Culture Vultures: Eric Larson's *In the Garden of Beasts, Friday Night Lights*, and Savvy

*In-the-know Chicagoans tell the Reader what they're watching, reading, and seeing*

By Sallyann Price
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*I'm right in the middle of Erik Larson's *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin* by Erik Larson*

By Mark E. Lococo, Director of theater at Loyola University

I'm right in the middle of Erik Larson's *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*, and it's every bit as good a read as *Devil in the White City*, though for very different reasons. Again, Larson takes a real, historical story and infuses it with the same kinds of details and descriptions found in the best fiction—but this time the focus is even more on characterization and less on plot. Unassuming University of Chicago professor William Dodd, who finds himself the first U.S. ambassador to Hitler's regime, and his daughter Martha, a "party girl" who relishes her contact with the glamorous elements of the Third Reich, make for a compelling story, highly relatable to anyone who's ever found himself in over his head, personally or professionally. I started reading this book as period research for an upcoming production, but now I find I'm completely engrossed.