AMERICAN WOMEN’S CLUB OF HAMBURG

CURRENTS

December 2014

www.awchamburg.org
Dear Readers,

A big THANK YOU to all the many submissions to the cover photo competition we had announced in the October issue. On December’s very cover you can find the winner, chosen by the jury made up by the current proofreaders.

It was elected on grounds of its originality and unusual motive and yet still christmassy theme. The decision was not made easily. We had beautiful submissions from so many members. Find the most beautiful throughout this issue.

Christmas is just around the corner, and while I am dreaming myself a merry cozy glass of Eggnogg, the stressful and crazy shopping time is starting. Please do yourself a favor, do your shopping online, after you bake some christmas cookies, and drink hot coco with your loved ones.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you.

Yours,

Karen, chief editor and the entire Currents staff
Members of the club’s film group and one guest (eight women in all) participated in a two-day writers’ workshop. Australian author – of three successful novels – journalist, lecturer, and publisher Campbell Jeffreys explained the who-what-where-why-how of writing a film review.

We met on Saturday, October 18th from 10:15 to 14:15 in the meeting room of the underground Rathaus-passage that is principally a used bookstore with a bistro as well. We watched three short films: Method Actor, Shave it, and Voice Over. After each film we wrote a review with both word- and time limits, and discussed our take on what we had seen. It was no surprise that there were many different interpretations, impressions, and interest ratings. We discussed length, past tense versus present tense, our target audience, and choosing a review’s starting point. Campbell said that a simple vocabulary is necessary if translators are going to render a review correctly in another language (if you expect your review to be published in foreign media). Editors appreciate inserting certain key words which will show up quickly when googled, thus giving your review more readership.

We went home with new ideas and impressions, and some homework:

- watch the 1975 film Sunday Too Far Away. We should write about it, and everyone’s review was sent to the other participants. We were not surprised that the film was both Australian and about “real men,” considering the background of our instructor. (Two links follow should you want to watch the film: 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-wNY-W9RrXI or 2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LZeC7PzKtI).

- We brought our reviews to the second session on Saturday, October 25th (from 10:30 to 12:00) at the downtown Karstadt restaurant. There, we gave and received feedback from the group as well as editorial comments from Campbell. He again led discussions that focused on our improvements, good presentations, and differences in impressions. (Our rating of the film ranged from ** to ****.)

The real hero and brains behind this very successful workshop was Marinell Haegelin. She conceived the idea, was able to put her excellent contact to Campbell into play and they planned the agenda, and she tirelessly planned the two sessions down to the minute so that all points were taken into consideration. She created the invitation information, brought refreshments – even flowers, and kept tabs on everyone so that nobody was confused about the event. A huge big thank you to Marinell!

In the end our enthusiasm ran so high that plans are underway to continue the idea. Everyone would watch the same film at home, write a review, and then meet to compare, offer suggestions for improvement and exchange ideas.
The FAWCO Region 5 Meeting in Hamburg was by all accounts a great success. The hotel was great, the food was yummy, the speakers were terrific, the entertainment was fantastic, the tours were fun, and everyone had a good time. The AWC Hamburg team pulled it off without a hitch, and we can all be proud of what we all accomplished for our clubs by getting together in the name of FAWCO. Thank you to everyone who attended meeting for your cooperation and participation during the meeting. As always, a group that can get together for FAWCO and Fun is also able to produce an article reviewing the weekend together. Many thanks to all the clubs for sending in your reports that formed this article.

**OPENING EVENING**

by Angelika M, AWC Berlin

When the participants went to the registration desk to pick up their conference materials and name tags, they were surprised by the huge goodie bag filled with lots of wonderful things collected by Tracy Moede and her team.

During the finger food buffet everybody had time to mingle, meet old friends, catch up and introduce the newcomers.

Shawn Klug, the meeting organizer, welcomed all and then handed the mike over to FAWCO’s youth ambassador Julia Goldsby from Cologne. Julia and Ally Moede, AWC Hamburg, gave a lively report on their trip to Shanghai where they and 12 other kids of FAWCO members spent 10 days doing charity work. Barbara Bühling, the Youth Program Coordinator, encouraged members to send their kids on next year’s trip.

**EDUCATING CHILDREN - DIFFICULT CHOICES AND OPTIONS WITH CONSEQUENCES**

by Hope Moore, IWC Munich

FAWCO members had the opportunity to learn about a variety of educational approaches available to our children in Germany and particularly in Hamburg. We were reminded that because the German educational system is not a federal system there are 16 states with 16 systems. During this panel discussion we were introduced to a variety of dynamic schools in Hamburg with different structures and approaches which are designed to meet the varying needs of different students.

The Panel Discussion was lead by Educational Experts representing four different schools that offer bi-lingual, international programs and educational certificates recognized by German and International Universities.

The Panel included:

- **Dr. Suzan Weishof,**  
  Junior School Principal International School Hamburg

- **Dr. Karl-Heinz Korsten,**  
  Headmaster Phorms Hamburg

- **Susanne Wunderlich,**  
  Education auf Deutsch

- **Kristin Eichholz,**  
  Vice Principal Helene Lange Gymnasium

International children have a variety of needs and so families must consider their child’s skills, abilities and interests as well as the personal situation of the family including financial and whether they will be staying in the same city in the long term or moving on. The languages used by the child and by both parents are also a consideration. It was reassuring to learn that there
are a variety of schools for a wide range of children. Eventually, a child will decide if they wish to go to university in Germany, the U.S. or another country. It was very reassuring to learn that the I.B., AP and Abitur in Germany are all recognized and valued at U.S., U.K. and other universities outside of Germany. In fact, students can even be awarded university credits with these certificates.

Education and cultural integrations go far beyond the 5 F’s -

**FAWCO & FUN – GETTING TO KNOW HAMBURG**
by Didem K., AIWC Frankfurt, Taunus and Rhein Main

After a very busy morning and a nice lunch, we had an afternoon to see Hamburg. We were given a choice of a visit to the famous Hamburg town hall, a bus tour or a visit to the St Michaelis church, locally known as the Michel, the icon of the Hamburg skyline. As a first-timer, I opted for the bus tour to see as much as I could. This turned out to be an excellent choice. I was impressed by the geography, the lakes and canals, the gorgeous old mansions by the water, the architecture and by Hamburg’s very inviting shops and cafes. Even the gloomy weather failed to make the city unattractive. I can imagine how beautiful it must be on a warm and sunny spring day. Thus, Hamburg quickly became my second favorite city after Frankfurt. I am grateful to our friends from Hamburg who organized this wonderful outing for us.

**HANSA VARIETÉ**
by Mary D., AIWC Cologne

One of the numerous highlights of this fun and inspiring FAWCO Region 5 weekend in Hamburg was our visit to the Hansa Varité Theater on Saturday evening. This jewel-box vaudeville theatre is a Hamburg legend, with a history dating back over 100 years. Stepping inside is a bit like going back in time – beginning in the lobby with its dark wood paneling and continuing into the plushy pink and white auditorium with its cozy table seating and bells for summoning the wait staff.

I was unsure of what to expect from the show itself, but I was delightfully surprised. The evening began with a short, grainy film about the history of the Varieté, including a run-down of some of the legendary entertainers who have appeared there – from Josephine Baker and Grock the Clown to the then-unknown Siegfried & Roy. From my Cologne perspective, I might describe the main show as a cross between Circus Roncalli and a Karnevals-Sitzung: the emcee, Rolf Claussen, spoke in a heavy Hamburg dialect and entertained the audience between acts with songs, poems and topical political humor with many local references, puns and plays on words. Good German and some familiarity with Hamburg were certainly helpful for understanding many of the jokes. Fewer language skills were needed to enjoy the individual acts, all of which were circus-style entertainment at a very high level. They included a magician who conjured up beautiful live birds, a creatively choreographed duo of unicyclists, and a dog trainer with his adorably disobedient boxer. My personal favorites were the gorgeous and breathtakingly athletic acrobat Oleg Izossimov, and Strahlemann und Söhne – a duo who performed a hilarious combination of juggling and G-rated striptease. All of this was accompanied by lively music from the top-notch Varieté band. Everyone in our group left the theatre with smiles on our faces.

**FAWCO PRESENTATION**
by Kathy T. AWA Vienna

The focus Sunday morning was FAWCO. We heard from FAWCO President, My Linh Kunst; Sallie Chaballier, FAWCO 2nd VP; and FAWCO Foundation President, Michele Hendrikse Du Bois. Also on hand was Catherine (Cat) Connor, FAWCO web guru.

Started in 1931, with six clubs, today FAWCO is comprised of 64 member clubs in 31 countries on 6 continents. As a virtual organization, FAWCO does so much globally to help women, children and families. The resolve is to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide. All of the information can be overwhelming as FAWCO does so much. Fun Fact:
FAWCO has the largest civilian membership of overseas Americans.

Sallie Chaballier spoke about the powerfulness of FAWCO in relationship to rights for Americans (civilians) living overseas. It is important to note that FAWCO lobbies on behalf of all Americans living outside of the USA with regard to voting, issues of taxation, and CEDAW (Conventions for Elimination of Discrimination Against all Women). The USA is one of several countries which has not yet ratified CEDAW nor CRC (Convention on Rights of the Child). FAWCO is our voice in Washington, DC.

On a broader scale, FAWCO has been an accredited United Nations NGO with consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council since 1997. FAWCO is YOUR voice at the United Nations. This status gives our members a voice on global concerns where it will be heard and acted upon. This is a real coup for FAWCO as Consultative Status is extremely difficult to attain.

My Linh Kunst spoke about the Task Forces and the focus on Education, Environment, Health and Human Rights. Every club member is welcome to participate on one of these task forces. There was also discussion about the FAWCO Youth Program. This is a youth cultural volunteers program and provides FAWCO youth with a cross cultural understanding and philanthropic learning. More information can be found at www.fawco.org. We also have our first FAWCO Youth Ambassador, Julia Goldsby, and a FAWCO Youth Representative to the UN, Gavin Higbie. Members living in Vienna, Geneva and NY are encouraged to become a FAWCO UN Rep. Currently, Vienna and Geneva reps are on boards of NGO committees for the status of women and children at the UN.

There is a vast amount of support for member clubs on the website, so no need to reinvent the wheel. There you will find ideas for fundraisers, a best practices library, ideas for club development workshops and more. There are also multiple social media outlets in order to ask for information from other clubs. The annual conferences and regional meetings also provide opportunity for idea sharing and networking.

The overall message for clubs is for individual club members to become involved. Apply for Education Awards, support a Development Grant, join a task force. Help make a difference!

The FAWCO Foundation is the philanthropic/charitable arm of FAWCO. Both My Linh and Michele spoke about the FAWCO Foundation Target Project ‘Free the Girls’. Women’s Rights as Human Rights is a buzzing topic right now. Monies raised by FAWCO and FAWCO Foundation through the campaign “Backing Women” will be used for creating the infrastructure needed by the ‘Free The Girls’ organization.

Remember, if you are moving back to the US, join FAUSA (FAWCO Alumni USA)($25 single/$40 couple).

**CLUB ISSUES: IDEA SHARING**

by Tracy M., AWC Hamburg

The last workshop of the conference dealt with membership issues; specifically, changing demographics and club concerns facing all region 5 clubs. Among the most pressing issues are 1) how to motivate and increase member participation at club events, 2) philanthropic and community involvement, 3) external relations including PR, sponsors and advertising, 4) fundraising for charity and 5) ideas and activities for recruiting new members. Each club was given the chance to tell how these situations are handled within their clubs, giving all region 5 clubs the opportunity to learn from one another’s experiences. Ideas were exchanged and each club was able to come away from the workshop with different ideas and activity concepts. This type of idea-sharing is always valuable for FAWCO reps, club presidents and all club members. It lets us see what works for other clubs and gives the opportunity to gather ideas that we can implement in our own clubs.
Once upon a time there was a painter…

Seasons come and go, winters change summers and he is still with us – Peter Esch - a tall man with a weathered face, hazy blue eyes, unruly hair covered with snow. We are sitting in a small kitchen and talking about 26 years of advertising with Currents.

Peter Esch started his painting business in the 80s. In 1988 he got the first order from an American Women’s Club member. Satisfied with the result, she offered him to advertise the services for other expat families moving to and out of Hamburg in Currents. In his golden years he would have 5 to 6 AWC clients a year. Mr. Esch would listen carefully to the specific needs of his customers, would take time and effort to understand their wishes and customize the painting services in their home. “I have always cherished a special contact and understanding with my clients, - says Peter Esch, - I was striving to keep the established relationships and trust. Some of the clients would even leave me their house keys for the period of vacations. Not only did they trust me, but they were also sure I would stick to the agreed plan. Everything we discussed would be taken into consideration.”

As the years went by, the number of painting jobs sank. But it is not yet time to stop. Mr. Esch engages himself in the community and undertakes some jobs for the German Red Cross, occasionally having private customers. He has one employee, who helps him with various projects.

BY ANNA S.
I would like to give a big thank you to the ladies of the AWCH for making my stay in Hamburg so enjoyable. Unlike most of you I knew when I came that my stay would be relatively short but even 7 months split between two stays is a long time to go without having any social life or being able to really talk to anybody but my husband, Duncan. Fortunately I found the AWCH on the internet even before I came the first time, back at the end of October and made arrangements to join so that I had your friendship and advice right from the beginning which was wonderful.

My first event with the AWCH was the Celebration of Membership at the American Consulate last November. It was only my second excursion on the transit system, it was after dark and it was a bit of a challenge finding my way after I got off the transit; but I made it and it was a great event. Being new it was really interesting to hear from some of the members- how they came to Hamburg and what the AWCH meant to them. Getting into the Consulate was also an interesting experience.

My next event was Stitch n Bitch. This became the main stay of my time in Hamburg. I really looked forward to these bi-weekly get togethers. Although getting there sometimes was a bit of a challenge for me I managed to find my way to people’s homes and there was always somebody to either drive me or accompany me back to a S-Bahn station late at night. It was here that I was able to really make friends because there was a core group of ladies who came to most of the sessions. Although you have the marvellous group called Hamburger Helpers, I tended to ask these ladies if I needed questions answered about where, what and how. Although I definitely would have requested a Hamburger Helper if I was staying longer and had to totally assimilate. I guess to use the analogy of “Bloom Where You Are Planted” because of the AWCH at least I did have some roots and experience growth as opposed to being like a cut flower that is just stuck there.

I tried to attend as many of the events as possible. We did tend to travel as much as we could to take advantage of being in Germany and Europe. But I was able to go the Christmas party, the Valentine’s movie night at the Savoy, the Coco Chanel exhibit, the tour of St. Georg, the Dim Sum, the Heart Pillow workshop and several Currents meetings. All of which were great experiences.

I am not mentioning names because a lot of you contributed to my wonderful experiences in Hamburg and I would not want to leave anyone out. In some cases it was just a few minutes of conversation at an event, in others I was privileged to get to know you and even meet your families.

I am now back in Surrey, Canada, which is near Vancouver and do not expect to be back in Hamburg, as my husband is no longer associated with the company that brought him to Hamburg, but I suppose one never knows. We are certainly up for an extended stay elsewhere in the world if the opportunity should come our way. While I am glad to be back in Canada where everything is familiar, I am going to really miss a few things in Germany, mainly you. However it is nice to be back in a country where I speak the language.

In closing, I would like to extend an extra thank you to the board of the AWCH both past and present and especially the editor of Currents. Without you being willing to do the jobs that need to be done in running the club there would not be a club or a magazine. I know that in clubs like this you are doing the job not for the money, fame and glory because there is none. Instead you are doing the job because you love the club and want it to continue and nobody else will do the job, even if this means you are learning as you go. It is inevitable that you will not please everybody, but I hope you can take solace from the fact that most of the club appreciates you and the job you are doing.
A few weeks ago, I had the privilege to attend *Carmen* at the Hamburg Staatsoper. It was a night I had really been looking forward to, since it would also be my first time being there. I have been in the Opera Club for about a year, under the awesome tutelage of Elizabeth R.. Over this past year, I have learned so many new things about opera. Before joining the group, I knew that the art of opera was glorious to listen to, but I truly had no clue how to tackle it. While sitting under Elizabeth's teaching, the many facets of each story being told and sung have really come alive to me. So as you can see, when the Opera Club goes to an opera: WE GO PREPARED!

I drove to the Staatsoper with a group of fun and lovely ladies that are with me in the Opera Club. After looking for a parking spot, we found a good one. We then walked to the entrance of the Staatsoper and all I kept thinking to myself was how classy and elegant everything looked. You could really sense the anticipation of the performance in the air, and it hadn't even started yet! Once we found our seats, I was truly speechless! I had such a great view of the whole auditorium, stage and my favorite part of all: the orchestra! Sitting there watching the story of *Carmen* unfold was such an amazing experience. And what really stuck out to me was the way this version of *Carmen* was being told. It was definitely set in a different era and time than the original writing. I tend to like the classic version of whatever production I am attending. To me, it was still fascinating that the same story was being told, just with a "new look"!

The singing was fantastic and the way the set design automatically moved with each scene was really neat! I was sitting there appreciating all of the hard work the performers and the people behind the scenes had put into the production! And in the end, my favorite singer of the night was not Carmen. Please don't get me wrong.

After the curtain closed, we ended the night by going across the street and eating some great food, while having an unforgettable time of fun and laughs! Thank you so much Elizabeth for the time, effort and hard work you put into us as you are "prepping" us for these grand nights of opera! I am already looking forward to the new opera season ahead!

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**Opera Club’s new project has begun:**

**Mozart’s “Le nozze di Figaro”*/"The Marriage of Figaro"*

It’s Mozart time at the Opera Club, and we couldn’t be happier about it. "Figaro" is a true masterpiece, positively packed with marvelous arias and duets as well as impossibly perfect ensembles. At our monthly meetings, we cover one act at a time, including plenty of images, musical excerpts, and video clips as we get to know Mozart’s brilliant opera. Our second meeting for "Figaro" on Friday, November 28 at 10 a.m. will focus on Act II. Contact opera@awchamburg.org for more information.
What is Readers’ Theater?

Readers’ Theater is a dramatic presentation of a written work in a script form. Readers read from a “script” and reading parts are divided among the readers. No memorization, costumes, blocking, or special lighting is needed. Scripts are held by the readers and we simply read the works aloud. The focus is on reading the text with expressive voices and gestures. Hearing the scripts aloud increases comprehension and helps bring out the rhythm of the text, making it more fun for the readers and audience! The scripts we read may come from members of the group or may be newly produced plays from several non-profit theater companies in New York.

Who can participate?

Anyone! Our goal is to get together, have fun, read aloud plays and talk about them. No theater or performance background necessary, just a desire to come together and have fun. We will email PDF’s of the play (in advance of the meeting) and you can bring your Ipad, smartphone or laptop to read the script from.

Where does this happen?

Depending on interest level, we were thinking of reading a play monthly in the home of an AWC member.

When will you meet?

Schedules permitting, the second Sunday of the month from 15:00 to 18:00 pm.

Why Readers Theater?

A shared experience helps provide a new perspective on the works. It will allow us to see how others react to different topics and will help see what works and what doesn’t, especially for those works provided by the group members. It will help inspire and recharge our creative juices, but most importantly, it will be fun!

“All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players.” – William Shakespeare

Questions contact:
Laura Langford  langford@cee-fa.de
Abby Myers  myersabby@mac.com

The American Women's Club of Hamburg
Readers’ Theater Group forming in January...

English Movie Night at the SAVOY

by Tracy M.

For a year now, we have been offering the movie night at The Savoy, the English movie theater in Hamburg. Some months have had more movie go-ers than others and overall I have to say the event has become a hit. In the month or two when there hasn’t been a movie night, I have had curious emails from members asking if I had forgotten or if I were on vacation! That is a good sign that you want your movie night!

Sunday nights might not seem like the best night to go to the movies, but most of you who have attended have told me that Sunday is a night that works well for them and doesn’t interfere with their weekend plans with friends and family. So, Sunday night it will remain.

It hasn’t always been on the last Sunday of the month. Due to whatever movie is playing, I have offered the movie night on the first and second a given month. I try to be flexible and choose movies that many people would like to see.

Only once did movie night need to be cancelled. The movie was sold out before reservations could be made. Snow Piercer sold out the SAVOY in record time!

So let me reserve your seats at an upcoming English Movie Night for you. How does it work? You rsvp to the Evite sent out to members each month, I reserve your tickets and send you the reservation number in an email (make sure you check your emails by Sunday!), you go to the theater at least 30 minutes before the film begins and purchase your tickets. It is that simple.

Enjoy your movie in the SAVOY in a reclining seat with extra space for long legs, or a lounge in the first rows of the Parkett and Loge sections and a view it on a large screen with a heavy gold curtain that opens and shuts with each showing. (Beat that, Cinemaxx….). I certainly feel spoiled in this plush theater.

You can enjoy tasty snacks and drinks offered at the bar, a coat check and reduced parking costs at nearby parking garages.

The Savoy also offers gift box sets and gift certificates. Subscribe to their newsletter and get weekly updates on what films are currently showing and which films are coming soon. www.savoy-filmttheater.de. You will be glad you did.
MEXICAN NIGHT AT STITCH AND BITCH

by Karen M.

No words needed here. Yes, the 7-layer dip by Stitch and Bitcher Allison R. tasted just as delicious as it looks in the picture. The great food selection from Mexican dip, guacamole, celery sticks and yummy, not so Mexican, hummus made it difficult to finally grab a last piled up plate into the living room to actually start the stitching. Thank you so much Carol, it was a lovely evening with great people, great food, and the cutest little doggy member of the Stitch and Bitch group, Lily V. We hope to see many of you at the next SnB event. Check online for the next location.
On Thursday the ninth of October a group of connoisseurs travelled to Carol S.'s Nienstedener home for an evening of wine and cheese. Shawn, our president, picked Karen M. and me up, meaning I could drink more than one glass of wine. When we arrived at Carol's house we were struck speechless. Her classic modern house looked like an Architectural Digest photo spread. The white kitchen island was decked out with large red dahlias and assorted other red flowers. Next to the flowers were platters of cheese, crackers, grapes and various red and chilled white wines. Heaven! After helping ourselves to cheese and wine we retired to the long dining room table a few meters away. The dining room table was tastefully decorated with many small vases with more red flowers and candles. Carol had put a lot of effort into the preparation and it had paid off. We all felt at ease and could concentrate on enjoying the candlelit evening. After a while someone suggested we change seats so we could talk to a new partner. We commented that it was a shame that Regina, the New Members' Events co-ordinator wasn't there to keep us mingling. It was really nice to talk to old friends and also meet some new members. We also had the opportunity to better get to know other long standing ones. After hours of yummy cheese and wine Shawn brought me home, to my front door. Excellent service and after three glasses I shouldn't have been driving anyways. Cheers.
The American Women’s Club of Hamburg has partnered again with COCO-MAT, an all-natural sleep store in Blankenese, Hamburg, for a special promotion that supports the Heart Pillow Project. In late October, COCO-MAT hosted a Make-Your-Own-Pillow event where you could create a custom pillow with all-natural materials for only €25. These pillows regularly cost €65, and for each custom pillow purchased (by any customer, not just the AWCH), COCO-MAT will make and donate a heart pillow to the AWC, which in turn will be donated to the local Hamburg hospitals.

After a social hour including lovely homemade Greek snacks, we filled our own sleep pillows with stuffing material and special scents. 20 AWC Hamburg members and families came to take advantage of this special deal. Over 25 pillows were bought this evening. The pillow making event was offered over a two week period and the total pillows sold, which will equal the total heart pillows that can be donated, is 80! Congrats to all on a job well done.

The AWC Hamburg has been working on the From the Heart Pillow Project for several years. To date we have donated 120 pillows we have made at three different From the Heart Pillow Sewing Bees. These pillows in the shape of a heart are placed under the arm that helps relieve pressure and pain in post-operative breast cancer patients. Materials and stuffing costs can run quite high, and thus far all materials have been purchased through proceeds from the Bagel Fundraiser Sales and donated by AWCH members. COCO-MAT’s generosity will significantly increase the number of pillows the AWC Hamburg can donate this year.

Established in 1989, COCO-MAT today is a recognized leader for natural sleep products, bed linen, towels and furniture for homes and hotels. All their products are made from natural materials from renewable sources, such as coco fiber, natural rubber, wool, cotton, sea grass, horsehair, silk, linen, wood and goose down. AWC Hamburg members can visit COCO-MAT Hamburg’s facebook fan page and can „like“. Members can also take part in their competition to win free nights at hotels and more pillows! You can find them at: www.facebook.com/cocomat.de

A special thanks to Coco-Mat Blankenese store owners Kostas Oreopoulos, Katy Behrmann and Konny Dammann for their hospitality and generosity. We look forward to future cooperative work with them. Thanks also to Tracy Moede and Susan Stanley-Witt from the AWC Hamburg for helping with the event organization and communication with the Hamburg hospitals.
Thanksgiving...a time for thanks and a time for great food and friends. Thank you all for contributing to such a fun night.

Like any great party, our Thanksgiving feast ended in the kitchen...

We enjoyed Eric’s help in the kitchen a lot. He promised to be back doing the dishes at the next event...let’s see how we can tie him to that!

Sandra and Susan all excited that Eric and all our guests helped doing the dishes...THANKS TO EVERYONE!

The aftermath...:-)
Anyone for Breakfast? by Derek Benfield, Robert Rumpf directs

Shirley’s not being totally altruistic when she offers her good friend her home for Jane’s maybe tryst with a younger man. Besides, its Shirley’s aerobics night. When Mark appears Jane nervously sets her plan in motion; his choosing beer over champagne and desire to directly dine hints at his proper intentions. Instead of being in Düsseldorf, fog has driven Shirley’s Gilbert – with airhostess Helga at the wheel – home. In due course, after desperate dodging then detection – much to our delight – fabrications intensify the subterfuge. Scarcely has a relative equilibrium been established than Jane’s Roger, clutching flowers, emerges through terrace doors. Hmm. Only one person knows all the participants and where they are lodged, but not their secrets. Feeling shortchanged and making the best of it, Gilbert’s enroute to cook breakfast when he encounters the newly arrived Shirley. Whom the cleaning woman, and a scantily clad male clearing the dining room then surprises. Instead of bringing clarity, the morning begets madness that adds to comedic complications, inventive pretenses, and audiences’ entertainment. Alas, Helga never gets her afters.

The timing and delivery, verbal and physical, showcase the talented London cast’s exemplification of British farce. Stephen Chance’s Gilbert, combining cunning ineptness with well-bred complacency, darts from one precarious exchange to the next with ease, while Jan Hirst’s Shirley counters with equal measures of equanimity and shrewdness. Whereas Debbie Radcliffe’s Jane displays sufficient amounts of nervous enterprise and quiet acquiesce, while James Walmsley’s Roger is reserved, restrained, and knows precisely when to keep his mouth shut. Rounding out the excellent cast is Robert Hamilton’s somewhat loquacious, modifiable Mark, and Gabrielle Douglas’s contrarily feisty Helga. Robert Rump utilizes the full zaniness of the situation, i.e. farce, with staging that keeps us guessing who’s going to appear from what direction when. Dramatist Derek Benfield’s clever one-liners embrace each character’s predicament with skill. So, purge those winter blues, or add to your Holiday’s merriment by checking out just who’s coming for breakfast.


Snowglobes, submission by Tracy M.

Foto by Tracy M. of wonderful Christmas Ornaments at the Christmas...
This isn’t all! Sometimes special events come up after the *Currents* deadline. In this case we will use *Evites* and our e-newsletter to notify members. Check your email and our online calendar for the most up-to-date event information.

**WALK AROUND THE ALSTER FALL BREAK!**

Our weekly Walk Around the Alster will take a tiny fall and winter break and will resume its quest around the beautiful Alster again in spring. Watch out for announcements early 2015!

**ONGOING ACTIVITIES**

**HH Helpers**

This group helps new AWCH Club Members to live the good life in Hamburg! If you have recently joined our club and need some assistance, you are encouraged to contact Regina D.

She will not only give you details about the next New Members’ Event but also refer you to the HH Helper in your area and to the groups and committees that might interest you. If you have already been a club member for some time and are interested in assisting new members in your area, please let us know. We are looking for more HH Helpers – especially in the western and southern parts of Hamburg. Contact Regina at hhelpers@awchamburg.org

**Opera Club**

At the monthly meetings of the Opera Club, we are discovering opera, one masterwork at a time. We meet several times to get to know a selected opera and then attend a performance together. Beginners are particularly welcome! Meetings are held Friday mornings in Hamburg-Poppenbüttel.

Contact Elizabeth R. at opera@awchamburg.org

**Film Reviewers’ Group**

The film group attends free press showings of films slated to open in Hamburg and writes reviews for *Currents* and other media. Communication is via email or fax. For more information, contact Becky T. at filmgroup@awchamburg.org or rebecca.tan@t-online.de

**English Movie Night at the Savoy**

New AWCH Event!

Starting in 2014 there will be a new monthly event at the Savoy movie theater in St. Georg: English Movie Night at the Savoy.

Here is how it works:

- Respond to the Evite and tickets will be reserved for you at the theater. You arrive no later than 30 minutes before the movie begins to pick up and pay for your tickets at the ticket desk. Easy!
- If you can’t make the showing, your tickets will be deleted from the system at no charge to you.
- If you are not there 30 minutes prior to the showing, your reservation is cancelled and seat reassigned, so don’t be late!

**Stitch’n’Bitch**

Tuesday, December 9 any time after 7pm. Otherwise known as Portable Hobby Night. Come join us for lots of laughs and snacks, a glass of wine, and some crafting.

Where: watch the newsletter for location information-

**German Practice Circle “Kaffeeklausch”**

Our Member Sylvia T. organizes a regular meeting to chat and meet in German in downtown Hamburg, for all those working and practicing their new language. Feel welcome to join. Contact Sylvia for further information on upcoming dates and locations.
Please check with activity leaders to confirm meeting times and places. More details on all meetings can be found in the membership section and on our AWC website: http://www.awchamburg.org

**December**

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**AWC Cancellation Policy:**

All events for which participants must reserve in advance and pay at the door must be paid for whether or not the person attends the event. However, if the cancellation is called in before the sign-up deadline, there will be no charge. If a person cancels after the sign-up deadline, she need not pay if a confirmed substitute can be found.

**DECEMBER**

**BIRTHDAY GIRLS**

Charlotte M. 6
Kalee S. 7
Jennifer C. 7
Monika S.-Y. 10
Nina T. 10
Imke R. 22
Elaine S. 27
Venita K. 31
Susanne G. 31

**JANUARY**

**BIRTHDAY GIRLS**

Susan S.-W. 2
Abby M. 5
Anne D. 14
WangDi S 22
Diana M. 23
Carol B. 23
Royal Christmas Tables
by Pat F.

The Royal Copenhagen Christmas Tables exhibition takes place every year at its flagship store in Copenhagen. Well-known artists are invited to create their own Christmas table settings and have luxurious license to take their pick of any Royal Copenhagen porcelain from all past collections. This tradition started in 1963 and will take place this year from November 13th to December 31st. Admission is free which makes it even harder to resist buying a couple of Royal Copenhagen Christmas souvenirs to take back home.

The table setting in this photo was created by Danish artist Cathrine Rabin Davidsen for the 2013 exhibition. More traditional than the other artists’ tables, one evoked the opulence and decadence of Ancient Rome, this one appealed to my sense of just what a perfect Royal Christmas table should be.

Making a list, checking it twice….
by Anna S.

The time before Christmas is getting more and more turbulent. We sprint, stumble, come to an abrupt stop and race again, looking for last minute presents, latest possible reservations, making a split leap between kids’ music performances, school plays, and obligations for friends and relatives. The most embarrassing thing in this hustle is to start forgetting things or missing appointments. Our overwhelmed brain strikes against this never-ending marathon.

Last November I was driving my car, flipping restlessly through radio stations, when I heard simple words: "he’s making a list, and checking it twice; gonna find out who’s naughty and nice… “ The experienced Santa has invented a recipe to prevent fuzzy memories and a holiday season mess. It is so easy! Just make a list, a schedule, a plan, keep it in your purse, post it on your fridge or save it in your mobile, check it twice and learn to rely on it. And in the meantime stop to see the snowflakes dance through the wind. Breathe in the hazy dreams like frosty air. Enjoy the lights and candles shimmer in the darkness. Pause to touch a hand of your loved one and feel connected. Give yourself time to remember precious moments the leaving year presented you with. Share these moments with your friends and family. Allow these treasured interludes take the lead in your holiday season.

When I came home, I opened my laptop and made a list… And it worked… This year I am doing it again.
When in 1904 Oskar Barnack invented the first Leica photography changed forever. The exhibit Eyes wide open: 100 Years of Leica Photography presents some 500 photographs, supplemented by documentary material, including journals, magazines, books, advertisements, brochures, camera prototypes and films, telling the history of small-format photography from its beginnings to the present day.

The introduction of the Leica (a combination of »Leitz« and »Camera«) which was delayed until 1925 due to the war, was not merely the invention of a new camera; the small, reliable and always-ready Leica, equipped with a high-performance lens marked a paradigm shift in photography. Not only did the small Leica offer amateur photographers and newcomers greater access to photography; the Leica, which could be easily carried in a coat pocket, also became a ubiquitous part of everyday life. The comparatively affordable small-format camera stimulated photographic experimentation and opened up new perspectives. In general, visual strategies for representing the world became more innovative, bold and dynamic. The exhibit also shows what new subjects the camera addressed with its wide range of interchangeable lenses, and how these subjects were seen in a new light: a new way of perceiving the world through the Leica viewfinder.

Rich Pickings. Displaying Wealth at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MKG) is devoted to the display of wealth and the self-presentation practices of the super-rich in photography and the mass media. On view are 150 objects - artworks, journalistic photography, film documentaries and video works by Tina Barney, Gabriel Mascaro, Martin Parr, Julika Rudelius, Juergen Teller, Paolo Woods and others.

The inciting exhibit is thematically arranged in various sections, like Rich and Poor, High Society, Born Rich and Global Wealth. The photo essay La Chinafricaine by Paolo Woods for example exposes Chinese investors in Nigeria staging themselves as aloof colonial masters. The Venues of Wealth are shown by Swiss photographer Giacomo Bianchetti who placed his large format camera in front of the entrance areas to market-listed companies in Switzerland, recording the conversations when confronted by security personnel. For his surprising documentary High-rise Latin American filmmaker Gabriel Mascaro interviewed nine wealthy Brazilians in their penthouses about their lives at the top. As the gap between rich and poor widens, wealth shows itself in increasingly excessive forms. With the self-publishing possibilities provided by the Internet, everyone can be the reporter of his own lifestyle and the blogger, or should we say paparazzo in his own interest. Excerpts from the reality TV show Rich Kids of Beverly Hills and Rich Kids of Instagram a photo-sharing portal are demonstrating ostentatious profundity: golden mobile phones, a golden Kalashnikov, or a receipt for a 100,000 Euro bottle of champagne.

As curator Esther Ruelfs summarizes: “Previously, photographers were mainly interested in depicting poverty. However, wealth is telling us just as much about a society as poverty”.

Rich Kids of Instagram. #alliwantformybdayisasbigbootyhoe by stevensachs. Blögeintrag vom 10.06.2014. © stevensachs

Jeff Mermelstein: Sidewalk, 1995 © Jeff Mermelstein
Heaven is for Real (Den Himmel gibt’s echt)

* * * ½
USA2014
Starts November 6, 2014
Directed by: Randall Wallace
Writing credits: Randall Wallace, Chris Parker
Cast: Greg Kinnear, Kelly Reilly, Thomas Haden Church
Length: 99 minutes

Four year old Colton Burpo (Connor Corum) has a near-death experience. Miraculously he lives. Colton’s doctors, relieved at the success of the emergency surgery, are amazed at Colton’s remarkable recovery. Miraculous!

Colton isn’t aware of the severity of his case and cares only to talk about one thing: his recent trip to heaven. He wants everyone to know. His claim is that heaven is for real. Colton first describes what was happening to his family while he was in heaven, “I looked down to see the doctors operating; mom is calling people to pray in the waiting room, and dad is in another room yelling at God not to let me die.”

Colton uses his experience to probe questions that make his immediate family, friends and the small town community folk uncomfortable about people he never knew. Eyebrows rise when he describes the appearance of Jesus, their talks and Jesus’ horse while He shows Colton around heaven. Colton exclaims that heaven is for real.

Colton candidly talks about several details of his journey. Concerned, his parents are skeptical and pass his tale off to a heavy dose of medications in his body from intense surgery. Once Colton reveals further information of things he was not privy to knowing due to his age, people begin to take notice. His childlike innocence gives him boldness to speak matter-of-factly with the frankness to ask difficult questions. To anyone who will listen.

Pastor Todd Burpo (Greg Kinnear), Colton’s father tries to make sense of his son’s extraordinary journey. He wants to believe him but the concern to not believe comes in different forms. Colton’s experience confronts Todd with his own belief about heaven, ass it does with his mother, Sonja Burpo (Kelly Reilly), when he mentions that he sees his sister in heaven. A sister he did not know. Todd and Sonja grapple with the importance of practicing what they have spent a lifetime preaching--a faith in God and their fellow man.

Based on the #1 New York Times best-selling book of the same name written by Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent, filmmaker Randall Wallace and screenwriter Christopher Parker bring to the cinema silver screen Heaven is for Real. Colton’s incredible story is a remarkable visual. Wallace and Parker collaborate to present the facts, the controversy and the dilemma between the reality of a child’s personal journey and an adult world lacking simplicity and imagination. Actor Connor Corum’s performance of childlike innocence endears the film audience of Colton’s compelling experience that Heaven is for Real! (Karen Pecota)
The Bachelor Weekend (The Stag) *
Ireland 2013
Starts November 6
Directed by: John Butler
Writing credits: John Butler, Peter McDonald
Cast: Andrew Scott, Hugh O’Conor, Peter McDonald, Brian Gleeson, Andrew Bennett, Michael Legge, Amy Huberman
Length: 95 minutes

Ruth and Fionnan are planning their wedding. Ruth convinces Davin, the best man, to organize a bachelor party for Fionnan with his friends Simon, as well as big Kevin and small Kevin (the obligatory gay couple). None of the five guys are really very thrilled about the prospect, and there is even less enthusiasm, when Ruth’s brother, Richard aka The Machine, shows up. He is obnoxious, insulting, full of himself and belittling. So, it’s off they go into the woods, where they proceed to lose the car keys, the compass, their phones, their camping tent, and eventually all of their clothes. They aren’t much more fun totally naked, but forward they go, preening as “real” men, even when walking single file like addled penguins. Additional hindrances are a fire, an electric fence, a bull, and general stupidity.

The film begins with the sound track of “You are the Sunshine in my Life,” while it’s raining and continues from one sorry cliché to the next—nothing against clichés if they are even a bit original (an oxymoron perhaps), but here it’s just not amusing. Perhaps the Irish need sadness underneath the so-called fun. In the end there is the obligatory wedding and wedding speeches about how “we all held together and are one” or something similar, much like the final wedding speech in Love, Rosie. Perhaps all bachelor parties are no fun at heart; I’ve seen bachelor parties in downtown Hamburg—called Junggesellenabschiede, where the perspective groom is dressed up like Alice in Wonderland and his buddies are either on the verge of alcohol poisoning or hoping to disappear for home as soon as possible. Director John Butler said that “the film is about very modern, Irish men, who normally wouldn’t participate in a bachelor party.” Peter McDonald wrote the screenplay together with Butler and gave himself the leading role of The Machine. This is perhaps something for adolescent boys, if they aren’t doing something more interesting like playing some 1000-hour computer game. Everyone else might be better off with Sex on the Beach 2 (The Inbetweeners 2) or Think like a Man Too, two sequels which were more successful at showing men at their worst. (Becky Tan)

Ein Schotte Macht noch keinen Sommer (What We Did on Our Holiday) **1/2
UK 2014
Starts November 20, 2014
Directed by: Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin
Writing credits: Andy Hamilton, Guy Jenkin
Cast: Rosamund Pike, David Tennant, Billy Connolly, Emilia Jones, Bobby Smalldridge, Harriet Turnbull
Length: 95 minutes

Divorcing parents Abi (Rosamund Pike) and Doug (David Tennant) pack up their lively brood Lottie (9), Mickey (6) and Jess (4) to drive up to the family estate in Scotland for Grandpa’s birthday. In order not to upset the gravely ill man, the children have been instructed to pretend everything is A-OK at the home front. A concept they don’t quite grasp, and though they try hard, inadvertently truths get revealed. Other relatives also try to make sure their ‘skeletons stay in the closet’, and while everybody is super busy planning and stressing over the party details, the kids (Emilia Jones, Bobby Smalldridge, Harriet Turnbull) and grandpa (Billy Connolly) enjoy some real quality time at the beach. The trio creates havoc when they follow their grandfather’s last wish to the ‘T’.

As the original (school essay-) title suggests, the focus is on the kids. They often have been encouraged to improvise—with hilarious results. But for a long stretch the film also seems to be geared to children only. The script—pleasant but not terribly exiting—is more suitable for a sitcom. In light of Hamilton and Jenkin being the director/writer team behind the successful British TV series “Outnumbered” this might not surprise. They do know how to write funny dialogues though and the cast knew just how to deliver them. (Carola)
AT THE MOVIES

Bevor der Winter kommt (Before the Winter Chill; Avant l’hiver;) (no stars)
France | Luxembourg 2013
Starts November 13, 2014
Directed by: Philippe Claudel
Writing credits: Philippe Claudel
Cast: Daniel Auteuil, Kristin Scott Thomas, Leïla Bekhti, Richard Berry
Length: 103 minutes

The title “Before the Winter Chill” is as mystifying as the film itself. 103 minutes of wondering where this is going.

Paul (Daniel Auteuil) and Lucie (Kristin Scott Thomas) have been married for 30 years. He is a very busy neurosurgeon close to retirement. Lucie tends to their chic bungalow and garden and babysits the granddaughter. They don’t spend much time with each other but appear reasonably content with the situation. One day, out of the blue they start getting mysterious rose-bouquets sent to the house and to Paul’s office. Paul suspects a pushy part-time waitress (Leïla Bekhti) he met at a bar—but she denies it. The couple feels harassed and worried. Their relationship suffers.

Whether this film is meant to be about a psychological crisis before retirement or if it is meant to be a thriller, either way the story is unconvincing and confusing (script and direction by Philippe Claudel). We can side with Lucie and understand her sense of betrayal. But Paul’s actions remain incomprehensible, his thoughts hidden. The significance of some supporting roles and their stories—family, friends and a visiting group of garden aficionados—is unclear, and even in the end nothing really falls into place. A frustrating and befuddling experience to sit through! (Carola)

And so it goes (Das grenzt an Liebe) **
USA 2014
Starts November 13, 2014
Directed by: Rob Reiner
Writing Credits: Mark Andrus
Cast: Michael Douglas, Diane Keaton, Sterling Jerins
Length: 93 minutes

Oren Little (Michael Douglas) is an obnoxious realtor who does not have a kind word or action for anyone. Oren’s driving goal is to make a final house sale, pack up, retire to a secluded location and be left alone. His neighbour, Leah (Diane Keaton), could not be more different. She is a sunny, welcoming person who seeks out human contact and enjoys the life she leads. Their paths are soon forced together when Oren’s estranged son leaves his 9-year-old granddaughter (Sterling Jerins) in his care. He is both uninterested and unwilling to take responsibility for his previously unknown granddaughter and Leah is soon enlisted to support her ornery neighbour. These two opposites, widow/widower, sixty something’s soon find that life is presenting them with a second chance.

Diane Keaton making her way through the awkward, second-time-around moments are worth a look, we can after all, relate to the awful flirting, first kiss and beyond moments this film depicts. However, the second-chance-at-life theme, flows a little too freely through this film, making it a little too predictable. A sweet, mildly amusing film you shall not be disappointed with Diane Keaton, if you are a fan. (Christine Riney)

Nightcrawler *****
USA 2013
Starts November 13
Directed by: Dan Gilroy
Writing credits: Dan Gilroy
Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal, Rene Russo, Riz Ahmed
Length: 117 minutes

This suspenseful thriller dives into the sordid (under-) world of freelance nighttime-crime journalists in L.A. From accidents to murder—their prey is everything that’s bloody and violent. Their customers are the local TV news-programs that compete in serving their viewers the most gruesome events and most graphic pictures of the night at breakfast.

Jake Gyllenhaal gives a terrific performance as Lou Bloom, a petty thief who stumbles onto his new career when he witnesses those ‘nightcrawlers’ at work, at an
accident scene. He is intelligent and a quick learner but, without any formal education, he can’t land a job. *This* is his calling. It’s scary to watch his ruthlessness in outdoing his competition, creepy his sociopathic streak that increasingly unsettles his assistant (Riz Ahmed) and even the scrupulous news director (Rene Russo) who came to depend on his footage.

The film is fast paced and features exiting car chases and breathtaking shots of L.A. at night (camera Robert Elswit). (Carola).

**Höhere Gewalt – Turist (Force Majeure)**  **

Swedish 2014

Starts November 20, 2014

Directed by: Ruben Östlund

Writing credits: Ruben Östlund

Cast: Johannes Bah Kuhnke, Lisa Loven Kongsli, Clara Wettergren, Vincent Wettergren, Kristofer Hivju, Fanni Metelius

Length: 118 minutes

Settled in a luxurious French Alps hotel, far from their native Sweden, the family’s dream-come-true ski holiday is off to a good start. But when an out-of-control avalanche scatters terrified diners on the outdoor terrace, the dream turns into a nightmare. Whereas mama grabs the two siblings and dives under the table, papa grabs his cell phone and runs for his life. Not talking about the event magnifies the subsequent feelings of betrayal. When Ebba and Thomas invite friends for dinner, it becomes apparent that Thomas’ memory of the almost-disaster is very different from all others present. As vacation days dwindle and his patriarch position shifts, so do the periphery of each members’ position.

Ruben Östlund wrote, directed, and edited (with Jacob Secher Schulsinger) this befuddled attempt at a tragicomedy. The film’s biggest problem is the sloppy script, with its lack of continuity and credibility. Too often, events occur that seem incongruent to the story; only later do we become privy to contextual information. The editing is muddled, and listening to two children berating and bossing their parents is not funny – more a bleak commentary on some peoples’ contemporary idea of humor. Fredrik Wenzel’s camerawork is noteworthy—especially the night Alpine shots, as is Ola Flottum’s music. Granted, the film has a few truly comedic moments, but Sweden obviously does not want the Oscar® if this is their entry. (Marinell Haegelin)

**Ruhet in Frieden – A Walk Among The Tombstones**

(A Walk Among The Tombstones)  **½**  

USA 2014

Starts November 13, 2014

Directed by: Scott Frank

Writing credits: Scott Frank screenplay, Lawrence Block novel

Cast: Liam Neeson, Boyd Holbrook, David Harbour, Adam David Thompson, Sebastian Roche, Olafur Darri Olafsson, Laura Birn, Natia Dune, Leon Addison Brown

Length: 114 minutes

New York City 1991: off duty, relaxing in a cops hangout Matt’s (Neeson) interrupted, follows the shooters outside, and… 1999: retired and an unlicensed private investigator, Matt’s introduced to a drug trafficker (Dan Stevens) who wants retribution for his abducted, then cruelly murdered wife. Matt grudgingly agrees to help. Looking through newspaper archives in the library, with technical help from TJ (Astro) – a bright homeless black kid he meets – Matt spots a pattern. Clues from sadistic crimes with the same modus operandi lead Matt into the city’s derelict areas. Detecting one common thread, he takes occasional liberties. Then adolescent Lucia (Danielle Rose Russell) is snatched; Matt takes over, hoping this time might be different.

With his tight screenplay, Scott Frank’s direction is equally unflinching. He delves into the most aberrant of personalities—convincingly conveyed by the cast—typifying characters in Lawrence Block’s mysteries. Justifiably our trepidation accelerates; awareness of what Matt’s up against is achieved through taut camerawork (Mihai Malaimare Jr.) and arresting music (Carlos Rafael Rivera). Jill Savitt’s restrained editing is incremental, realistic. Conversely, Neeson’s equanimity as Block’s ever-evolving Matthew Scudder adds an element of unexpected stillness. For some the contrasts could be too great, but… if you hanker after a volatile whodunit, take this walk through the tombstones. (Marinell Haegelin)
**The Drop ****

USA 2014
Starts December 4, 2014

Directed by: Michaël R. Roskam
Writing credits: Dennis Lehane
Cast: Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace, James Gandolfini
Length: 106 minutes

Bob Sagninowski (Tom Hardy) works for his cousin Marv (James Gandolfini) in a small neighborhood bar. Small-time gangsters “drop off” ill-gotten money which Bob collects and hides under the counter for pick up. He is a loner with no social life except daily attendance at the Catholic Church for Mass, although he never takes Communion. Part of his sadness originates from the death of friend Richie who died ten years ago. He rescues a pit bull puppy named Rocco out of a garbage can. He asks his neighbor Nadia (Noomi Rapace) for advice on caring for a dog and, for the first time, Bob gets a grip on life and begins a personal relationship. Life takes an upward turn until Eric, Nadia’s ex-boyfriend and original owner of the dog, appears. Then the bar is robbed and the police become interested.

Belgian Michaël R. Roskam directs this sympathetic film, based on the short story *Animal Rescue* by Dennis Lehane, who is credited for the screen play. Lehane said, when asked about his idea for the original story, “I think that loneliness kills more people than cancer and I couldn’t get this thought out of my head.” Roskom found his perfect site in Brooklyn, New York: an old Catholic church in a neighborhood bustling with people. He said that these neighborhoods are disappearing in the U.S and spent weeks visiting various neighborhoods which are seldom seen in movies. He said he had never been in so many bars in his life – going from one to the next, listening to people talk about the local gangsters and their secret lives. The actors, from Great Britain, Sweden, Belgium, etc., learned the typical Brooklyn accent. Tom Hardy carries the film though his own personal charisma. Director Roskam said, “The role of Bob was the most difficult to cast since Bob fills the emotional center of the film although he, himself, shows very few emotions.” This was Gandolfini’s last film before his untimely death in 2013. (Becky Tan)

**Magic in the Moonlight ****

USA 2014
Starts December 4, 2014

Directed by: Woody Allen
Writing credits: Woody Allen
Cast: Colin Firth, Emma Stone, Marcia Gay Harden
Length: 98 minutes

This romantic comedy set in the 1920s follows the famous magician Stanley Crawford (Colin Firth) as he attempts to debunk a charming spiritualist, Sophie Baker (Emma Stone) who is seemingly exploiting a wealthy socialite family, the Catledges.

Stanley arrives at the Catledge family estate to set about the unmasking of the fraud with the conviction of his skepticism and armed with his caustic personality. But Sophie’s predictions and enchanting way soon present Stanley with more than he expected. Against his better judgement he is soon doubting his stance and bowing to the desire to believe that there is “something more” to life itself. The biggest trick in this story is a charming sleight of hand that brings a smile to your lips. (Christine Riney)

**Wo ich wohne: Ein Film für Ilse Aichinger von Christine Nagel **** 1/2

Austria 2014
Starts: December 4

Directed by: Christine Nagel
Writing credits: Christine Nagel
Cast: Ilse Aichinger, Helga Michie, Verena Lercher, David Monteiro, Moritz Uhl
Length: 81 minutes

One of the most important writers of postwar German literature, the Austrian poet and short story writer Ilse Aichinger has continued to be overlooked in the English-speaking world. Born in 1921, she lived through the Second World War in Vienna with her Jewish mother, who was a doctor. According to the Nuremberg Laws, the mother was protected from deportation as long as she lived in the same household with her minor daughter, a “half-Aryan.” Ilse’s father, a teacher, divorced her mother so as not to endanger his career. Her twin sister Helga was sent to England on a Kindertransport in
1939— and the nonagenarians remain close to this day. Many of their relatives, including Aichinger’s beloved grandmother, were deported (before Ilse’s eyes) in 1942 and died in concentration camps.

Ilse’s stories combine haunting imagery with Kafkaesque sensations of strangeness and persecution; her poetry is concise and lyrical. Filmmaker Christine Nagel does an exquisite job of transferring Ilse’s lyricism to the screen, by weaving together elements of the author’s short story Wo ich wohne (“Where I Live“) with off-screen conversations, on-screen interviews with Helga, paintings, and Super 8 footage shot by Ilse in the 60s. Forming the surreal backbone of the film is a peculiar narrative: a young woman’s apartment seems to be sinking floor by floor, unnoticed by everyone but the protagonist herself. She finally ends up in the basement. Wo ich wohne is a beautiful visual portrayal of the inner life of Ilse Aichinger, who has said her greatest wish is not to speak of herself, but to disappear. Thus the poet is never shown on-screen, but remains approachable only through reflections of her life and work. It’s our privilege to share part of her consciousness. (Brenda Benthien)

Timbuktu **1/2**
France/Mauritania
Starts December 11, 2014

Directed by Abderrahmane Sissako
Writing credits: Abderrahmane Sissako, Kessen Tall
Cast: Ibrahim Ahmed, Toulou Kiki, Abel Jafri
Length: 97 minutes

Timbuktu. The word conjures exotic, mysterious sensations, and is a metaphor in English dictionaries. The film however, falls short in delivering a cohesive storyline with its numerous vignettes about locals coping with a jihad coup. Juxtaposing urbanites with rural sand-dune dwellers, the oppression is relative. Islamic radicals, scarcely speaking the indigenous language, control with guns and censor. Now forbidden: music, smoking, playing soccer, dancing, etcetera. Women must wear gloves and nylons; men’s pants must be a certain length. Episodes include: repercussions from friends sharing a musical evening; an independent woman’s audacity; a devoted, goat herding family’s dilemma; a surly fisherman. Patrols regulate constantly, whether by foot, motor scooter, or truck. Ad hoc courts upholding the new jihadi laws hand out random, frequently gruesome verdicts.

Men, Women & Children (#Zeitgeist) ****
USA 2014
Starts December 11

Directed by Jason Reitman
Writing credits: Jason Reitman, Erin Cressida Wilson
Cast: Kaitlyn Dever, Rosemarie DeWitt, Ansel Elgort, Adam Sander, Jennifer Garner, Judy Greer, Emma Thompson, Olivia Crocicchia
Length: 119 minutes

A man-made object flies through outer space and approaches Saturn, which looks exactly like it was lifted from extra footage left over from the film Interstellar. From here we look back at the universe and see a teeny spot. It’s the famous “pale blue spot,” a photo of Earth taken from the Voyager 1 in 1990. This inspired astronomer Carl Sagan to write his book Pale Blue Spot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space. Contrary to a first impression, this is not a science fiction film, but rather a round-about path to get us back to the real life on Earth, specifically in Austin, Texas, USA.

Here we meet married couple, Don and Helen, looking for relationships with other people. Donna runs a website to further her daughter Hannah’s acting career. Tim quits the high school football team, to the consternation of his father Kent. Both have been abandoned by the mother, who fled to California into the arms of another man. Brandy is literally imprisoned in the clutches of her mother Patricia who controls her every computer and phone message. Allison is naïve and dying to death.
Life truly is on earth, but it is also impacted by “outer space” in the form of the computer. The film mirrors how we live with ever-present computers: much less personal contact, even for something as intimate as sex versus actually “having” sex – not to mention just plain conversation. Today communication and friendships occur via on-line dating, games, texting. The school psychologist asks, “Do you have any real-life friends?” You learn to read abbreviations such as DTF or bj. (There is a whole list of internet abbreviations in case you are looking for a master’s degree topic!) We learn that a person is made up of a billion molecules and “cosmos-ly nothing matters.”

For two hours the camera follows these people in their daily lives at home and in high school. It goes slowly, but never seems boring. There is much talk, often in the crude language so popular today. The parents want the best for their children, while the children attempt to squeeze away from the inexpert, human mistakes of the parents. And overall are the misunderstandings which might even have fatal results. I definitely recommend Men, Women & Children, but go with friends, not family, because you might not be able to look each other in the eyes afterwards – although that might be an oxymoron, since you will be “looking” at them through your internet access anyway, even if you are travelling home together. (Becky Tan)

The Loft *
USA 2014
Starts December 11, 2014
Directed by: Erik Van Looy
Writing credits: Bart De Pauw, Wesley Strick
Cast: Karl Urban, James Marsden, Wentworth Miller, Eric Stonestreet, Matthias Schoenaerts, Isabel Lucas, Rachael Taylor
Length: 103 minutes

A woman is found brutally murdered in a posh penthouse-loft. The grizzly scene has been discovered by one of the five married men that jointly maintain this pied-à-terre for their affairs and one-night stands. Circumstances indicate that one of them has to be the murderer though all claim to not even know the victim. They start to suspect each other. Fear pits one man against the other until no trust is left.

“Trust” is an interesting subject. What is it based on? What can it withstand? Therefore it may not surprise that this is already the second re-make of the original 2008 Belgium film Loft. (The first remake was a 2010 Dutch version by Antoinette Beumer. Both, the original and this 2014 US film, were directed by Van Looy; De Pauw wrote the screenplay for all three productions). What does surprise though is that this opportunity was squandered. The result is less than thrilling.

The story is told from different perspectives in often confusing flashbacks. Exchanges between the men repeatedly sound rehearsed. Instead of increasing suspense, the many false leads become just too many false leads. The five men (and men in general) are stereotyped as non-stop cheating, hollow womanizers. Hard to believe they find any time (leave alone brains) for their high paying jobs that enable them to pay for the little ‘loft extravaganza’. These guys never were more than accomplices in hiding their extra marital affairs, not friends as suggested, and it doesn’t surprise one bit how quickly they mistrust each other under the circumstances. (Carola)

Winterschlaf (Winter Sleep) ****
Turkey/ France/ Germany 2014
Starts December 11, 2014
Directed by: Nuri Bilge Ceylan
Writing Credits: Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Ebru Ceylan
Cast: Haluk Bilginer, Melisa Sözen, Demet Akbag, Serhat Mustafa Kilic, Nejat Isler, Ayberk Pekcan, Tamer Levent, Nadir Aribacak
Length: 196 minutes

Set in the hills of Anatolia in east Turkey, this film revolves around the figure of Aydin (Haluk Bilginer), a handsome, elderly man and former actor, who runs a hotel catering to foreign visitors. You see him at the beginning of the movie in a long black coat, striding between beehive-like huts built into the cliffs that look like something out of the middle ages. Then you are led into one of the huts and are amazed to see how wealthy and civilized it is furnished with warm rugs, antique furniture, original paintings on the wall, and a shiny Apple computer on the desk. This is just one of the incongruities of this part of Turkey, which is open to modern communications and travellers but still heavily embedded in pre-modern
living conditions. And Aydin is a kind of prism, through whom all these contradictions pass and are deflected. The first impression you have of him is that of an intelligent, sensitive and gentle man. But then, as in real life, you discover his ambiguities.

One obvious contradiction involves gender. Aydin is an educated, wealthy and elderly male, which give him superior rank and shape his role as a tolerant but basically detached patriarch. He supports two women, his beautiful young wife, Nihal (Melisa Sözen), and his recently divorced sister Necla (Demet Akbag). Both women lead quite comfortable lives, which seem to be more important to them than greater independence, and both resent Aydin’s power. Another conflict is between poverty and wealth. Aydin derives his income from rental property he inherited from his father, and although he writes moralistic columns in the local newspaper, he is very unsentimental when it comes to collecting rent. He keeps his distance from the problem by letting his “henchman” Hidayet (Aberk Pekcan) do the dirty work. Then there is the clash between youth and mobility on the one hand and old age and a sedentary rural life on the other. Young visitors come and go, and Aydin likes talking to them, since he once had a more active life in Istanbul. But although he attempts at one point to return to Istanbul, he finds that he is unable to leave his wife and home in Anatolia.

This movie is a long one (3 hours), but the vast, exotic scenery and the highly sophisticated dialogs it employs to convey its message are well worth experiencing. (Pat Nevers)
a tight budget, adds authenticity. The cast is stellar: Jones and Swank embodies complicated, disparate personalities, as do Grace Gummer, Miranda Otto, and Sonja Richter’s starkly unnerving depiction of effects from having a breakdown. Rodrigo Prieto’s dramatic cinematography and Marco Beltrami’s music boost, whereas Roberto Silvi’s editing is disorienting, especially and unfortunately the flashbacks introducing the three wives.

Important to appreciating The Homesman is historical information. Eager to own land but ignorant of the physical conditions many were naively lured to the plains. Prairie, steppe and grassland covers much of the Great Plains that stretches south from Canada to Mexico lying between west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains; the area now provides substantial U.S. wind power. Perhaps one has to live on the plains to fully understand the loneliness that accompanies remoteness and how the wind can whittle away at the soul. I have albeit over a century later, and it is just as depicted in this woebegone film. (Marinell Haegelin)

1001 Grams***
Norway 2014
Starts: December 18

Directed by: Bent Hamer
Writing credits: Bent Hamer
Cast: Ane Dahl Torp, Stein Winge, Laurent Stocker, Hildegunn Riise, Per Christian Ellefsen
Length: 88 minutes

1001 Grams is a gentle comedy about a weights and measures scientist who finds herself recalibrating her own life. Most of us probably spend little time weighing the importance of international standards of scientific measurement. There exists, however, a cadre of scientists who keep their national prototype kilograms in secure vaults, to be withdrawn on occasion and taken to Paris, where the world’s international standards organization compares them to its prototype. Among their rarified ranks is Marie, a serious-minded metrologist at the Norwegian Institute of Weights and Measures. Newly separated and virtually friendless, Marie spends time with her dad, who, despite directing the Institute, enjoys the chaos of country living and is considerably more relaxed than his uptight daughter.

Marie travels the country in her ridiculously tiny energy-efficient car, checking the precision of postal scales and gas pumps. But when her father becomes ill, it falls upon her to journey – carefully – with the precious kilogram prototype to a conference in Paris. After delays at the French border, where quizzical customs agents fail to understand the sober Scandinavian’s attachment to what looks like a piece of metal inside a bell jar, she settles in for a meeting of like minds. But then Marie meets a former scientist who has cast off his job, preferring instead to tend the lovely gardens surrounding the prestigious International Bureau of Weights and Measures. Which leads us to wonder, along with Marie: if something extra is added to our lives, so that they’re suddenly thrown off balance, is that necessarily a bad thing?

Though it’s obvious where the film is going, it’s a pleasant enough journey getting there. Beautifully-lit Parisian gardens provide a contrast to the clinical institutional interiors in Norway. Actor Ane Dahl Torp is convincing as Marie, though her performance remains muted after she’s come out of her chrysalis and become a butterfly. Norway’s nomination for the 2015 foreign language Oscar, „1001 Grams“ also opened the Nordic Film Days in Lübeck. (Brenda Benthien)
**Clouds of Sils Maria** ****1/2  
France | Switzerland | Germany 2014  
Starts December 18, 2014  
Directed by: Olivier Assayas  
Writing credits: Olivier Assayas (screenplay)  
Cast: Juliette Binoche, Kristen Stewart, Chloë Grace Moretz  
Length: 124 minutes  

The Maloja Snake does not bite. But it sneaks up on you and brings bad weather with it. In *Clouds of Sils Maria*, this weather phenomenon in the Engadin Valley stands for the change of generations and the progression of age. Maria Enders (Binoche) has once come to fame acting as a young seductress of an older woman in the play *Maloja Snake* by Wilhelm Melchior. Decades later, she is on her way to receive an award on behalf of him with her personal assistant Valentine (Stewart). But Melchior dies while they are on their way. The loss of her mentor, a gruesome divorce, and the challenge to change her laudation into an obituary have already shaken up Maria’s emotional stability. But her ultimate challenge is yet to come. Lars Eidinger (Diesterweg), a famous theater director, wants her to play in a remake of *Maloja Snake*. This time, however, she would not be the seductress, but the older woman who is driven to suicide.  

“What would I have to do for you to admire me?” says Maria to Valentine at one point in the movie. She has realized that she is not 18 anymore and feels defeated by age. She cannot grasp what actually happened between the time were she was young and beautiful and had life’s opportunities ahead of her and the now, where wisdom and confidence are supposed to compensate the loss of youth. From this point on, the movie progresses like an intimate play with an emotional triangle, which consists of her Assistant and the new cast for the seductress, Jo-Ann (Moretz). This great multi-layered movie picks up on many themes, such as the influence of celebrity-hype and media on people’s lives. But above all, it is a film about fulfillment in the course of one’s life.  

(Katia Trost)

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**The Theory of Everything** (Die Entdeckung der Unendlichkeit) **** ½  
UK 2014  
Starts December 25, 2014  
Directed by: James Marsh  
Writing credits: Anthony McCarten, Jane Hawking  
Cast: Eddie Redmayne, Felicity Jones, Harry Lloyd, Charlie Cox, Maxine Peake, David Thewlis, Emily Watson  
Length: 123 minutes  


Marsh’s formidable, astutely exhilarating look into the lives of two unordinary peoples’ impact on one another and the world is favored with remarkable, dynamic performances from Eddie Redmayne (Stephen) and Felicity Jones (Jane). Redmayne is viscerally, extraordinarily convincing, just as Jones’ portrayal of delicate mettle is spot-on. David Thewlis as Hawking’s doctoral supervisor, Harry Lloyd as Hawking’s close friend, and Charlie Cox as their friend Jonathan merit recognition. Benoît Delhomme’s spectacular cinematography penetrates the cosmos and our consciences, Jinx Godfrey edits powerfully, and Jóhann Jóhannsson’s music whisks us through their three-decade marriage. This biopic manages to unify Hawking’s scientific findings—about our universe’s beginning, albeit in layman language—and how hope, steeped in love and trust, can bear out astonishing results. “While there is life, there is hope.” (Marinell Haegelin)
**FROM THE HEART BAGEL SALE**

At the end of January the AWCH will again be selling American Bagels at 10€ per dozen. Flavors subject to change, but count on Sesame, Natural, Whole Wheat, Blueberry, Cinnamon Raisin, Sunflower Seed and Everything.

Mixed dozens will also be available. You place your order and we arrange a pick up time and place in central Hamburg. Proceeds go towards buying material used to make heart pillows for breast cancer survivors, the AWCH "From the Heart" activity.

**"FROM THE HEART" BREAST CANCER PILLOW ACTIVITY**

In February there will be the annual Open House Sewing Bee at Tracy M's house. We will be cutting, sewing, ironing and stuffing heart-shaped pillows that will be donated to breast cancer patients at the Mammazentrum in Eidelstedt. Come and go as time allows. This is a fun event so come and join us even if you don't own a sewing machine or know how to thread a needle!

**SAVE THE DATE !!!**

**FOR OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**AT DESY**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 2014**

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**David Opperman**  
**Certified Public Accountant**

Specializing in U.S. income tax preparation for Americans abroad  
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To Tracy, Jess, Karen and Carol for hosting Stitch and Bitch.

To the Consulat General and especially our honorary member Consul General Nancy Corbett for having us at the Consulat for our annual Celebration of Membership

To Nancy T. for playing the piano so beautifully at the Celebration of Membership and at the Region 5 conference.

To Marinell who organized the extremely successful two-day writers’ workshop for the film group and to the members of the AWC who participated.

To Tracy for organizing the great american style turkeys for our Thanksgiving Dinner.

To the entire conference comitee for organizing a wonderful and fun event for the whole Region 5.

To the proofreaders Pat, Carol and Thelma.

To everyone who made this year at the AWCH so fabulous and wonderful.

To the outgoing board for all their hard work and time they put into the club.

To Karen, for those many lonely hours working on the layout for Currents.

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