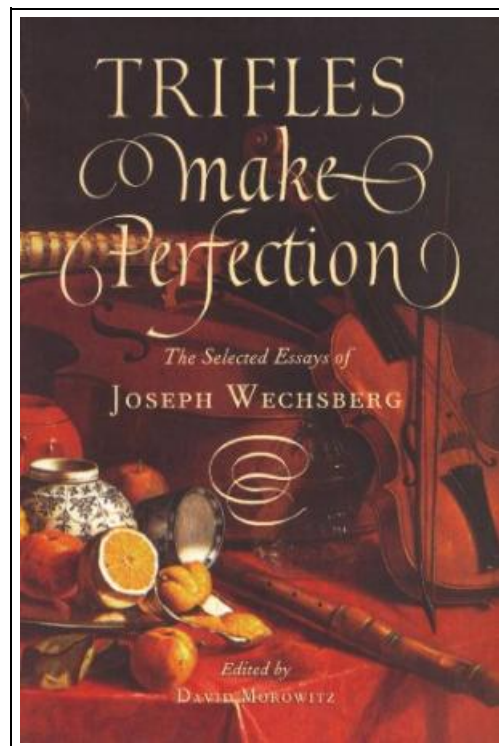


Trifles Make Perfection



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Reviews

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(Ken Watsica)

TRIFLES MAKE PERFECTION

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David R Godine. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 320 pages. Dimensions: 8.7in. x 5.8in. x 0.9in. A Moravian by birth, a musician by avocation, a writer by choice, and a bon vivant almost by instinct, Wechsberg was among a generation of mid-century writers that included A. J. Liebling, M. F. K. Fisher, Waverly Root, and Ludwig Bemelmans. Many of them found a home for their work at the New Yorker and were virtually provided carte blanche by Harold Ross and later William Shawn to tackle any subject they found interesting. For Wechsberg, this included most of what he perceived as the cultural life of the civilized world, which meant music (especially chamber music), food (especially classic French food, as prepared by its great chefs like Henri Soul and Fernand Point), travel (not always first-class), and the history of banking and finance. Always central to these essays and portraits were men of acknowledged accomplishments, men whose lives he tried to understand both in the contexts of their own personality and of the cultures that shaped them. Wechsberg was basically a connoisseur in the old European sense of the word, a man who valued perfection for its own sake, and who saw its quest as both worthy and attainable. His vision was pervaded and shaped by an acute sense of history, especially European history, and a relentless curiosity. Born in 1906 into a wealthy, assimilated Jewish family, he was raised in Austria, but saw his comfortable life threatened, and then extinguished, by Hitler's annexation of his native Czechoslovakia. He came to America with only a basic command of English but an impressive command of what was happening in Europe. His most powerful essays, describing the tragic fragmentation of Europe at the end of World War II, are never strident or bitter and only...

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