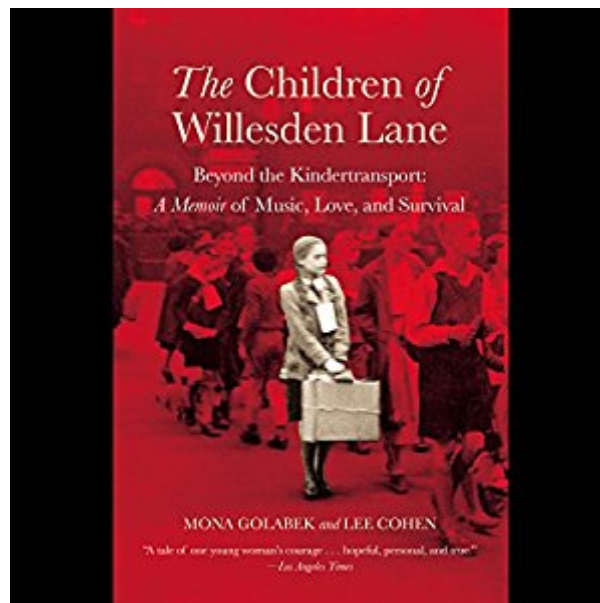




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# **The Children Of Willesden Lane: Beyond The Kindertransport: A Memoir Of Music, Love, And Survival**



## Synopsis

Based on the true story of her mother, Mona Golabek describes the inspirational story of Lisa Jura Golabek's escape from Nazi-controlled Austria to England on the famed Kindertransport. Jewish musical prodigy Lisa Jura has a wonderful life in Vienna. But when the Nazis start closing in on the city, life changes irreversibly. Although he has three daughters, Lisa's father is able to secure only one berth on the Kindertransport. The family decides to send Lisa to London, so she may pursue her dreams of a career as a concert pianist. Separated from her beloved family, Lisa bravely endures the trip and a disastrous posting outside London before finding her way to the Willesden Lane Orphanage. It is in this orphanage that Lisa's story truly comes to life. Her music inspires the other orphanage children, and they, in turn, cheer her on in her efforts to make good on her promise to her family to realize her musical potential. Through hard work and sheer pluck, Lisa wins a scholarship to study piano at the Royal Academy. As she supports herself and studies, she makes a new life for herself and dreams of reconnecting with the family she was forced to leave behind. The resulting tale delivers a message of the power of music to uplift the human spirit and to grant the individual soul endurance, patience, and peace.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours 5 and 6 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: March 15, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01AKOV9LE

Best Sellers Rank: #49 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Holocaust #685  
in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Artists, Writers & Musicians #1181  
in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical & Political Figures

## Customer Reviews

I met Mona in a coffeeshop. What a sweet lady! We talked for some time about how young people (my age 22 and younger) are seeing a trend of pop culture references that make light of the Holocaust and WWII. There are few survivors left, and someone needs to tell the stories the way they should be told, the way we should remember. Mona & Lee Cohen do exactly that in this

book. They tell the heartfelt story of their mother Lisa Jura, based entirely on true stories and real people. Jura's family sent her to England as a young child on the Kindertransport, in hopes that she could use her brilliant talent as a pianist to make a life for herself. She had to leave her parents, sisters, friends, and neighbors behind. But despite her fears, loneliness, and confusion (why would the Nazis do this?), Lisa Jura always found a way to be thankful, polite, and appreciative of the good things in life. This is more than just a survival story; it's a story about how she and the other Jewish children refugees found ways to make their lives rich and meaningful in times when life didn't seem to make sense. This is a quick read -- in one sitting in case you get addicted, and can't put it down! -- and very uplifting. It reminds you to be thankful for what you've got, and not brood on what could have or would have been. It is not a depressing book, but it will bring tears to your eyes! I shared this book with family and friends, and everyone loves it so much that they've asked to buy their own copies. \*\*\*\*\* FIVE STARS

I didn't know what to expect from this memoir-style book but ended up liking it very much. The real-life story of a young girl's escape from Nazi-occupied Vienna to the completely different world of London is compelling and touching. It's also informative about what life was like living in greater London during the heavy bombing. Kudos to the residents who "stayed calm and carried on." Such conditions are difficult to imagine. Lisa's determination is inspiring as she struggles to keep a promise made to her mother to continue her music studies. The lives of her closest friends in the refugee orphanage are also hinted at. They all served as a substitute family in place of the ones they left behind. I give it four stars instead of five only because the story is told second-hand. The author, Maya Golabek, is Lisa's daughter. She does a fine job of evoking the time and place and covering the major points of her mother's life. Still, it's always preferable to get such a story firsthand. But overall, this was an excellent book.

Amazing, heart-warming life story. I cried. Highly recommended for music lovers, biography lovers, history buffs, and people in general. It is perhaps not obvious from the title, but this is a Holocaust story that never enters a camp. It is about not knowing and caring so much it hurts. Lisa Jura, one of the Children, is sent to London on the Kindertransport soon after Kristallnacht. Her parents are taken by the Holocaust, but she does not know this for sure until months, maybe years, after the war is over. This book provided a new and unexpected point-of-view plus the wonderful details of a tale of growing up in wartime poverty that Lisa does not allow to define her.

Lisa Jura is a talented 14 year old living in Vienna when Hitler comes to power and invaded Austria. Her father is a simple tailor and the family lived in a working class ghetto of Vienna. They are not rich. Lisa is a talented and promising pianist who studies piano with a prominent teacher in this city of music. It is Lisa's dream to play a concert in the much loved Vienna State Opera House. The first consequence of the Nuremberg laws which discriminated harshly against the Jews was that her much loved Music professor, Dr. Isseles could no longer teach her piano. Non-Jews could no longer teach Jewish students. It was with great regret that professor Isseles has to dismiss his promising student, Lisa. Lisa returns home downtrodden. The whole neighborhood was inspired by Lisa's gift and was hopeful that she would arise from the ghetto and make something of herself. Her music loving mother was her inspiration and constant encourager. After crystalnacht, when her father was beaten, forced to undress to the waist and ordered to scrub the street, Lisa's mother recognized the danger for her family. A seat on the Kindertransport became available and was offered to the family. Rosie, who was 18 was too old. Lisa at 14 qualified and her mother sent her. With tears and sadness Lisa left her family with a small suitcase which contained a photo of her family and a sparkling evening bag that belonged to her grandmother. She removed the tiny gold necklace with the piano charm that she always wore and put it around the neck of her 11 year old sister, Sonia. Lisa was placed in the country home of a wealthy military officer and his much younger wife. Lisa was a servant in the house and the house did not have a piano. After 6 months of loneliness and isolation in the country, she ran away to the Jewish agency in London which then placed her in an orphanage for these children run by a Viennese matron who also fled Austria. She had camaraderie among the other children most of whom were from Germany or Austria. They all spoke German. However, the matron, Mrs. Cohen, an educated and previously wealthy Viennese matron required that only English be spoken so that the children became fluent in English, the tongue of their adopted land. Ten thousand Jewish children were saved by the English. Many of them opened their homes to these children. Not all of the homes were Jewish. The orphanage had a piano and Lisa played it beautifully and regularly. All the residents of the house were entertained by her music. She worked as a seamstress in a clothing factory during the day to earn money for her food and lodging. She was allowed to keep 25% of her earnings for personal expenses. She tried to find ways to save her family. Sonia needed a sponsor and Lisa searched for one everywhere. Life was becoming desperate for Lisa's family and Sonia. Finally, she asked a quaker widow who had been charitable when a bomb damaged the orphanage and Lisa needed a place to sleep. The widow could not keep Sonia, but she found another quaker family in the country who could. Sonia was on the last train of the kindertransport before England declared war on Germany and the trains stopped running. Sonia

was allowed to study in the morning and work only in the afternoon. She was lucky as most had to work all day. Mrs. Cohen recognized Lisa's talent and encouraged her to apply to the prestigious Royal Academy of Music. Lisa won a spot and a scholarship. She attended the academy, but worked mornings at the factory making supplies for the army. She sewed heavy fabric into back packs etc. Her piano teacher noticing the stress on her fingers arranged for her to have a job playing the piano in the evenings at local club where there was drinking and dancing. Lisa was an attractive girl with red hair, and all the soldiers wanted to buy her drinks and flirt with her. She only saw her sister once every 6 months because the train tickets from the countryside were expensive and Sonia could not leave her work or school very often. They lost contact with their married sister, Rosie and their parents. No one in the orphanage had contact with their parents. The Jewish agency heard the rumors about the death camps, the deportations, and the mass killings. No one wanted to believe it. The stories were so horrific that they were unbelievable. Lisa graduated from the music school and the school financed her debut recital. It was heavily attended. One attendee was a French Jewish soldier, Michael Golabek, who had heard her play in the club and was impressed by her talent. After the war, Sonia and Lisa were reunited with their sister Rosie who was now wearing the chain with the piano charm. Rosie her husband Leo, and their four year old daughter, Esther survived by escaping from France into Switzerland. They all emigrated to the U.S. where Lisa again met up with Michael Golabek. Lisa and Michael married. All three sisters and their spouses moved to California. Lisa's parents were deported to Lodz and then Auschwitz where they died. Lisa's daughters and granddaughters are all talented pianists. Her daughter, Mona Golebek one of the authors is an internationally acclaimed concert pianist, the host of a classical music radio show and grammy nominated recording artist. This story was a page turner. I could not put it down. However, it was sentimental. The characters lacked dimension. They were usually good people with few negative qualities. Because of that they were not realistic. They all seemed to be kind and good, tolerant and understanding of each other. For teenagers they had relatively few issues. All but one lost their whole family. One boy had a mother who survived. These children spent their teen years in the children's home and grew to adulthood there.

A good story but it is the youth version so it is thinly written.

I really enjoyed the book. It gave one such a good idea of what it was like for those German Jewish children landing in London being separated from their families and having to learn to speak English. They were so brave and I loved the true story of Lisa's music career. I was sorry when I finished it.

It was an absolutely wonderful book. Mona Golabek also does a one woman show and tells some of these stories and transports you with her beautiful piano playing as well. I highly recommend it.

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