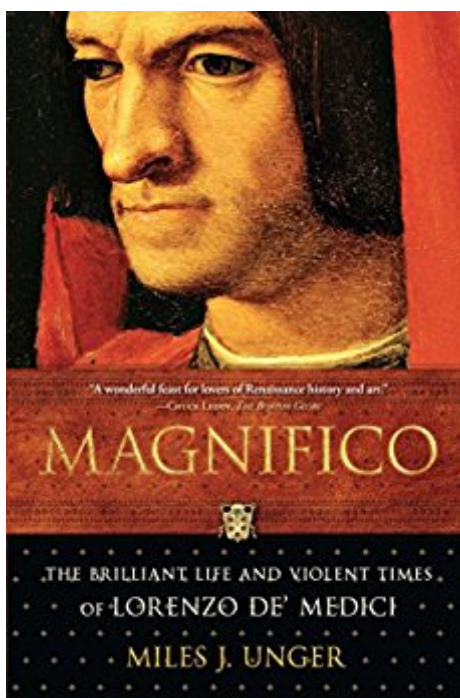


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Magnifico: The Brilliant Life And Violent Times Of Lorenzo De' Medici



Synopsis

Magnifico is a vividly colorful portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici, the uncrowned ruler of Florence during its golden age. A true "Renaissance man," Lorenzo dazzled contemporaries with his prodigious talents and magnetic personality. Known to history as Il Magnifico (the Magnificent), Lorenzo was not only the foremost patron of his day but also a renowned poet, equally adept at composing philosophical verses and obscene rhymes to be sung at Carnival. He befriended the greatest artists and writers of the time -- Leonardo, Botticelli, Poliziano, and, especially, Michelangelo, whom he discovered as a young boy and invited to live at his palace -- turning Florence into the cultural capital of Europe. He was the leading statesman of the age, the fulcrum of Italy, but also a cunning and ruthless political operative. Miles Unger's biography of this complex figure draws on primary research in Italian sources and on his intimate knowledge of Florence, where he lived for several years. Lorenzo's grandfather Cosimo had converted the vast wealth of the family bank into political power, but from his earliest days Lorenzo's position was precarious. Bitter rivalries among the leading Florentine families and competition among the squabbling Italian states meant that Lorenzo's life was under constant threat. Those who plotted his death included a pope, a king, and a duke, but Lorenzo used his legendary charm and diplomatic skill -- as well as occasional acts of violence -- to navigate the murderous labyrinth of Italian politics. Against all odds he managed not only to survive but to preside over one of the great moments in the history of civilization. Florence in the age of Lorenzo was a city of contrasts, of unparalleled artistic brilliance and unimaginable squalor in the city's crowded tenements; of both pagan excess and the fire-and-brimstone sermons of the Dominican preacher Savonarola. Florence gave birth to both the otherworldly perfection of Botticelli's Primavera and the gritty realism of Machiavelli's The Prince. Nowhere was this world of contrasts more perfectly embodied than in the life and character of the man who ruled this most fascinating city.

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Customer Reviews

I finished this book with regret, wishing Lorenzo hadn't died so young, and that I could hear more about his role as patron of the Florence Renaissance. Yes, great names pop up as players in his life--Botticello, DaVinci, Michelangelo--but this book emphasizes the political world Lorenzo inhabited, and for me this was essential information. We tend to know the Renaissance by its geniuses and masterpieces rather than by the intense and dangerous politics of the small Italian republics and states. Here we see a very real Lorenzo, dashing, brilliant, artistic, and politically shrewd; though from a fabulously wealthy banking family, he was a prince in Machiavelli's sense.

As a non-academic who just enjoys reading about history, I found this book utterly fascinating. Many times I simply put the Kindle down and said out loud, "You can't make this stuff up!" I had never heard of the Pazzi conspiracy, but I've read several books about the plot and its various characters since, and am considering a trip to Florence next year. Though heavily footnoted and indexed, I found the book highly readable and well within the reach of anybody who just wants to read a thickly plotted, amazing story -- and best of all, this one's true. One drawback - the maps in the Kindle book are too small and fuzzy to be useful. I found it helpful to print a map of 15th Century Italy from an Internet site and keep it by me as I read. Also, there are portraits of many of the people mentioned in the book on Wikipedia, as well as photographs of sites in Italy, Medici castles, etc.

Not even half way through and I'm very impressed. Mr Unger's writing style is easy to read and informative not only of the subject but also the times in which he is writing about. Highly

recommend.

Thorough account of a magnificent man. I loved the detail and entertaining presentation. This book really helped me in my research.

Superb! Congratulations to the author. I have read close to 200 biographies and this one is probably one the best to me.

This man's life and the lives of his grandfather and father and Florence are amazing!

The book gave a good overview but for all the detail (sometime excruciating) the picture of Lorenzo was still fragmented. The tendency of the author to move rather arbitrarily back and forth in time , sometime 10 years, made it difficult to understand the complete timeline of events. I was disappointed.

Really enjoyed reading this, paints a brilliant portrait of Florence and its political tides during the time Lorenzo. If you find this time interesting, you will love this book. However, I would advise anyone that has not been to Florence, you will not enjoy this nearly as much as if you have seen a lot of the places/things they mention in this book.

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