President’s Message

As I write this, I am in Laos. Travelling here, I am reminded just how good we have things both in the United States and in Germany. Truly, we have the best of all possible worlds; we benefit from Germany’s planning and processes and America’s “can do” attitude and enthusiasm. The AWCH is no different. We have the rules that must be followed (our guidelines and constitution) and the freedom to play within those boundaries.

To that end, the coming year will be one where we will celebrate our 60th year as a Club! We will have the anticipated activities such as the Gala, as well as new and innovative ones like this month’s “Dance Me to the End of Love” workshop. The Anniversary Committee, headed by Anna S., is planning many other surprises in the coming months to mark this wonderful occasion. We will be asking everyone to put on their thinking caps to find the best way to celebrate, culminating with the Gala on September 24th.

Bunco Night was also brought back by Tracy M. this year; Tracy also organized the “From the Heart Working Bee” to make heart pillows for cancer patients. The Oscar Party hosted by Nancy T. was, as always, a fabulous event, with members walking down the red carpet in ultimate style (see the write-up here on page 19 of this quarter's Currents).

Our regular Clubs Within the Club activities are also sharing the best of all possible worlds. With the revamp of Currents magazine, the team headed by the tremendous trio, Laura O., Anna S. and Ericka S., we now have a publication that captures the best of the AWCH (and, did I mention, they have also made it a whole lot of fun?) The Film Reviewer Group is continuing to work around the globe going to film festivals and writing up their reviews everywhere as a key contributor to KinoCritics and Hamburg Guide. The Book Club, meanwhile, is reading one terrific novel after the next helping broaden our world prospective, and the The Opera Club is learning about Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin, helping our members access the story more fully. Last but not least is Stitch ‘n Bitch, which remains a bedrock of the Club, meeting every other Tuesday night to share their “crafty” ways (and perhaps a glass of wine ;-) ).

Our membership has also continued to grow with more than 20 new members. Thanks to the efforts of Petra R. and Cat C., we are taking advantage of the cyber world – taking applications online and coordinating the responses with the Clubs Within the Club leadership. We are working towards more seamless integration with the calendar, membership database and invitations too. Our Facebook presence has also jumped massively, with more than 100 likes! Way to go, ladies!

We also added two new board positions, Currents Representative and Activities Chair. As Laura O.’s Currents responsibilities grew, she felt it was time to let someone else fill the secretary position. We also felt that an Activities Chair would help keep us organized. We found two terrific ladies for these positions, Wang Di S. is our new Secretary and Rachelle B. is our Activities Chair.

Finally, as Chris L. served on the Board for the maximum two-year term as Treasurer, Monika M. has agreed to take on the mantle. Other members of the Board, including Mary Frances L., Petra J., Carol S. and me, will continue in our current positions as Vice President, Membership Chair, FAWCO Representative and President respectively. We are all looking forward to celebrating the various ways that over the past 60 years AWCH has helped us find the best of both worlds.

All the best,
Laura Langford
Dear readers, dear contributors,

When we first discussed themes for this issue, the idea of “best of both worlds” excited us. Think about the things expats get to take advantage of: living overseas, speaking two (or more!) languages, having longer vacations, moving freely in two worlds. We can mix cultures as we please to make something all our own. But at January’s Currents & Coffee, Carol B. talked about what this means to her in a way we hadn’t considered. In her 50+ years overseas, she says doesn’t really mix her cultures much. In Germany, she acts like a local, but it’s more than just an act. It’s her German self. It got us thinking: Do we do this too?

We hope you enjoy exploring what these worlds may mean to you. Gute Reise!

- your Currents Team
The Region 5 Meeting took place November 6–8, 2015 in Düsseldorf. If you’d like to learn more about it, please read the conference report that is posted on the AWCH website in the FAWCO section. The next Region 5 Meeting will be held in the fall in Berlin. Watch for the dates and plan a road trip!

The Interim Meeting 2016 is coming up March 11–13 in Frankfurt. The agenda is available online. AWCH will have a delegation of 6 members. We’re looking forward to a fun and inspiring weekend! The meeting will kick off with The Foundation Opening Dinner—Celebrating 85 Years of FAWCO. The new FAWCO Brand and the new Target Program with a focus on education will be launched. Even if you don’t participate in the conference, you can participate in the Friendship Quilt and Diamond Ring Raffles and the Online Auction on the Foundation website. My report of the meeting will be posted on the AWCH website.

The 60th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from March 14–24, 2016. A delegation of 14 FAWCO women will join with over 6,000 other NGO representatives in New York. CSW60 blogs will be posted on the FAWCO website. FAWCO joined with other members of the NGO CSW in Vienna to sign a statement on Women’s Empowerment and the Links to Sustainable Development that was submitted to CSW60 and posted on the UN website.

A jointly sponsored FAWCO and The FAWCO Foundation Symposium Backing Women: Stand Up Against Human Trafficking will be held March 7–9, 2016 in The Hague. The Symposium will be held at the International Press Club of The Hague. This Symposium will be open to the public as well as to FAWCO club members. The Symposium will focus on education and awareness of human trafficking as a critical world issue. The goal is to provide motivation and tools for participants to become everyday heroes by backing women. The future for survivors should be to return to their communities with their dignity, health, and job skills. Save the date!

Register to vote in 2016! Overseas US voters must register in every year in which they wish to vote, and there will be elections for President, Congress and state and local offices in November 2016. Ensure your participation by registering to vote now if you haven’t already done so. Fill out the form online, at either the FAWCO website with the Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) or at the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

The fourth FAWCO Youth Cultural Volunteers Program will take place in Dublin, Ireland from June 7-12, 2016. This program is open to FAWCO teens between the ages of 15-18. The program will introduce the group to some of the sights and sounds of Dublin, and the teens will be introduced to Ireland’s structure of volunteering and the underlying needs. It’s a wonderful opportunity for teens to experience a new culture working side-by-side with other teens. The application period...
will begin in February 2016. For more information please check the Youth Program on the FAWCO website and be sure to view the video documentaries of past years.

If you’re still thinking “what the heck is FAWCO” or would like to organize your thoughts about FAWCO, please take 13½ minutes to view the video FAWCO in a Nutshell on YouTube. Leslie Collin-gridge, FAWCO 2nd Vice President, has produced this impressive video to inform us about FAWCO and she’s done a wonderful job answering the questions: What is FAWCO? What are the different facets of FAWCO? How can you get involved? What does FAWCO offer to its member clubs?

FAWCO LINKS

Interim Meeting 2016 Agenda
http://files.ctctcdn.com/2d8d8b90b001/ ec4c5c57-0fe0-4f61-9ace- 3d2c97c99fbb.pdf

CSW60 Blog
https://www.fawco.org/fawco-the-un/what-we-do/current-initiatives/women-s-rights/csw

Women s Empowerment and the Links to Sustainable Development

Overseas Vote Foundation
https://fawco.overseasvotefoundation.org/vote/home.htm

Federal Voting Assistance Program
https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter

FAWCO Youth Program

FAWCO in a Nutshell
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE PiXwSopJg&feature=youtu.be

Friendship Quilt and Diamond Ring Raffles and the Online Auction
http://www.fawcofoundation.org

Fundraising for FAWCO

Apron Fundraiser
AWCH aprons are available in white or blue and you can purchase them either from Carol S. or Petra R. for the price of 25€ each. If you are interested in purchasing one or two or even more please contact: membership@awchamburg.org
You can discuss a pick-up or drop-off spot with the ladies. Please have 25€ in cash available for each apron. The profit of approx. 10€ per apron will be going to the FAWCO target project.
A special thank you to Marinell Haegelin for her beautiful design of the AWCH logo!

Silent Auction at the AGM
The Silent Auction at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) brought in €929!. All proceeds will go to the FAWCO Target Project, Free the Girls, which gives women in Mozambique, Uganda and El Salvador a way out of human trafficking.
A very special thank you to all members who made donations: Carol S., Jenny M., Petra R., Becky T., Sandra S., Shelly S., Stella K.-R., Tiana D., Tracy M.! Also thank you to Coco-Mat Blankenese for their generous donations!
A big thank you to all who participated!

Bunco Evening
Many thanks to Tracy M. for organizing a fun and successful Bunco evening at DESY on February 13!

The Diamonds Celebration Committee is looking for former members to join the celebration activities and/or to share the stories of their lives after AWCH.
Are you a former member or do you know former members’ emails and addresses?
Please contact us under currents-exec@awchamburg.org
In Hamburg

Places that you have visited that are always on your mind …

by Thelma Freedman

In 2003 my daughter went to Bénin (W. Africa) with a German organization called Pro Bénin to do an environment project in elementary schools near Dassa Zouné. On Xmas 2009 she and I traveled there so see could visit old friends. The following was not written as an article but was actually just a letter I sent upon our return to some of my relatives who asked about the trip.

My trip started out with good omens since my cabdriver to the airport was W. African and the check in person at the airport was American. Andrea and I met up in Paris where she had arrived 5 hours earlier and we flew off to Cotonou. We spent the first night at a European style airport hotel because I promised Andrea that, if she would agree to that, I would “go native” the very next morning!

During the morning our driver Casimir picked us up in his jalopy and took us to Tanja’s house. Tanja is a German woman who works in the administration of a volunteer organization. Now she is living with a local man and has one child. We got rid of one of our 6 suitcases since it was full of presents for Tanja from her parents in Berlin. We had a good visit and then Casimir drove us to the ocean resort Grand Popo so we could spend 3 days relaxing and getting used to the heat. We did a tour one day in a dug out boat to see the mangroves and learn about fishing techniques and visited a couple of villages on the Mono River where there were many voodoo shrines. The next day we walked to visit a man who volunteers his time to protect turtle eggs from the local population so they would not be stolen to eat. It was a good stay in spite of the red ants that invaded my suitcase and the lizards that crawled all over the walls. I had forgotten that from my Peace Corps days...

We drove on to historic Abomey. We stayed overnight and toured the former kings’ palace (a UNESCO site) with a Danish family who stayed at the same guesthouse. In the afternoon we wandered around the market. In this small town we were the only white people around the market that day and got bombarded with...
kids chanting “Yovo, yovo, bonsoir, comment ca va? Merci”. (Whitey, whitey, good evening, how are you, thank you).

Then it was off to Dassa, the highlight of the trip - the town Andrea had lived in. We stayed at a nice guest-house (when I say nice it means cold running water, real toilets and mosquito nets for the bed). The family Andrea had lived with when she worked there were literally screeching with excitement when we arrived. They were just so moved that one of their former volunteers actually came back to visit. Emmanuel is a gardener, his wife Véronique a housewife with 4 children. That day we stayed just a short while, gave them a suitcase of presents they had requested (shoes for the family, backpacks for the kids, etc.) but went back several times over the next couple of days including new year’s day when we met many of their neighbors and friends. That first day we were also invited out for a drink with 5 men from NGOs in Dassa. They picked us up on motorcycles and we went out to a snack bar in a little village. Andrea got a thank you speech and she gave a speech and I was praised for bringing her up so well!

Casimir, the driver, went home while we were in Dassa since there we were always visiting Emmanuel and Antoine and we got to them by taxi (motorcycles with no helmets and absolutely no holding on the driver). Antoine was Andrea’s colleague at school. He teaches 50 children from ages 4-8 an hour away by motorcycle. His school has rickety benches made of sticks, no desks, no books, no paper. He collects bottle caps to teach math and has a blackboard that he carries back daily to the nearby village where he boards so it won’t be stolen. Antoine and his wife Joyceline (a talented dressmaker) have 3 wonderful children who get lots of attention compared to the other African children we met. They are a lovely family and it was so comfortable being at their place. I felt guilty that they went to so much effort cooking meals that took about 3 hours to prepare stamping with mortar and pestle and cooking over the wood fire. Joyceline made clothes for us. Leaving them was like leaving family and Andrea understandably had a real crying session.

Back to Cotonou where we stayed overnight at a Christian conference center, met up again with Tanja and spent a very nice last day at her house chatting and eating and Andrea got her hair braided African style.

That’s it in a nutshell. I can’t tell of all the impressions we had - the colors of the beautiful materials, the intricate hairdos, the nostalgic smell of the wood fires that made me relive my year in Abidjan, walking around sharing the road with chickens and goats, being so sweaty and dirty from the heat and dust, but most especially the friendliness and courtesy of everyone we met in Bénin. I was always in heaven being called Maman out of respect for my age. And being complimented on my frizzy head of hair (the humidity!!) by two teenaged girls made my day. Andrea was admired for wearing African clothes every day.

Afterword:
As a result of this letter almost all the people I sent it to contribute to Antoine’s school and he was able to make real improvements. However, now he is teaching back home in Dassa to be closer to his children because, sadly, since this letter was written lovely Joyceline died during childbirth.

On a happier note Emmanuel’s teenage daughter Natascha, who is best in her class, will be coming to Germany this summer to stay with Andrea and her family in Berlin. To me this is proof that international volunteer organizations contribute to understanding between peoples.
The grass is greener...
by Susan Stanley-Witt

“My high school had a lock down yesterday” Sammy, my 17 year old son had seen it on Facebook. The high school where he attended 11th grade, during his year abroad, had a lock down. There had been a gunman in the military hospital next door so for the children’s safety they were locked in their classrooms for 12 hours. “Kids had to pee in buckets. That would never have happened here in Hamburg.”

In April I will have been living in Hamburg for 30 years. A long time. In some respects I don’t know what is going on in the U.S. any more. Just from vacations, television and what friends tell me. I do know that when I travel to the U.S. it is difficult to find ‘German’ presents to take to family members. Through globalization almost everything I can buy here can get there and if it’s not in the stores it is available on the Internet.

In Hamburg there are definitely more refugees than in the States. According to Donald Trump many millions. Although Americans have not opened their arms to the world’s refugees, I truly believe they are amongst the friendliest, nicest people on earth. I miss that. North Germans in comparison are reserved: when they win concert tickets on the radio one just hears a cool danke. No screaming or jumping about. I miss the enthusiasm and the ‘yes, we can’ mentality. But I guess in life you can’t have the proverbial cake and eat it too. I do have great health insurance, which pays for both of my boys’ orthodontic braces. I see the parents of my nieces and nephews in the States worrying about such costs and upcoming university fees. My oldest son will soon start studying engineering in Flensburg, north of Hamburg, for minimal fees. My youngest sister still has outstanding college debt. Ouch.

I am grateful for my comfortable life here in Hamburg. Yes, so I have a vitamin D deficiency due to lack of sun but I can go to my GP and get that taken care of. When one has lived in a variety of countries, or just two, one has comparisons. Some grass is always greener on the other side. But here in Hamburg with all the rain, the grass is pretty darn green.

Tomorrowland
by Ericka Seifried

When we began our unique, intercultural, biracial romance nearly 20 years ago, we were idealistic and heart-strong. Our chance meeting was fate stepping in. We’d met at the beginning of the end of key phases in our lives: me about to leave 8 years of work experience behind to pursue a master’s degree in the Netherlands, and Robert towards the end of his graduate year at Georgia Tech abroad.

We didn’t think too much about the practicalities or complexities of our relationship. Things flowed and were easy. It was fun. Friends and family were welcoming and excited for us. But we didn’t need much egging on. We were smitten (really, did I just use that word?). With this sweet, sheepish wunderkind there were romantic picnics with homemade dips, study sessions in tree-shaded, mosquito-filled coves, public displays of affection in broad daylight, chatty walks in the oppressive Atlanta mugginess with smiles that even sweat couldn’t wash away, long dates that ended with a first kiss and quickly extended to pre-dawn dining at Waffle House (because we weren’t ready to say goodnight), even bike rides on public streets in traffic. Quite the whirlwind! We actually reveled in the bizarre nature of our union. Who’d put us together? St. Fate, that’s who! A shy and promising engineer from southern Germany (a Schwoib) and a gregarious, quirky arts manager from Music City. We didn’t think, we just did for many years. But when it became clear this was no passing fancy and it was high time to consider a real future together, we sat down (on many occasions) and discussed what seemed like every possible issue we’d eventually have to face. We wouldn’t approach the rest of our lives with such lofty thinking. We’d take off those rose-colored glasses and be realistic. Practical thinking. Meaning it mostly revolved around practical, not emotional, matters. Where did he want to work? How could I find (fulfilling) work in the same place? What size and kind of city? With what kind of people? What about taxes? Voting? Retirement planning? Residency permit? Prenuptial agreements (but wait, weren’t those only for moguls and actors?) And eventually children? We’d examine all options and make an informed decision and our future. Yes, very forward-thinking and realistic. Ahem...

In the end, we decided that we didn’t really have to actually decide. Who needs to be stymied by convention? We were young. We’d have the best of both worlds, which we could freely move between at anytime. It
Body double

A simple glance, a sidebar thought, a passing wish,
Two lives intersect.

1 innocent (enough) flirtation + 1 matchmaking gal pal
= 2 destinies merged.

So germanely American yet not wholly either. Stuck in a red-white-and blue/schwarzrotgold reality that repeats as soon as you set foot on either soil.

This is some kind of real Double-stuffed Oreo chaos.

Two “permanent” addresses, 2 SIMcards, 2 driver’s licenses, 2 bank accounts with 2 unique passwords, (at least) 2 currencies at hand at all times,
2 sets of measuring cups in stainless steel so the numbers won’t wear off,
(oh boy!) 2 Christmases on two separate days, 2 calendars to track holidays (most of which you can’t actually observe), 2 ways of approaching any ailment (mit Kügelchen and real drugs), oh, and 2 type of iToy chargers.

Composed while sitting in a plane somewhere near 54° latitude, 40° longitude, flying over the Atlantic makes you smile in awe: An expat life is living the best of both worlds.

-Ericka Seifried

wasn’t as if we were from 2 totally different worlds. Germany and America: two leading, first-world nations. My father had studied German in college, so he had an appreciation for what I was getting into, right? We came from loving families with 2 parents (middle-class families with similar values, what luck finding someone whose parents stayed together and still loved each other!).

With his dreams of becoming a professor, he could find work anywhere (what university wouldn’t want a bright engineer with all that German know-how?) we could live 5 years here, the next 5 there. It’d be an exciting adventure, foreign and domestic. In 2006, Robert was invited to UC Berkeley to do a post-doctoral year – with me in tow. See, we’re doing it! Living the expat’s dream: a year in the Bay Area, with job security in Germany when it’s over. Wunderbar! But that didn’t last long. After a year of working with American academics, my then soon-to-be-husband realized the German academic environment had more to offer and more flexibility. So we decided to settle in Germany, get married, and soon we were blessed with a son. Together we decided that I would stop paying into U.S. Social security and make all future contributions to my German pension plan; after all, the German authorities were more forgiving when it came to back payments, penalties and interest. A future retirement in a socialist system was clearly a wiser choice. And once Felix was born, I took maternity leave, and we could have our cake and eat it too. For the next 5 years I could spend months in America with my not-yet school age child, extending vacations on a whim. Taking advantage of off-season flight prices a few times per year. Going to a hometown playground, introducing him to a real diner-style PBnJ with the crusts cut off, story time at the same library I’d been to as a child with my little one wrapped up in all those cool European organic baby clothes (look, he’s wearing a neckerchief and tights!)

Now having the best of both worlds has morphed to convincing my German family (continued on page 12)
Homing in on Hamburg
...and working to make it work
by Jennifer Kearns-Willerich

Before moving here, I called London home. It's an amazing city, with the moody wide Thames rolling through it; people of every shape, colour and size living there; and a devil-may-care attitude that, frankly, Hamburg could do a bit more to adopt (sorry, but it's true).

I loved London – and still do, clearly – but I found, once I became a mother of two, that I could no longer keep up with the pace of working, keeping house, seeing friends and, well, just being me. I knew our family needed to change something: it didn't seem right to me that our kids spent nine hours a day, five days a week, in a nursery so that my husband and I could make a living. We needed to make a decision, and our decision was to move here to Hamburg, where my sister-in-law (my husband is German, in case I haven't mentioned) lives. Instant family + more space + finding a new career = happy Mum = happy family = happy life = oh, you get the idea…

Germany, with its forward-thinking attitude towards parent- and childhood – the government-endorsed three-year Elternzeit; later school starts (in the UK, as in the US, children start between 4-5); all that bloody Sachunterricht! – fit the bill in so many respects. And I hadn't given kicking my job to the curb in the UK a second thought. After all, my skills as a copy editor were well-honed; I had spent over a decade editing some of the UK's top women's magazines. Plus, I was ready to take a break – to focus on the kids and me, and to make the world a better place with my good energy.

Who was I kidding? It's not that easy to change, and no sooner had I arrived here, jobless, that I started thinking, "I need a job. Quick." All my fantasies about being home and dreaming up imaginative Pinterest-worthy crafts that I could do with my kids, growing a vegetable patch, perfecting my German, and using my time and energy to better the world through charitable actions dissipated like the money I had stored in my savings account. I turned into a version of myself that I did not recognise: one who envied the people around me, whether it was because they had jobs or because they could celebrate and enjoy being jobless. I was miserable – and I was miserable to be around.

Fast-forward two years and I've landed a job that I enjoy – and for the number of hours per week that seem to just about fit with also having a husband, a 4- and 7-year-old, (new) friends, and (not enough) German-language learning. Of course, all the old stresses and strains have returned as well: cobbled-together dinners that the "perfect mother" in me despairs of; hanging up laundry at 11pm when all I want to desperately do is go to sleep; going a day without saying little more to my husband than: "Have the girls brushed their teeth?" But in my head I feel more like me, and that surely makes me a better mother, wife and friend.

Strictly Fictional Limerick

A north German lady, Frau Tege,
declared “It is all about Pflege!”
Poshly polished and prim,
pampered, perfectly trim;
So gepflegt was impressive Frau Tege.

An Iowa girl, Emma Dunn,
said “that’s great, dear, but how ’bout the fun?”
So they took shoes in hand,
wiggled toes in the sand,
and went wading, down by Övelgönne.

If Frau T. grew or changed is unknown.
Of the beach, she complained with a groan:
“I had bugs in my hair,
sticky sand EVERYwhere,
and my handbag was scratched on a stone!”

Ms. Dunn though, impressed by Frau Tege,
soon paid much more attention to Pflege.
But her lack of dishevel
never quite reached the level
attained by near-perfect Frau Tege

(and she asked herself, “Is it to be?
It requires, as I’m starting to see,
ot just style, panache
and hard work, but hard cash! --
bucketloads! -- to keep up with Frau T.”)

There’s a lesson somewhere in here, too,
(Taking humor and courage, it’s true):
to learn when (though it’s tough!)
to say, “I am enough!
But I bow to what’s great about you.”

-Laura Otto
Two Worlds
by Birgit Schrumpf

After trying to describe what is the „best” of two worlds, I ended up by thinking about the “difference” of two worlds that I have experienced.

1. Let’s start with the climate. On the tip of Africa, in Cape Town, the winter is about three months long, during the time we in the north have summer: June, July, August. Temperatures can drop to about 4 – 8°C. This is more like Hamburg’s autumn weather, except that even in winter there are warm days with bright sunshine and blue skies. Most houses have no proper heating system installed, nor double-glazed windows, as it doesn’t seem to be worth it. This means, when it is wet and windy outside you sit either in front of an electric heater or fireplace, which heats up your front but your back stays cold and so does the rest of the house. Moving around indoors you look dressed for the ski slopes in order to stay warm. Here comes the difference when living in Hamburg with a much colder winter: with great pleasure I am just turning the knob of my Zentralheizung and within minutes I can enjoy the warm and cozy temperature of 20°C, not caring about the howling wind and rain outside. What bliss!

2. In Cape Town our bedroom opened out onto the garden. One morning, when shaking out the bedding after airing it, an 8 cm long yellow scorpion was clumsily crawling out from under the covers with its poisonous tail ready to strike. This had me jumping rather fast out of the door. Luckily, my husband came to my rescue. He even managed to catch it in a jam jar so that the experts at the museum could tell us which species it was. But we knew enough about these creatures to look around the bedroom for its mate as they always come as a couple. And sure enough, we found number two struggling against the wardrobe door. No such excitement when living in Hamburg. All I usually see when placing my bed covers for airing on the windowsill is a little brown squirrel jumping from the tree and eagerly crossing the lawn to run up the next tree.

3. When my then 12-year-old daughter came running into the house shouting: “Mama, Mama, there is a snake in the garage,” I didn’t believe it at first. We lived in a newly built-up area with bushes behind us but I had never seen a snake in the surrounding area. But she was right. The snake tried to hide under some logs of wood. There had been fires on Table Mountain which had disturbed the animals and they were looking for shelter and water, probably haved smelled the swimming pools. With a stick and shielding sunglasses (sometimes snakes can spit) my husband slowly and patiently managed to catch the frightened serpent. Family and neighbors watched in a respectful distance. I must add: There are plenty of snakes in the Cape Peninsula, on the mountains as well as in the sandy dunes along the coast but it took seven years of living in the country before we came across our first one. It was sunning itself on the hot roof of our camping car.

Living in Hamburg, I don’t have a garage for animals to hide in. I can watch people walking their dogs along my road after breakfast. Here the only annoyance is when dog owners don’t clean up after their darlings.

Photos: Birgit writes, “Luckily this was not the deadly poisonous spitting cobra snake. Tanja is bravely holding the jaws of the snake closed so that it cannot get the sharp fangs into her finger. Daddy Klaus caught the snake with a stick and it was put into a sack to deliver to a ‘snake handler’ who catches and collects them.”

(continued on page 14)
Tchaikovsky: the best of both worlds in opera and song
by Elizabeth R.

The Opera Club is currently studying Tchaikovsky’s opera “Eugene Onegin” as well as a selection of his art songs.

Nutcracker, Romeo & Juliet, 1812 Overture… who doesn’t know the music of Tchaikovsky? His ballet and orchestral works are widely performed and dearly loved throughout the world. However, at least among Western audiences, this familiarity comes to an abrupt halt when it comes to Tchaikovsky’s vocal music.

I had certainly never heard any of these works for most of my life. However, as my interest in opera has developed and grown over the last several years, it was inevitable that I would soon come into contact with Tchaikovsky’s operatic masterpieces. At a concert here in Hamburg a few years ago, I heard a brilliantly-performed version of a moving aria from “Eugene Onegin”. At this moment, the door to Russian vocal music was flung wide open for me, and I haven’t looked back since.

I firmly believe that Tchaikovsky’s operas and songs are infrequently performed in the Western world due to the extremely unfamiliar sounds of their Russian texts. It certainly has nothing to do with their quality, which is outstanding. But this Slavic language is much more challenging for our Western ears to process than, say, Italian or French. Accessing the music’s beauty requires getting past the distraction of vastly different accents and rhythms. However, a little bit of ear-tuning via listening can overcome this obstacle nicely.

Whatever the language, Tchaikovsky speaks to me so clearly. His art songs, known as romances, are as powerful as his operas. These short works sing the passions and longings of people from another century, country, culture, class, etc. with no connection whatsoever to me — but, no matter, when I hear this music, I feel transformed into these characters with my consciousness stretching across time and physical space. How did this complicated, socially awkward composer understand how to create such an effect?

However he accomplished this, for me, Tchaikovsky’s songs and operas are musically “the best of both worlds”: namely, they perfectly link the Western musical culture I know so well to the fascinating, exuberant, passionate world of Russian vocal music. I can only be grateful for this timeless gift.
On Valentine’s Day, seven gallant couples – Sandra and Uwe, Tracy and Dietmar, Anna and Dmitry, Chris and Wolfgang, Mary Frances and Stefan, Nina and Julian, and Andrea and Helmut – met for a Dance Workshop. Some of us already had years of experience twinkling our toes, others were just beginners, but we all enjoyed this chance to connect and mesh with the help of eyes, gestures and movement, flowing with music in each other’s company on a very special day. More dance sessions are in the works, so be on the lookout for future classes learning new ways to “cut a rug” as we gear up for the 60th anniversary gala in September! (Anna S.)

“T” (Tomorrowland, cont’d from page 11)
that Thanksgiving is more than just dinner, integrating an Advent’s calendar and wreath into our heterogeneous family traditions, hosting my nephew during an exchange year, making Spätzle for my parents, and sharing all these life-changing experiences with new friends in the AWCH. What a charmed life! ❖

(Two worlds, cont’d from page 13)
I will finish with a “curiosity” that strikes my visitors from South Africa as strange. They all find it amazing to see dogs with their owners dining in a restaurant, never mind what size. My friends are used to dogs at home, in the garden or at the farm, but it is unheard of taking them to restaurants.

Well, these are some of the differences I have experienced “living in two worlds.” ❖

“February 14, 2016”

“I learned that I have forgotten a lot of the waltz figures and that it is not that easy to dance with another partner after having danced solely with your husband for over 25 years.” -Tracy, who met her Dietmar at dance lessons in Hannover in 1988.

“Excellent teacher! Normally I feel very self-conscious in situations like that, but both of them made me feel much more relaxed and much less self-conscious than I thought I would be. Can we have a repeat, please, please, please?!?” -Sandra

“It was a fun afternoon with people we don't see that often, so it wasn't only just about the dancing, it was about having fun.” -Tracy

“We learned (to dance) as teenagers and I danced for a few years then, but we both haven't danced since then... It was very interesting and a little bit challenging, especially since we never took dance lessons together. Very much enjoyed it and would love to do it again.” -Chris

“Well, these are some of the differences I have experienced “living in two worlds.” ❖
Tracy M., AWCH member since March 1998

Who was the first member of AWCH you talked to?
Becky Tan, who is still my AWCH role model. She is always smiling, happy to meet and help new members, talk to older members who can no longer come to events.

Which groups or projects have you been involved in during your years in AWCH? What was the most interesting?
I began by picking up the monthly issues of Currents from the printer in Niendorf, packing them up and mailing them. I had two small children at home and this was a job I could do that suited me and was also helpful to the club. I was the membership chair for a total of 4 years and FAWCO Rep also for 4 years. Now, I organize the From the Heart Working Bee and attend Stitch n Bitch and other events.

Who would you invite to attend the AWCH Diamond Celebration Party?
Past Members still living in HH.

Tina G., a member of AWCH for about 6 years

Who was the first member of AWCH you talked to?
I’m not sure who was exactly the first person but I know Becky was one of my first and Beth M.

Which groups or projects have you been involved in during your years in AWCH?
For many years I served on the board as activities manager. I loved this function even if it was a lot of work. I’ve been to all the events, met all new members… At some point it became too time consuming for me and now I come for events once in a while. I wish I could come to more but often they collide with my schedule.

Who would you invite to attend the AWCH Diamond Celebration Party?
Past Members still living in HH.

If you were to organize a committee or a group within our Club, who would you have invited to help?
There are so many great and helpful women that it would depend on the subject who I would ask.

* What three words do you associate with the AWCH?
Petra R., member since 2014

Who was the first member of AWCH you talked to?
The first ones were Tracy M and Shawn K. They are actually the reason why I decided to join the club. We had a great chat at a dinner at the U. S. Consulate Generals’ place and this is the first time I had heard that even non-Americans can apply for membership.

Which groups or projects have you been involved in during your years in AWCH? What was the most interesting?
I have helped at a couple of events and started working on a couple of projects but that’s not really how I started. I had become a member and the first event I attended was the AGM 2015. The secretary position was open and on the same evening Laura O and I got elected to this position. We then started working on getting an idea of what this all involves and what we can bring to the position. So the things I had worked on was Social Media, the website and various projects. When I returned from my world trip in September we had the Membership Chair position which needed to be filled and I took on this responsibility as I had time and energy for it.

If you were to organize a committee or a group within our Club, who would you have invited to help?
There are so many members with a huge variety of backgrounds. I think there’s always someone who’s interested to help in something.

Who would you invite to attend the AWCH Diamond Celebration Party?
The entire club, previous members, members from other English speaking clubs, some press and media, Hamburg city council.

... continued on page 16

Regina D., a member of AWCH for nearly 21 years

Who was the first member of AWCH you talked to?
One of the first persons of the AWC I talked to was Barbara H M. We had a Club lunch at a restaurant in Rothenbaumchaussee in June 1995 and when I left I was in a really good mood. I liked the lively and friendly atmosphere among the ladies right from the beginning. I joined the Club shortly afterwards and in September 1997 I had my first organization job: The AWC Hamburg’s orientation. It took place at the Landesfrauenrat.

Which groups or projects have you been involved in during your years in AWCH? What was the most interesting?
Secretary of the AWCH Board 2003/2004 and 2004/2005
New Members’ Events Organizer 2005-2014
Hamburger Helper Coordinator 2008-2014
It was both an honour and an immense pleasure for me to organize events for long-term, new and prospective members of the AWCH. It all started with Tracy as Membership Chair. I also worked closely and very well with the AWC Membership Chairs Brenda, Kate, Jess and Brooke. It was all real fun!

If you were to organize a committee or a group within our Club, who would you have invited to help?
I would probably ask the ladies listed above and some of my other long-term Club friends. But to be honest: I think it is great that many of the younger ladies who have not been in our Club for decades are involved and are taking responsibility now. This makes it all much more interesting!

... continued on page 16
...continued from pages 14 - 15

Tracy M.
school year abroad. 2nd is FAWCO. I love being involved in an organization as me, Tracy. Not Tracy as a mom or Tracy as a wife, not Tracy as an employee.

Which music inspires you most?
I like music that makes me move because I love to dance!

What book have you read and reread many times?
I can (and have) reread the Dr. Herriot “All Creatures” series. I also enjoy rereading comics. My favs are Calvin and Hobbes, The Far Side and Matt Groening’s Life is Hell and School is Hell.

What movie would you see again and again?
I watch Sense and Sensibility many times a year and my family’s go-to movie for fun and silly quotable lines is Despicable Me I & II. Lipstick Taser!

Tina G.
Describe a place in your childhood or adolescence you long to come back or to revisit.
Most influential for me was my year as exchange student. At 16 I went to the US (NY) and went to high school for one year. I was even allowed to graduate. This was a life-changing experience for me and gave me so much even until today that it would take up several pages to describe them all.

Regina D.
Who would you invite to attend the AWCH Diamond Celebration Party?
I would invite long-term members who had been active and helpful in our Club in the past. They may have left the Club or may not be active now for personal reasons – but it would be lovely to see them again at the AWCH Diamond Celebration Party.

What was the most outstanding project you had last year?
I have joined the project “Dialog in Deutsch” of the Öffentliche Bücherhallen in Hamburg. We help immigrants to Germany to practice the German language. This is very enjoyable and rewarding.

Which area draws your attention at the moment?
Like everybody these days I am very much concerned about the refugee crisis. This is the challenge of our time.

Petra R.
Do you have something special planned for 2016?
Well, since 2015 was a year full of changes for me already I could totally live with settling down a bit again. Maybe find a new job and get started there. Anything else will come as it is.

What was so special about 2015?
Since the company I had worked for almost 15 years restructured last year and my job was made redundant I had made the decision to take a time out and travel the world. So I decided to go to places I hadn’t been able to go to before – Hawaii, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Best decision ever. Yes, I could have taken on another job and not be looking for something new. Yes, I could have saved a lot of money by simply staying home. But I would never have met such wonderful people and seen such wonderful places and experienced as many wonderful things as I have. I’m pretty sure this was the best decision for my little soul!

What music inspires you most?
I listen to all kinds of music – from classics with David Garrett over New Country with the Rascal Flatts to Rock with my alltime favorite Lenny Kravitz.

What book do you read and reread many times?
Harry Potter is something I can always read and re-read. And I do enjoy Grimm’s fairy tales.

What movie would you see again and again?
Definitely Dirty Dancing. And I have to say La Boom. Both parts. That’s what was the big deal during my teenage years. My mom even videotaped La Boom for me, but now it’s also appeared on DVD. Big YAY!

Interviews by Anna Sizorina
From the Heart Pillow Project

On Monday, February 22, a Heart Pillow Working Bee took place at Tracy M.’s with 13 AWCH members participating. A total of 60 pillows were finished with 50 more cut, sewn and ironed – to be finished when more stuffing is available! The AWC Hamburg has been working on the From the Heart Pillow Project for several years. These pillows in the shape of a heart are placed under the arm, helping post-operative breast cancer patients to relieve pressure and pain. In the past AWC Hamburg has donated 160 pillows, which were made during four different sewing bees, to breast cancer patients at local hospitals and most recently at the Mariahilf Breast Cancer Clinic. This year all materials were purchased through a donation from the AWCH. A special thank you to Andrea H., Tracy M., Jana F., Petra R., Jess M., Birgit S., Susan S-W., Sandra S., Laura O., Martina H., Monika M., Sylvia T., and Stella K-R. for their wonderful work! (Carol Strametz)

Photos by Jess Mancuso
Sixty years of AWC Hamburg. Who has been around that long? Often club members join, learn the ropes of living in Hamburg and make a few close friends. That’s all they need, so they do not rejoin. Some move away.

A quick look through the 1995 membership directory shows that at least 25 of our present members joined 20 years ago and stayed loyal to the club. Even less common is a membership of 30 years or more; 15 of these members are listed in the 1985 directory. Why do people renew their membership so faithfully? Read below about five such members whose total club membership adds up to 208 years!

**Nancy F.** arrived in Hamburg in 1975 and joined the next year. She missed the U.S. and the opportunity to speak English. She was looking for Americans with a common background and found it in the handicraft group. Along the way her daughter Kirsten also won a major FAWCO scholarship! Later on Nancy also discovered the German-American Women’s Club with the advantage that the members did not move away quite so quickly, so that her newfound friends were still around a few years later. Although Nancy is occupied with family matters, she still very much appreciates knowing what the club is doing, what’s going on in Hamburg, e.g., consulate services and movie reviews. She appreciates a printed version of Currents Magazine.

**Thelma F.** joined in 1978 seven years after her arrival in 1971. She was looking for an opportunity for her four children to play in an English-speaking atmosphere, to recognize that English is not “foreign” and should be a part of their lives. She discovered the club’s playgroup and also attended the monthly luncheons, the club’s main activity. After a four-year stay in Berlin, she returned to Hamburg and continued her membership, starting with Currents proofreading. She was the FAWCO rep for two years and attended probably six FAWCO conferences with a highlight in Casablanca. She was club president. For several years, she (and Becky Tan) regularly visited Americans, who were serving time in Hamburg’s “Santa Fu” prison in Hamburg-Fühlsbüttel. She still enjoys meeting up with Americans and participates in the club’s film group and proofreading.

**Freda P.** arrived in 1977 and also joined just one year later after learning about the club from a friend. She organized and hosted the handicraft group, as well as a museum group. She also likes to keep tabs on club activities and enjoys reading a printed Currents (which she can take into the bathroom for as long as she likes). She considers the AWC “an incredibly important life line, a help line. One can make friends very quickly, until one finally then does have German friends. The AWC club members are on the same wavelength. We have so much in common.” She especially enjoys changes that new members bring to the club with their interests and enthusiasm, for example, the club’s relatively new opera group. Freda is also a member of BRIDFAS.

**Carol B.** came to Hamburg in 1966 and joined in 1968 for the club’s only activity: lunch once a month. She was a member for four years, moved to Berlin, returned and immediately rejoined in 1977. She considers the club to be her
“anchor” and needs the relaxed camaraderie of the members (“who can also understand my jokes”). She also hopes that the younger members can benefit from her years of experience. Naturally, the club needs Carol, considering her service as FAWCO rep (her favorite “job”) for four years, three-time member of the FAWCO board, as well as club president, vice-president, and secretary. She was one of the originators of the club’s publications of *Hamburg in Your Pocket*, *Bloom Where You’re Planted* and the club cookbook – a compilation of recipes from her newsletter column, “Made in Germany.”

**Becky T.** arrived in 1964 and joined seven years later in 1971, after she decided that she needed a psychiatrist to survive and the club was recommended instead. After 50 years in Hamburg, her best friends are still AWC club members. There is something to be said for the idea that common backgrounds attract and hold together. She was club president, on the FAWCO board (also serving as president), has attended many FAWCO conferences, and was Currents Magazine editor. At the moment she oversees the club’s film group.

These are just five examples of long-term memberships. We would certainly hear similar stories from Nancy (K.) B., Sara G., Barbara H-M., Heidi K., Irmgard Z., Debbie O., Natalie W., Maria R., Margaret N. S. and Allene (S.) P., all long-time members for more than 30 years. (Becky Tan)

*The 88th Academy Awards party*

Many thanks to Nancy T., who opened her apartment and shared her huge TV screen with 19 film fans who gathered to see the 88th Oscar awards ceremony. Nancy had stayed up all night recording the events! We gathered at 9 a.m. to sit and eat and cheer and compare lists. Everyone had to promise not to watch the news beforehand. Nancy made her own Oscar statues out of Lego and awarded them to the winners with the most correct answers on their Oscar ballot: Shelly S., Laura L. and Ericka S. Out of 24 awards our highest winner guessed 14 correctly. Stella K-R. was the winner of the Oscar Bingo game, provided by Tracy M. (Rebecca T)

*Pictures from top:* watching intently; TV with Moderator Chris Rock; Birgit S., Jenny M. and Thelma F. at the buffet; good food; Laura L., Shelly S., and Ericka S. with their trophies; winner Shelly S. holds a photo of Leonardo di Caprio (winner, Best Actor).
To help mark our Diamond Jubilee, the AWCH is kicking off a series of events this year called “Lunch ’N Learn”. Each “Lunch ’N Learn” activity will involve two parts: first, you will be able to participate in a short presentation, demonstration or hands-on educational session on an interesting, informative and fun topic; second, you will be able to partake in a lovely luncheon, either hosted or potluck style. “Lunch ’N Learn” series are nothing new, but we are delighted to be able to add this to the AWCH’s outstanding repertoire of programming and events.

Our first “Lunch ’N Learn” took place in February and the theme was “Harlem Renaissance Women: Black Diamonds” in celebration of both Black History Month (February) and the AWCH’s Diamond Jubilee Year. Hosted by Ericka S. (with Activities Chair Rachelle B. serving as co-host) and taking place at her home, this “Lunch ’N Learn” featured a potluck luncheon and a presentation on black women writers, artists, musicians, scholars and others who made significant contributions to arts and culture in Harlem, New York, between the end of World War I and the middle of the 1930s. During this period Harlem was a cultural center, making the Harlem Renaissance a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement that kindled a new black cultural identity in the United States and worldwide.

“Lunch ’N Learn” is informative as well as interactive, and looks for more to come throughout 2016 and beyond. If you’d like to have an idea and would like to host a future Lunch ’N Learn session, send it to: activities@awchamburg.org

Dear Ericka, Thank you for this and for teaching us so much about such fabulous women! I definitely learned something and I am looking forward to exploring the topic more... - Laura L.

...Never did Ericka lose her cool, albeit jet-lagged, as a bunch of gabby gals arrived in dribbles. She graciously arranged that all the delectable delights made it to the table, while setting up her presentation. Also, to Rachelle who was taking care of lots.

The Harlem Renaissance is a fascinating topic; it must have been challenging whittling a long list of worthy women down to a few. Ericka kept the presentation focused, and it worked out well having the lunch break. Lovely!. - Marinell H.

Picasso. Window to the World

Bucerius Kunst Forum
www.buceriuskunstforum.de

Through May 16, 2016

It is astounding to see some of the early works of Pablo Picasso painted in a rather traditional manner. Picasso (1881-1973) is best known for breaking the rules of traditional painting and introducing cubism to the art world. The small canvas “Interior” painted by 19 years old Picasso inspired Dr. Ortrud Westheider, director of Bucerius Kunst Forum, to investigate the motif of the window in Picasso’s oeuvre. The exhibit Picasso, Window to the World, is the first show to focus on this central motif and brings together 40 art works from all periods of the artist’s career.

Even in Picasso’s early art windows are not just everyday objects. By concealing a window with a curtain or blocking it with a canvas, he placed it on equal footing with painting. The view from his studio window as shown in this enthralling exhibit was a motif for the artist from the first small studio in Barcelona to the fantastic Villa La Californie in Cannes. Picasso no longer used windows to frame a realistic scene, as done since the Renaissance times, but instead to represent the gateway between him and his world. This can also be observed in his late work, in which he included his own reflection when exploring the window motif.

50 iconic photographs of Picasso by Robert Doisneau, Edward Quinn and David Douglas Duncan supplement the exhibit. There is also a 15-minute film showing a short interview with Picasso and statements of fellow artists and contemporaries. For example, a charming Jean Miró tells about a visit to Picasso’s mother, who told him that already as a small boy Picasso was painting: on the bathroom mirror with shaving crème.
RAYMOND PETTIBON
HOMO AMERICANUS

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

Through September 11, 2016

More than seven hundred drawings and hundreds of flyers, record covers and fanzines as well as films, paintings and wall drawings by the American artist Raymond Pettibon (born 1957) are on view at the Falckenberg Collection/Deichtorhallen.

Raymond Pettibon is a mythologist who takes up and subverts the distinctive narratives of the American culture from Woodstock via the presidencies to the war against terrorism. The artist’s area of expression is drawings, in which he sporadically combines images and texts. Since the end of the 1970s he has probably produced more than 20,000 sheets. On top of that he created films, paintings and artist’s books as well as flyers and record covers for punk rock bands and fanzines.

In the 1980s Pettibon’s subjects were the decay of hippie culture, murder and suicide in the drug scene as well as the repression by the established society. This is complemented by the examination of family, race and gender relationships, religiosity and the Vietnam War. In the early drawings, he works with bitter, precisely placed punch lines. Later, the literary dimension of the work with references to 19th century poetry prevails, until his oeuvre culminates again in large-format, colorful drawings, in which – disillusioned and angry – he sharply criticizes George W. Bush’s policies and the US war in the Iraq.

OPENING HOURS AND GUIDED TOURS (also in English)
The Falckenberg Collection is located in Hamburg-Harburg. The exhibition can only be visited by booking a guided tour: Thu and Fri 6 p.m., Sa 12 a.m. + 3 p.m., Sun 12 a.m., 3 + 5 p.m.
NEW: Open every first Sunday of the month from 12 a.m. – 5 p.m., no registration required

BRILLIANT DILLETANTES
SUBCULTURE IN GERMANY IN THE 1980S

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

Through April 30, 2016

A garden hose with a clarinet mouthpiece, an exhaust pipe turned saxophone and a plastic container with Lego bricks; those are just some of the instruments played by the German underground band Ornament und Verbrechen. In 1981 a festival took place in Berlin’s Tempodrom with the willfully misspelt title, Geniale Dilletanten (Brilliant Dilletantes). That name was to
become synonymous with this early 1980s German subculture. Bands with hilarious names such as Die tödliche Doris (The Deadly Doris), Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft (D.A.F.) (German-American Friendship) and Einstürzende Neubauten (Collapsing New Buildings) deliberately used German names and lyrics in order to set themselves apart from the English-language music mainstream.

In the early 1980s, an alternative art scene had developed in the underground of West Berlin and attracted international attention and recognition with its vociferous protest and calculated provocation. Rather than focusing on mastery in their art, the artists aimed at organizing their own artistic environment according to a raucous do-it-yourself spirit. They found their own record labels, magazines, galleries and clubs, and started to produce records and cassettes independently.

The lively and informative exhibit Brilliant Dilletantes provides insights into the multiple interconnections between the individuals involved, and shows how artists from all genres in the visual arts, film, fashion and design influenced one another. There are over 250 art works, including paintings, photographs, objects representing art, design and fashion, records, music cassettes, audio stations, music, magazines and fanzines, posters, band films and an interview film produced especially for the show.

Especially the interview film (English subtitles) by Mathilde Weh is an invaluable and entertaining introduction to the topic. It is also great fun to see how those rebellious youngsters look today. The exhibit has overall English wall texts and explanations, unfortunately not always available at exhibits in Hamburg.
In Hamburg

American Women's Club of Hamburg

Also at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe

Unterm Strich

Through April 10, 2016

By Shelly Schoeneshoefer

Dr. Jürgen Döring, who is responsible for the graphic and poster collection at the MK&G introduced Christoph Niemann after explaining that he first saw an exhibition of his work in Vienna and was so impressed with the images that he decided that he had to do the same here in Hamburg. Niemann started surprisingly young when you check out all the work he has done. He has written a number of children’s books and has worked for the New Yorker Magazine since 2008. He was born in Waiblingen, Germany, and lived 11 years in New York. He currently lives in Berlin with his wife and two sons. Niemann is an illustrator, graphic designer and author all rolled into one.

His work is universal and he often uses ideas that could even appeal to the youngest of audiences, such as using cookie dough or gummi bears to express feelings or ideas. His style appears very simple, but he uses clever ideas to make the message readable on an international level. He said that at the beginning of his work he would be presented with an idea and then would create something to illustrate it. Now he has gone a step further and is taking objects and looking to see what they have to offer such as the work Leaves on Paper, which were leaves that he just found on the street. I can highly recommend this exhibit to all of us who love reading the New Yorker, and for all of us with children who should experience a fun exhibit at a museum and for anyone else who wants to see where one can go with just an idea.

AND SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO:

Discover the new Hamburger Kunsthalle from April 30, 2016 on!

Top left: Christoph Niemann (*1970), T-Rex, Sunday Sketches, 2015, Print, Mixed Media, 24 x 26 cm, © Christoph Niemann

Christoph Niemann (*1970), The Gummy Bear Chronicles, 2014, Mixed Media, © Christoph Niemann
Mirror, Mirror, on my feet…

Snow White’s Evil Queen would absolutely love the new Spring Trend of this year’s fashion world. The material, leather or synthetic, shows a variety of all colors of the rainbow this season. The biggest colors to watch are silver and rose gold but don’t be afraid to go AWOL and try out blue, green or pink. Please don’t think this is too extreme. The metallic colors are everywhere and there is no escape from the fantastically polished mirror materials. The best shoe style to try out this new season is the trendy lace up shoe. Different outsoles will make it suitable for any age group. Wear with a simple and elegant black outfit, slim slacks, a plain black shirt, and you are ready to go anywhere from a Gallery opening, to shopping downtown or taking a walk through the park. For all the ladies out there just a little too shy to combine two trends at once, try metallic on an elegant high heel. It’s a very sophisticated look and you are sure to be the head-turner at any event. But if all else fails, just... smile. That’s the super hot trend this spring worn by only the very fab fashionistas! ;-)

What We’re Reading:

Neil Gaiman
The Ocean at the End of the Lane

“People should be scared of Ursula Monkton.”
“P’raps. What do you think Ursula Monkon is scared of?”
“Dunno. Why do you think she’s scared of anything? She’s a grown-up, isn’t she? Grown-ups and monsters aren’t scared of things.”

“Oh, monsters are scared,” said Lettie. “That’s why they’re monsters. And as for grown-ups…” She stopped talking, rubbing her freckled nose with a finger. Then, “I’m going to tell you something. Grown-ups don’t look like grown-ups on the inside either. Outside, they’re big and thoughtless and they know what they’re doing. Inside, they look just like they always have. Like they did when they were your age. The truth is, there aren’t any grown-ups. Not one, in the whole wide world.”
She thought for a moment. Then she smiled. “Except for Granny, of course.”

Take equal parts Susan Cooper, Italo Calvino, Madelyn L’Engle, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez; pour in your own precise observations, quite a bit of abject terror and some wise comfort to cover; stir well. Repeatedly inject crackling imagination on full power to bring the mixture to a barely controlled simmer, alternating with a rolling boil. Sustain over several hours, then let cool slightly. Add a generous pinch of personal magic and leave your creation to ferment overnight on a moonlit windowsill. When the mixture has turned a glowing gold with ominous chilly veins of ash- to charcoal grey, press with great care through a fine, clean linen cloth to yield one small, concentrated story. Properly made, it will swirl and pulse at the bottom of the jar like a dream freshly netted in giant country1, or a wormhole to another world2. In fact, it is both of these things. Fasten your golden-grey story between the covers of a slender novel; with a bit of luck it may resemble The Ocean at the End of the Lane, by Neil Gaiman. Highly recommended for readers from about 13 years to adult by this 40-year-old (child). (Laura Otto)

1Raold Dahl 2Neil Gaiman

What We’re Wearing:

DANKE DANKE to Adrian Schoeneshoefer, who won the Currents contest of interpreting the slogans on Hamburg’s red trash containers. His answers were:
1. Do you want to throw it away? (Willst du es mir entsorgen?)
2. I am a cup of emptiness. (Ich bin der Becher der Entleerten.)
3. Garbage welfare and housing. (Artgerechte Müllhaltung)
4. Hamburg’s smallest dump. (Hamburgs kleinste Müllkippe)
5. The best is saved for last. (Das Beste für die Reste)
6. Cigarettes belong in prison. (Kippen gehören eingelocht!)

- Thanks very much, Becky
Son of Saul *****

Hungary 2015
Opening March 10, 2016

Directed by László Nemes
Writing credits: László Nemes, Clara Royer
Principle actors: Géza Röhrig, Levente Molnár, Urs Rechn

Son of Saul begins in chaos, with sounds of screaming officers and images of people being forced to move. Saul Auslander (Röhrig), a Hungarian Jew, is forced to work in the extermination factory, taking corpses to the ovens and then disposing of the ashes. The moment Saul hears that a young boy has survived the gas chamber, he is spiritually awakened and his life has a purpose. The Nazis kill the boy and demand an autopsy. Something snaps deep inside Saul; he now believes this boy is his son and is willing to risk everything to make sure that he receives a decent burial.

The majority of the film focuses on Saul, which results in a “tunnel vision” effect. All the terrible events that lurk in the corners of his mind also affect ours. Director Nemes gives us a very realistic view of someone who is dealing with this situation under a state of shock. Our minds start to deny what we are seeing and we can relate to Saul and his excruciating circumstances. The film’s soundtrack is very important; it is loud and displeasing. There is never a peaceful moment and the characters never have the luxury of having space for themselves. Nemes, who is a young 38 years old, said, “We cannot forget our past. Right now is a crucial time in our history since most of the people who lived through the Holocaust are either dead or soon will be gone. Since we did not go through the experience or have someone there to tell us what happened, we will lose sight of what must it have been like to survive a concentration camp like Auschwitz.” Some of the source material came from manuscripts called the Scrolls of Auschwitz, which Nemes came across some ten years ago and which moved him so much that he had to make this film. The Son of Saul won the Grand Prize at last year’s Cannes Film Festival and stands a good chance of winning an Oscar®.

(Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

Ask Anna:

Love Sense
A baby is born into the family. Ideally, a child receives love, attention and care from the people around it not only to survive the first years, but also to develop into a fully functioning, emotionally stable person. It is no longer a secret that children are attached to their parents no matter how the parents behave. These first interactions within the close circle shape their views on themselves and on others. Later, in adolescent years, they rebel to break free and restructure the existing relationships with their parents, in order to, finally, establish themselves as adults. And here they are: young, full of energy, free … and, apparently, not enough… Having loosened the family ties, they start looking for someone to share their life with. Why?

Human beings are not designed to live in isolation. The evolution shows that in order to stay alive, people need to stick together. Love is the greatest survival mechanism invented by Mother Nature. A couple, therefore, is the basic survival unit. Staying together means life, pleasure and relaxation, being alone represents danger and stress.

A conflict between a husband and a wife is all about connection: “Do you accept me the way I am (when he takes off his dirty shoes in the middle of the hallway)? Can you hear me (I told you one hundred times to put them into the closet!!)? Are you there for me (Every time I want to discuss this, you shut down!!)? Am I enough (I mowed the lawn, painted the garage door, and you are still not happy)?” The answer “No” means loneliness, isolation, and threat. And they fight, not against each other, but for their survival and connection. They struggle because it still matters. They wrangle to hear the answer: “Yes. I am here. You are very precious to me. I love you.”

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**Birnenkuchen mit Lavendel**  
(Le goût des merveilles) ***  
France, 2015  
Opening March 10, 2016

Directed by: Éric Besnard  
Writing credits: Éric Besnard  
Principal actors: Virginie Efira, Benjamin Lavernhe, Hervé Pierre

Ah, Provence. Orchards, fields of lavender, local markets, rustic kitchens. It’s all there in Birnenhuche mit Lavendel, which was filmed entirely in the village of Nyon in the Rhône-Alpes region.

Louise (Efira), recently widowed mother of two, runs a traditional orchard farm on her own; however, her lack of prospects and cash is rapidly forcing her into bankruptcy. On market day, after a couple of drinks at the bar and a reckless drive home, she collides with Pierre (Lavernhe) in the road outside her home. Pierre is at first a mystery: he refuses to leave, sorts out her kitchen, tastes the homemade cake, inspects the pear trees. Gradually this gentle man becomes a part of Louise’s life, and a love story develops between the two.

I was expecting the worst – that Pierre’s eccentric ticks and quirks would dominate the story – and then I was wonderfully surprised. Lavernhe is a theater actor at La Comédie Française, and his Pierre is a sweet, subtle and genuinely lovable character. Efira’s Louise seems ordinary in comparison, but her fighting spirit and her down-to-earth qualities makes her a good foil to Pierre. The rest of the family and the local bookseller Jules (Pierre) make up a cozy circle of locals I felt I had known forever.

This is a very pleasant way to spend a chilly day while waiting for the fruit trees to blossom. (Ann Gebauer-Thompson)

**Kung Fu Panda 3***  
China/USA 2016  
Opening March 17, 2016

Panda Po is back, practicing Kung Fu in his native China, which will soon be threatened by a great danger. After spending 500 years in the spirit world, the villain Kai wants to return and takeover the mortal world. Only Po can stop him, but even he must update his abilities, specifically, he must learn Chi, the energy that flows through all living things.

To Po’s great surprise, an older panda bear appears and claims to be his real father: Po’s loyalty to his adopted father, a goose, makes this a difficult situation. There is a conflict, but nothing compared to the greater problem of protecting the country.

They all go to a secret panda village, where Po can connect and learn Chi. A village full of pandas is rather tedious – all black and white, even when panda Mei Mei puts on a dancing costume. Luckily, Po’s loyal and quite colorful friends also show up: a snake, a monkey, a tiger, a praying mantis, a crane, and others. Naturally, all ends well with a positive moral to the story: “If you never do more than you can do, you will never be more than you are now.” The two fathers become the best of friends.

This is part three of an animated series, which first came out in 2008, followed by Part II in 2011. This third version is enjoyable and understandable, whether or not one has seen the prior films. The music is excellent; not surprising considering that it is composed by well-known German film composer Hans Zimmer and performed by pianist Lang Lang. At 95 minutes, the film is perfect for children of all ages. (Becky Tan)

**Trumbo****  
U.S.A 2015  
Opening: March 16, 2016

Directed by: Jay Roach  
Writing credits: John McNamara (screenplay), Bruce Cook (book)  
Principle actors: Bryan Cranston, Diane Lane, Helen Mirren, John Goodman, Alan Tudyk, Elle Fanning

During the Cold War the US congress wasn’t content without a ‘real’ war to fight overseas. So, they brought the fight against communism to Hollywood. The myth that motion pictures were spreading the red menace across the USA was ridiculous, but somehow it took hold of
Joy (Brie Larson) has been kidnapped as a teenager, sexually abused and gotten pregnant while in captivity. She has been cut off from any contact to the outside world and is confined to one windowless room with her now five-year-old son Jack (Jacob Tremblay). Though the film doesn’t lack suspense this isn’t a crime thriller; it is a moving and inspiring story about parenting but also about ‘reality’ and ‘perception’, told from the child’s perspective, with Oscar®-worthy performances, script (Emma Donoghue) and direction (Lenny Abrahamson). With maturity beyond her age, Joy has been able to spare Jack the nightmare that she lives every day and created a nurturing environment that not only is his whole world; he believes this is the world. She established a remarkable trust between them and taught him love and mindfulness for his surroundings by referring to each object without an adjective as if it was a given name: ‘Chair’, ‘Sink’, ‘Bed’, ‘TV’ or ‘Room’. When he starts acting up and questioning their situation, Joy realizes that they won’t be able to go on like this much longer and devises a plan to break free. (Carola)

Bach in Brazil ****
Brazil/Germany 2015
Opening March 24, 2016

Directed by Ansgar Ahlers
Writing credits: Ansgar Ahlers
Principle actors: Edgar Selge, Pablo Vini cius, Aldri Anunçiacao

Retired teacher Martin (Selge) inherits an original page of manuscript by J.S. Bach from an old friend who immigrated to Brazil. Martin must collect this inheritance in person; once in Brazil, he realizes that the language difference is a problem, especially after his papers, luggage, and the manuscript are stolen. A young man, Candido, agrees to help him, but only if Martin will leave his retirement to teach music to youngsters in a juvenile detention center. These kids are older than their years, used to fending for themselves. Although they have never had an opportunity to develop anything except a sense for survival, they have a natural talent for music. Martin opens new worlds, both figuratively (a new world in music) and literally (a new world in Germany) when they travel to Bückeburg for a performance. The ending is predictable, but the transformation of the street children and the lessons Martin learns from them are uplifting.

Bach in Brazil was filmed in Ouro Preto, Brazil, as well as in Bückeburg and Hamburg, Germany, and was partly financed by the Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig Holstein. This is director Ansgar Ahlers’ first film. At the 2015 Filmfest Hamburg he said, “One can achieve much with music. Also, I was interested in the contrasts between the German and the Brazilian culture, as well as between an older man and juvenile delinquents.” (Becky Tan)
(Though not everyone will appreciate the explicit language). But then Lolo’s pranks, too silly and too numerous, occupy way too much time before the film comes to a respectable end after all. Too bad, because its subject, the relationship between ‘generation X’ and its pampered and overprotected offspring, ‘generation Y’, is worth making fun of and the cast was well chosen. (Carola)

Lolo – Drei ist einer zu viel (Lolo) **1/2

France 2015
Opening March 17, 2016

Directed by: Julie Delpy
Writing credits: Julie Delpy & Eugénie Grandval
Principle actors: Julie Delpy, Dany Boon, Vincent Lacoste, Karin Viard

While on a wellness vacation in Southern France with her best friend Ariane (Karin Viard), 45-year-old Violette (Julie Delpy) falls in love with a local, Jean-René (Dany Boon). What starts out as a one-night-stand turns into something more, as software designer Jean-René reveals that he’s relocating to Paris with Violette.

The “one too many” (“Einer zu viel”) in the title refers not to Jean-René but rather Violette’s son Lolo (Vincent Lacoste), who has just moved back to ‘Hotel Mama’. This narcissistic 19-year-old ‘Peter Pan’ looks 14 and acts four, planning prank after prank to get rid of the man who threatens to become the number one in his mother’s life.

As can be expected – with solid comedy actors Julie Delpy (2 Days in Paris) and Dany Boon (Welcome to the Sticks) in the lead and Karin Viard (La Famille Bélier) as support – the film gets off to an entertaining start, with funny comments about the pick-up rituals and love life of today’s middle-aged professionals.

The Finest Hours ****

USA 2016
Opening March 31, 2016

Directed by: Craig Gillespie
Writing credits: Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy
Principle actors: Chris Pine, Casey Affleck, Ben Foster

Based on the non-fiction book, The Finest Hours by Casey Sherman and Michael J. Touogias, filmmaker Craig Gillespie brings this incredible story vividly to the screen.

Along the upper New England coastline, on February 18, 1952, a gigantic nor’easter hits, destroying everything in its path. This particular seaboard is a common route for huge oil tankers; five tankers are travelling the coast that day and two of the five 500-foot oil tankers are caught dead center in the eye of the storm.

The SS Pendleton and SS Fort Mercer, bound for Boston, Massachusetts and Portland, Maine, suffer intense damage. The storm rips both vessels in half, trapping most of their crews. First assistant engineer Ray Sybert (Casey Affleck), aboard the stern of the Pendleton, rallies his crew to work together to keep the ship afloat for as long as possible, hoping to be rescued.

The U.S. Coast Guard working the station in Chatham, Massachusetts, receives information that two tankers are in trouble. Those available at the station that night are next in line for the rescue. It is a death trap and each man knows it.

Warrant officer Daniel Cluff (Eric Bana) orders captain Bernie Webber (Chris Pine) to head to the tankers to search for survivors. Obedient to the call of duty, Webber and his three-man crew board their 36-foot motorized, wooden lifeboat, made to hold only twelve, and head for open waters.

To their amazement, in the middle of 70-foot waves, frigid temperatures and zero visibility, Webber and his crew spot half of the Pendleton tanker nudged up against a sandbank. Searching for life, they find 33 survivors lined along the top deck of the vessel.

They are overjoyed at the sight of men alive: at the same time, they are aware that their little boat is incapable of carrying all of the survivors even in calm seas. How will they choose just eight to rescue?

Two survivors are alive today who were directly involved in the February 18, 1952 mission: Coast Guard engineers Andy Fitzgerald and Mel “Gus” Gouthro. Both men, friends to this day, were instrumental in helping the filmmakers in the early stages of the film’s development to ensure the facts and details were authentic. The two remember the historic night as if it were yesterday. (Karen Pecota)
Who is Teaching What to Whom?
By Marinell Haegelin

Educating Rita by Willy Russell at English Theatre with Nicholas Humphrey directing

Rita’s a swell Liverpudlian with an itch to change. Not like her customers at the hair salon; no, Rita knows to change it’s really gotta’ be from the inside out. Twenty-six and married, she daringly decides to take a course at the Open University in preparation for sitting exams in English Literature. When she enters the Professor’s office, her honest and appraising life approach and quirky personality is a breath of fresh air for the middle-age Frank. He’s only tutoring to pay for drink. Initially, they ram heads: he, about bad use of the English language, and she, “walking around looking like an ol’ scruff bag.” Rita’s working class, where “there’s more culture in yogurt” while cynical Frank hasn’t written a poem in years. Still, impressed by his cultured bohemian and the University, she’s sure education will bring more in confidence, and future endeavors. Rita’s determination undermines Frank’s disenchantment with teaching and life. Time passes; Frank’s tutelage is adaptable and she works hard; discussions become more evenly balanced.

Meeting after the summer break—Frank, Europe, and Rita, London—her transformations and academic prowess couldn’t be more obvious. What Franks sees though, is a reflection of the pseudo-academia culture he’s sick of. Frank’s tumble changes everything, just as his assessment and a classmate’s actions open Rita’s eyes. They realize the limitless possibility of choice is knowledge worth having and sharing.

The English dramatist, composer, and lyricist Willy Russell draws on his background—life experiences—in his plays. Educating Rita (1980), his second successful play is semi-autobiographical; he wrote the screenplay for the 1983 film with Michael Caine and Julie Walters who received an Oscar® nomination. Fluctuating between musicals, theatre, and television, Russell is best known for Shirley Valentine (1986), Blood Brothers (1983), Our Day Out (aired in 1977), and One Summer (first episode aired in 1983). The Wrong Boy is his first novel and was published in 2000.
THE AMERICAN WOMEN’S CLUB OF HAMBURG

In 1956, a small group of American women began meeting once a month in each other’s homes, and founded the American Women’s Club of Hamburg. Since then the growing club has met for monthly luncheons at restaurants, at the Amerika Haus, and presently at a private club to accommodate the burgeoning membership. The February luncheon is traditionally a big affair combined with the British and Commonwealth Ladies’ Luncheon Club, and features a fashion show. The meetings of the AWG take place on the second Wednesday of the month (except in July and August when we do not meet), with the Board of Officers meeting the following Monday.

We have been a regular member of FAWCO since 1976. As of January 1985, we are just under 200 members, 25% of whom are Associate Members. Full Members hold American passports, are married to American citizens, have American children, or are non-U.S. citizens who have lived in the U.S. for five years or more. Associate Membership is granted to English-speaking individuals who have had recent ties with the American way-of-life but do not meet the requirements for Full Membership. Only Full Members may vote or hold elective office.

Our annual membership (no initiation fee) is presently DM 60 (approx. $20) and primarily covers the cost of publishing our Newsletter, Directory, and Handbook.

The purpose of the AWG is to help all American women and their families in Hamburg to adjust to living in Germany, the environment, the culture, and the mentality in order to make life happier and more effective, and to inform all members about issues that concern them. We primarily attempt this through publication of our monthly newsletter which informs them of club activities, local events of interest, English-language films, concerts, changes in American and German law that affect them, sources for hard-to-find American items or adequate substitutes, and FAWCO news. In addition, our Hamburg Handbook has not only been entirely rewritten this year, but it also has a new title, “Hamburg in Your Pocket,” and offers a complete guide on such necessities as permits and registration, banking, housing, medical care, education, and leisure activities, to name a few. The book has been written with the entire English-speaking community in mind as a market, not only Americans. We hope this will not only enrich the reader’s knowledge of how to adjust in Hamburg, but will raise enough money to become a self-supporting project.

Club activities include a very active travel group, German conversation, couples and daytime bridge, mixed doubles (dual-national marriages), needlework, children’s playgroups and baby-sitting co-ops, book discussion groups, evening groups for those who cannot attend daytime activities, international dinner group, museum tours, tennis round robin, cooking classes, aerobics, children’s Halloween party, gardening and photography.

In the autumn, we hold a special Orientation Program, “Bloom Where You Are Planted,” in a series of four sessions. These cover everything from shopping to health care and from sports and cultural activities in Hamburg to cross-cultural adaptation, in a concerted effort to make our new (and old) club members feel at home in their surroundings. A new booklet to this end has been written which augments our handbook in the sphere of the home. It also includes a number of articles from other FAWCO clubs concerning adjustments one must make when living in a new country. The Orientation Program comes under the auspices of the club’s FAWCO representative in order that new members may also become acquainted with FAWCO and its support for Americans living abroad.

Carol B., FAWCO Rep., Hamburg

This archived letter from circa 1985, with its intriguing list of activities and groups, shows that while much has changed, much has also stayed the same with the AWCH. Happily, one of the things that has stayed the same is that the letter’s author, Carol B., is still (again) a member. (See page 18 for more.)

Carol came to Hamburg in January 1966. She writes, “The Alster was frozen over and cars could drive on it; I went to work in inky blackness and returned to my flat in inky darkness. Grocery store hours were an abomination! The sun finally peeped out several months later.”
American Women’s Club of Hamburg, e.V.

Photos: Opera Club members at Die Fledermaus; Bunco Night (B.N. photos by Jess Mancuso)