

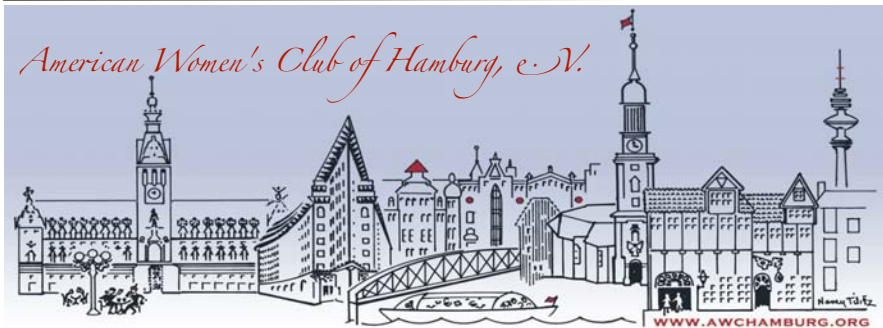
American Women's Club of Hamburg, e.V.

# CURRENTS

Summer 2015 Vol. 31, No. 2

[www.awchamburg.org](http://www.awchamburg.org)





*"One must always maintain one's connection to the past and yet ceaselessly pull away from it."*

- Gaston Bachelard

And so we have begun the pulling away process in the AWCH with open board meetings and the relaunch of the Book Club, but we are maintaining our ties to the past with Currents, the Film Reviewer Group, Stütz 'n Bitch, the Opera Club, and of course, our ongoing support of FAWCO. Some things, like Currents and the Newsletter, have undergone a revamp and new delivery times, while others are simply continuing to run more efficiently than ever under the tutelage of their leaders. I look forward to every issue of the Bi-Monthly Newsletter, the weekly emails from Becky T. with the latest films that *maybe* I can see, seeing the Facebook postings from the Stütz 'n Bitch group, hearing that the Opera Club is researching a fabulous opera, and the FAWCO updates, which help ensure I remain tax compliant and remind me that AWCH is tied to an incredible network; but more importantly, I look forward to forging my connection with the AWCH community. Because that is what we are: a community – and I am honored to be a part of it.

Did you hear that we have new members? We have more than 10 new members and I can tell you that they "know how to do CPR" (to quote our last president, Shawn K. – another connection with our past;-). One new member, Gaby G., has reignited the Book Club. She is bringing her enthusiasm from her time in Finland, where she was the leader of the AWC Finland Book Club, and we are starting by reading "Wild" by Cheryl Strayed. Ericka S. has also been helping with Currents, taking on a leadership role, and I know that Laura O. and Anna S. are happy to have her on board. Julie N. is also helping to work with our new members, coordinating the Members' Choice Events. Talk about forging connections!

We are also excited to have some spontaneous events that will be happening next quarter including the Dim Sum lunch on July 12th and a Grillin' and Chillin' event on August 18 that I will be hosting. Be sure to check your Evites and the Newsletter to see what other things our members think of to help cement our connections to the community and the region.

By now, you must have noticed that I am inspired by quotations from minds that inspire me. I even named my cat after a famous German from whom I can always find an appropriate saying, so I end this Message from the President with a quote from Goethe:



*"In nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it and over it."*

All the best,

Laura

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**Dear Readers,**

Welcome to the Creating Connections issue.

Living overseas is a very challenging undertaking; it can be both a burden and a blessing. We have learnt a lot from it, but, most importantly, we have become experts in creating connections: finding a common language with German friends and neighbours; discovering new places; keeping in touch with the rest of the family in the US and elsewhere.

Flipping through the pages of the Summer Currents, you will find the people and events that have accompanied us on this path lately, and discover many facets of American life in Hamburg and in Europe. One special event is the tenth anniversary of KinoCritics.com, our "very own film website," which has been a connection for our Film Group to a bigger audience and larger opportunities (more on page 24)!

This publication is about us all, so different and so fabulous, about the journeys that brought us to the AWCH. This issue is a testimonial to our club, which has connected us to each other, after all.

Your Currents Team,

*Anna Sizorina, Laura Otto, & Ericka Bahner Seifried*



empowering women worldwide since 1931

## FAWCO Biennial Conference: The Eternal Woman—Equality, Protection, Empowerment

Rome, March 25–28, 2015

by Carol Strametz

The theme of human rights for women permeated the FAWCO Biennial Conference in Rome, that covered all aspects of FAWCO: global issues, US issues, member clubs, and philanthropy. All the keynote speakers, a panel discussion and some of the sessions focused on human rights for women. This was in support of

the FAWCO Target Program 2013-2016: Human Rights for Women—Protecting the Rights and Improving the Lives of Women and Girls Worldwide. In her opening speech, Conference Chair Shannon McCarthy quoted Claire Boothe Luce, who founded the American Women's Association of Rome (AWAR) and whose photo was on the podium throughout the conference: "The success of any community is gauged by the role the women play in it." Shannon went on to state: "We can all be proud as we work to strengthen the role of women, ensure their rights and advocate for equality, protection and empowerment. By doing this, we are putting these words into action." The four days of the biennial conference left the delegates better informed, focused, and motivated to get involved in "something that makes a difference... that gives a voice to the voiceless" (Cindy McCain).

It was exciting to be one of the 140 FAWCO women attending the conference. The energy, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of the attendees were contagious. FAWCO has a long list of accomplishments. How are they achieved? Committed women laid the ground work of this organization and a stream of committed women keep it up-to-date and relevant. We are all FAWCO and we can all join in and contribute actively to FAWCO and its goals!

*FAWCO, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, has 64 member clubs with 12,000 members in 33 countries.*

### FAWCO Resolutions 2015–2017

- To improve the lives of women and girls worldwide, especially in the areas of human rights, health, education and the environment.
- To advocate for the rights of US citizens and US permanent residents living abroad (US persons living overseas), and keep FAWCO members informed on issues arising in the US that may impact US persons living overseas.
- To support, strengthen and expand the FAWCO network.
- To practice good global citizenship and create a better and more peaceful world.

The organization of the conference by AWAR deserves kudos and congratulations. Sincere thanks to Conference Chair Shannon McCarthy (President AWAR), Conference Co-Chair Anna Carlson (FAWCO Representative AWAR) and all the enthusiastic volunteers of AWAR that made this conference so successful and enjoyable! The program, meeting rooms, keynote speakers, panel discussion, the club member events, and pre-conference tours were impressive and all well-chosen. The member events featured the themes "Excavating Ancient Sites", Goddesses, (continued on p. 8)

*It was exciting to be one of the 140 FAWCO women attending the conference. The energy, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of the attendees were contagious!*



### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Michele Bond**, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, attended the conference to address American Consular Services around the world. However, moved by what she had learned about FAWCO's involvement with *Free the Girls*, she spent much of her talk describing her attempts to address trafficking when she was posted in Lesotho. Ms. Bond emphasized that a key factor is to empower ordinary citizens, such as taxi drivers, to help identify and assist victims of human trafficking.



**Cindy McCain**, wife of US Senator John McCain and a lifelong humanitarian, also spoke about her work to combat human trafficking, including her attempts to raise awareness of the plight of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Continuing the theme of the involvement of ordinary people in the process, Mrs. McCain emphasized that trafficking is going on all around us and that we all have a responsibility to act when we see something that is wrong: if you see something, say something! She expressed the need for tougher penalties for perpetrators and decriminalization for victims, especially children. Mrs. McCain also described a new campaign to recruit prominent male citizens to speak out against human trafficking.

Other presenters, including Linda Douglass, wife of the US Ambassador to Italy, a panel of local experts working on women's human rights issues, and FAUSA member Paula Lucas, founder of Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center, focused on topics related to violence against women. Thanks to all of these speakers, attendees left the conference inspired to redouble their efforts to promote gender equality and human rights for women and girls. (Therese Hartwell, Human Rights Task Force Bulletin, April 2015)

**My-Linh Kunst**, outgoing President, gave a clear picture of what FAWCO is about in her closing remarks. FAWCO mobilizes us through the "power of the collective," says Ms. Kunst:

*"...By spending time together, by structuring our hopes and thoughts, and giving them a voice, FAWCO unlocks a gate to our collective future. Individually we are pinpoints of light, intense but lonely; individually, we might be determined, but remain challenged. Individually we can be vocal, but are often silenced by the noise of the gender-unequal world. The outlook changes when we work together, when we respect our similarities and differences, recognize our strength and weaknesses, honor our varied individual passions, and build on the highs and lows of our experiences—*

*we become a collective strength that cannot be ignored. Through FAWCO, your and your club's voices carry far and wide. Through FAWCO, your hands are joined with others around the globe. Through FAWCO, you stand on the world stage and your calls echo far and wide. FAWCO is being heard. We are not yet a roar, but neither are we a whisper. I believe in FAWCO. I believe in us: women who work to support and promote other women, women who resourcefully work through challenges, women who refuse to be victims, women who never say 'I can't,' women who go beyond borders—to follow our passion and leave our footprints in the sand."*

*"You must do the thing you think that you cannot do."  
-Eleanor Roosevelt*



**Dr. Moez Doraid**, from UN Women (here with My-Linh Kunst and Shannon McCarthy), presented an overview of the Status of Human Rights for Women and Girls. Dr. Doraid noted that gender inequality is the most pervasive discrimination around the world. Similar to the theme at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Dr. Doraid indicated that progress has been made, but we have a long way to go.

*"Let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all!"*

*—Hillary Clinton, Beijing 1995*

**FAWCO and the U.S.**

FAWCO advocates the inclusion of American women living overseas in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

FAWCO had a strong representation at Overseas American Week in Washington, D.C., trying to communicate that "a woman shouldn't have to choose between her country and her husband." An important message to all of us is "write to your legislators" and keep informed through the US Liaison Bulletin.

US Liaison Lucy Laederich presented and moderated the session "FAWCO and US Issues" assisted by Elaine Terlingen and Chairs Judy Furukawa and Mary Stewart Burgher. Michele Bond, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs was the guest. We were brought up-to-date on the latest bank and tax issues, citizenship and overseas voting. Ambassador Bond informed us about consular services that are available for routine work and in emergencies.

**The U.S. Senate has not yet ratified the UN treaty Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).**

**FAWCO and the UN**

Laurie Richardson brought us up-to-date in the "FAWCO and the UN" session.

FAWCO is a non-governmental organization (NGO) with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN). FAWCO's UN involvement gives us a voice at an international level on global women's issues in areas of education, environment, health and human rights. There has been an increased focus by FAWCO at the UN, with representatives on the boards of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in Geneva and Vienna, and with the Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Working Group on Girls in New York. The next generation is being engaged through three Youth Program modules—Youth Ambassador, UN Youth Rep and Youth Cultural Volunteers.

The Beijing+20 Forum looked back on the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. The Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) was asked to review and appraise the progress women have made in the past 20 years—since Hillary Clinton's spot-on speech in Beijing "Let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all"—and look with a critical eye at the long list of needs for women and girls around the world. Seventeen FAWCO women attended the two-day forum in Geneva in November 2014. Beijing+20 CSW took place on March 9–20 at the UN Headquarters in New York. A delegation of eighteen FAWCO women attended this session. Look online for the inspiring UN video *Empowering Women – Empowering Humanity: Picture It*. Robin Goldsby (AWC Cologne) and her daughter, Julia Meloy Goldsby (FAWCO Youth Ambassador), were commissioned to write the theme song for the closing ceremony of the forum in Geneva. Robin's and Julia's performance, "Maybe Its you," can also be viewed online.

FAWCO promotes the ratification of the United Nations international treaty Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the US Senate. In 1980 President Jimmy Carter signed this treaty; however it has never been made a law by Congress. The Committee NGO/CSW NY has created an outreach campaign to get 100 cities and their leaders to agree to become "Cities for CEDAW". We should do what we can to reach out to people in cities that could implement this program.

FAWCO also promotes the ratification by the U.S. Senate of the UN treaty Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is hard to believe that child marriage is still permitted with parental consent in New Hampshire for girls who are 13 and for boys who are 14.

FAWCO UN Youth Representative Vali Mitsakis described her UN experience with insight: "FAWCO has helped me understand that in this universe, I don't exist as an individual, but also as part of the worldwide community with a goal to sustain the well-being of my world and the people in it."



**Workshops and Face2Face**

There were three workshops for FAWCO representatives: "What's In It for Me?", "Sharing Success", and "A Better Toolkit". The challenge for the reps is to bring FAWCO back to their clubs and get the members activated. There were lengthy discussions on best practices, the difficulty of reaching members and how to approach fund raising.

Elisabeth Abbot gave a very effective workshop on "4 Steps to Effective Leadership". Why is it so hard to implement the four steps—facilitating work, emphasizing goals, facilitating interactions, and supporting those around you?

Paula Lucas, founder and director of Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center (AODVC), gave a session on "Weaving a Global Safety Net—You Can Be Part of the Solution". The Global Safety Net Program aims to empower American victims of domestic and sexual violence traveling and living overseas to reach out for help. Since 2011, AODVC has received an increase in calls regarding sexual violence involving American women studying abroad. For this reason she founded Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA). We can help by stopping victim blaming, creating a safe place for reporting, and being willing to intervene. To reach young women abroad, SASHAA has a poster which should be posted in places young women frequent overseas. To help, contact [jennifer@866uswomen.org](mailto:jennifer@866uswomen.org).

Melissa Watson and David Terpstra, founders and directors of Free the Girls, gave a workshop on how we can fight human trafficking in small ways through education and engagement programs. Dave also shared stories about women in the Free the Girls project around the world.

Face2Face gave everyone an opportunity to speak directly with members of the task forces on human rights, education, health and environment, as well as other areas such as development grants, education awards and club finance. It was a fun and successful session for learning, asking questions and requesting information. A book table with actual publications from members was also featured.



**Panel Discussion: Human Rights for Women and Girls**

The session was moderated by Marilu Lucrezia, foreign correspondent Tg I. She and the panelists Elisa Ercoli (Differenza Donna), Francesca Paltenghi (UNHCR), Eleonora Rizzuto (Bvlgari CSR) and Anna Costanza Baldry (University of Naples, Donna in Rete) discussed various aspects of human rights for women and girls and shared ways to help women all over the world.

Marilu Lucrezia shared dramatic stories about women from Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq. She informed us of Italy's project to build jails in countries where women do not have the right to go to jail and are prosecuted otherwise.

Elisa Ercoli sounded the alarm on the deterioration of the women's role in Italy and emphasized the need for awareness in the early stages of education. Elenore Rizzuto discussed how private companies can play a role in gender-based violence by empowering women through education and investing in job opportunities and philanthropy. Anna Costanza emphasized that a woman subjected to violence must have help and that volunteer foundations are needed to support women and children.

**Guest speaker Julia Goldsby, FAWCO Youth Ambassador, began with a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". She ended her talk with the four C's:**



- Be Compassionate:** Don't look away — be aware of the world around you.
- Be Courageous:** Be brave enough to take the first step.
- Be Curious:** Seek out ways you can help.
- Be Collaborative:** Find others who share your passion and desire to help.

**"Empower yourself with the 4 C's..." Goldsby urged, "This is what FAWCO is all about!"**

(continued from page 4)

Virgins, Wives and Citizens" and "Eternal Fashion: An Italian Perspective 1945-Present!"; the tours were to the Presidential Palace and Ostia Antica.

The evening events were spectacular. Opening night at the Residenza di Ripetta featured a meet-and-greet, a sit-down dinner, and a performance of the sketch "The Eternal Woman Goddesses" by members of AWAR. The following night we went to the Taverna de' Mercanti in Trastevere, which was the right location to enjoy the medieval atmosphere of Rome over authentic Roman food while connecting with each other at endlessly long tables. The post-conference evening took us to the center of Rome to the private 18<sup>th</sup>-century palace, Nuova Circolo degli Scacchi. We were all awed by the interior, the waiters in 19<sup>th</sup>-century uniforms, and the intimate ambience.

**"Fun raising," or fundraising, is an important aspect of FAWCO and should be pursued by all member clubs to guarantee the philanthropic work of the FAWCO Foundation.**

*The foundation's gala dinner with the theme "Three Coins in a Fountain" took place on Friday night of the conference. The foundation was remarkable in all the fun that they put into fundraising, which they have coined "fun raising"! Many women followed the call to dress as their favorite women. The delegates and guests with friends and family reached deep into their pockets for the online auction, silent auction, live auction, and raffle prizes. Total proceeds of approximately \$56,000, which will be allocated between the FAWCO Foundation programs, were achieved. All proceeds from the Backing Women fundraising campaign are donated in support of the FAWCO Target Program, whose project Free the Girls focuses on human rights for women.*

**The FAWCO Foundation**

**2015 Education Awards:**

**IT Award for Young Women:** *Emilie B (mother AWC Surrey)*

**Sciences Award:** *Brennan T (mother AWC Düsseldorf)*

**Humanities Award:** *Carter B (AWBS International)*

**Viola Wheeler Arts Award:** *Gabi F (mother EAUSA)*

**Dual Cultural Award:** *Allison M. (AWC Hamburg)*

**Award for University Degree Study Programs:** *Pat D. (member AAWE Paris)*

**Skills Enhancement Award:** *Christina E (member ALLO Florence)*

**Women in Technology Award:** *Christine F (member AWC Cologne)*

**NEED Scholarships were awarded for university teacher training and midwifery to seven women in Burkina Faso.**

**2015 Development Grants:**

**Education:** *Preventing a Lost Generation: Sending Refugee Children to School (sponsoring club AW of Eastern Province)*

**Education:** *Project Mwangi (sponsoring club AWC The Hague)*

**Environment:** *Trees Grow in the Sahel (sponsoring club AWC Genoa)*

**Health:** *KIDS Support Group (sponsoring club AWC Bern)*

**Human Rights:** *Aziza's Coffee (sponsoring club AW of Eastern Province)*

**Human Rights:** *Prevention Center for Family and Marital Violence (sponsoring club AWC Brussels)*



*FAWCO Biennial Conference Impressions, Clockwise from top: Taverna di' Mercanti; panel discussion; Nuova Circolo degli Scacchi; Michele with the winner of the Backing Woman painting; the book table; Foundation Night costumes; Residenza di Ripetta; Therese Hartwell, Human Rights Task Force. All photos copyright Leslie Collingridge.*



**FAWCO Links for further reading**

Conference slideshow, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Annual Report 2014: [fawco.org](http://fawco.org) (HOME – Conferences – Rome 2015)

**Pass the Equal Rights Amendment:** It's long past time to guarantee equal rights and protect all women across the United States. FAWCO endorses the campaign by the Equal Rights Amendment Coalition and their petition to Congress which says: Equality between women and men is a fundamental human right and should be guaranteed in the Constitution. Add your name to their petition and pass it along to your friends at [eracoalition.org](http://eracoalition.org).

**CEDAW and CRC Updates:** In May, South Sudan became the latest UN Member State to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The US has still not ratified CEDAW or CRC.

[CEDAW2015.org](http://CEDAW2015.org) provides news and updates on the status of CEDAW ratification in the US. You can read UN NGO Rep Paula Daepfen's update on CRC and join the campaign for US ratification of CRC at [fawco.org](http://fawco.org) under "UN Issues."

**Upcoming Events**

**October 25 to November 1, 2015:** Strength of a Woman Tour: Rwanda, with optional add-ons before and after the main trip. Registration deadline is July 15.

**November 7-8, 2015:** Regional Meeting for Region 5 (Germany and Austria) in Düsseldorf, Germany hosted, by AWC Düsseldorf. More information to come.

**March 11-13, 2016:** FAWCO Interim Meeting 2016 will be held close to Frankfurt am Main, Germany. More information to come.

# Dunsum...



*If you're looking for a last minute getaway to breathe in some fresh salt sea and wriggle your toes in the sand, consider driving north and hitching a ferry (leaving from Dagebüll several times a day) over to the island of Föhr. More affordable than neighboring Sylt and less rustic than craggy Amrum, this roughly 82 km<sup>2</sup> island is the second largest of the North Frisian islands in Germany. It has just one official town, Wyk; the rest of the terrain is dotted with sixteen quaint villages, stables, beaches and bird sanctuaries. If you're lucky the weather can be quite warm and sunny as early as mid-May. This year's Pentecost holidays were spent enjoying several hours of warm sun daily.*

It's not overwhelming in size. The whole island is very accessible by car, bike, horse, and even foot. Bike rentals are available all over the island, and they offer fair prices on a wide variety of bikes including e-bikes, tandem, children's, and even bike trailers for kids or dogs (don't worry they have separate fleets). Budget tourists can generally save on accommodations or find a last minute deal by booking in one of the less populated towns like Dunsum, Witsum or Midlum (Wyk and Nieblum seem to be the "hot spots"). We were extremely pleased with our holiday apartment at the Deichhof in Dunsum. The Deichhof has several attractive apartments in a cluster of five holiday houses (some units even allow dogs), which include assigned parking, a play ground, soccer field, and grill and picnic area. It was the perfect place for our pre-schooler to run around and play outside between meals and outings. Located on the most westerly side of the island, Dunsum is known as being the home of the other island post office as well as the starting point for the famous Wadden Sea walking tours. A wonderful guide, Mr. H.J.

Fischer, leads curious tourists four kilometers out to a nesting ground for sea lions and informs about an abundance of sea life and tide movements along the way. Children on the tour get some up-close time with sea worms, mussels, and other sea creatures. You'll all be tired after the trek, but it's well worth it.

## Föhr sure! Spots worth visiting:

**AquaFöhr** – if the weather turns gray, you can always take a dip in the saltwater pools or skid down the winding slides there. Every half hour waves roll through the main pool, which overlooks the sea.

**Cappuccino Waffel- und Eiscafé** – there's usually a line outside the door filled with people hankering for the best ice cream, waffles and strawberries on the island. Take a seat in one of the *Strandkörbchen* and watch the people bike by on the cobbled streets (the coffee drinks are also delish).

**Käpt'n Nolte** – an amazing traditional fishmonger with fresh fish sandwiches daily. If you're not into herring (pickled, fried or otherwise), order the *Bratfisch* without reservation. It's made fresh to order, complete with a scrumptious dill sauce and lettuce. We stopped there again on the way to the ferry back to the mainland. It's just that good!

**milk and more (Dunsum)** – a working farm, café (the rhubarb cake is fabulous!), and playtime paradise for families. They have a BBQ and tractor ride, soccer-golf field, petting zoo and, well...more!

**Wattenläufer** – after the eight km trek out on the Wadden Sea, head into the only spot on the coast. Simple fare. Try the Weisskohl Pudding.

*p.s. Don't forget your rubber boots and windbreakers regardless of the season!*

## Exit Row

You will buy your life as a series

of "experiences"

to which you will belong.

Have a good flight.

•

Do you believe in reproduction?

Do you think this upland of clouds,

white buttes cut by shadow canyons,

shapely and boundless

as the body you were promised,

will reappear after you're gone?

•

Boarding all zones at this time

## -Rae Armantrout

Rae Armantrout, "Exit Row" from *Itself*. Copyright © 2015 by Rae Armantrout. Reprinted by permission of the author. Source: *Itself* (Wesleyan University Press, 2015)

# Creating Connections

by Jenny Mather

We were living in the north of England, happily bringing up our little girls when my husband was invited by his parent company to move to the States. Within months of the invitation we were living in Connecticut.

Bob's company was marvelous about arranging our green cards, helping us to find a house, a school for the children and to settle into our new life. I joined Welcome Wagon, which is a wonderful organization and started to get to know my neighbors. They brought plates of cookies when they introduced themselves and everybody was friendly and helpful. From the day we arrived in the States, I was struck by the kindness and generosity of Americans.

After five happy years in Connecticut and far too few trips into New York City, possibly the most exciting city in the world, Bob was headhunted by another American company and we were on the move again. This second company was later bought by a German one and Bob was offered a job in Hamburg.

We moved here with mixed feelings. I had loved living in the States and had many good friends. We were then living in Charlotte, North Carolina which has a great climate and the thought of cold northern winters and grey skies wasn't too appealing. On the other hand, one daughter was now working in London and her younger sister had just graduated from university and wanted to work in London too. If we lived in



Hamburg and they lived in London then we would be relatively close to each other.

We stayed in a company flat in the city centre until we found somewhere to live and it was at this time that I would have appreciated an American style realtor to help us. A well-informed lady who could advise us and help us settle into life in Germany would have been very useful. This is the role of our Hamburger Helpers today and it would have been helpful for us then, had they been in existence. Older club members may remember the article I wrote for *Currents* about our unscrupulous builder who stole lots of our money. I strongly advise our members to check, double check and then check again the credentials of anybody they hire to do building work for them. We didn't manage to get the builder to court but his foreman was sentenced to a year in prison. His sentence was waived, however, when he claimed to have diabetes. There doesn't appear to be a victims support organization here and the help I received was entirely from friends in our club and at the International School.

Bob's colleagues told him about the American Women's Club of Hamburg and at my first event, a luncheon, I met Becky Tan. Becky is the person who has helped me the most in Hamburg. Apart from in-

cluding me to the film group and proofreading, she suggested that I get in touch with the International School. Becky had been a substitute teacher for many years and told me that the school was always looking for substitute teachers. Soon I was teaching there full time and I was able to add teachers from school to my group of AWCH friends. If you have any teaching qualifications and would like to be a substitute teacher, then I strongly recommend that you get in touch with the school. If you have time on your hands on a regular basis then you might consider volunteering there because there's nothing like being with little children to make you feel happy.

Now, like many of my uprooted friends living here, we are having to face making new choices as we get older and decide quite where home is going to be in the future. We are happy and settled in beautiful Hamburg but wonder about where we should be in a few years time. Should we, for instance, consider moving nearer to our children and their families so that they can look after us in our dotage? When you are reading this I shall be on an extended visit to England to help nurse my ailing mother and will take some of the burden of looking after her from my sisters. Knowing that elderly parents are missing us and want our help is something that every ex-pat knows must be faced one day. Although there is no perfect solution to this predicament, there is certainly comfort in knowing that it can be discussed with understanding friends in our club.



photo cc Lexie Flickinger

## LIFELINE Connections

by Ericka S.

For many of us, living abroad (and staying abroad) is a bittersweet pill. We cherish the experiences and perspectives (and the wine and food!) that travel and other cultures bring to our lives, but even after 10, 20, or 40+ years, we still

long for and try to recreate that familiar sense of home – family, friends, foundation, food, fun, and all that "home" means for each of us individually. At some time or other, many grapple with the reality of fully connecting to the new or finally letting go of the old.

Staying connected to our cultural selves takes on many forms. For me, it varies depending on the issue. Voting is simply not optional, although it means months of planning ahead, confirming addresses, and having enough postage weeks in advance to mail out the ballot. European peanut butter has been cautiously accepted and can be found in my pantry no less than twice a year (alas my more-German-than-American son does not know the joy of eating a PB&J sandwich with the crust lovingly cut off by mommy). It's something I'm willing to forgo. Personal enjoyment has been on the upswing having realized that Germany will remain my family's hub – so splurging on yet another Apple device has meant not paying exorbitant international shipping rates and priority mail prices on magazine subscriptions and not having to wait months on end for movies to show up (in English!) in Germany, and bringing back a hefty supply of Calumet baking powder allows for trouble-free baking of my grandmother's 7-flavor pound cake anytime I want (note: baking powder is extremely light even in your carry-ons). There are tons of things that we do on a daily basis to stay connected to home, and using media and technology is another facet of that.

Before I had my son, it was hard to remember to send cards or remember the time difference between here and Central Time Zone well enough to call at a decent hour, so staying in touch meant flying home twice a year, cramming lunches, brunches, shopping and movies into a few short weeks, or welcoming the occasional sibling or guest from the States. Now (that it's apparent we're not going back to live any time soon), staying in touch means impromptu FaceTime or Skype chats, text messages with photos, voice messages, and figuring out ways to stream current episodes of the Ellen Show or Late Night with Jimmy Fallon (or in more mature moments, NPR). →



2015/0



photo: Laura Otto

So what are the popular ways of staying connected for many of us in Hamburg?

**Skype** - high-quality video conferencing (depending on speed of Internet connection). FaceTime (Apple's version of video conferencing) is a godsend. I can chat with my sister in real time anywhere I have WiFi or cellular connection. She's facilitated taking my parents on a virtual tour of our apartments in Germany, gotten an early morning birthday serenade from her favorite Swabian nephew, and seen the Alster (and its swans) from the comfort of her bed 5000+ miles away.

**iMessaging** (Apple's texting tool) - I've been a serial apple user since 2006 moving from iShuffle to iPods to iPads to and iPhone and convincing all my siblings to purchase them too. It's great way (and no additional costs on phone plans and free on wifi) to stay in touch in real time. My best girlfriend and I have planned bridal and baby showers via a barrage of texts from four corners of the world. Seeing those little blue word bubbles pop up on my cell phone screen in real time gives you a rush and feels somewhat like a hug from afar.

**Facebook** is the ultimate social platform, where multi-generational users (even my 75-year-old dad has an *active* account) can come together and share information. As one user put it, "If it wasn't for Facebook, I don't think I would know 80% of what is going on day to day [in my circle]." I resisted joining for years and finally gave in when I had my son. It was an invaluable tool in showing off my new baby and keeping postpartum mommy from feeling isolated.

**Apple TV** - now I can keep up with current shows and films (an added plus is knowing the correct answers load of [useless?]pop culture Facebook quizzes). My son can watch classic episodes of Sesame Street and School House Rocks while getting language reinforcement without even realizing he's practicing his English.

**Reading newspapers** from local sources, referring to NYT bestsellers' list for contemporary books, listening to a local broadcast of **All Things Considered** (it makes me feel like I'm commuting with my sister each morning)

**What'sApp, Viber** - free texting applications and/or telephone calls which work internationally

**Landlines** - rotary, digital, cordless. Skype, Vonage and Viber can be used to make calling Germany easier for friends and family back home.

**good ol' pen and paper** - with all the new fangled ways to communicate, I still love finding handmade cards and paper. it's still a wonderful feeling to see my own words and have a little chat with one of Hamburg's finest postal workers.

*"My sister has facilitated taking my parents on a virtual tour of our apartments in Germany, gotten an early morning birthday serenade from her favorite Swabian nephew, and seen the Alster (and its swans) from the comfort of her bed 5000+ miles away."*

## "You WILL learn German!"

### Connect with Deutschunterricht

by Pat Frickey

The very best way to get connected when you come to Hamburg is to attend a daily intensive German course. It was daunting when the director of the Deutsch-Institut für Ausländer Frau Doctor Schmuck (at least I think that was her name) said emphatically to me, "You WILL learn German". Luckily this stout authoritarian dressed-like-Merkel intimidator was not the teacher. Instead rather nerdy young students were assigned to tutor us. It was a motley group of eager and not so eager learners from all over the world. There were, among others, Nigerians, Iranians, Moroccans, Argentinians, and also other Americans. We spent three hours a day learning a lot of grammar and vocabulary. The premise was that the conversation aspect would develop naturally, later.

We learned a lot more than the difference between the dative and genitive cases. We developed bonds with our fellow international classmates, all united in a quest to learn an extremely demanding language. Though of course we didn't directly meet Germans other than the teachers, many of our new-found friends were already connected with Germans, the reason they had come to Germany in the first place. Knowing them opened the door to being welcomed into German families.

It was at the Deutsch-Institut für Ausländer we met one of our very best lifelong friends, Mark, who eventually returned to Michigan with his German wife where he became a prize-winning winemaker. Not something he learned at language school, but something he studied at the Hochschule Geisenheim because he had eventually perfected his German!

## International Connections

by Kimberley Kleczka

When we first arrived in Hamburg, Germany we had a chance to experience a lovely town on the south-eastern side of Hamburg called Bergedorf. It was our first unexpected undertaking of the Northern German hospitality. This quaint town has a lot to offer, like the old charming buildings with cobbled stone paths and lovely shops to wander through, and the picturesque castle that is now a museum that also hosts weddings and luncheons. St. Petri and Pauli Lutheran Church, is the oldest of the central location. This pocket church has a wonderful architectural design. Definitely worth a visit and a nice stroll along the Bille river. Then stop off at one of the local cafes or restaurants, to taste the local cuisine of Northern Germany. This lovely town inspired me to write this travel poem.

Home is where you may lay down your hat

In another country, oh yes, so fancy that.

A complex language that is so difficult to spell,

Some words as long as a large table, oh well.

So here we are wondering what to do next,

Scrunching and scratching totally perplexed.

We have done this ah, so many times before,

'Tis a wonderful adventure, so what is in store.

Exploring our local town, oh what a sight to see,

Bergedorf, the old and the new, cafe's with tea.

Beautiful houses and terraces with colour galore,

Old buildings, crooks and crannies, even more.

Friendly faces with panting pooches, passing by,

"Hallo" they say, nodding with a twinkle in their eye.

Eating ice cream seems to be very popular here,

As well as wurst, bretzels and lots of cold beer.

Finally you find the local toilets, which are very clean,

Bring your change, you must pay for use of the latrine.

Running, biking and pole walking are popular sports,

So are rowing, sailing and curling; who would have thought.

There are a great many international restaurants to enjoy,

Supermarkets with aisles of honey, chocolate and even Chips Ahoy.

Festivals, music, shopping and a Starbucks we have, great!

So Bergedorf, we have arrived with a schnitzel on our plate.



# Music & BUSINESS

by Anna Sizorina

## Part 1. The USA

The United States of America was the first foreign country I had ever visited in my life. I was 20, a student at Moscow University, and it was 1992.

When my homeland was collapsing, I longed for a model of a country that was functioning, where people were free and safe, could have (and voice) their opinion and enjoy life.

And when, in 1995, I got a chance to pursue my MBA degree in California State University East Bay, I had no doubt this was my chance and I accepted it. Almost every day, I would go to a dull, two-story concrete building with a most illogical name: the Music and Business Building. But the idea behind it was very pragmatic, half of the building was occupied by music students, the other half by finance, marketing and organization management students. A marriage of convenience in some sense.

What did I learn along the way was to work hard, not give up, follow your dream and make a small step forward every day, because the opportunity knocks on the door but once.

And I fell in love with San Francisco and with my Russian husband. I needed to fly over the ocean to find the man of my life. And later, I needed to leave him to find out just how important to me he is. And we are still together and we have re-visited San Francisco, our honeymoon city, now with our kids, to show them that the English language is not only a school subject, but a language that connects our wonderful world and our family.

## Part 2. AWC Hamburg

In 2001 we came to Germany, where my husband was working for a big German company. After my studies in the United States and experiences with large European companies, I was sure, the change would be fun. A bit optimistic... I was... I came to Hamburg wearing my American (perhaps a bit rose-colored?) glasses. I was never worried that I had a limited knowledge of German. After all having already lived in Sweden and Denmark, I thought I could find my way around using English. Big mistake!

I started learning German in the Volkshochschule and when I realized that I was not progressing, I went to

the University of Hamburg. Out of all the opportunities available I wanted to capitalize on the most interesting one. I studied Sociology and Movies. Why sociology? I wanted to understand the German society. And movies? As long as I remember myself I was fascinated by theatre and cinema. At school I wrote plays, and as a university student I performed with the university theatre. I went to be placed in charge of a TV project.

Somewhere between seminars on gangster and silent movies, a friend of mine, who was a member of this club, told me that AWC had a well-established film group. I was interested, but it took me years to make a courageous step and join the club. The first event was a tea party, beautifully organized by Regina D. And the second was a writers' workshop, where I met Becky, Marinell, Sandra, Mary Frances and others. Thank you all, for making me feeling welcome.

And like the fields of Music and Business were put together under the roof of one building back, so are we women of different heritages joined under the roof of the AWC Hamburg.



**Living with 2 suitcases full of goodies, dresses and shoes**



by Anna Sizorina

Breaking away from our home country, we, on the one hand, loosen cultural and family ties, and, on the other, we pack up our suitcase with all the things, that might be of importance: rules, habits, conventions, the whole way of life, that we call culture. In the savage times cultural tradition immersed as a protecting factor to distinguish between familiar and unknown, unexplored and probably dangerous. So, our striving to adapt is a natural way to show that we are comprehensible, agreeable and safe. Making a step forward to a new world, we establish connections, which allow us to feel well and to do well in the new environment. Acquiring the new culture, people do not move only in one direction: it is a reciprocal process; our native culture affects the new one, and the new culture influences the native.

**When at home watching movies in English or meeting with my American friends, I sometimes have remorse that I do not do everything to fit in. Do I need to give up my original culture to become better adapted, to fit better into my German family?**

Coming to a new country we focus on learning the rules of language as well as the rules of society. Recent research shows that it is possible to have a steady ethnic and national identity at the same time: there is a growing trend of people who consider themselves Americans living in Germany, Germans living in Spain and so on.

Contemporary acculturation studies (Acculturation is the process of adopting the cultural traditions and patterns of social interaction of another group) show that people who retain the original culture and absorb the new one are more successful economically and socially, than those who forget where they come from and concentrate on acquiring new, in most cases, dominant culture. In other words, coming to a new world with a suitcase full of American goodies and experiences, do not throw it away, use it. And at the same time start gathering your German treasures, watch, be curious, follow and seek suitable German apparel. Just imagine, compared to many others, you are travelling with two suitcases; you are twice as rich.

Meeting your American friends, reading American books, being a member of American Women's Club gives you a wonderful chance to take out your American dresses, air and wear them. They are part of your treasure chest and they deserve a bit more time to shine.

Browsing through your suitcases, attune to yourself and decide what pair of shoes to wear today.

*Anna Sizorina is a psychological counsellor and Heilpraktikerin für Psychotherapie specializing in intercultural families.*

## Now where did I lay that Instruction Manual?

by Jennifer Kearns-Willerich

**Jennifer is a new AWCH member who recently moved to Hamburg with her family after many years in London. This is an excerpt from her blog on AngloInfo.**

January 28, 2015

Last Friday was the deadline for enrolling our eldest daughter in Grundschule, or primary school, and it felt like one of the first, in what will no doubt be a lifetime, of huge decisions that could affect her whole life. No pressure then...

We've, of course, already made one of these decisions for her (although, I suppose, in reality, we've already made so many more, including what to name her, whether or not to give her a sibling, what books to read to her – god, the list is actually endless, isn't it?), and that is moving to Germany.

It's hard to determine what kind of impact it's had on her, good or bad. I mean, she's only just turned six, so could she verbalise it even if she wanted to? I'm almost four decades older (not quite, though, thank you), and I can't even decide whether it's been a good or bad move.

In moving here, we enabled her to build what I hope will be a long-lasting, loving relationship with her three cousins, who are all roughly the same age, and their parents, her aunt and uncle. In London, although we had – and still have – incredible friends, and were beyond lucky enough to live on a road with people who were, undoubtedly, the best neighbours on the planet, I was always aware of a lack of family at birthdays and other milestone gatherings. I grew up with my cousins, and their mother, my maternal aunt, was such an incredible

## A New Pair of Shoes

by Christine Riney

**Sporty or dressy, high flying or flat, lace up or pump... ...must I choose just one?**

**Running or walking, dancing or lunching, museums or movies... ...what will we do together?**

**Too small or too wide, too tight or too bright, leather or cloth... ...must they be just right?**

**Comfy lace ups, strappy red sandals, oh those bright floral espadrilles... ...how do I choose?**

**Try them, take them for a spin, give each a chance... ...will I know which are right?**

**Soon they will take you through sunshine and rain... ...you have found your new friends, your new pair of shoes.**

**"[This poem] is about making friends," writes Christine, "Something we all need and something that does get harder as we all get older!"**



Above, Christine with a fabulous friend she 'found' when she lived in London

and breathtaking rock in my life that I've still not recovered from her death even though it happened six years ago. So, for me, it seemed imperative that our children grow up with those same bonds.

But what about the friends we left behind? What about those people my daughter had already bonded with during her earliest years: the mums I met while pregnant and whose children she took her first steps with and uttered her first words to? The said neighbours who looked after her when we needed an extra hand? Has removing them from her life also removed some fundamental building block that she will forever struggle to rebuild? It's a worry, amongst the countless others that plague me, that I entertain far too often probably.

And this is how it relates to signing her up for school: because we now live a drive away from my daughter's kindergarten, many of the friends she's made over the last 18 months won't be joining her at her local primary. This means a whole new set of kids and carers to get to know, a new landscape, and a whole new routine. How much change can one kid handle? It makes me anxious, and I detect it may be making her anxious, too (silly strops and trouble sleeping have become an almost daily occurrence in our lives).

But how much of this am I projecting? Kids, as everyone will tell you, are incredibly strong and resilient. Our girls arrived in Hamburg speaking very few German words, and we plunked them down in a

German kindergarten, to new people, new foods, a new place to live, and to two parents who were, if truth be told, winging it for at least the first six months. Within three weeks they were behaving with their cousins as if they'd always lived near them (it's incredible how much kids can communicate without language); within three months, our eldest was speaking German better than I am now; today, she is fluent in both English and German (including reading), and has good friends that she adores.

So, what then, exactly, am I worried about?

**more from Jennifer:**  
<http://blogs.angloinfo.com/wer-wie-wo-here-we-go/>

# Yard Art

by Tracy Moede

I am not much of a gardener, really. Things tend to die when I am in charge of their care. That and the fact that we have a small yard and there isn't much room for large projects limits how creative I can be in the area of "how pretty can I make things look before they begin to fade." I am quite proud of the roses that grow just off our terrace. I get many compliments on them from the neighbors. I let them believe that I am in charge of these beauties when all I do is trim off the rose buds after they have bloomed. My husband is the sole reason why we have grass that stays green, bushes that grow and flowers that bloom. My job is weeding and mowing the lawn. This is a job I take very seriously and I enjoy mowing in a different creative pattern each week in the warm months. It is quite Zen-like for me, and I relax and have a chance to let my mind wander. One thing I think I do well is yard art. Since I am not gifted with a green thumb, I let my creativity run free in the yard decorating area. My husband thinks this is a bit ridiculous because flowers should be the main decoration, but I figure I have to contribute something to the outside of our house. In the past I have made decorative bird houses to color the garden when flowers are not in bloom. I also like working with yarn, so recently I have incorporated a few pieces in our garden. I LOVE it, but I guess it is an acquired taste!



## Planting to stay here

by Laura Otto

Most likely, the hand I raised at the *Currents* meeting in early March already had a fine line of black soil under each fingernail. "Let's ask people to contribute about their gardens!" I blurted, certain there were others in the AWCH who felt, as I do, that one of the best ways to put down roots in a place is to nurture things which will – literally – do it for you. While the club's hidden gardeners haven't exactly come clamouring out of their potting sheds in their eagerness to share for *Currents*, I still believe they are out there.

Tending a garden is an act of deliberate connectedness with the soil, seasons, and wild living things of a place – as I'm sure some other writer has told you before. I'll second that, absolutely. But I find that in gardening, I am drawing connections on many more levels, as well. Connections to "past lives," like the thriving daylilies, tall grasses, prairie sunflowers, and goldenrod which dominate a sunny bed by my front door and remind me of my childhood in Iowa whenever I pass by, or the fragrant fern which takes me straight back to the Maine woods. Connections to ideas or realms of the imagination, like the exquisitely delicate iris which appears to have materialized off of an antique Japanese woodblock print, or my growing inventory of native and bee-friendly flowers. And of course connections to people, including a near-endless supply of topics for enjoyable conversations with my gardening German father-in-law.

The small, shady bower I call my own dictates what grows in my garden: a lush and sometimes lanky riot of part-shade perennials and flowering shrubs, semi-wild berries, and herbs. Usually, I'm satisfied by that. Every once in a while, though, visions of harvesting heirloom beans and heavy red tomatoes will drive me to mad fantasies of constructing raised beds with slug barriers, rain roofs that drain into irrigation channels, and mirrors rigged to catch sunlight. Eventually, I come to my senses. Hamburg has a great gardening climate, especially if you stick to perennials. The really good news is that it has wonderful farmers' markets for the rest.

Even among the perennials, not every plant likes life in Hamburg. Perhaps they are a bit like some of us that way. Some will tough it out without ever really growing much, or disappear over time; others joyfully expand; a few vigorous characters threaten to take over the bed. I try out new plants in cycles. I don't insist that the sad ones stick around, and I don't have enough space for the aggressive ones. But I can always find space for a joyful good neighbor, and it is always welcome to stay.



## Free the Girls Open House

by Carol Stramet

Shelly and I had the pleasure on May 29 of hosting an Open House with Italian Wine and Antipasto in honor of the FAWCO Biennial Conference in Rome this spring. The recurring theme of the conference was human rights for women which is in line with the Target Program and Target Project, Free the Girls (FTG). FTG has programs in Mozambique, Uganda and El Salvador which help sex trafficking survivors build their own business by selling gently used bras.

Guests were asked to donate bras, books and handbags to benefit Free the Girls. Shelly will take a suitcase full of bras back to Colorado this summer to hand over at one of their collection points. The proceeds from the books (€97) and handbags (€174) will go through FAWCO to FTG without any deductions. Twenty AWCH members and three guests including my daughter and Thelma's were present. It was a fun and lively evening with the backup of a good cause. Thanks to everyone who came and to all for the donations!

More information about the Free the Girls project can be found at <http://freethegirls.org/about/our-story/>

as well as

<http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/2013/02/18/mozambique-or-bust-watch-it-now/> for the moving CNN Freedom Project documentary.

The FAWCO Foundation, thanks to the involvement of FAWCO Member Clubs and individual members throughout the world, has raised over \$100,000 for Free the Girls in the first year of the Target fundraising campaign..

AWC Hamburg has been placed on the gold donor level! Let's keep up the good work for this good cause! A fun-raising bunco evening is being planned for October.





*Opera Club's Spring Night at the Staatsoper*

Natalia M. R., Lisa S., and WangDi S. at the Opera

by Elizabeth Reifke

The 2014/15 Opera Club season concluded with a beautiful outing to the Staatsoper to see *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* by W.A. Mozart. The performance of this marvelous *Singspiel* featured a heaping portion of gorgeous arias and ensembles with an enthusiastic, humorous cast and a cheerful viewing public. Our dinner af-

Carolyn H., Kandra T., Elizabeth R.



terwards wound down a very pleasant evening and a dynamic season of musical discoveries.

**A lively start to the new opera season**

An ambitious public viewing broadcast is all set to kick off the Hamburg Staatsoper's 2015/16 season with spirit and flair. While the season premiere will take place at the opera house itself, the *Binnenalster Filmfest* will enable thousands more viewers to partake in this event via livestream. Music and film fans will gather on the Jungfernstieg to watch the transmission on a large screen set up in the Binnenalster lake – and admission is free.

What a perfect opportunity for the Opera Club and the Film Group to get together!

This joint event will take place on the evening of Saturday, September 26. The big-screen opera in question is Hector Berlioz' *Les Troyens*, undoubtedly the most elaborate and glorious opera in the French grand opera tradition.

In mid-September, the Opera Club will offer a single meeting at which we can get a good overview of the background, the story, and the music of Berlioz' masterpiece in advance.

**From grand opera to operetta**

After this exciting event, we will start in on our main Opera Club fall project. This time we are taking a step to the side for a look at operettas. The German-speaking world is privileged to have an inspiring operetta tradition. One of the best-loved of these "light operas" is Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, which will be performed here in Hamburg in December and January, and this work will be our main focus.

Everyone always asks, "Just what is the difference between operas and operettas? And what about musicals?" Precisely this question will lead us to some interesting discussions and perhaps our own definitions. We will also be considering the distinct operetta styles of other nations such as Great Britain and Spain. For more information, contact Elizabeth R. at [opera@awchamburg.org](mailto:opera@awchamburg.org).

Mary W., Natalia M., Carolyn H., Lisa S., Elizabeth R.



**AWC Hamburg donates From the Heart Pillows to the Mariahilf Helios Hospital**

By Tracy Moede

On Monday, May 11, Susan S-W. and Tracy M. donated 60 heart pillows to the Mariahilf Breast Cancer Clinic. The Mariahilf is part of the Helios hospital system and is located in Harburg, just south of the Elbe. The pillows were made in February during a "working bee" open house in Tracy M.'s home. The AWC Hamburg has been working on the **From the Heart Pillow Project** for several years. To date we have donated 160 pillows that have been made during four different **From the Heart Pillow** sewing bees. These pillows in the shape of a heart are placed under the arm that helps relieve pressure and pain in post-operative breast cancer patients. Materials and stuffing costs can run quite high, and thus far, all materials have been pur-

chased through proceeds from the bagel fundraiser sales and donated by AWCH members.

On another but similar note, the Coco-Mat pillow making event in October resulted in a total of 120 heart pillows that were donated by the Coco-Mat store in Blankenese. So far we have donated 50 of the Coco-Mat heart pillows to the Albertinen Hospital in Schnelsen. A few pillows have been donated to friends, relatives or store customers who are in need of a heart breast cancer pillow. There are still many pillows to be donated! No one should suffer through breast cancer without the help of one of these useful heart shaped pillows. If you, a relative or a friend are in need of a heart pillow to relieve the pain caused by a breast cancer operation or therapy, please contact Tracy M.



# Congratulations



by Becky Tan

*Kirsten Greco is the creator of our very own film website, KinoCritics.com, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.*



Kirsten moved from Chicago to Hamburg in 2000 with her husband, Jim, who had accepted a new job here. Kirsten joined the AWC Hamburg and was active in different facets of the club. She was especially appreciated in the club's Film Group, where she wrote reviews and attended film festivals such as the Berlinale. She says, "I like film because here all worlds converge."

Always very versatile, Kirsten had many interests. She was enrolled in an eighteen-month online course at Sessions College where she was studying for a certificate in graphic and web design. As a final project for the class in 2005, she had to create and design a website using PHP-programming language with a corresponding database. She chose to make an English language website for films opening in Germany along the lines of [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com), with information for the film lover as well as descriptions of films. At the time, the only alternative was [www.awchamburg.org](http://www.awchamburg.org), where privacy was an issue. She envisioned a site where critics could use their names in full as professionals do and, thus, receive credit for their work. She said that the hardest part was thinking through the structure of the website while still making it interesting and searchable for those who wished to find films via different sources, e.g., title, or critic, or date. She wished to include reports from film festivals. Originally, she considered information about local cinemas which showed films in English such as Abaton or – at that time – Grindel.

KinoCritics.com was an immediate success. In April 2006 Kirsten's son Dylan was born and she returned with her family to Chicago. She kept up connections to Germany by visiting frequently and

enrolling Dylan in a German-speaking day-care school in Chicago. Best of all, it was with heartfelt gratitude that the club's film critics could continue to submit reviews from Hamburg, with Kirsten coordinating from the U.S.

Now, ten years later, KinoCritics has more than 2250 film reviews written by 68 club members, former club members, and in some cases, written by members' teenaged children, who use the site as a stepping stone to creative writing. It boasted a monthly average of 11,089 page views, 6,479 visits, and 46,876 hits in 2014. It sponsors club members such as Mary W., Karen P., and others for accreditation to film festivals such as the Berlinale, Sundance, Tribeca, and the Filmfest Hamburg. The online expense for the web presence is willingly supported by volunteer donations from the club's film group.

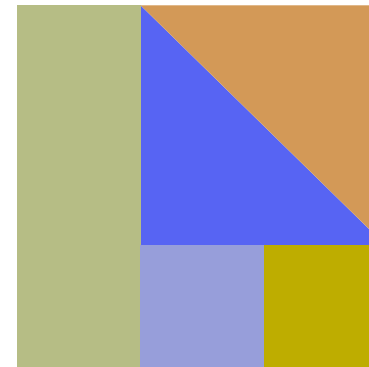
Although Kirsten and her family have recently moved to Colorado, we hope this project will continue. Naturally, she needs and expects help from club members to put up reviews each month. This is a big job for one person. There are plans to update the program beginning in August. Feel free to contact the website, [www.kinocritics.com](http://www.kinocritics.com) or talk to Becky Tan, tel 5503972 or [rcbecca.tan@t-online.de](mailto:rcbecca.tan@t-online.de) if you would like to participate.



**Thank you** to Mary W. for generously opening her house for the annual club film group tea on May 19. Besides delicious refreshments, we had the opportunity to see each other by the light of day, instead of in our usual dark cinema seats. We could also discuss our future contributions to issues of *Currents Magazine*, Brenda's work with the Cleveland Film Festival, updating the KinoCritics website, and our interaction with the club's opera group. We also questioned why good festival films never seem to open anywhere and talked about other film related topics. Present were hostess Mary W., Jenny M., Anna S., Christine R., Adele R., Shelly S., Marinell H., Nancy T., Brenda B., Becky T., and guests Elizabeth R., (chair of the club's opera group), and Dana (sister of Shelly, visiting from Colorado).

**A special thank you** to the following club members for their part in the revision of *Bloom Where You Are Planted*: Carola, Susannah E. B., Jenny M., Tracy M., Julie N., Christine R., Shelly S., Susan S. W. and Brooke V. Their effort and time dedicated to updating this club publication are much appreciated!

**DANKE! DANKE!**



*The 2015 FAWCO Friendship Quilt was a huge success and brought in over \$3000 for Free the Girls!*

*Now it is time to start making blocks for the 2016 FAWCO Friendship Quilt "Liberty". It will follow the design at <http://www.quilterscache.com/L/LiberateBlock.html>.*

*You'll need 5 different colors. Please use solid colors, no prints. Use 100% cotton. So go to the link and follow the steps! (Sewing instructions are on page 1, cutting instructions on page 2.) Then sign your block using either embroidery or a Pigma pen (0.5mm permanent archive quality).*

*The deadline, as usual, is October 10, 2015. For more information, contact AWCH member Tracy M.*



# 4th of July with the AWCH

A group of 60 AWCH members, family and friends met in sweltering heat at the Saint Pauli Landing Pier No. 10 to travel by ferry to the emigration museum BallinStadt, the „port of dreams“ for five million people from all over Europe. After a lecture about the museum, we gathered in the courtyard of the restaurant „Nach America“ for a BBQ, homemade desserts, good conversation and fun. Afterwards we had time to play lawn games, visit the museum’s award-winning exhibitions or just relax before the ferry took us back to our starting point.

A special thanks to the BallinStadt for their fantastic hospitality and generosity and to the Maritime Circle Line for their excellent service. Last but not least, a very special thanks to all who came and made this Fourth of July so memorable!



Photos by Monika M. and Carol S.



## At the Movies

**Atlantic \*\*\*\***  
Netherlands/Belgium/Germany/  
Morocco 2014  
Opening June 25, 2015

Directed by: Jan-Willem van Ewijk  
Writing credits: Jan-Willem Van Ewijk  
Principal actors: Fattah Lamara, Thekla Reuten, Mohamed Majd and Jan-Willem van Ewijk

Fattah is not only a young fisherman from a small village in Morocco, but is also a talented windsurfer – a skill he picked up from the tourists who seasonally come to spend holidays. He has made many friends among the group and makes them feel right at home. For Fattah and his family, the tourists mean a lot of money and, sometimes, they give him surfing equipment that he can repair and use to improve his skills. From the moment Fattah hits the water with his windsurfing board, you can sense his freedom. He and his board and the Atlantic are one.

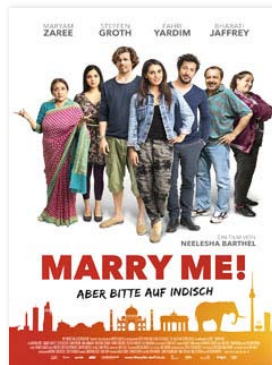
All seems as it should be until Fattah falls in love with Alexandra, the girlfriend of one of the surfers from Holland. He then begins to realize that the Europeans have the freedom to come and go as they please. This creates a crack in his world and he decides to follow a new path; the question is: which path to take? Should he stay with the family who loves him or risk travelling far out into that big

Atlantic on a surfboard, hoping to make it to Europe. The cinematography takes you to a place that feels like another planet. This vision is both fascinating, but also isolating. It makes you think of the refugees trying to reach Europe by boat, and why they are willing take such dangerous risks. This film has been recognized for its unique storytelling and is a film that shouldn't be missed. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

**Marry Me (Aber Bitte auf Indisch) \*\*\*\***

Germany 2014  
Opening July 2, 2015

Directed by: Neelesha Barthel  
Writing credits: Neelesha Barthel  
Principal actors: Maryam Zaree, Fahri Yardim, Bharati Jaffrey



Although Kissy (Maryam Zaree) was born to an Indian mother and a German father, she is more German than Indian. She leads a very alternative lifestyle in the multi-cultural area of Kreuzberg in Berlin, where she runs the café that her mother started up before she died. Kissy lives with her younger sister, Sonal, as well as with her own daughter, Meena. Meena's father, Robert (Steffen Groth), with whom Kissy never had a "real" relationship, lives in the apartment house above the café. He is one of several tenants (including Wolfgang Stumph, whom we know as Stubbe on German TV) who take advantage of Kissy's leniency about rent payments.

Out of the blue, Grandma Sujata (Bharati Jaffrey) arrives from India and declares that if Kissy and Robert do not marry, she – the actual owner of the property – will sell the house and café. The café is not just Kissy's livelihood, but also her connection to her deceased mother. So Robert moves in with Kissy, and they pretend to be a real couple and start planning a traditional Indian wedding and celebration. The whole situation becomes chaotic, especially when Sujata hires Karim (Fahri Yardim) to take over the café's kitchen.

In spite of enjoying appearances by several experienced actors, the changes between scenes were not always smooth and Sujata's *Denglisch* was unnerving at times. But this is Barthel's debut as a movie producer, and she depicts the conflict between the modern and traditional for a bicultural person in Germany very well. (Thelma Freedman)

**Far from the Madding Crowd (Am grünen Rand der Welt) \*\*\*\* 1/2**

UK/ USA 2015  
Opening July 9, 2015

Directed by: Thomas Vinterberg

Writing credits: Thomas Hardy, David Nicholls

Principal Actors: Carey Mulligan, Matthias Schoenaerts, Michael Sheen, Tom Sturridge, Juno Temple

Since 1995, when he and fellow Danish avant-gardian Lars von Trier touted their Dogma 95 filmmaking manifesto, director Thomas Vinterberg has come a long way. Or has he? Twenty years on, Vinterberg's lavish new film, based on Thomas Hardy's 1874 novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, (thankfully) breaks several of Dogma's "vows of chastity" – particularly the one requiring films to be set in the here and now. But the goal of the Dogma collective was always to purify filmmaking by rejecting Hollywood-style artificiality and concentrating on the story and the actors' performances, and to these ideals Vinterberg's new film is true. The actors are uniformly first-rate, and Hardy's story resonates just as strongly after 140 years.

Bathsheba Everdene (Carey Mulligan) is an independent-minded, country girl who goes to work her aunt's farm, having lost her parents and her fortune. Nurturing her own ambitions, Bathsheba refuses to be tied to anyone else. She is instinctual, a good horsewoman, and a hard worker, and also straightforward enough to admit to being somewhat vain. Her headstrong characteristics attract the attention of neighboring landowner Gabriel Oak, a strong silent type and man of the earth, played by handsome Belgian Matthias Schoenaerts. True to his blunt character, he proposes to her the second time they meet, and Bathsheba immediately rejects his sincere offer. A husband isn't part of her plans.

Soon enough, Bathsheba comes into a fortune and an impressive country seat of her own, and as the new mistress of the estate, she must find ways to make the farm workers respect her decisions. She hires Gabriel, who has had a striking reversal of fortune and is now destitute. Though the situation is

awkward, she values his steadfast, hard labor – and she needs him. Gabriel is content to stay in the background, quietly protecting her interests, even at the risk of his own life. On a childish whim, Bathsheba sends an insincere valentine to Mr. Boldwood (Michael Sheen), a humorless and lonely middle-aged bachelor, who owns the neighboring estate. To her dismay, he takes her declaration of love seriously, and soon proposes to make her his wife. Though in principle she finds such an idea laughable, it's one she must consider, since a woman alone struggles for security. She begs Mr. Boldwood for time to think his offer over. Soon, Bathsheba's eye is caught by a gadfly, a soldier in a scarlet tunic. Sergeant Troy (Tom Sturridge) is a cad and a rough gambler, but he's unbearably good-looking. Troy seduces her, blinding sensible Bathsheba into actually marrying him. She quickly realizes her horrible mistake, and her carefully planned-out world threatens to come crashing down around her.

Shot in rugged hill country in Dorset, southwest England, the film captures the lives of people aligned with the rhythms of nature. Humility, loyalty, and reliability are great virtues, and Gabriel's and Bathsheba's relationship to the earth binds them together. Scything, tilling, building fences, and herding sheep are honest respites from the nonsensical business that humans have constructed in the name of "society."

*Far from the Madding Crowd* is far from the kind of movie those familiar with Thomas Vinterberg's work might expect him to make. And yet Bathsheba is a Vinterbergian character, conflicted about the necessity of conforming to the stifling societal norms which she rejects. Vinterberg's best-known previous films, *The Celebration* (in which a wealthy family is racked by accusations of sexual abuse) and *The Hunt* (a kindergarten teacher is cast out of his community after being wrongly accused of abusing children) also feature morally decent central



characters caught up in sexual and societal taboos. Disheartened by modern cynicism, Vinterberg (who grew up on a commune) seems to be nostalgic for simpler times, pursuing dreams of freedom from the regulations of a cruel and well-ordered society. In a 2012 interview in *The Guardian*, he declared, "The mediocre, rational world is my enemy. Well-adjusted is the thing that I hate. Well-adjusted means fearful and cowardly."

Vinterberg is currently in post-production on *The Commune*, which reunites him with *Celebration* stars Ulrich Thomsen and Trine Dyrholm. We won't expect it to be set in a rational world and feature well-adjusted characters. (Brenda Benthien)

(second opinion)

**Far from the Madding Crowd (Am grünen Rand der Welt) \*\*\*\***  
UK | USA 2015  
Opening July 9, 2015

Thomas Hardy would mightily approve this adaptation of his – fourth, and successful – 1847 novel, last brought to the screen in 1967 (director John Schlesinger's fourth film). The 2015 film combines an unorthodox Danish director (Thomas Vinterberg, *The Celebration*, *The Hunt*), a tried-and-true author and screenwriter (David Nicholls, *Starter for 10*, *One Day*), and a

mixed bag of stellar thespians, a "crack-team of visual artists", and the terrestrial southwest Dorset and coastline to impregnate this period epic with timeless contemporary credibility, sumptuousness, and unrestrained passion.

Hardy created a capricious, inspirational female protagonist, e.g. Suzanne Collins' Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*. Bathsheba Everdene – young, fiery, willful, unfettered, admits to being, "educated yet with nothing to give". An early, ardently single feminist, Bathsheba comes into an improved societal position that strengthens her perseverance in male-dominated Victorian England. She attracts three dissimilar suitors: the constant farmer, the country squire, the seductive sergeant. Their fascinating stories unfold among the local convivial, earthy inhabitants who are in tune with nature's cycles. Belatedly, Bathsheba ascertains not all choices bring happiness, while oftentimes what is within arms reach is golden.

Good casting (Nina Gold, Theo Park) pays in spades. Carey Mulligan's facial subtleties reflect the kaleidoscope of feelings Bathsheba wears on her sleeve, whether being vivacious or stoically enduring mistakes. Making up for his stilted performance in *A Little Chaos*, Matthias Schoenaerts' rugged physicality adds to the individualist sheep farmer Gabriel Oak's character: steadfastness, munificence, honesty, patience, and amity as well. As the older, reticent bachelor landowner William Boldwood, Michael Sheen combines gravitas with strength, melancholy with pride, and a deep loneliness overpowered by figments of his imagination. Upon first glance, we sense Sergeant Troy's darker side that women should avoid and Tom Sturridge encapsulates: charming yet effete, full of vigor yet concededly fickle, lustful yet self-deceiving. Juno Temple as the vulnerable Fanny and Jessica Barden as loyal Liddy round out the central characters.

Shot in 'Hardy country' in Technicolor, cinematographer Charlotte Bruus Christensen embraces the characters' and nature's turbulences beautifully. Award winners Claire Simpson stitches the film in shape, as Janet Patterson does costumes. Kave Quinn's production design, Craig Armstrong's music, and Glen Freemantle's sound design add to our spirited journey. This sweeping tale of Thomas Hardy's takes on unconventional love and fortune reversals ensures alluring viewing that lingers long after leaving the cinema. (Marinell Haegelin)

**Papa ou Maman** (Mama gegen Papa, Daddy or Mama) \*1/2  
France 2015

Opening July 9, 2015

Directed by: Martin Bourboulon

Writing credits: Guillaume Cliequot de Mentque, Matthieu Delaporte, Jérôme Fansten, Alexandre de La Patellière

Principle actors: Laurent Lafitte, Marina Foïs, Alexandre Desrousseaux, Anna Lemarchand, Achille Potier, Judith El Zein, Michaël Abiteboul

Florence (Foïs) and Vincent's (Lafitte) tumultuous relationship has greatly quieted down the past fifteen years; they have enough *joie de vivre* in their



lives as busy professionals—engineer and doctor respectively—with three children. Therefore, good friends Virginie (El Zein) and Paul (Abiteboul) are flummoxed when, over dinner, Flo casually announces their imminent divorce. Then, meeting with the judge (Anne Le Ny), she reminds the amicable couple of a persisting hurdle – enlightening their nine-, twelve-, and fourteen-years-old children. Life surges forward: Florence receives a promotion to Denmark, Vincent a stint with *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders). Still dragging their feet, the judge delivers an ultimatum to the couple. Thus giving them ideas – turbulence reenters Flo and Vincent's relationship. They disappoint friends, test colleagues' patience, and mortify their children forcing them to face realities.

Labeling this film a comedy is a stretch. Cliequot de Mentque's original idea might have had merit, but the telling, i.e. screenplay, is convoluted. The good cast valiantly milks the most out of the thin script and ludicrous scenarios. Although, certain aspects deserve parents paying attention. Martin Bourboulon directs, Virginie Bruant edits, Laurent Dailland is cinematographer, and Jérôme Rebotier provides music. *Papa ou Maman* has some funny moments, but if you wait for the DVD you have the option of ejecting it. French, subtitled: (Marinell Haegelin)

**Entourage** \*\*\*\*\*

USA 2015

Opening July 9

Directed by: Doug Ellin

Writing credits: Doug Ellin

Principle actors: Adrian Grenier, Kevin Connolly, Jerry Ferrara, Billy Bob Thornton, Haley Joel Osment, Kevin Dillon, Jeremy Piven

Actor/Vincent Chase hails from Queens in New York City. Now a successful film star in Hollywood, Vince is recovering



from a divorce after a nine-day marriage. Naturally, he is accompanied by half-brother, Johnny, (also an actor), and Eric and Turtle, his friends since kindergarten. Vince, now a successful film star, is in Hollywood, naturally accompanied by these three pals or "entourage." Together they party intensely on the beach and cruise ships, talk about girls, and commend each other on their assets. Vince plans to direct his next film personally to be called *Hyde* (as in *Jekyll and Hyde*). He employs the aid of producer Ari Gold. In no time they are forced to ask Ari for additional money in order to complete the film. Ari is hesitant to visit the actual financier, Larson McCredle (Thornton) in Texas, ("Do you know what they do with Jews in Texas?"), because he has seen nothing of the film, although there is an invitation out for private viewing. Before loosening the purse strings, Larson sends his mentally-challenged son, Travis, to report on the film's progress.

Entourage is based on the HBO TV series of the same name which ran from 2004– 2009 with additional episodes in 2010 and 2011. Director, Doug Ellin brings back his original characters. My colleagues rated the film "much fun" to "bad," while prior acquaintance with the TV show seemed to have little influence on these opinions. I tended toward "much fun" and enjoyed the wild parties, the

beautiful bikini girls and the running commentary, I do wonder how they will translate something like "kowtowing to cow tipplers" or "leave my nut sack in the Mediterranean" into German; be grateful that you can also see it in English. It was rather strenuous to differentiate which girlfriend went with which guy; also there is a fast turnover of participants. Real celebrities pop in and out playing themselves, e.g. Mark Wahlberg, Liam Neeson, Pharrell Williams, Mike Tyson, etc. Jeremy Piven as Ari Gold was especially good, perhaps because his role reflected a sense of responsibility compared to these ostensible losers full of themselves, and living according to the rule "work is not supposed to make you angry." (Becky Tan)

**Den Menschen so Fern** (Loïn des Hommes, Far from Men) \*\*\*\*\*  
France 2014

Opening July 9, 2015

Directed by: David Oelhoffen

Writing credits: Albert Camus, David Oelhoffen

Principle actors: Viggo Mortensen, Reda Kateb, Djemel Barek, Vincent Martin, Nicolas Giraud

Humanity's conundrum is consistency – politically, amorally, in accountability – that French-Algerian philosopher



Albert Camus's 1957 short story L'Hôte (The Guest from L'exil et le royaume [Exile and the Kingdom]) scrutinizes. Aesthetically sensual and cinematically stunning, tensions are high in French colonial Algeria, 1954 when war for independence breaks out. In a solitary structure squatting on a plateau, loner Daru (Mortensen) teaches children from surrounding mountain villages. Gendarme Balducci (Martin) arrives and gives Daru no choice; he must take the accused murderer (Kateb) to Tinguit to be tried. Seemingly poles apart, the two men's journey progresses in stages, externally and internally, somewhat absurdly and sometimes poignantly. Decent men forced by fate, they persist whereby both teacher and prisoner make life-altering choices.

Writer/director David Oelhoffen explains his adaptation to the New York Times, "From the start, I felt it could be a universal story rather than a French story, like a western — a collision of two systems of law, with that immensely savage and powerful landscape". Visual magnitude offsets verbal minimalism enforced through brilliant sound design: shattering silences, earsplitting winds, soothing downpours, looming hoof beats and marching feet echoing off earthen tracks or rocky gradients ally with Nick Cave and Warren Ellis's music, amplifying the atmospheric worth. Mortensen and Kateb's brilliance is kinetically conveying their characters emotional inundations that cinematographer Guillaume Defontaine, shooting on Panavision, encompasses. Not for everyone but quite breathtaking – a rare treat for those who do invest the time. French | Arabic | Spanish subtitles (Marinell Haegelin)

**Gefühl Mitte Zwanzig** (While We're Young) \*\*\*\*\*

USA 2014

Opening July 16, 2015

Directed by: Noah Baumbach

Writing credits: Noah Baumbach





Principle actors: Ben Stiller, Naomi Watts, Adam Driver, Amanda Seyfried

This terrific, well-cast comedy stars **Ben Stiller** and **Naomi Watts** as Josh and Cornelia, a New York couple in denial about being middle-aged. Professional success hasn't materialized in the desired way and they feel estranged from their friends, who at least have kids to show for it. Along comes a twenty-something, neo-bohemian, couple from Brooklyn, Jamie (**Driver**) and Darby (**Seyfried**), who catapults them out of midlife crisis. Josh and Cornelia feel energized and forgo the company of their old friends to tag along with their hip new pals, to try new places and activities. They presume a kinship because Jamie and Darby surround themselves with the items they had had when they were young—books, LPs, even a typewriter—and had exchanged for i-devices.

But a generation gap can't be wished away that easily. What is vintage for the young is *nostalgia* for the old. To no surprise they are tickled pink when Jamie, an aspiring documentarian, admires their long-term work in this field. But again they falsely "judging a book by its cover." Noah Baumbach is a keen observer, and didn't spare any of his characters the examination under his 'satirical looking glass'. Regrettably the story's ending is befuddling.

The direction is probably more at fault here than the actual idea. However, even if this questions the meaning of the film at first, it does pay to give it some time to sink in. (Carola).

**(second opinion)**

**Gefühlt mitte Zwanzig** (White We're Young)  
USA, 2014  
Opening July 16, 2015

Josh Srebnick (**Ben Stiller**) and his wife, Cornelia (**Naomi Watts**), a married couple that suddenly realizes they are middle-aged and in a rut. This awareness comes after they meet and get to know a younger, cooler, fresher couple — Jamie (**Adam Driver**) and Darby (**Amanda Seyfried**). Josh and Cornelia soon start to long for who they were and start trying to recapture what they believe they have lost. This search has them ditching their old friends to hang out with their young friends. They are introduced to a hip lifestyle where hip-hop classes, street raves and 'getting in touch with yourself' drug experiences are the norm. All this excitement awakens Josh and Cornelia to what it is like to be young and alive again. Their search for youth highlights what is missing from their lives and, as they embrace who they are and what they have learned from their journey, it becomes clear that older can mean wiser.

Directed and written by **Noah Baumbach**, this is a dramatic comedy that will strike a chord to many of those in their 40s. (Christine Riney)

**Für immer Adaline** (The Age of Adaline) \*\*\*  
USA 2015  
Opening July 9, 2015

Directed by: **Lee Toland Krieger**  
Writing credits: **J. Mills Goodloe, Salvador Paskowitz**  
Principle actors: **Blake Lively, Michiel Huisman, Harrison Ford, Ellen**



Burstyn, Kathy Baker, Amanda Crew, Hugh Ross, Lynda Boyd

What if, at age 29, a fateful accident becomes a magical occurrence whereby you live through decades without aging? Such is Adaline Bowman's (**Lively**) existence. The unexplainable cause has significant effects. Intellectually sophisticated, her charismatic comportment sustains agelessness, even as Flemming, Adaline's daughter (**Burstyn**), and friends mature. Until pursuit by probing, questioning individuals propels her into anonymity. Preparing for a time-honored move, Adaline serendipitously meets the young, energetically charming entrepreneur Ellis (**Huisman**). Immediately drawn to one another, and with Flemming's encouragement, Adaline lets her guard down, and agrees to attend Ellis' parents 40th anniversary party. Where a chance encounter with her past sends Adaline spiraling.

Writers **J. Mills Goodloe** and **Salvador Paskowitz** explore the many dimensions of love, aging, and death from the perspective of a multifaceted woman in this character-driven drama. To sell producers this phantasmal story, director **Lee Toland Krieger** presented a seven-minute mood reel to visually get across his ideas. It worked. From the dawn of the 20th



century until the present 21st—world altering wars, revolutionizing social norms, technology growth, unparallel conveniences—well-placed flashbacks and Lively's perceptive interpretation holds our attention. Seasoned thespians **Harrison Ford** and **Ellen Burstyn** fuel its believability: all deliver keen performances, and production values are proficient. A smidgen too long, still it's easy-/good entertainment value. English subtitles (Marinell Haegelin)

**About a Girl** \*\*\*1/2  
Germany 2015  
Opening July 23, 2015

Directed by: **Mark Monheim**  
Writing credits: **Mark Monheim, Martin Rehbock**  
Principle actors: **Jasna Fritzi Bauer, Heike Makatsch, Aurel Manthei, Simon Schwarz, Sandro Lohmann**

This is a story *about a girl* who doesn't want to grow up. Charleen is 15, melodramatic, and mega depressed. Her best friend, Isa, is getting really boring, her alchi dad is out of the picture, and her mom has hooked up with her biology teacher. How awkward is that? At least she has a pretty cool apprenticeship preparing dead bodies for funerals. Her musical heroes Jimi (Hendrix) and Kurt

(Cobain) and Amy (Winehouse) are all dead. It's about time Charleen was, too. But she can't even get suicide right, and now the adults are all freaked out. She has to sit through therapy with lame Dr. Frei, with his "unusual" methods. A social worker comes snooping around to see if her family life is stable, which of course it isn't. Two bright spots in Charleen's life are her Granny (whose "Jim" is called Jesus) and a frickin' genius named Linus. But when these relationships start to come apart, Charleen suddenly starts thinking about people besides herself. About a Girl features a theatrically rebellious (and therefore 100% convincing) performance by **Jasna Fritzi Bauer**, who won the Bavarian Film Prize for Best Up-and-Coming Actress. Punctuated by indie rock tunes, this quirky teen movie will appeal to those of us who sometimes feel like killing ourselves, even though we don't really mean it. (Brenda Benthien)

**Um Jeden Preis** (I Am Here) \*\*\*\*1/2  
Germany | Denmark 2014  
Starts July 23, 2015

Directed by: **Anders Morgenthaler**  
Writing credits: **Anders Morgenthaler**  
Principle actors: **Kim Basinger, Jordan Prentice, Peter Stormare, Sebastian Schipper**

Maria is a happily married, middle-aged executive, who is desperate; yet another miscarriage, a dismal diagnose, and Peter's (**Sebastian Schipper**) refutation. Inadvertently, she hears about a prostitution-cum-infant-market enclave on the Czech border. Maria's (**Kim Basinger**) near-obsession for a child overrides everything: marriage, career, and common sense. Impulsively she sets off; en route, Maria befriends a diminutive junkie strangely dressed like a panda. Their mutually beneficial deal is terminated in lieu of a fix. But, area customs impede, and then burden Christian's (**Jordan Prentice**) gratification, necessitating a cautiously



conciliatory reunion with Maria. Unaware how perilous an act that is, until an arrant Russian (**Peter Stormare**) catches up and introduces them to his reality: a violent, brutal world.

Shot in Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, Danish director Anders Morgenthaler daringly augments this thriller with paranormal elements, albeit very different from the norm. The small cast delivers hugely memorable performances. **Olivia Neergaard-Holm's** editing, **Jóhann Jóhannsson's** music, **Natascha Tagwerk's** production design, the special effects and sound design all complement **Sturla Brandth Grovlen's** unique camerawork. Morgenthaler infuses wonderment and understanding—how desire for a child can supersede all else—into his screenplay. A natural extension perhaps for this comic artist and children's books author: Bringing an absorbing novel film to fruition, the entire company delivers a hauntingly thought-provoking film. (Marinell Haegelin)

**Señor Kaplan** (Mr. Kaplan) \*\*\*\*  
Spain | Uruguay | Germany 2014  
Opening July 16, 2015

Directed by: **Álvaro Brechner**  
Writing credits: **Álvaro Brechner**

**Principle actors:** Héctor Noguera, Néstor Guzzini, Rolf Becker, Nidia Telles, Nuria Fló, Leonor Svarcas

In this zany black comedy, crotchety Jacob Kaplan (**Noguera**) at 76 is having an identity crisis. Upon his driving license being revoked, his family arranges a driver. The first meeting with easy-going—despite his checkered work history—Wilson (**Guzzini**) falls flat. During a subsequent heart-to-heart with his 18-year-old granddaughter (Fló), Jacob learns about an old German immigrant at the beach. Later, a TV news report about an ex-Nazi gets his imagination going. An initial foray to the beach whets his appetite; begrudgingly, Jacob acknowledges he needs Wilson. Their investigative escapades frustrate his sons (**Gustavo Saffores**, **Hugo Piccinini**), catch the attention of The German (**Becker**), and confound his patient, loving wife (**Telles**). But, when the table is turned, the pair walk away grateful, and wiser. Through it all, Jacob and Wilson – diametrically dissimilar – learn on and learn from each other.

**Álvaro Brechner** writes and directs this very likable, layered film that engages at every twist. The thespians are tremendous, especially the excellent comic timing and delivery from Noguera and Guzzini's, whose relationship is the crux of the story, and Telles' sympathetic dignity is poignantly weighty. **Alvaro Gutiérrez's** unusually framed cinematography,

with **Mikel Salas'** jaunty, eclectic music and **Nacho Ruiz Capillas** and **Alvaro Brechner's** fine-tuned editing nicely polish it off. Notwithstanding some serious topics therein, Señor Kaplan defies not laughing along during Jacob and Wilson's full-fledged capers. In the end, Jacob gets the last laugh, and perhaps Uruguay will win a foreign-language Oscar® with this submission.

Spanish | Yiddish – German subtitles; 98 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)

**Tokyo Tribe \*\*\*\***  
Japan 2014  
Opening July 16, 2015

**Directed by** Sion Sono  
**Writing credits:** Sion Sono

**Principle actors:** Ryōhei Suzuki, Young Dai, Nana Seino, Yōsuke Kubozuka, Akihiro Kitamura, Riki Takeuchi, Yui Ichikawa

Twenty-three clans rule the streets of Tokyo. The most brutal are the Bukuro Wu-Ronz under their leader Merrra (good-looking blond **Ryōhei Suzuki**) and the Buppa Town gangster under Yakuza Buppa (**Takeuchi**) and his rather feminine son, Nkoi (**Kubozuka**). Their attempts to control the city dissolve when Merrra kills Tara, a member of the Musashino Saru clan. In retaliation the remaining 21 clans such as the Gira Gira Girls, the Shibuya-Saru, the Shinjuku-Hands and the Musashino Saru join forces and seek revenge for this death.

This is basically the storyline, but there is much more to the film. Based on a Manga comic *Tokyo Tribes Part II*, which was then turned into a 13-part TV series in 2006, director Sono has made a rap opera. Sometimes described as a rap opera, the music is ever present. There is no straight-forward text, just rhymes, all in Japanese (with subtitles), which move the action forward, accompanied by exhibits of physical strength in the form of martial arts. Japanese seems quite suitable for rap, even to those who do not know the language. It's the overall impression that counts. There is the occasional English



“Mickey Mouse” or “suckers” or swear words that rhyme with “sucker.” The clock ticks on the screen, so that we know what happens at 23:21 or at 2:11, all in a single night. This film has played successfully in many film festivals including Toronto, Rotterdam and London. Director Sono has a long history of films since 1986, including *Strange Circus* and *Love Exposure*, which won prizes at the Berlinale in 2006 and 2009 respectively. This is definitely interesting for anyone interested in rap or Japanese or just something different from the usual film fare. (Becky Tan)

**Heil \*\*\***  
Germany 2015  
Opening July 16, 2015

**Directed by** Dietrich Brüggemann  
**Writing credits:** Dietrich Brüggemann  
**Principle actors:** Jerry Hoffmann, Liv Lisa Fries, Oliver Bröcker, Benno Fürmann, Anna Brüggemann

Who said that Germans have no sense of humor and are incapable of laughing about themselves? Not true, as this film proves. Sebastian (**Hoffmann**) is a German-African author on his way to Prittwitz in former Eastern Germany for a reading of his latest book. Tattooed Neo-Nazis greet him with their clubs and chains and he is knocked unconscious. Upon awakening, he has lost any sense of identity or memory

and believes that these guys are his pals. He joins them under the leadership of Sven (**Fürmann**). They travel to public events and television interviews, where Sebastian is Exhibit Number One. He declares convincingly that Germany needs to revert to the days of Hitler and racism. They make plans to invade Poland.

Sebastian's girlfriend Nina suffers from his absence; after all, she is highly pregnant and needs his support. She travels from Berlin to Prittwitz, meets Sascha, the local policeman, and together they follow Sebastian from one talk show to the next.

Nobody is taken seriously, not old, right-wing radicals, nor young hippies with swastikas called “nipsters,” nor liberal intellectuals. Some people will say the film goes too far with no respect for order, according to today's rules of acceptable social behavior; So be it. It's what the Monty Python boys would do if they lived in Germany.

Several different German actors make short appearances in different roles. The most surprising was **Matthias Elwardt**, who is not an actor, but the manager of Abaton Cinema in Hamburg. Here, in a short appearance, he excellently plays a business man giving advice – maybe a new career is in sight. The title *Heil* refers to the term as it was used in World War II, but actually it goes way back almost to the 12th cen-



tury when hunters greeted each other with *Waidmannsheil*. (Becky Tan)

**Taxi Teheran (Taxi) \*\*\*\*\***  
Iran 2015  
Opening July 23, 2015

**Directed by** Jafar Panahi  
**Writing credits:** Jafar Panahi  
**Principle actor:** Jafar Panahi

**Jafar Panahi** wrote, directed and acted in *Taxi*. Iranian Panahi is banned from film making by his own government due to his political views. Therefore, this film was smuggled out of Iran in order to show at the 2015 Berlinale. He creatively uses a taxi as a perfect prop to convey the political injustices which are occurring on an everyday basis in Iran. Two cameras were mounted in his taxi, one on the front dash board and one on the back of the passenger's seat next to the driver. Two mobile phones and an iPad play a role in the film. He even had a camera on the street filming a wedding where strange events took place. Each camera acted as a witness to these different events and added yet another layer of political statements to the film. With each new customer comes a new story, which grows and winds between the lives of these ordinary people as the taxi makes its way through the city. It touches upon thieves, teachers, couples and family members who all struggle to understand the obstacles that they

have to overcome in order to survive under this oppressive government. Panahi began film making in 1988 and showed a film at the 2014 Berlinale called *Closed Curtain* which was even more complicated to understand but dealt with the same topic as *Taxi*. However, this year he opted for a more-in-your-face storyline which reached the audience in a very confrontational way. It made it perfectly clear what is going on politically in Iran from the maker/taxi driver's point of view. I (and my Turkish taxi driver in Berlin) have put this film on our must-see film lists. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)





*American Women's Club of Hamburg, e.V.*