

ably poignant. Steen on Sibelius supplies useful data rarely found otherwise. Here, writing these words, is one music buff who considers himself all the richer for having learnt from Steen that on his 90th birthday Sibelius had received “cigars from Churchill and 12,000 telegrams.”

Franck, so apt to irk critics of nationalist kidney (numerous Teutons find his style too Gallic, numerous Gauls too Teutonic) is also intelligently introduced here. Steen reveals the sad news that the Franck statue which for decades stood outside Paris's Sainte-Clotilde church, where Franck long served as organist, was recently toppled by a falling tree—and that the city council has no plans to restore it. What a relief it is, besides, to see Wagner and his ideologies discussed with calm sapience for a change. Junk-media denunciations of Wagner have grown so formulaically repetitive that they could easily be used as voicemail. (“You have reached *The Daily Sleaze's* Arts Editor. Press 1 to hear how Wagner was responsible for Auschwitz. Press 2 to hear how Wagner was responsible for Auschwitz. Press 3 to hear how Wagner was responsible for ...”) To such balderdash Steen supplies an agreeable corrective.

Maybe this sometimes brilliant but more often frustrating behemoth would have been more fittingly conceived as two books rather than one. Steen, obviously a man of immense expository talent, had it in him to provide a fascinating general history of modern European politics, one quite separate from a fascinating general history of European music. As it is, two different literary projects are here bound together like Siamese twins, and both suffer for it. No need, then, to remove Schonberg's and Salter's surveys from library shelves quite yet. Still, perhaps in 2005 the best possible entrée to composers' biographies is the one that you can compile yourself after hours or days of sustained Internet-surfing. ■

R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne, Australia.

[*Blog: Understanding the Information Reformation That's Changing Your World*, Hugh Hewitt, Nelson Books, 225 pages]

The World at Their Fingertips

By Clark Stooksbury

2004 WAS THE YEAR of the blog. Politicians and big-media mandarins alike were humbled by private citizens blogging from their homes while wearing pajamas. CBS News and Dan Rather became high-profile victims when they posted faked documents on the Web relating to a story on the president's National Guard service. Several blogs began noting that with features like a superscripted “th,” the papers appeared to have been produced by a modern word-processing program instead of a 30-year-old typewriter.

Hugh Hewitt is a leading evangelist of the blogosphere, and it is not surprising that he is the first to transform the story of blogs into book form. Hewitt—a law professor, talk-radio host, and fierce Republican partisan—focuses his attention on the center-right portion of the blogosphere that supports the Iraq War and the Bush administration. His partisanship is both a strength and weakness: it keeps him on message, always in tune with the agenda of the Republican Party. But it also impairs his vision; he dismisses liberal and Democrat-oriented blogs almost out of hand. And forget about websites that are non-Left but also antiwar and/or critical of President Bush—LewRockwell.com, Antiwar.com, etc. Hewitt doesn't mention them at all.

Blog usefully compares the rise of the blogosphere and its war against big media with the role of the printing press in spawning the Protestant Reformation. Hewitt relates the tale that after Luther posted his 95 Theses in Latin, “someone, no one knows exactly who,

got hold of a copy of Luther's theses, translated the Latin into German, and published them. Thanks to Gutenberg, Luther—and more important, his ideas—were known all over Germany within two weeks, and all over Europe in a month.” Hewitt seems actually to believe that blogs will kill off the old media: “you have to be very dim indeed to be planning a career as a print journalist these days,” he says, as if newspapers, magazines, and other non-blog forms of communication will cease to exist. This is odd, since he went to the trouble recently to suggest several names to replace William Safire at the *New York Times*. Why bother if the medium is on its deathbed? Hewitt should take note that the Catholic Church survived the Protestant Reformation and exists to this day.

He and his allies would also be wise to think about how their own world might collapse. The blogosphere will continue to be a source of political and cultural commentary, and it will evolve in ways that I won't try to predict. But Hewitt's portion, the right-wing new-media echo chamber, may be riding for a fall. When like-minded people only communicate with each other, they are vulnerable to groupthink and are setting themselves up for unpleasant surprises.

Former *New Yorker* film critic Pauline Kael famously wondered how Richard Nixon could have won in 1972 when nobody she knew had voted for him. *Blog* shows signs of this sort of insular thinking. Hewitt makes numerous assertions without feeling the need to back them up with sources. Without much evidence, he accuses *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman of lifting a quote from liberal blogger Joshua Micah Marshall. I am aware that there is a mini-industry on the Web dedicated to correcting alleged Krugman errors. But I don't assume that Krugman is wrong just because a right-wing blogger has attacked him—or just because he's Paul Krugman.

Similarly, when Hewitt notes that CBS lost ratings after the Raftergate scandal, he doesn't bother to give any

numbers. It is possible that the author is trying to avoid a CBS problem himself. The network got in trouble not by running the National Guard story but by posting the bogus documents on the Web, where anybody could evaluate them. By not giving sources, Hewitt makes it harder for readers to verify his claims. But perhaps he is just confident that his intended audience will accept his assertions without question; sources would be superfluous.

Bloggers on the right side of the Web have done a lot of work to hold what they contemptuously refer to as the "MSM" (mainstream media) accountable. They do less well when their allies transgress, as I know from firsthand experience. In late May 2004, Jonah Goldberg and Glenn "Instapundit" Reynolds approvingly linked to a *Boston Herald* editorial that dishonestly truncated a quote from former Vice President Gore in order to use his words against him. The *Herald* quoted Gore as saying that Americans have an "innate vulnerability to temptation... to use power to abuse others." He actually said, "Our founders were insightful stu-

dents of human nature. They feared the abuse of power because they understood that every human being has not only 'better angels' in his nature, but also an innate vulnerability to temptation—especially the temptation to abuse power over others." I naïvely thought the big-time bloggers would note and denounce the *Boston Herald's* mendacity when I pointed it out to them.

They neglected to do so, even after it was noted on *Reason's* "Hit & Run" blog. This stands in stark contrast to the center-right blogosphere's outrage over

Child Left Behind Act occurred after *Blog* was published, but it is interesting to note the center-right blogosphere's response. With few exceptions, it was not overly concerned about the affair. They did not create a large-scale "opinion storm," as Hewitt would call it. Most of the commentary questioned Williams and his ethics without calling for accountability from the Bush administration.

Hewitt sees the blind spots of other bloggers. Referring to Josh Marshall's lack of interest in the Howell

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Maureen Dowd's similar mangling of the words of President Bush, to which Hewitt briefly alludes when discussing the role of blogs in ending Howell Raines's tenure at the *New York Times*.

Hewitt's side of the blogosphere is tethered to the Bush administration and particularly to the war in Iraq. Notably absent from the list of big shots skewered in *Blog* are Don Rumsfeld, Ahmad Chalabi, and Richard Perle. I haven't seen where Hewitt or his allies have demanded accountability for the Abu Ghraib scandal (above the level of Specialist Graner) or for the fact that the cakewalk brigade in charge at the Pentagon was totally unprepared for what happened after the rose-petal throwing ended. They were too busy running interference for Rumsfeld and company to raise troubling questions. Andrew Sullivan, who has repeatedly and vociferously denounced the Abu Ghraib scandal, is an exception. But Hewitt reads him out of the club when noting his role in the takedown of Trent Lott, referring to him as the "then-conservative blogger Andrew Sullivan."

And then there is the curious incident of the lapdogs that did not bark. *USA Today's* exposure of Armstrong Williams's acceptance of almost a quarter of a million dollars from the Department of Education to shill for the No

Raines/Jayson Blair story at the *New York Times*, Hewitt writes, "the center-right bloggers had been part of the effort to oust Lott, but the hyper-partisan Marshall provided an early example that the blogosphere, like MSM, had its corners where partisan advantage would trump story line." For Hewitt, who has about as much critical distance from the Bush administration as Karl Rove, to paint another blogger as "hyper-partisan" is like the post office calling a dial-up connection slow. Even the campaign against Lott was a White House approved take-down of a potential political liability who was not beloved by conservative Republicans. It is hard to imagine a circumstance where Hewitt's crowd would attempt to hold anyone in the Bush administration accountable for anything other than deviance from the party line. I searched Hewitt's site and found one reference to Abu Ghraib in the last year, compared to at least nine references to John Kerry's fanciful stories about spending Christmas Eve in Cambodia in 1968.

Hewitt's slender volume is in a sense two books. The part to which I have devoted most of this review is a brief, polemical overview of the right-wing blogosphere. The other is a boosterish business/leadership tome devoted to the rising importance of blogging. In the

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introduction Hewitt advises—no, demands—that the purchaser “read this book very quickly and distribute it to your senior leadership, then hold a few days retreat to discuss what is going on. I have made it short [thanks, Hugh] so that you can absorb it on a plane ride... When you go on the retreat, spend the extra bucks to bring along one or two or even three of the bloggers from the very large A team... I am thinking of my audience as senior and mid-level executives in business, government, the arts, the church, and especially in politics, if television affects your life, the blogosphere will as well.”

Although I doubt that executives across the country are convening corporate retreats and shelling out big bucks for lectures from bloggers, Hewitt has a point. Blogs are a new and radically decentralized means of dispensing information and opinion. People and businesses in the public eye should be aware of the danger of being caught up in a blog-generated opinion storm. Hewitt also believes that companies and business leaders should start their own blogs. On this I can agree with him: I think that blogs are such a good idea that I started one myself, clarkstooksbury.blogspot.com. It includes links related to some of my claims in this review.

It is great that the power of big media is eroding, a process that was underway long before the rise of the blogosphere. As early as 1993, Michael Crichton predicted that the *New York Times* would be gone in ten years. He now says he was a bit premature. Hewitt, standing deathwatch over such institutions as the *Times*, should be careful: there was no blogosphere to speak of in 2000; it was a huge story by 2004. Dan Rather succumbed to the arrogance of power and never saw his downfall coming. There is no reason to assume that the same fate can't befall a few big-name bloggers by 2008. ■

Clark Stooksbury has written for the American Enterprise, Chronicles, and Liberty.

[*John Jay: Founding Father, Walter Stahr, Hambledon & London, 482 pages*]

America's Prime Minister

By Kevin C. Gutzman

JOHN JAY SURELY IS the least appreciated great man of the American revolutionary era. His fame has waned even as that of arguably less significant contemporaries has waxed. If, as Forrest McDonald argued in *The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson* (echoing the Peripatetic), the most important test of a man is what he does, then John Jay merits a rank right behind George Washington among the pre-eminent Americans of his generation and indeed among the most notable of any generation.

Jay was a propagandist, lawgiver, spymaster, diplomat, political philosopher, philanthropist, abolitionist, jurist, and legislator. He was also, by all accounts, an exemplary father and doting husband. His achievements were, to borrow an 18th-century term, signal in each of his fields, in some cases unbelievably so. Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, two of the leading “Founders Chic” commodities, never approached Jay's accomplishments, and yet they are far more renowned than he. Thus it is high time for a new Jay biography.

He was born into a prominent New York merchant family and married into the colony's nobility. Jay's father, the son of a Huguenot refugee, saw to it that his oldest son was put up in a francophone New Rochelle boarding school, received a King's College education, and was provided with first-class training as a lawyer by one of the New York bar's leading lights. John's marriage into the Livingston family, New York's leading political clan, gave him a network of indispensable political and social connections that facilitated his career as patriot politician. While not an unmixed

blessing—his feud with brother-in-law Brockholst Livingston, for example, receives some slight attention here—Jay's marriage was as good a bargain as he might have hoped.

By the time the Revolution began, Jay was an attorney in his early 30s with what Richard Nixon once called “an iron butt,” the ability to apply his sharp mind to detailed work for long hours. As a member of his Provincial Congress in 1777, Jay became the chief author of the New York constitution of that year. After independence, he served as governor of the state; by the time he finished his second term in 1801, he had seen to the reform of the state's penal code, pushed the first American experiment with penitentiaries (the traditional British penalty for virtually all crimes, from treason and murder to pick-pocketing and petty theft, had been hanging), and signed into law New York's gradual emancipation act of 1799.

Jay's greatest contributions, however, came in the realm of foreign policy. From October 1779 to May 1782, Jay was America's representative in Madrid, where his hat-in-hand solicitation of aid fell flat. But the experience prepared him for a more important role, that of chief architect of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Arriving in France to join the octogenarian Benjamin Franklin, long beloved of the French and similarly enamored of them, Jay added a tough-minded counterweight to Franklin's complaisant negotiating posture. (Here one might note—and I think Stahr underplays this—Jay's lifelong aversion to the country that had expelled his ancestors and the religion for which it stood.) Jay insisted on decoupling the American mission's negotiating efforts from the policy of a French government nominally friendly but actually interested in ensuring that the fledgling North American republic not be too strong. The resulting treaty gave the United States all the land it had dared dream of acquiring, including a western boundary at the distant Mississippi River, which was exactly what Jay had insisted on.