AWCH (b.1956)
"Fruits of our Labor"
Photography/Mixed Media
Courtesy of the C. Ureents collection
William Blake reminded me to be grateful for all of the work involved to harvest the fruits of our labors. Certainly, this year with the American Women’s Club of Hamburg, we have much to be grateful for. The efforts of our members have been amazing and we are lucky to have such a productive group. Currents Magazine, the Film Reviewer Group, the Opera Club, and Stitch ‘n Bitch are all flourishing and it is rewarding to see. We have even brought back the Book Club and in November, we will be restarting the Moms and Tots group. Every month, these “Clubs within the Club” help build a community for our members.

AWCH also has ad hoc activities and as we head into the Fall, what we lose in sunshine, we will make up for with joyous celebrations. We start with the Celebration of Membership on November 3rd which may well be our last chance to see the interior of the beautiful “Little White House”. We hope that many of you will come and see this historic building. We are planning a lovely event and we will hear a few of the stories from its illustrious history. The traditional Thanksgiving Feast on November 21st at DESY, complete with turkey, dressing and members’ favorite sides, will fill our bellies with the tastes of home. No holiday season would be complete without the Christmas Bash and White Elephant Gift Exchange, which will be held on December 9th in the beautiful Literaturhaus. We are also scheduling the Annual Cookie Exchange at Nancy Corbett’s residence.

The fall also brings the FAWCO regional conference in Düsseldorf from November 6th to the 8th. Those of us that already have the FAWCO Fever will certainly enjoy this empowering event and those of you who have never attended a FAWCO event will surely become infected. This year’s theme is ‘Bridges to the International Woman’. Topics covered include ‘Not in My Backyard’ focusing on the dangers of Human Trafficking and Expat Women Financing, focusing on the legal and financial issues that relate to expat women.

One of the most rewarding things that AWCH does is philanthropy, raising funds for the FAWCO Target project and donating excess funds annually to a local charity. At our last open board meeting, we were able to pitch in and achieve our target of more than €1,000 for Free the Girls, FAWCO’s Target Project. We also had two inspiring and informative speakers Annette von Schröder and Pat Mix at two of our Open Board Meetings. These generous and industrious women spoke with us on the refugee situation and on the activities of Amnesty for Women. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, we will be having a clothing drive for the refugees with our turkey, especially useful are men’s small and medium clothing, as well as children’s wear.

Finally, I would like to remind you that we will be holding elections at the January Annual General Meeting. If you are interested in serving the Club more, we would love to hear from you. I can tell you from experience that it is truly a rewarding experience and next year we need even more help with the 60th Anniversary Celebration to plan, so please let us know if you would like to serve.

Best Wishes,

Laura Langford
President, AWCH
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Dear Readers and Contributors,
Fruits of our Labor: this issue’s theme is about our family and friends, it is about our work and hobbies, it is about the triumph and endeavor in acquiring new traditions, crafts, trades and languages. So many of you made this issue your own, contributing personal stories of stages in life: challenges met and precious time enjoyed, of connecting hobby to work, raising children and planning the last sentimentally sweet summer before they go on their own. A bountiful harvest has come together of beautiful things we have gathered, experienced, explored and invented in a big project called life. Thank you! And best wishes for many more small and large triumphs,

Your Currents Team
20% less Fruit for our Labor
Guest Editorial by Joana Moths

A good friend of mine is the CEO of a company. He told me that if the company has a successful product launch, the men involved in the project will come knocking on his door and ask for a raise. "The women never do," he told me. Why is that actually?

Women in the USA earn on average 20% less than men. Known as the gender pay gap, the gender wage gap, male–female income difference, gender gap in earnings, gender earnings gap, or gender income difference, it is an issue all over the world.

The reasons for the pay gap are manifold. As my friend pointed out, women are not aggressive enough in negotiating their pay. However, some factors which create the pay gap are structural. Traditional "women's work" such as child care, nursing, and teaching are poorly paid. There is also the fact that women are more likely to take breaks from paid work in order to care for other family members. This break in earnings is often compounded by the fact that employers simply pay women less for the same work than they do men.

Can we use a graph? Numbers are based on an article in The New York Times.

Source:
career.uoregon.edu/blog/students/2013/02/womens-roundtable-tackle-gender-pay-gap

For more on this issue, including professional coaching and networking opportunities: bpw-international.org (Business and Professional Women); In Hamburg bpw-hh.de

Universal Children's Day: November 20
Advocate for ratification of the CRC!

"The one thing all children have in common is their rights. Every child has the right to survive and thrive, to be educated, to be free from violence and abuse, to participate and to be heard."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The United Nation’s Universal Children’s Day was established in 1954 and is celebrated on November 20th each year to promote international togetherness, awareness among children worldwide, and improving children's welfare. The date 20 November, marks the day on which the United Nations Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. The CRC was the first legally binding international instrument which set standards for the civic, economic, social and political rights of children under the age of 18. Although CRC is the most widely signed of all UN treaties, the US is the only member state of the UN 195 member states that is not a party to it.

Every year, FAWCO asks you to use Universal Children’s Day as an occasion to advocate for the US ratification of the CRC. The US signed this treaty in 1995 but has never ratified it. Let us appeal to President Obama and to our US senators and express our concern that the conspicuous absence of the United States as a party to the CRC undermines our nation's international leadership role on behalf of children and families.

To learn more about advocating for US ratification of the CRC, sign an e-petition to President Obama, and find out how to get involved, please take the time to check out childrightscampaign.org online.
Dear Member,

Every member of AWCH is a member of the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO).

It takes time to understand what FAWCO is all about. FAWCO is a NGO with consultative status; it is a member of the UN agency, UN Women, for gender equality and the empowerment of women; its current Target Program focuses on Human Right for Women and the Target Project, Free the Girls, helps former victims of sex trafficking in Africa and Latin America; it is the oldest non-partisan organization representing private sector Americans abroad; its philanthropic arm, The FAWCO Foundation, has donated more than $1 million in education awards and development grants since 1967; and there is much more.

A good way to start learning about FAWCO is to sign up for the quarterly President's newsletter Connections, monthly News in Brief, the semi-annual Forum newsletter, the Task Force Bulletins, and the bulletins for themes such as tax issues, voting, and banking. The newsletter and bulletins keep you up-to-date and help make the website content more transparent. Every member of AWCH can register on the website FAWCO.org and sign up for e-delivery of the publications.

Take a look at the FAWCO Red Book for the history of FAWCO from 1931 through 2011. It is an interesting and informative book.

Another good way to get to know FAWCO is to attend the regional meetings. The Region 5 (Germany and Austria) Meeting took place in Dusseldorf at the beginning of November. The meeting report is forthcoming. For a report of the 2014 Region 5 Meeting in Hamburg see FAWCO on AWCH website.

FAWCO's Regional Meetings are a great way for board members and club members to get to know FAWCO and network with sister clubs in the region. Regional meetings – announcements on the FAWCO website – are open to every FAWCO member (also outside the region).

And another good way is to attend the Biennial Conference or Interim Meeting, which take place every year in March in a different city. The Interim Meeting 2016 will take place near Frankfurt am Main at the beginning of March (see announcement in this issue). Representatives from FAWCO member clubs attend to participate in the work of the FAWCO Council and hear updates about FAWCO’s UN/NGO, US Issues, and Global Task Force activities.

FAWCO on the AWCH website awchamburg.org is in the process of being updated. Please follow the FAWCO News blog with up-to-date postings.

AWCH would like to organize an Expat Workshop for you early 2016. Let us know what topics would interest you and we will try to arrange for the right speakers. Do you want to know more about how to become US tax compliant, how to get started with FBAR, your rights regarding Social Security and Medicare, citizenship issues, rights of an expat woman married to a German, how to arrange for burial in the US, how to have a voice as one of 8 million expat Americans, …Send your topics and comments to Carol at fawcorep@awchamburg.org.

Looking forward to hearing from you and wishing you all the best for the 2015 Holiday Season!

Carol S.
Kid’s Stuff
In addition to advocating for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, AWCH would like to commemorate Universal Children’s Day, November 20 with a drive for Kids’ Stuff that will benefit children at the Children and Family Center in Hamburg-Barmbek.
We would like to ask each family to donate one gently-used item—a toy, a book, or a game or a piece of warm winter clothing. Please bring your donation to our Thanksgiving Celebration at DESY on Saturday, November 21.
Items needed include warm winter clothing, games, toys and books. And, of course, scooters, tricycles, bobby cars, and bicycles would make the children very happy.
Please deliver donations to Carol’s home by 3:00 PM, November 21, the day of the AWCH Thanksgiving Celebration at DESY. Small items may be turned at the DESY. Contact fawcorep@awchamburg.org

Giving by Shopping
Did you know that you can give to FAWCO and AWCH just by shopping?
iGive
An easy way to give to The FAWCO Foundation is by using iGive. Whenever you shop online at over 1,500 retailers a donation is made to The Foundation. This is an especially handy tool for members who want to give a gift to family or friends in the US. There is NO cost to you!
To make online shopping work for The FAWCO Foundation register with www.iGive.com.
It’s easy: Go to the iGive site, then follow the directions to register and start shopping! Sign up The FAWCO Foundation as your cause!! To date $24,884.40 has been donated to The FAWCO Foundation just by using iGive for shopping!

The Amazon logo on the AWC Hamburg homepage
Amazon.de gives AWCH money – for doing nothing! Well, almost nothing. Just click on Amazon sponsor button at the bottom of the AWC Hamburg homepage, www.awchamburg.org. This will take you to Amazon at a AWCH link. Just login and place your order as usual. Bookmark this page for Amazon and every time you click you will be linked to AWCH, so a percentage of your purchase is transferred to our club. In 2013 we received about €250 from Amazon.

igive.com/welcome/lp16/cr62a.cfm
fawcofoundation.org/donations/how-can-i-donate.html
fawcofoundation.org/our-programs/education-awards.html

Backing Women Boutique
All proceeds from your purchase from the Backing Woman Boutique on The FAWCO Foundation website will support the FAWCO Target Project recipient "Free the Girls" that focuses on Human Rights for Women.
The "Backing Women" logo was inspired from artwork donated by the renowned French artist Christian de Lauhadére, whose collection of works "The Necks" depict the nape of the neck as a powerful symbol of strength and femininity. The jewelry, textiles, bags that are offered make perfect gifts.

Soup for Syria
Would you like a fun way to assist refugees in Syria? Why not start your holiday shopping by ordering Soup for Syria: Recipes to Celebrate our Shared Humanity. This cookbook was put together by former AWC Lebanon member Barbara Abdeni Massad. Celebrity chefs contributed their favorite recipes and all profits from the sale of the cookbook will be donated to help food fund relief efforts for refugees. This book can be ordered on Amazon.de with free postage!

Donating

Silent Auction
The Silent Auction at our Annual General Meeting in January has been our biggest fundraiser in recent years. Many thanks to all those who have donated so generously in the past! Let’s try to make it a big success again this year. Please take time to think about what you could donate. Handcrafted items, household goods, and free services from members are always perfect! But maybe you also have a favorite business or restaurant that would be willing to make a donation, a vacation home that you could offer for a weekend, frequent flier miles that could be transferred… I am happy to inform that Coco-Mat in Blankenese has already generously donated two vouchers, each for a weekend in one of their beautiful partner hotels.

Matching Donations
The FAWCO Foundation will match private donations to Free the Girls „Free the Girls“ needs help to get the donated bras from the central collection point in Indiana to the women in the three countries – Mozambique, Uganda and El Salvador – with active programs. It costs $20 to ship a carton of 200 bras to one of these countries. The FAWCO Foundation has proudly announced that they have donated $3000 to match individual donations dollar for dollar until December 31, 2015 to help get the donated bras to the women who need them.

All FAWCO articles by Carol S.
FAWCO hopes to promote international understanding and good will by giving annual awards for study, in the US or abroad, at high school, undergraduate and graduate levels. The Foundation Awards Program is open to all FAWCO club and FAUSA (FAWCO Alumnae USA) members and their children (grandchildren are eligible for the Dual Cultural Award), regardless of nationality and regardless of whether or not the affiliated Club has made a contribution to The Foundation’s programs.

The 2016 awards:

**AWG IT AWARD FOR YOUNG WOMEN $4,000**
This award is for the study of information technology including, the study of computer and telecommunication systems, software and application development, information management in the mobile computing space.

**VIOLA WHEELER ARTS AWARD $4,000**
This award is for undergraduate or graduate study in the history, theory and/or practice of the performing arts, visual arts, film and media arts, architecture and graphic arts.

**SCIENCES AWARD $4,000**
Sponsored in part by AWC Zurich and AWC Genoa, in memory of Frieda Bacigalupo Natali. This award is for undergraduate or graduate study of scientific subjects (e.g., biology, chemistry), mathematics, medicine, engineering, environmental studies, computer science, economics and business administration.

**HUMANITIES AWARD $4,000**
Sponsored in part by AAWE, in memory of Gertrude de Gallaix. This award is for undergraduate or graduate study in the field of education, law, social studies, history and languages.

**DUAL CULTURAL AWARD $4,000**
Sponsored in part by Donna Erismann and AWC Bern, in memory of Suzanne Erismann. This award may be used to attend a semester of American high school or an academic or structured educational summer program in the United States.

**FAWCO and FAUSA Member Awards**
The following two awards recognize the diverse lives of our members, their achievements and their never-ending quest for knowledge and self-improvement. Applicants may study in any country.

**AWC BASEL AWARD FOR UNIVERSITY DEGREE STUDY PROGRAMS $5,000**
Sponsored by Shirley Kearney. This award is for continuing or resuming studies in an undergraduate or graduate level university degree program.

**FAUSA SKILLS ENHANCEMENT AWARD $4,000**
This award is for acquiring new skills or enhancing already existing ones.

**WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY AWARD $4,000**
This award is for the study of information technology, including the study of computer and telecommunications systems, software and application development, information management, and mobile computing.

Application must be submitted in full by Friday, January 8, 2016. If you have any questions or would like some help, please contact Tracy M. or Carol S. at fawcorep@awchamburg.org.

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**FAWCO Interim Meeting 2016**

FAWCO will be holding its first-ever Interim Meeting over 48 hours March 11–13, 2016 near Frankfurt, Germany. The Interim Meeting will focus on FAWCO business and member club development. On the agenda are FAWCO’s Annual General Meeting as well as presentations on FAWCO’s core activities and workshops designed to help club officers and members to be as effective as possible. FAWCO will celebrate its 85th anniversary during the Interim Meeting, and The FAWCO Foundation will also hold its annual fundraising evening.

The meeting fee is 270€ for registration before December 15, 2015. After December 15 the registration fee will be full price, 300€. For those who can only participate on one of the conference days, the rate will be 100€. If you would like to join us at one of our dinners, or invite a guest, the rate will be 50€.

Full delegate rate includes:
- Welcome dinner Friday night “Celebrating 85 Years of FAWCO”
- The FAWCO Foundation dinner Saturday night “Wind Beneath My Wings”
- Two coffee breaks and lunch on Saturday and Sunday
- All conference materials

Day rate includes:
- Two coffee breaks and lunch on either Saturday or Sunday
- All conference materials

Dinner rate includes:
- Welcome dinner Friday night “Celebrating 85 Years of FAWCO” or
- The FAWCO Foundation dinner Saturday night “Wind Beneath My Wings”

Log in to the FAWCO.org website for dates and registration information for the meeting.

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Labors Halved, Fruits Doubled, and Counting
by Anna Sizorina and Laura Otto

The year 2015 had more in store for us than we realized at first. At the AGM all of the club members were invited to join the new Currents Team. We both arrived at the first meeting, joined the small group sitting at a window table of the Karstadt cafeteria, and chimed in with what we thought we could contribute and share. It had not been our intention to take the reins, but after a while, we realized they had been handed to us. Taking the responsibility for the magazine was not a light decision. Anna had a flair for organization but no previous experience with printed media; Laura had some experience in writing, illustration and design but none in layout or journalism. Sometimes we were excited, sometimes we were discouraged, sometimes we had to invent trivial things. We managed, though, in one way or another, and this is the first issue in which we have had to expand the number of pages! On the way we have always felt encouragement and support of Becky, who also ensures that the printed Currents, still loved by many members, is being published. The Currents Team has grown up; much to our delight, we have been joined by Ericka and Jennifer. We have a group of ingenious writers and enthusiastic proof readers. In September we invited the Currents group and all interested to our first Currents party. We heard a lot of stories, spent the evening laughing, listening and talking, and felt at the end of the night that we were carrying on a tradition even more important than we had realized. But we also felt, more than ever, than we weren’t carrying it alone. Thank you to all of you for making this project a reality.

Reaping the Harvest
by Jennifer Kearns-Willerich

When I stepped off the plane with my family in 2013, having given up our London life for one in Hamburg, I didn’t know what to expect. I thought I’d have to learn German, of course; find a new job; find somewhere to live… But none of that concerned me: all I cared about was whether or not my children would – could – be happy. Would they find friends? Would they cope in kindergarten not having any real working knowledge of German? Would they hate me forever for taking them away from everything that was familiar and safe and easy and understandable? As it turns out, I should have focused more on myself because, as they acclimated and picked up the language as if it were nothing, I stumbled and tripped and fell, feeling more and more like I’d walked into a dark room with sunglasses on.

Then, somehow – maybe it was this summer, maybe it was last Christmas – things started to fall into place. We found a place to live that suited us perfectly: light and airy and, most importantly, with neighbours who lifted us up, elevated us, and embraced us like family. I went to school, and now my German is, well, good enough. I found a job, which is overwhelming (in a good way). And, on a whim, I joined the American Women’s Club of Hamburg, which, if truth be told, was one of the best decisions I made (note: this is not a paid endorsement).

I feel like, for the first time, maybe we won’t have to run back to London, because, now, Hamburg feels like home. And, really, finding a home, in a place that for a long time felt anything but, is the ripest, juiciest fruit you can imagine. I am Eve, with no guilt whatsoever as I take each new bite…

Learning German
by Christine Riney

Learning a foreign language is so much easier when you’re young. Or so I am told. I only started to learn German in my mature years and well, for me, not so easy. When I think of the various attempts I have made to learn the language I wonder how it’s possible that it has not sunk into my brain as much as it has sunk into my wallet.

The reason for my everlasting attempt to learn German is a certain German who speaks English fluently. So why do I continue this ruse? This project, that has lasted years and I have an inkling will continue until the end of days, is a labor of love.

I keep learning and hoping that one day this project, that has stubbornly refused to bear anything more than a few leaves, will bear fruit. It is the type of hope that we have that it won’t rain in Hamburg this week – fruitless.

What keeps me going in my sporadic attempts is that learning a language can stave off Alzheimer’s. Or so I am told.
A Musical Fruition
by Elizabeth Reifke

Fruits of our labor is certainly an idea that speaks to me whenever the Opera Club attends a performance together. These outings are the culmination of much time and effort on my part as group leader, and so far they have been worth every bit of it.

Many of you already know that I started Opera Club in 2011 because I wanted to make opera more accessible to more people. At the same time, I hoped to build up a group of women with whom I could share my favorite interest while spending beautiful hours with glorious music. This is indeed what we have achieved together at Opera Club.

I started out with just a few AWC members who were willing to give Rossini’s “The Barber of Seville” a try. At this point, I just had my iPod speaker for a music source and some printed sheets of aria texts. As time went on, though, and we covered more and more operas, I found many new and more technically exciting ways to present the material. Nowadays, I often provide a full libretto for perusal while I juggle a much fancier Bluetooth speaker, an iPad hooked to the TV with images and video clips, and either one or two DVD players. I have a great time gathering the best music and the most fascinating information—especially anecdotes regarding the “birth” of the operas—and find it very stimulating to put it all together into an exciting audio/visual package for each of our meetings.

So has this been effective? Our results have been a real mix. We now have a few converts who always can’t wait to hear more. Other members enjoy what they hear at Opera Club and the opera house, but that’s just enough for them. And a couple have decided that opera just isn’t their thing. In this busy world with its vast array of entertainment options, I think that this is a logical response pattern.

In any event, when we next visit the Staatsoper Hamburg together during this holiday season, Opera Club attendees will not have to figure out the plot of Strauss’ “Die Fledermaus” as the tangled story unfolds, nor will they have to think, “Hmm, was that another waltz?” Everyone will already know who’s on stage and what to listen for particularly, and so we can all fully immerse ourselves in the live experience.

This will be my personal “harvest”, and I hope it is one that will continue to inspire the others in the Opera Club as it always inspires me.
Fruits of our Labor  
American Women’s Club of Hamburg

Bountiful Delight  
by Karen Pecota

The German countryside is full of visuals of harvest time, isn’t it? Oh, how I miss these sights. At this time of year the farmer delights in his harvest. He is ready to reap the benefits of tending his field, the long hours spent caring for his crops. One never knows what “fruits” will be reaped from their labor. Similar to the farmer, we are always hopeful for fruit from our labor.

A few months ago, I was approached by a representative from the Sundance Institute asking if I would be interested in applying for an online screenwriting course, a pilot program that would run for 4 weeks. They wanted to test the waters with a mix of experienced and inexperienced writers. If selected, the course would be free for me. I applied! A few weeks prior to the course’s starting date, I received a congratulatory notice. I had been chosen to participate in the first-ever Sundance Institute-sponsored online screenwriting class. I was thrilled to be chosen. Then I panicked knowing my lack of talent in this area. Doubts filled my mind. I wasn't sure I could handle the assignments nor did I know what was going to be required of me. I wanted to learn a different writing skill and prove I was a student worthy of being chosen for the course. The course designers must have felt that I had the skills to finish the course. Debatable would be how well.

The first day of class all the participants received a basic agenda for the course. We were given details of the weekly course work and the deadline for the first assignments. Each week was met with reading material on a certain aspect of screenwriting, excerpts from films and tutorial videos along with a response time, as well as a Q & A to the filmmakers of the week. Each week's topic built upon the previous one. The estimated weekly course work time was two to four hours, but it always took me longer. We started by taking one idea from a personal photo, a short story, a poem, music, etc., to identify a storyline for a screenplay. Every week we developed our story line using tips of the trade.

Our final project was to write a five-page screenplay from a scene in our story. Gulp! Thankfully I did not know about this until the fourth week assignment rolled out. I might have backed out that first week. I knew nothing about screenplays and was lost with the simple terminology. I asked a lot of "basic" questions of our course leaders and fellow students. I was amazed how patient and accepting they were of my concerns.

The second week we had to form small groups of four to six people). You could either be a leader of a group or a member. Forming this online was a bit daunting. I was invited to join a group led by a fourteen-year-old. She had already written three screenplays. The rest of our group consisted of an actor, a high school teacher in media and film, and a filmmaker. I had no experience. Connecting with these classmates was unforgettable and rewarding. The fruit of my labor from the screenwriting course can only be measured over time. As of now, the fruit I received from my labor was a bounty of shear delight.

In my last update with Becky Tan, editor-in-chief of the film group, regarding the project, I wrote, “I just finished my screenwriting course. The last assignment was due at midnight! I had to write a script for a scene from my chosen story. I wrote about a backpacking trip Steve (my husband) and two of his buddies took that turned out to be a very dangerous adventure... The course has helped me realize that because I visualize so much of what I write, I just might be good at screenwriting.”

Fresh Press  
by Kim Kleczka

This adventure started when I was growing up as third culture child in Africa, where I gained an appreciation for wildlife, foreign languages, diverse cultures, exotic foods, nature and all that comes with living in or travelling to more than 60 countries around the globe.

I have always had my hand in the entertainment business, but raising a family as an expat in five different countries made it difficult to find time to start writing and publishing books. Over the years, I often thought about how I would share
all of my wonderful life experiences with other children around the world and perhaps inspire them to venture beyond their natural boundaries one day.

Several years ago we became empty nesters, and it was finally time to focus on my dream of entertaining children while educating them (or edutainment) and showing them what a cool world we live in, through stories, songs, and shows or videos. In January 2015, my husband and I formed an edutainment company called Koolamundo. Koola stands for cool and mundo means world (in Spanish), hence our tagline, “It’s a Kool World”.

I did not just want to write and publish books, as I felt that we could offer so much more with audio, music and video, so we created a concept that we call “The Whole Package”. I have always been able to write poetry and make things rhyme, so I decided to start with children’s rhyming stories for ages two to six. It takes me about two quiet and focused days to write one 40-page rhyming story. What I did not realize was how detailed and difficult the illustration process could be. Finding an illustrator who was able to bring my words to life required lots of research, trial and error. I hired and fired my first illustrator in the first six weeks, and then found an amazingly talented young lady in India, who has already completed the first two books and is working on my third.

Once the writing and illustrating are complete, all the back office work begins preparing the book for sale in paperback and digital formats. I also write a song for each book, which is composed and produced as a soundtrack. Then I create an audio book in our sound studio. And finally, we create a book trailer and read-along video in our green screen studios, which is how I recently had the pleasure of flying on a magic carpet!

Finally, since our main character, Alook, travels through the world on various adventures, we have translated the first book into ten languages. The audio, video and translation work is done simultaneously during the illustration process, which takes about three months per book.

I have made two new lovely friends this year as a part of this venture. Carol Mathews, who lives in Canada, composes our songs and puts them to music. She is such a talented woman and a joy to work with. Apoorva Dingar works her magic from India with beautiful illustrations, and her creativity and use of color is amazing!

We released our first book, Klara the Cow Who Knows How To Bow, in paperback on May 17, 2015. I was scared to death that no one would buy my book, but we have worked hard on the marketing and promotion side (I could write another book about what this entails) and it is paying off. I have received pictures from parents reading Klara the Cow to their children, which gives me great joy! We took a big risk on translating and publishing the book into ten languages, but what has already made this all worthwhile is waking up in the morning and seeing that someone (or entity like a library, school, bookshop) just purchased 10 Klara the Cow books in Chinese while we were sleeping! It’s a kool world!

koolamundo.com/books.html.

Labor of Love
by Birgit Schrumpf

Making my hobby into my profession has been a very successful harvesting of the “fruits of my labor”. Living in Cape Town, South Africa, I had joined the ceramic class at the Ruth Prowse Art Centre, where I learned all about clay: how to throw on the wheel, various hand-building methods as well as chemical components of glazes. But then my husband and I separated and I had to make a decision how to earn my money and still be able to look after my two girls, then nine and ten years old. My first idea was taking an office job, my second one to work as a tourist guide. But both options would have meant being out of the house for the whole day. Therefore, I opted for making my hobby into my profession. I moved into a 1920s terrace house near the German school so the girls could walk alone to school. This saved me time by not having to be the mom-taxi any longer.

Two ground floor rooms of the cottage were altered and became my ceramic studio. They held two electric wheels, a large working table, shelves along the wall and the kiln for firing the clay objects. I put up an advert at the school offering children’s pottery lessons. This was the start of my teaching career.
During the next Easter season, a kindergarten class visited my studio. These tiny tots had great fun in building little Easter bunnies. Showing them that a big Easter egg could be thrown on the wheel earned me great admiration, and we all had fun.

Adult lessons in the evening followed soon. This meant that I could work in my own studio and was home when the girls came back from school. It gave me a chance to supervise homework and keep an eye on their daily activities. After bedtime I could continue working or teaching adult classes. It worked out perfectly.

I participated in various ceramic exhibitions as well as selling my work on our special local markets during Christmas and Easter time. After some more study and improving the scope of my work, I was regularly invited to the annual national ceramic exhibitions of the Potters Association of South Africa which alternates between Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

Soon I was also actively involved in organizing exhibitions. I was offered to give weekend workshops of my specialized hand-building technique which I had learned from Elsbeth Woody, a visiting American ceramist, during her stay in the Cape. I served on the board of the Cape Potters Association, and when the editor of our “Cape Potters Magazin” was looking for an assistant, I put up my hand. After he moved to Durban I became the editor and continued on my own. This also entailed writing about current exhibitions, visiting artists from abroad and interviews. This all was a challenge to start off with and had not always been an easy task but in the end it was a good decision with a fruitful outcome. It did not make me rich but allowed for precious quality time with my daughters. Now they are grown-ups and have their own families but assure me that they are still grateful for the time we had together and for my always being there for them.

Fruits of My Winter and Spring Labor
by Tracy Moede

I guess I could write about my garden or about my first attempt to make a quilt, but really the fruits of my labor that have meant the most to me this year was our vacation in the American Southwest this past summer. I usually take charge in planning our summer family vacations, but this was to become something extra special because it could technically be our last with all four of us. Rebecca will be getting her Abitur next July and will start university and who knows if we will ever have time off at the same time to go on vacation as a family for a long while, so it was to be a bang-up vacation.

We flew in to Las Vegas and picked up our camper and headed out towards Hoover Dam and locations east. We drove a long 120-mile section of Route 66 and only saw four
other cars the entire time. I don’t think I was the only wondering if there was cell phone reception in that desolate place and hoping that our camper wouldn’t get a flat tire. We visited most of the typical tourist spots, adding our own flair and trying to do things a bit differently than what the hordes of other visitors were doing. We walked from our campground in the Grand Canyon after dark past the visitor’s center towards the Canyon’s rim. In complete darkness at Mather Point in the Grand Canyon we lay on our backs and gazed up at the Milky Way, shining brightly and seemingly only an arm’s reach away. From there we drove to The Petrified Forest and The Painted Desert. Such beauty in the middle of the desert is absolutely breathtaking. The colors are astounding. From there we drove through the Navajo Nation to Kayenta and Monument Valley. Now, mind, I had done the research, I had seen the photos on the internet. Google Maps and I are on a first name basis, but nothing can prepare you for the majestic buttes of this area. There were moments when the four of us just stood and gaped the enormous land mass in front of us. No photos can do them justice.

Arches, Bryce and Zion were the last stops before having to return the camper. The last truly remarkable hike was „The Narrows“ at Zion National Park, where we literally walked six miles in a river in almost complete silence. We were almost all alone on this hike, and it wasn’t difficult to be in awe of the nature around us, enjoying the narrow, high-walled canyon. I spent over 60 hours and nine months planning the route, making reservation and gathering information on the places we wanted to visit. It was worth every minute, not just because of the unique landscape and scenery, but the time we spent together exploring it all.

Tüting My Own Horn
by Ericka Seifried

Back story: When my son was born in August 2009, my parents made their only journey (thus far!) across the wide Atlantic to meet their newest grandchild in early September – the time traditionally marked by the first days of first grade, new school bags and, here in Germany, Schultüten. After my mother got over the shock of seeing her youngest daughter in the role of “mom” to a newborn boy, she began to bask in the local food culture, enjoying a bowl of Flädlesuppe, a cool Hefeweizen or a Viertele of Trollinger followed by a healthy serving of Käsespätzle. But above all, my mom remained fascinated by the intricate and colorful designs cut out and pasted on those Schultüten, which to her were seemingly large candy cones with which children were prancing through the streets of Stuttgart. Living within a block of the neighborhood elementary school made for a perfect viewing platform from which to watch children and their parents proudly marching down the block carrying large loads of school supplies, educational toys and candies, all the while grinning ear to ear. To
her delight, one lad allowed us to capture his special day on film. I had to develop that photo before she returned, so she could show all of her friends back home.

But, as sweet as those little ones were, and no matter how much I enjoyed explaining my new culture to my parents - peppering my sentences with easy-to-understand Schwäbisch expressions - I looked at my own bundle of joy with a hint of dread, knowing in just 6 year’s time, it would be my turn to somehow weave bits of cardboard into a colossal masterpiece.

With each passing year, my anxiety grew (I’m only able to write about the creation of his/our Schultüte now because this labor of love is finally behind me!). How would I ever be able to pull off such a crafty feat? Me: someone who had never been good in art class or at piano (or flute or recorder) lessons, even my penmanship was less than stellar. I had friends who were handy, they could sew, knit, scrapbook or effortlessly make their own pâte brisé without a food processor. They had all been able to craft amazing Schultüten, and one even gave me specific advice: „Give yourselves at least 3 nights to get it done!“

Admiration sprinkled with envy set in. Would one of them be willing to take on commission to make one for me, and ship it to Hamburg? Probably not! Relatively new to Hamburg, I set out to find a local shop where I could order a custom-made Schultüte with his name gloriously spelled out in organic gingham, a precisely cut out knight or soccer player, and a billowing bow on top. Deciding to go this route was easy for me, whereas convincing my husband that 70+ was worth it was another story altogether!

When we decided to splurge on the more expensive, ergonomically-fitted Schulranzen and matching accessories, it was clear that his Schultüte would have to be a thrifty, homemade project. We convinced ourselves that it would be a great bonding experience for us as a couple: something we could work on at night like Christmas elves with wine and great conversation to spur the creative mood. A project we’d complete together as husband and wife, papa and mommy. But we all know who really spearheads such traditions, so it was actually up to me as Frau to get everything organized. After many mishaps that I won’t bore with you here, I thought of a design that I could be proud of, one that sounded feasible, yet individual, one that he just might like too. The motif would feature a real American school bus and a lot of other amazing features yet to be thought of or materialized. And with a yellow school bus as the centerpiece of the theme, all the other elements would magically fall into place. Hadn’t I seen some kind of classroom toy set somewhere? Couldn’t I affix them somehow to that cone? Wouldn’t a desk and chair and a plastic kid with a backpack look cool dangling off the side? Right? Wrong! It felt like making this thing was a major milestone in my career as mother somehow. I was scared I’d fail, I was scared to try. I was stuck in a creative rut with just five days until the first day of school!

Thankfully once I cut the first piece of card stock, everything actually did fall into place. My husband had turned my idea into an elaborate eyecatcher (we were both astonished and proud at this first big step). That left me time to figure out how to do the rest. A winding paved road with yellow lines, a replica of school building facade, passengers for each school bus window -- including a juvenile-version of Spiderman, traffic lights, a 3-D stop sign, a patchwork cityscape, a few trees and a mere five night’s work later the Schultüte was finished! We were quite pleased with ourselves. A finished product that was done well before time. Well, isn’t that the expectation here in Germany? Schultüten are handmade, right?

All jokes aside, we had actually had fun completing this first of many-to-come school projects. But would he even like it?

Just before 7:00 am Felix woke bright-eyed, bushy-tailed and ready to dive into his gifts. He wanted to finally see the Schultüte that „Mommy and Papa made“ . All he said was „I didn’t know you could draw a school bus, Mommy.“ Felix’s rather uneventful first day of school was spent ushering him to school, to lunch, and back home again. Worrying about things falling off of it was futile: our son and his classmates gripped and crinkled up
Fruits of Kindness
by Jenny Mather

When we were young and newly married, my husband’s company was taken over by an American one. Soon after the American bigwig who was given the task of ironing out the wrinkles in the takeover arrived in Britain, he and his wife invited the British staff to a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Turkey is standard fare for British Christmas dinners, but none of us had eaten pumpkin pie before and everybody was looking forward to tasting it. The turkey arrived accompanied with standard British vegetables of carrots, cauliflower and roast potatoes and we all ate it happily, not having any knowledge of the sweet potatoes, green-bean casserole or cranberry jelly that are served as standard in the States. After the turkey came the pumpkin pie. A triangle of brown tart was placed in front of each eager diner. “I thought it would be green,” said my neighbour. “I thought it would be orange,” I said. We all picked up our spoons and forks and attacked the tart. It tasted of nothing, nothing at all, but we all dutifully ate the pastry and the blob of brown goo on the top. After the meal, Mr. and Mrs. Bigwig visited each table and chatted with us all. We thanked them for the delicious meal and said how much we had been looking forward to trying pumpkin pie. Mrs. Bigwig blushed and told us that the restaurant staff hadn’t quite followed her instructions about making the pie. It didn’t matter. We all appreciated the generous gesture that they had made.

A couple of years later we were living in Connecticut and were invited to share Thanksgiving dinner with our neighbours. What a difference there was between the two meals. We had seen pumpkins growing and our children had delighed in picking some and taking them home to carve into jack-o’-lanterns. Before then, the only pumpkins we had seen were in books or movies about Cinderella and the coach she took to the ball. Our kind neighbours introduced us to a truly American Thanksgiving dinner and we tasted a traditional pumpkin pie for the first time.

During our years in the States, we shared many Thanksgiving meals with generous neighbours and friends. In south Texas, the turkey was stuffed with tamales; in North Carolina, it came with Vidalia onions and sweet-potato pie; and, in Connecticut, it was stuffed with oysters. Different areas of the country offered variations on the same theme and all were scrumptious. We continued the tradition when we moved to Hamburg and invited our neighbours to share a Thanksgiving meal in our home. We moved the meal to the Friday evening so that nobody would have to worry about going to work the next day. Buying a turkey that was big enough for 14 people was surprisingly easy, and I was amazed to find some (hideously expensive) sweet potatoes and a packet of cranberries in Kaufhof. I later discovered that sweet potatoes are always available in Turkish markets in St. Georg. I found pecan nuts at a Christmas market and – joy of joys – a can of Libby’s pumpkin-pie mix in Karstadt (though, 15 years later, I have yet to find a frozen pastry case in Germany).

Wherever we have been for this most important event in the American calendar, we have always felt special when we’ve been included in the celebration of Thanksgiving, and have appreciated sharing in the fruits of American kindness.
Pumpkin: Well-Seasoned

Before moving to Germany, I had lived in London, and during the last five or ten years in particular, there was a real focus on seasonal cooking. Many of the big-name British chefs really got on their soapboxes about why it was so important to enjoy fruits and vegetables that hadn't flown more air miles than the average person does in their lifetime.

It turns out that what these TV chefs wanted was for the British to be more like the Germans. This country not only supports seasonality, it downright demands it. Ears of fresh corn at Easter? You must be joking! Cherries at Christmas?! You're killing me! You'll eat your Kohl and you'll like it because the farm in the next state grew it, thank you very much.

I couldn't agree more with this seasonal-eating ethos. And yet moving here has, at times, tested the limits of my enthusiasm. I'm a huge fan of asparagus (although I still opt for the lithe green stalks, as neither the potatoes nor the béchamel that inevitably accompany the white variety float my boat), but by the time Spargelzeit has come to an end in July, I can't look at the stuff.

Conversely, when the summer months come to an end and my local supermarket refuses to stock halloumi – that firm, squeaky cheese that holds its own on the BBQ – I see red. Dear store manager, please take note: one CAN put halloumi in the oven. It is NOT seasonal produce! Likewise, forget about finding wooden skewers (because, clearly, only a Neanderthal would make any kind of kebab in winter). And dare I put a strawberry in my daughter's school Brotdose at this time of the year, I may be excommunicated from die Mütter.

Jokes aside, I do get an enormous amount of joy out of seeing what's in season just by wandering around my weekly market. And, if you haven't already figured it out, October is definitely Kürbis month. I love anything squash related, truly, but I think the restaurants here tend to err on the side of caution and stick to soups. But why have soup, I ask, when there is curry?

This recipe, Nigella Lawson's Thai Yellow Pumpkin and Seafood Curry, from her book Nigella Bites, ticks all the right boxes for me: easy to make, aromatic, and perfect with a glass of crisp white wine.

(Jennifer Kearns-Willerich)

Thai Yellow Pumpkin and Seafood Curry

(Serves four hungry adults.)

400 milliliters can of full-fat coconut milk
1-2 tablespoons red curry paste (or, better yet, yellow, if you're lucky enough to find it)
350 milliliters fish stock (I quite like the Jurgen Langbein range of Suppen Pastes, which come in handy 50 gram portions)
3 tablespoons nam pla (or fish sauce)
2 tablespoons sugar
3 lemongrass stalks, bashed with a rolling pin
3 lime leaves (look for these in the frozen section in Asian supermarkets; one bag will last you ages!)
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1 kilogram pumpkin, peeled, seeded and cubed
500 grams salmon fillet, skinned and boned
500 grams peeled prawns (Nigella specifies raw, but these are near-impossible to find here, unless you go to the fish monger. Again, look in the frozen section in Asian supermarkets or buy them cooked and add them at the last possible minute to stop them going to tough and rubbery)
2-4 heads pak choi, depending on size (you can substitute mangold here, which is easier to find. A head of mangold tends to be massive, so you'll only need one, if that)
lime juice, to taste
fresh coriander and rice, to serve

Skim to cream off the top of the coconut milk and stir-fry this with the curry paste in a large saucepan for a minute or two, mixing well to combine. Add the rest of the coconut milk, along with the fish stock and sauce, the sugar, lemongrass, lime leaves and turmeric. Bring to a boil, then add the pumpkin and simmer until tender. Add the salmon and prawns (if the prawns are frozen, add these a few minutes prior to the salmon) to the simmering pot and continue simmering for 3-4 minutes until the fish is cooked through. Next, add the pak choi and, once wilted, lime juice to taste. Serve in warmed bowls with rice and loads of coriander.
It’s Pumpkin Time!

Grandmother’s Pie

This is my Grandmother’s original recipe from Arkansas, which my mother wrote out for me in a wedding shower present. Plus, there are my adaptations to make it work in Europe.

The first hurdle is the non-availability of canned pumpkin, but this is quite easy to solve. I’ve tried steaming, pressure cooking and baking pumpkins, and I highly recommend the oven, at least for pie or custard purposes. The easiest pumpkin to bake are the little Hokkaido that you can now get at nearly any Market or supermarket this time of year. Alternatives include wedges of the large Halloween style pumpkin, other winter squashes, and sweet potatoes. They need peeling after baking, but not the Hokkaido. Just cut in half, scoop out the seeds with a soup spoon, and bake cut side up at 150°C for about 45 minutes. When you can easily poke through the skin into the pumpkin with a fork, it’s done. This is a good time to make your crust. (Put a small glass of tap water into the fridge when you put the pumpkin in the oven.) A crust recipe is below (next page), but it isn’t from my Grandma. (Mary Frances Ludolph)

Mabel Mary Eisenhart Davidson’s Pumpkin Pie filling:

Preheat the oven to 160°C with the fan or 180°C without. Cream together:

3 Large eggs (add an extra if you can only get M or S)
Cup brown sugar (Mix molasses (Melasse from the Reformhaus) into white sugar until you like the color, or use 2 Tablespoons molasses and a heaped ½ cup light brown sugar.)
When the sugar is dissolved, add:
9 liquid ounces evaporated milk (1 bottle 250 ml 24% Koffeemilch)
½ Cup whole milk (4%)
1-2 teaspoons cinnamon (Zimt) We like the extra spice to show through the molasses.

½ – 1 teaspoon ginger (Ingwer, dried, fresh grated, or fresh chopped in a coffee grinder)
¼ – ½ teaspoon nutmeg (Muskatnuss)
¼ teaspoon cloves (Nelken, can also go in your coffee grinder with the ginger)
1 ½ Cups cooked pumpkin (Just smoosh it into the measuring cup and then add to the mixer.)

Whir the mixer again and pour into your pie shell. This makes 1 deep dish 10 inch pie or 2 smaller regular pies. If you have extra filling, take an oven proof coffee cup or small dish and bake it along with the pie. It will be done sooner. If you prebaked the crust, you will want to cover the edges with foil after about 20 minutes. A large pie is done in about 50 minutes. Test with a toothpick near the center.
Turkey platter
What American Thanksgiving table would be complete without a proper serving platter? One way to feel closer to family and friends back home is to celebrate (and decorate!) as you would Stateside. A golden brown turkey trimmed with roasted mini pumpkins or root vegetables can double as a delicious centerpiece when served on a molded ceramic platter. If you haven't brought one over from the States (or it broke in your luggage), a great place to bargain hunt is TK Maxx or local second-hand shops.

Great non-alcoholic punch
For the designated drivers and under-aged diners, try mixing pomegranate or rhubarb juice with mineral water or ginger ale (or even apple cider) for a festive punch. Serve in martini glasses or glass tea cups. Be inspired by fall fruits to garnish (fresh cranberries, currants, pomegranate seeds, or even wine grapes)

Go out on a limb
Take advantage of Hamburg's weekly markets and plan a side dish using local produce. Play with color by roasting beets, parsnips or purple carrots, or add a traditional German favorite like kohlrabi in a cream sauce or porcini-laced knödel instead of grandma's stuffing. A kale-based raw salad with walnuts and sprouts or sautéed kale with broccoli rabe and chard brings a real burst of color and added vitamins K, A and C.

Tasty wine pairings
To complement poultry dishes, try a crisp, late harvest Riesling or bold, biting Chardonnay. I'm even considering a chilled rosé this year to balance out the day's worth of heat coming from the oven and stove. (For beer lovers: offer a robust, malty Orval Trapist triple-ale or local favorite, like a Ratsherrn Brewery beer. They offer a fun, off-beat IPA.)

Play hostess
My childhood family was large, so for me the holidays still means a table full of food and hungry mouths. Here, my adult family is relatively small. Giving thanks with an unmarried friend or sharing our table with a co-worker or teacher from my son's school makes me feel more like I'm recreating those family feasts of yesteryear. (Ericka Seifried)

Pie Crust (Continued from p. 17):
Mix together: (I've only done this in the food processor. This should also easily come together using a pastry cutter or your fingers, but you will probably need a different amount of water at the end.)
1 Cup whole wheat flour (1060, we prefer the nutty flavor)
a pinch of salt (omit if using salted butter)
½ Cup cold unsalted butter straight from the fridge (I measure 113g, or if your scale does both, 4 oz. If you can smooch it into the measuring cup, it is too soft. Cut off thin slices onto the flour)
When mixed until crumbly looking, add the cold water, ½ Tablespoon at a time and mix between additions until it will just hold a ball. This will be between 2 and 4 Tablespoons. Roll out from the center with extra flour on the counter and rolling pin. I flip and reflatten to prevent sticking. Use an egg wash at least on the crust, or on the whole thing, and pre-bake for 10 minutes.
Enjoy with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.
Some fashionistas say fall is the best fashion season of the year. I would definitely agree with them. In no other season can you dress up as nice and easily as in fall. Winter: too cold. Unless you have an awesome coat there's not much you have going for you, as you only see the big coat — and your little legs and boots sticking out underneath it. So, not that fashionable. Summer? Too hot. Please see my previous articles on how summer makes you just want to take off your clothes and be naked. Not a pretty picture. I wouldn’t want to force that sight on ANYBODY. I am too much of a philanthropist. Spring. Well, usually, with that you're still recovering from months of lack of sunshine. So, yes, fall it is. For these reasons: The effortless chic of the cozy months is, of course, accompanied by the best part of the fall season: PUMPKIN SPICE. I have to say, I'm not the least sorry that the trend of "Pumpkin Spice With Everything" has conquered the Old World and is now treating us with the yummiest lattés that coffeeshops have to offer (wait until I write about Macadamia Brittle Nut for Christmas!). So yes, I have to say: I love fall.

Scarfes, hats and layers peeking out from underneath a light coat are so easy to wear; you look wonderful without any effort.

Use that advanced color vocabulary so everyone will think you are FAB!

ANYBODY looks great in green, orange or yellow. Oops! I mean moss, cinnamon and mustard. (Use that advanced color vocabulary so everyone thinks you are absolutely FAB!)

They're perfect camouflage for a cozy walk through the park. Furthermore, they fit in with the old/new 1970s trend. I wasn't kidding when I told y'all this summer that it was time to get your Fawcett on! Yes, the urban bohemian 1970s look is back. And, yes, we have heard it before. But it's on! And there's nothing you can do about it, except indulge in it and use the adorable opportunities vintage can give you. I just got these sweet peas…

LOVING THEM! Yes, the heels are high, so feel free to go flat. But if you do, please at least go for something like this:

The Chelsea-style boot is super comfortable, and looks classy and casual at the same time. Opt for a pair with sturdy soles, as they're also super-convenient on muddy or slippery sidewalks. Just make sure you stick to shades like whisky or burgundy (I love how they are named after drinks) to fit in well with the rest of the 1970s color palette. As always in fashion: anything goes. So feel free to throw in a little hippie, a little lady or a little granny if you like, and you'll look gorgeous.
Amnesty for Women Housewarming

On October 8, I had a lovely time meeting Pat Mix and others at the Amnesty for Women (AfW) reception to celebrate their move to a larger office space. Pat made sure to give each arriving guest a personal tour. Thelma Freedman, an AWCH member who has volunteered at AfW for a long time, was also there and introduced me around. The guests included friends, sponsors (like us) and their legal adviser. The main advantage of the new location is security. No one can just walk in - you have to identify yourself and be buzzed in. For many of their clients in trouble, this is a big plus. Also the atmosphere is quite different from their old office. Instead of previously scheduling a time for the single meeting room, each counselor now has enough room in her office for consultations. Just like the AWCH, Amnesty for Women will be celebrating a "round" anniversary next year - their 30th. We can look forward to being invited to join them. In the meantime, take a look at their tri-lingual website (amnestyforwomen.de) for information on courses (sewing, yoga, and even German) and phone them if you are interested in registering. (Mary Frances Ludolph with Thelma Freedman)

It’s Operetta Time at Opera Club


The Opera Club has been indulging in a bit of time travel to the musical golden age of mid-1800s Vienna. Wars and challenging times came and went, but when the going was good, the Viennese made the most of it! And there was nothing they would rather do than waltz the night away. The Johann Strausses, father and son, were the true “Waltz Kings” of the day. Who doesn’t know Strauss Jr.’s “Blue Danube Waltz”? Beautiful melodies positively gushed from both of their pens, not to mention their violins. Fortunately for all classical music fans, the younger Strauss eventually branched out into the operetta world, infusing the humorous works with his incredible waltzes and irresistible melodies.

Opera Club’s latest project is operettas in general and Strauss Jr.’s operetta “Die Fledermaus” in particular. As we enjoy spending time with this lighter, entertaining, and danceable music, we are working on our own definitions and perceptions of “what exactly is operetta?” In upcoming meetings, we will also be considering Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas along with Spanish zarzuela. Finally, with a good overview of the format, we will be attending a performance of “Die Fledermaus” at the Staatsoper here in Hamburg in early January. We can’t imagine a better way to waltz our way into the new year. (Elizabeth Reifke)
On September 18, club member and executive editor of Currents, Anna S., opened her beautiful home and terrace to former and current magazine contributors to celebrate Currents’ past and future and have an informal get together. About 14 club members joined in the potluck party, where the sunny Indian Summer weather bolstered an already enthusiastic atmosphere, captured in the moment by photographer, Kathrin Stahl. Members (re-) introduced themselves, renewed friendships, exchanged ideas, and toasted the past, present and future of our creative labors while enjoying a bountiful potluck buffet of chicken skewers, vegetarian quiche, pumpkin soup, small bites, and wine. Some even began envisioning the future by dropping ideas into the "pot o' gold" suggestion box. Another highlight was a lively ice-breaker in the form of an AWCH/Hamburg-inspired game of BINGO. The grand prize went to Mary W., who won a Hamburg guide book donated by Laura O. Many thanks to all who participated, and an extra special thanks you to Anna S. (and her lovely family) for hosting this event! Be on the lookout for future events for the Currents Crew! (Ericka S.)

All photos by Kathrin Stahl

Come join us at our new monthly „Currents and Coffee“ Stammtisch! We’d love to see you there!
Celebration of Membership

This year's celebration of membership was held at the beautiful "White House on the Alster" on Nov. 3. We were warmly greeted by Consul General Nancy Corbett who spoke briefly about herself and the plans to move the Consulate offices to the Hafencity sometime next year. After a group photo taken on the grand staircase, historian Dr. Heiko Herold led tours through the building, which was built originally as two villas in 1882 and 1893 by architect Martin Haller, who also designed the Hamburg Rathaus. In 1950 the U.S. Government purchased the site from the heirs of the original owners since in between the buildings had been Nazi headquarters (!) and then occupied by the British forces.

About 60 AWC members and guests (including several husbands) enjoyed the event. Sekt, open-face sandwiches and soup were arranged for by the board, and Nancy Tilitz provided background music on a Steinway piano. She was accompanied for a time on the saxophone by Angelique Blake, a prospective member and daughter of Rachelle B. For those who had been at the Consulate many times or for newer members who were there for the first time, it was exciting socializing in such a splendid setting. (Thelma Freedman)
DANKE! DANKE! to members of the club’s film group who attended the 2015 Filmfest Hamburg as accredited journalists representing Currents Magazine, awchamburg.org, and three other related media: Abby M., Birgit S., Becky T., Christine R., Marinell H., Mary W., Rose F., and Shelly S. Film group members who attended privately were Thelma F. and Ann G. In all they accumulated a total of 180 viewings of 89 films — more than half of the 172 films which showed in the 10-day festival October 1-10.

This issue of Currents was made possible by the critical eyes, red pens and volunteer hours of Carol B., Jennifer K.-W. Mary Frances L., Ericka S., Tracy M., Carol S., Laura O., Thelma F., Becky T., Abby M., Kim K. Thanks for all your hard work and for sharing the fruit of your labors!

LONDON BABY, YEAH!
by Karen Malinowski
This summer I went all Austin Powers and got all groovy in London, Baby, yeah. Oh yes, indeed, I am going all English, and I don’t mean for tea (stay tuned for more gossip on that soon).

...anyway, of course I wouldn’t go anywhere without my AWC!

IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN:
Looking for some original, high quality Christmas presents?

Go and visit the annual crafts’ markets at Museum für Völkerkunde and the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe!

Völkerkundemuseum: Market of the People
November 11 – November 15, 2015
marktdervoelker@mvhamburg.de

The dialog between cultures is the main focus of the Market of the People. About 70 craftspeople, traders and specialty-dealers acquaint visitors with craft products from all over the world.

On one hand, the market is a platform for many different traditional crafts threatened or disappearing as a result of modernization. The market is also a forum for new trends in the field of these crafts. Some examples include the creation of recycled products using tin cans or telephone wire. Countries from which exhibitors have come in the past include Portugal, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Indonesia, China, Japan, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, South Africa, Canada, Argentina and Guatemala.

At the Market of the People, manufacturing techniques are put on display in live performances, through film and other media. Fair trade is highly valued and local economies, small family businesses and other projects are purposefully supported. Through this market, the museum also aims to directly support different craftspeople.

The Market of the People is also known for its diverse cultural program. Musicians, singers and folklore groups give performances; for children there is make-up, crafts, painting and a story-telling workshop. The Market is a festival for the whole family.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe: Arts and Crafts Fair
27 November until 6 December 2015
www.kunstundhandwerkmesse.de

The MKG fair covers the spectrum from the preservation of traditional culture techniques to the critical analysis of current developments in artisan craftwork. 66 participants present the areas of jewelry, textiles, furniture, pottery, glass, wood and tableware as represented by superb works made by hand as unique specimens or in small series.

For more than 130 years, the MKG Arts and Crafts Fair has been providing contemporary artisans a means of presenting their works to a broad public. Thematically, it addresses the current discussion of values revolving around ecology versus new luxury and unique specimen versus mass product, but also production and working conditions. (Ulrike Henn)
**Artist Talk**

Photographer Ulrike Henn talked to us about her own work and the work of her colleague Johanna Wunderlich at the finissage of their exhibition *Dreams and Other Catastrophes* in Künstlerhaus eins ein on July 18. The photographs in the exhibition addressed the transience of a moment which belongs to a dream or catastrophe. It was wonderful to have Ulrike guide us through the exhibition. Knowing more about the photos puts them into a different perspective even when they speak for themselves. Ulrike's photo „La vie en rose“ touches a magical moment for a rose peddler, whereas a group of four photos showed the dream (amazing) with the reality. Her large format photos Knock on Wood I and II contrasted the calm of the Grand Canal in Venice, slowly sinking on its wooden foundations, with the turbulence in the streets of Delhi under an arched way supported with a makeshift wooden scaffolding. Ulrike remained true to her artistic vision down to the last detail, including the hanging of the photographs with common office clamps. Johanna's photos showed dreams that bring hope, that make life easier, but that can also vanish: a kite, a soap bubble, a sunset.

It was a beautiful day and a perfect opportunity to enjoy the lovely garden at this historical site. Thank you, Ulrike, for taking time for us! (Carol Strametz)

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**Fall Mad Libs**

So you think you're not that creative? Think you need a PhD in literature to write a poem? Try your hand at poetry with this DIY poem!

**Fall into the Season**

It's Fall. Everywhere you can __________ the __________ __________ing.

All the __________ are and the __________ is __________.

In the distance, __________ go to __________ in the co-

lorful __________.

Each __________, _______ rustle(s) in the __________.

It makes __________

just __________ in my __________.

(Erica Seifried)

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**Red Trash Containers**

Hamburg is proud of its red trash containers. In May 2005, the city’s sanitation department decided that the grey containers were attracting nothing: garbage landed on the streets. They commissioned the MKK Advertising Agency to design bright red containers, each with a phrase inviting everyone to put something into it. This was a great success and since 2005, there actually has been less trash on the streets and more in the red containers. In the last ten years these “speaking” red trash cans have even won prizes for design.

In the meantime there are 9100 containers all over town, some with the original phrases and some with new phrases to reflect the area or the times, e.g., during the 2006 World Cup Games, or on Christopher Street Day, or a “back-to-German” campaign by the Deutsche Sprache Verein.

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**Let’s Learn German!**

Look at the containers on this page - all photographed between Grindelhof and Jungfernstieg. Test your German and read the phrases; they might even make you grin. Write down the German phrase and its literal meanings in English, as well as what you think that certain phrase might refer to originally in the German and what that means. Send your answers to Rebecca. tan@t-online.de and you will receive a gift certificate worth 15 Euros at Savvy Cinema. Offer open to the first ten contestants (must be members of the American Women’s Club of Hamburg or their families). Deadline is December 15, 2015. Questions? Call Becky at 040-5503972 or 0172-809 7 908 after November 21.
Art in the City

Hamburger Kunsthalle

Nolde in Hamburg
Through Feb 10, 2016
Galerie der Gegenwart, 3rd Floor

The city of Hamburg held great significance for the Expressionist artist Emil Nolde (1867–1956). Not only did he find inspiration for numerous artworks here, he also gained considerable recognition at an early stage of his career. Now, for the first time, Nolde’s close ties to the city are being explored in a comprehensive display of around 200 of his works, which include vibrantly colored paintings and watercolors, atmospheric etchings and woodcuts as well as dynamic brush-and-ink drawings.

Nolde visited Hamburg regularly on his travels around Germany. He was fascinated by the bustling activity of the harbor and was also impressed by the wind and weather in the Hanseatic city, which for him represented the primal forces of life and nature. In 1910 he spent several weeks here, staying at the harbor in the St. Pauli district. Nolde captured his immediate impressions of his surroundings in over a hundred works produced in rapid succession during this time. The majority of these are in the collection of the Nolde Foundation Seebüll, and are now being presented in the city where they were created, alongside works from the holdings of the Hamburger Kunsthalle and loans from a number of public and private collections.

Bucerius Kunst Forum
www.buceriuskunstforum.de

From Poussin to Monet. The Colors of France
Through Jan 17, 2016

In the 17th century, French painting began to set the standards for all of Europe. Values in France during the Enlightenment began to shift.
toward a bourgeois society where painters were exposed to new themes and new artistic experiments. The French Revolution, the prototype of all struggles for liberation, marked a new era that became deeply entrenched in the development of French painting. The exhibition focuses on the effect that this dramatic social upheaval had on art. During Poussin’s time, an argument broke out regarding the role of color in painting. Sensory experience and subjective perception became increasingly important until color was freed entirely by the Impressionists at the end of the 19th century. During Poussin’s time, an argument broke out regarding the role of color in painting. Sensory experience and subjective perception became increasingly important until color was freed entirely by the Impressionists at the end of the 19th century. Paul Cézanne viewed nature as an arrangement of planes of color. Paintings no longer told a narrative; instead they gave to see. Color no longer depicted light; it became light. The exhibition demonstrates France’s path to modern art through paintings and drawings by Poussin, Watteau, Chardin, Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Van Gogh and others.

Deichtorhallen/Falckenberg Collection,
Hamburg-Harburg
www.deichtorhallen.de/buchung

The Dreamlike Vision of Sarah Moon

Nov 17 through Feb 2016
Deichtorhallen/Haus der Photographie
www.deichtorhallen.de

“I watch out for the unexpected, I wait to see what I’ve forgotten, I undo what I put together, I hope for hazard, but more than anything, I long to be struck as I shoot.” states French photographer Sarah Moon. Sara Moon’s highly highly elegant images have a painterly, almost abstract quality that lure the viewer into the spheres of dreams, mystery and anguish. Oftentimes the black-and-white or faded color photographs are out-of-focus, showing a painterly, almost abstract quality. Vagueness and a melancholic mood set the tone of Sarah Moon’s work whether she is photographing still life or fashion. The comprehensive exhibit “Sarah Moon” shows roughly 300 art pieces and seven films spanning the entire career of the photographer.

Born in 1941 as Marielle Hadengue, she grew up in France and England. As a teenager she studied drawing before working as a model in London and Paris. Ultimately bored with being a model, she started in 1967 photographing her model friends and renaming herself as Sarah Moon. Before long, she started working for fashion designer Barbara Hulanicki; creating nostalgically images for the iconic clothes store Biba. Moon quickly established herself as a sought-after photographer and director, carving out her own style. In her work Moon often relies on Polaroid or distressed negatives to give the image an aged, timeless feel, which she often enhances by using subtle sepia tones.

Besides her impressive body of work for magazines like Harper’s Bazaar, Vogue and Elle, Sarah Moon shot more than 150 promotional films for Oréal, Cacharel and Dupont to name just a few. She also shot a couple of shorts and feature films like Mississippi one, in 1990 and Henri Cartier Bresson. Point d’interrogation in 1995.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
www.mkg-hamburg.de

Art Nouveau.
The Great Utopia
Through Feb 7, 2016
The Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (MKG) dares a quite new approach to the epoch of the Art Nouveau in its exhibition project “Art Nouveau. The Great Utopia”. In contrast to the period about a century ago when Art Nouveau was le dernier cri, it can be seen today not just as a mere historical stylistic era, but can open up parallels to complex phenomena familiar to visitors from their own experience: scarcity of resources and issues of what materials to use, precarious working conditions and consumer behavior, the trade-off between ecological and aesthetic considerations in manu-
facturing processes or the desire for stylishly elegant, prestigious interior furnishings. These are just a few of the aspects which emerge as central motives common to both the reform movement of the years around 1900 and for the decisions facing today’s consumers. The exhibition project attempts to locate Art Nouveau in its historical context of ideas as a reform movement with all its manifold facets and extremes. Adopting a particular focus on the relationship between nature and technology, it illuminates the most varied disciplines, ranging far beyond the movement of arts and crafts and reaching as far as the history of medicine and the technology of filmmaking. On view are paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints, posters, books, tapestries, reform dresses, photographs and films as well as scientific and historical medical apparatus and models.

(Compiled by Ulrike C. Henn)

Great News from the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe:

The MKG (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe) has made its artefacts available on a digital platform. In addition to highlights from all collections, primary objects from the collection Photography and New Media are available. By entering a word into the search box, all collections are searched for matching objects and their respective images. Objects can be saved via “My Collection”. Sharing buttons allow you to share your findings on various social media platforms. AND, all images tagged with “Public Domain” are free of rights and can be downloaded. These images can be used without restriction for private, scientific, creative and commercial purposes!

AND, the best thing: It’s in English! (Ulrike C. Henn)

sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/en

Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder

Fat Pig by Neil LaBute
with English Theatre’s Robert Rumpf directing

A young executive ends up sharing a table with a young woman at lunch, prompting conversation whereby he learns she’s a librarian. Before parting, Tom and Helen trade names and a phone number. Spending time together, both welcome how similar their tastes are; Tom’s drawn to Helen, despite her plus-size. Good-natured, wise, and as honest as the day is long, Helen’s sense of wellbeing triggers a comforting reaction in Tom. Until his friend and colleague learn he’s seeing someone, then trouble bubbles. Carter’s inquisitivity is notorious; Tom’s reluctance for him to see Helen is overwhelming. Carter puts a bee in Jeannie’s bonnet, also a co-worker who has been dating Tom off and on for some time, instigating stinging confrontations. As Tom and Helen’s rapport escalates to love, Carter’s probing pays off. Subsequent to seeing Helen, Carter lambastes Tom, warning him to stick with his own kind rather than a “pig”. Equally derogative is Jeannie: How could Tom even consider tossing her over for some “fat bitch”! It’s Helen though, who hits the nail squarely on the head: the question is whether Tom is his own man, or not.

American playwright, screenwriter, and film director Neil LaBute’s award-winning Fat Pig (2004) continues his, what some deem, misanthropic slant. Yet, his forte is holding up a mirror reflecting what’s lying under the surface of society’s consciousness. In Reasons To Be Pretty, (a 2011 English Theatre production), LaBute faults people’s fixation with facial beauty, whereas here it’s about obsessing over a perfect body. Veteran director Robert Rumpf has a sure grip on the stellar London cast: he holds them back, and gives full reign as diatribes are unleashed. Rumpf’s clearly timed production is in adherence with the word cadence in LaBute’s brilliant, finely honed comedy.

Ed Sheridan plays Tom, the typical young-man-on-the-rise, nice guy. Meeting Helen opens his eyes to rewards inherent if someone looks deeper than another’s façade. Sheridan nicely nuances the vacillating Tom: one we like, and one who tests our patience. Rosalind Seal embodies the likable librarian whose extra weight doesn’t impinge; Helen’s perspicacious viewpoints and easy self-confidence is refreshing, for all in the theatre. As Carter, Ziggy Ross is the consummate, shallow jerk, and conceited office buddy. He manipulates by antagonizing, and sees Tom an easy target. Jeannie’s the conundrum, which Lucy Sinclair compellingly captures. Cannily, beautiful, and efficient, her self-assurance is shattered when Tom chooses a “fat girl” over her. Any recourse is inadequate, since appearances is intrinsic to whom she is. The insinuations in LaBute’s barbed-wire dialog are magnified by Mathias Wardeck’s minimal set design, and cushioned by Paul Glaser’s apt music choices. Quips keep us laughing throughout, even if social content is such that audiences might feel uncomfortable. Still, the play’s enduring relevance is strikingly brought to life, as its visceral content set off lively discussion afterward about how we define ourselves.

Fat Pig premiered September 3 and runs until November 7, 2015. The next production is No Dinner for Sinners, a comedy by Edward Taylor that’s sure to add sparkle to your holidays, and brighten deep winter days. It premieres on November 19, 2015 through February 6, 2016. (Marinell Hagelin)

Evening and matinee performances; tickets available at the theatre or online: www.englishtheatre.de. The English Theatre of Hamburg, Lichenfeld 14, 22081 Hamburg, Tel. 040-227 70 89, U-Bahn Mundsburg

www.awchamburg.org
it would change her; intensive rehabilitation was required. Today, Malala accepts the physical limitations, is positive with a great sense of humor, and dauntless in her quests. Succinctly, with the aid of dramatic reenactments, animated drawings, interviews and personal and public archival footage, a fascinating account of the young heroine emerges. “School was my home,” explains Malala referring to her father Ziauddin’s schools. Former family and societal customs, and the process of integration in England are meaningfully described. When Mullah Fazlullah arrived in the northwest province where the Yousaafzai family lived, the Taliban soft-soaped, then brainwashed, and finally, ruled through terror. Not willing to remain silent, Ziauddin initiated a peaceful protest. Prior to Malala, Taliban never hurt children. The family’s first-hand accounts are staggering; Ziauddin best explains: “It was not a person [who shot Malala], it is an ideology.”

Director Guggenheim and his proficient editors, Greg Finton, Brad Fuller and Brian Johnson, have assembled a compelling film. We smoothly move between continents and time eras, while never losing sight of the struggles of those caught in the crossfire of world events. Enrich Roland’s cinematography is comprehensive yet never invasive, just as Thomas Newman’s music comprises both the strength and sensitivity of the protagonist. Some people’s astonishing responses to even small things propel them into unexpected greatness; Malala and Ziauddin are two such persons. Following this 18-year-old’s future endeavors: “It is hard to get things done in the world...have to keep trying.” 87 minutes (Marinell Haegelein)

Madame Marguerite oder Die Kunst der schiefen Töne
(Marguerite) ****
France/Czech Republic/Belgium 2015
Opening October 29, 2015
Directed by: Xavier Giannoli
Writing Credits: Xavier Giannoli,
Marcia Romano
Principal Actors: Catherine Frot, André Marcon, Michel Fau, Christa Théret, Denis Mpunga

Poor Marguerite. She’s a middle-aged baroness in a loveless marriage, living in a lavish country seat outside Paris in 1920. If she were satisfied attending ladies’ teas and concerts in aid of war veterans, her life would be so simple. But then she wouldn’t be Marguerite. Convinced that she was born to the stage, and that her voice is a gift bestowed upon her by the heavens, Marguerite organizes private concerts in her salon. Adorned in feathers and furs, like her beloved, ill-fated opera heroines, she presents her Art to assembled aristocratic devotees. Yet most unfortunately, Marguerite possesses the most spectacularly awful voice known to man, her screeches rivalled only by the peacocks calling to her from the estate grounds. Everybody but Marguerite is in on the joke. Not a soul dares mention her vocal disability, out of hypocrisy or cowardice. Her opera fantasy is enabled by her employees, her embarrassed husband, and the social circles who benefit from her largess.

A pair of young scalawags scales the estate’s wall to crash a performance and confirm rumors that the Baroness is in fact tone-deaf. Brash, arrogant members of Parisian left-wing intellectual art circles, they determine to use Marguerite’s cheerful good will – and money – to their advantage. A glorious scene takes place when Marguerite agrees to support her new young friends by appeasing in their literary cabaret. Lured to the show under false pretenses (an appearance by Charlie Chaplin has been advertised), the audience is subjected to a kind of Dadaist-Expressionist performance of anarchic poems and anti-Republican diatribes. Then Marguerite appears as in a vision, dressed in white like Marianne, the symbol of the French Republic. She squawks the Marseillaise; the public is outraged; chaos ensues.
Marguerite is portrayed as a lonely woman who seeks to restore her apathetic husband’s lost affection. Yet in refusing to acknowledge her lack of traditional artistry, she gains power, in effect becoming an early performance artist. The question remains whether she’s aware of her insufficient talent, or whether she’s getting what she needs out of her slavish and illogical devotion to singing. The film’s sets and costumes are suitably elegant, and Catherine Frot is charming and vulnerable as Marguerite. Outstanding performances include those by Michel Fau as Madame’s outlandish, has-been vocal coach, and by Denis Mpunga as her perhaps too faithful butler. Unfortunately, the film loses a bit of steam and would benefit from being half an hour shorter.

Marguerite is based loosely on the life of an early 20th-century New Yorker, Florence Foster Jenkins, was a very rich woman, embarrassingly passionate about art and opera, and apparently completely unaware that her voice was so bad. Fortunately for the makers of Marguerite, their film arrives in theaters months before an English one based on the life of the same woman. Florence Foster Jenkins, directed by Stephen Frears and starring Meryl Streep, is sure to provide a different — and potentially more comical — take on the subject matter. Contemporary critics sometimes described Madame’s performances in a snottily ambiguous way that aimed to pique public curiosity: “Her singing at its finest suggests the untrammeled swoop of some great bird.” To which she was known to reply, “People may say I can’t sing, but no one can ever say I didn’t sing.” (Brenda Benthien)

**Suite Française ***
**UK 2014**
**Opening November 19, 2015**

Directed by: Saul Dibb
Writing credits: Matt Charman, Saul Dibb, Irène Némirowsky (original novel)
Principal actors: Michelle Williams, Matthias Schoenaerts, Kristin Scott Thomas, Sam Riley
Length: 107 minutes

In the French village of Bussy in the summer of 1940, Lucile (Williams) is a lonely war bride left behind to mind the manor house under the airtight supervision of her mother-in-law Madame Angellier (Thomas). These are joyless times of mass evacuation, French capitulation and Nazi occupation. Sympathy is scarce as neighbors denounce neighbors, food and weapons are hoarded, and summary persecution of villagers begins. The manor house becomes the new quarters for a handsome German officer, Bruno von Falk (Schoenaerts), and by proximity, Lucile is pulled into the spell of his sensitivity and his music. When Lucile hides a local farmer, Benoit (Riley) from the Nazis, her emotions and loyalties become confused. Based on a famous French novel and filmed in France and Belgium, the film is picture-perfect, Hollywood perfect. Orderly groups of Paris evacuees push wheelbarrows of antique-shop suitcases along country roads bordered with tidy wheat fields; the manor has lovely wallpaper and the wine glasses are splendid. The villagers speak modern English and the Germans for the most part shout monosyllabic orders in the tersest of German. All of this is alienating, to say the least. Schoenaerts is once again magnetic as the masculine-but-empathetic lover (this time with a two-tiered haircut that shows off his neck rather nicely). Lucile scurries around the village like a lost chicken, but her wide-eyed character lacks depth and it is hard to be interested in her. Madame Angellier is a mother-in-law from Hell. A bit more imperfection, or daresay, subtlety would have served this film well. Despite everything the story itself is riveting, and it is worth forgetting the quiet perfection of the novel to see this film on its own terms. (Ann Gebauer-Thompson)

**Les Héritiers** (Die Schüler der Madame Anne/Once in a Lifetime) ****
**France 2014**

Opening November 5, 2015
Directed by: Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar
Writing credits: Ahmed Dramé (screenplay), Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar (screenplay)
Principal actors: Ariane Ascaride, Ahmed Dramé, Noémie Merlant

Based on a true story that takes place in the troubled Parisian suburb, Créteil, at the Léon Blum Lycée (High School), the director, Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar, in her film, Les Héritiers (Once in a Lifetime) tells a powerful tale about integration and a chance to overcome differences by working collectively. The junior class at Léon Blum School is known as the most unruly, doomed to fail class (their Literature teacher even states that it is not worth trying since they won’t pass the final exam anyway) but then their new history teacher, Anne Gueguen (Ariane Ascaride), arrives. She is faced with a demoralized, pugnacious class of various religious and cultural backgrounds—many of them Muslims, but she is determined not to give up on them and dreams up a pro-
project, which takes them on a trip back in history. They must participate in the annual National Contest of Resistance and Deportation. They will be required to create a project on the theme of “Children and Teenagers under the Nazi Regime”. At first, they are skeptical and unwilling, but after Madame Gueguen takes them to the National Shoah Memorial, where the class learns about the Nazi genocide, they are moved and curious. Then later when Leon Zyguel speaks to the class about his tragic experiences in concentration camps, they begin to realize that this project has something to do with them as they become more aware of and appalled at the racism and antisemitism in their own minds and surroundings. Maybe it is possible to change and mold their own future if they work together.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this film is how it came into being. Ahmed Dramé, who played the likeable but initially dispirited Malik, was actually part of this rowdy class and wrote the screenplay when he was 20. He then contacted Madame Mention-Schaar, convinced her it was film material and together they improved and finalized the script. Many of the actors were from Créteil and Leon Zyguel played himself (the most mesmerizing moment). The actors’ performances were convincing and heartfelt, especially that of Ascaride as Gueguen, resolute but with respect for her students (“I have more faith in you than you have in yourselves”) and that of Dramé as Malik—at first disillusioned, and at the end, determined and self-confident. The pulsating piano accompaniment was exceptionally supportive, especially after emotional scenes, when only the piano music could be heard, giving the characters and audience a chance to reflect. Although some subthemes and characters are skimpily explored and a bit unfocused, the overall effect is gripping and inspiring. With so many powder kegs waiting to explode in today’s world, a film like Lifetime is a must. It affirms that it is possible to overcome differences by working together instead of against each other. (Karen Schollemann)

**Ewige Jugend (Youth) ***
USA 2015
Opening November 26, 2015

Directed by: Paolo Sorrentino
Writing credits: Paolo Sorrentino
Principle actors: Michael Caine, Harvey Keitel, Rachel Weisz, Paul Dano, Jane Fonda

Sicilian director Paolo Sorrentino’s style is highly operatic and visually extravagant. His previous two films The Great Beauty, winner of the 2014 Oscar for best foreign language film, and Il Divo, a blood-soaked drama about former Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, centered on men pondering the regrets and rewards of a life lived in the spotlight. So too with Youth, which features Michael Caine as an insistently retired British composer contemplating both the indignities of old age and the burden of celebrity. Enconced at a luxurious Alpine spa, Fred Ballinger has refused repeated requests from an emissary of the Queen to conduct a Royal Command performance of his early masterpiece “Simple Songs.” He wants to be left alone, and he seems to have come to Davos (setting of Thomas Mann’s Magic Mountain) out of a 20-year habit rather than with a particular goal in mind. His beleaguered daughter and assistant, Lena (Rachel Weisz), and his old friend Mick (Harvey Keitel) are there having massages and mud baths alongside him. Mick is still working as a Hollywood director, and he’s brought along a coterie of youngsters to help him develop his new film — and though it’s meant to be his “testament,” nobody can come up with an ending. This great work will feature one of Mick’s muses, diva Brenda Morel (Jane Fonda, terrifying in heavy makeup and a frightful wig). Also in residence is an intellectual L.A. movie actor (Paul Dano) whose greatest regret is that he once ‘gave in to levity’ and played a robot on film. To his disgust, his legions of fans now consider this his greatest accomplishment.

All these characters drift around the sumptuous grounds of the weirdly soulless resort, unchanged since its construction as a sanatorium in 1900. The old guys wax sentimental, regrettting their lost youth and lost loves. Fred has a reserved relationship with his daughter and hasn’t visited his ailing wife in Venice for years. He seems to have little passion for anything except conversations with Mick — though he sometimes furiously conducts a bovine symphony on a hillside meadow. He badgers Mick to tell him whether he slept with a woman they both loved long ago. Mick, in turn, is clinging to his unfinished film project as proof that he’s still got what it takes. Youth is both nostalgic and current; elegant; and intrinsically macho. These octogenarians, cognizant as they are of their faded youth, don’t tire of gazing at, or thinking about, young women’s bodies. There is much discussion of decay, both physical and emotional, and one could be excused for thinking the 45-year old director might be working out a sort of mid-life crisis on-screen. The idiosyncratic hotel workers and guests are reminiscent of caricatures à la Fellini. They suffer visions and nightmares rooted in past and present fears, which Sorrentino works into delightfully vibrant and unexpected interludes. Typically for Sorrentino, the music varies widely, from Fred’s classical compositions to indie folk, to an alarming fantasy by British pop star Paloma Faith. Luca Bigazzi’s cinematography is marvelous, compositionally striking, and often painfully. Boos and bravos followed Youth’s press screening in Cannes, and it will surely divide audiences as well. (Brenda Benthen)

**Ewige Jugend (Youth)****
Second Opinion

Fellini would have approved. Youth exudes wistful octogenarian decadence,
now all but impotent, yet lovingly and dreamily wrapped in occasional mystical illusions. The location is a posh spa in Davos, Switzerland populated with faceless, pasty bodies pampered with massages and mud baths. Director and writer Sorrentino most certainly had Michael Caine in mind when he created Fred Ballinger, the once dynamic, now totally apathetic, British composer spending his December years in this opulently tranquil setting. Fred’s many women have come and gone. His daughter Lena (Rachel Weisz) certainly loves him though perhaps he doesn’t deserve it. His old friend Mick (Harvey Keitel) is his best friend, probably because they never speak of anything unpleasant. The only possible rift is over a girl, Gilda Black, whom they had both loved as youths. Fred, so many years later, continues to seek reassurance that Mick had, like himself, never slept with her. It is ironic considering Fred’s countless conquests, yet touchingly nostalgic, a tribute to the lost innocence of youth. Paul Dano as actor Jimmy Tree and Jane Fonda as actress Brenda Morel both shine, Paul as a reluctant Nazi, and Jane as a diabolical, destructive diva. Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi brilliantly captures the picture postcard majesty of the Alpine countryside. He borrows a little of Wes Anderson’s aura when shooting the sumptuous Swiss spa. He recreates Fellini like magic, filming quirky fantasy shots including concert performing cows and a levitating Indian guru. Youth is humorous, melancholy, and an absolute must-see movie for all ages, though those of an older vintage may savor it most. (Pat Frickey)

**Hasret – Sehnsucht***

Germany, Turkey 2015  
Opening November 26, 2015

Directed by: Ben Hopkins  
Writing credits: Ben Hopkins, Ceylan Ünal Hopkins  
Principal actors: documentary, Isa Çelik, Bilge Güler, Serhat Saymadi

Director Ben Hopkins and a small team of film-makers go to Istanbul to record life in that city of 20 million people. The assignment is a low-paid job, and does not include flight tickets. They travel from Germany on a container ship full of micro-wave ovens. Upon arrival in Istanbul (the world’s fifth largest city, with the world’s sixth most tourists), they immediately begin filming people, streets, and the beautiful Bosphorus which runs through the middle of town. They portray illegal immigrants who collect rubbish, Shites and Sunnis, construction workers, Kurds from Afghanistan, graffiti, new shopping centers built over ancient neighborhoods, long-closed synagogues and more. Director Hopkins is slowly drawn into the magic of the surroundings and begins to imagine things, such as ghosts, a theory supported by many of the people interviewed. The team returns to Germany, leaving Hopkins behind for three months. He films alone, often at night which gives the film a black and white cast. He talks to an eccentric historian who claims that the country was originally governed by cats. People tell him that there are secret meanings in the graffiti. Whereas the first part of the film is your expected documentary, the second half reflects more of the director personally and his feelings of “anger and secret sadness.” It has less to do with Istanbul, but more of the effect that an extended stay in Istanbul has on Ben Hopkins. The title Hasret Sehnsucht means “yearning” in English. I recommend it for anyone who has visited Istanbul or expects to travel there. It was in English, Turkish, and German with German subtitles. Do not confuse this film with a similar production from 2013 called Hasret – Desire by Michael Hehl. (Becky Tan)

**Hallåhallå (HalloHallo)**  
Sweden 2014  
Starts November 19, 2015

Directed by: Maria Blom  
Writing Credits: Maria Blom  
Principal Actors: Maria Sid, Johan Holmberg, Ann Petrén, Calle Jacobsson, Tina Råborg

A warm-hearted Swedish comedy that will keep you toasty through the winter, Hallåhallå keeps winning audience awards at film festivals. Disa is 40ish, a bit dumpy and way too accommodating. Her husband has left her for a twiggly new model; she’s bossed around by her mother and by the chief matron at the hospital where she works. While her ex is looking sporty and put together, Disa remains stuck in her rut. An old crone in the hospital tests her patience beyond its limits, and she tries martial arts to get out some aggression. But one day when she’s handing the kids over to her ex in the library, a roguish charmer named Kent catches her eye. Kent has seven kids by a bunch of women, and a most relaxed outlook on life. His message for Disa: take care of yourself, and the rest will follow. Actress Maria Sid is priceless in the lead role. Stockholm-born director Maria Blom is also a playwright and screenwriter. She prefers to film in the Swedish province of Dalarna, where she lives. (Brenda Benthien)
Currents Party:
Celebration of Membership

American Women's Club of Hamburg