"It is an absolute honor to be taking part in the pageant the Diamond Jubilee. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and will be a moment in history that will always be remembered."  
Steve McFadden, British Actor

While it may not be quite as historic as the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, I can certainly say that I am honored to be serving as president for the American Women’s Club of Hamburg during this Diamond Anniversary Year! Anna S., head of the Diamond Planning Committee, has been coordinating our activities around this historic event. Becky T., Shelly S., Carol S., Laura O., Tracy M., Rachelle B. and many others are playing a role in the festivities too. With Robin Goldsbys’ performance at the Steinway Haus in June, post-Gala brunch at the Vier Jahrzehnten following the Gala, musical performance by a great American-born performer (not sure if we’ve announced it yet, but I can certainly say that her name says it all), a slide show, a multi-page souvenir program, a raffle with fabulous prizes and various Gala preparation activities, there will be something for everyone to participate in. I sure hope that you can join us for all or part of the activities.

It has also been a busy year for seminars, helping our members learn about cross-border estate planning issues, voting from abroad and more about black history. Carol S., Ericka S., and Rachelle B. have done a wonderful job helping us grow. For those of you that were unable to attend, don’t forget that access to ever so much information is available on the FAWCO website. As members of the American Women’s Club of Hamburg, we are all members and there is a treasure trove to be found there. Also, with help of Tracy M. and the Bloom Where You Are Planted team and Anna S. and the Currents Proofreading Team, we will also soon have the updated “Bloom Where You Are Planted” publication to help our members successfully navigate Hamburg, the German medical system and deal with a few of the bureaucratic hurdles one can encounter here.

Our regular Groups within the Club are all very active and it is heartening to see. They are the bones of AWCH. I do so enjoy hearing of their activities, and sometimes even take part. The Movie Reviewer Group, under Becky T’s steady hand, continues to be a leader in the community, with the publication of the Berlinale Currents edition, and they know how to have fun with the Oscar party and Film Tea. Elizabeth R. is leading our wonderful and insightful Opera Club. Every other Tuesday, Jessica M. and Tracy M. fill the Stitch ‘n Bitch Group with levity. Their movie reviews, under Becky T’s guidance, helped us learn Book Club Best Practices. Currents is also thriving under the leadership of the American Women’s Club of Hamburg, we are all members and there is a treasure trove to be found there. Also, with help of Tracy M. and the Bloom Where You Are Planted publication to help our members successfully navigate Hamburg, the German medical system and deal with a few of the bureaucratic hurdles one can encounter here.

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We also have our regular annual celebrations, with the planning for Thanksgiving and Christ- mas on the agenda. This year, our Independence Day celebration will be held jointly with the American Club of Hamburg and the Deutsch-Amerikanischer Frauenclub at Bobby Reich’s on the Alster.

I end this President’s Message with quote from one of my favorite educators, Mary McLeod Bethune:  
"Invest in the Human Soul. Who knows, it might be a diamond in the rough."

Your AWCH President,  
Laura Langford
FAWCO Interim Meeting, March 11—13, 2016
by Carol Strametz

FAWCO held its Interim Meeting in the hills south of Frankfurt, Germany on March 11-13, 2016 with 117 delegates from 38 member clubs representing FAWCO’s 12,000 members worldwide. AWC Hamburg was represented by 5 delegates. The meeting was a perfectly organized, action-packed 48 hours that focused on FAWCO and club business while still providing time for networking! Kudos to the meeting co-chairs Angelika McLarren and My-Linh Kunst (AWC Berlin) and the registrar Tracy Moede and Conrad Meyers for arranging for a very generous donation of a beautiful Yogi Tea gift for all the delegates!

Welcome and Gala Dinner
The meeting got off to a good start with a Welcome and Orientation for first-time attendees that focused on FAWCO and club business while still providing time for networking. Kudos to the meeting co-chairs Angelika McLarren and My-Linh Kunst (AWC Berlin) and the registrar Tracy Moede (AWC Hamburg)! Many thanks to Abby Meyers (AWC Hamburg) and Conrad Meyers for arranging for a very generous donation of a beautiful Yogi Tea gift for all the delegates!

The opening dinner Celebrating 85 Years of FAWCO was very festive. One birthday present was three videos, produced by Rick Chizma-

dia, documenting FAWCO’s history from 1931 through 2015.

Another birthday present was the update by Georgia Regnault (AWC The Hague) and Nancy Thornley (The Red Book). It is a true treasure and well worth taking a look at the history of FAWCO from 1931 to 2015! The Red Book, the third FAWCO history video, and photos of the gala evening are available online.

Highlights of the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
The Rebranding Task Force under Chair Kathleen Simon worked with internationally experienced brand consultants Edwin and Sanja Schmidheiny of Accent Branding for a very generous donation of a beautiful Yogi Tea gift for all the delegates!

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What a FAWCO Education Award meant for me...

In 1981, I received a $4,000 scholarship from FAWCO that had a tremendously important and positive impact on my life. A bit of background:

In 1975, I moved with my family from Massachusetts, USA, to Hamburg, Germany. I started the seventh grade at the Gymnasium Blankenese (Kirschtenstraße), and I gradually learned to read and write in German. While there were many advantages to living in another country, not least of which was the deepening relationship to my German grandparents who lived in Hamburg, I also had a strong feeling of displacement and homesickness for the United States. How much of that feeling was due to the usual ups and downs of adolescence, I’ll never know, but I did feel uprooted. In spring 1981, I received my Abitur, and a few months later I eagerly matriculated at a top-notch private liberal arts college, Smith College, in western Massachusetts. My learning experience at Smith College that year was challenging and invigorating, and I felt inspired by the teachers and my fellow students. I also felt I had returned home. I thrived.

Smith had accepted my Abitur as equivalent to one year’s worth of college courses—an appropriate acknowledgment, in my opinion, of the breadth and rigor of the Gymnasium experience—so I was technically a sophomore in my first year. That year, 1981-82, tuition and residence fees came to $10,850. My parents did not have that kind of money readily available, and they tightened their belts. (My mother called these the “stone soup times.”) I promised my parents that I would get a merit scholarship and, failing that, would return to Germany. I did not expect it to happen that way, but it did. I did not get a scholarship (in truth, I had no idea how to go about it), but I received one. When I asked if she could tell me something about it, she sent me this inspiring story of what her award has meant to her and generously granted her permission to share this with you in Currents. Thank you Kirsten! (Carol Strametz)

That’s when FAWCO comes into the story. During the year back in Hamburg, I applied for a FAWCO scholarship. To my immense relief and everlasting gratitude, I received an award for $4,000. It would not cover the costs at Smith, which rose by $1,000 every year in those days, but it made the crucial difference. The FAWCO award made it possible to imagine how we might cobble together a solution. I distinctly remember receiving news of the award and how hard I cried. My parents dug deep into their pockets once more, I successfully applied for a Pell grant, and FAWCO did the rest. Smith College accepted my credits from the University of Hamburg (what a serendipitous circumstance that Smith had a year abroad program with that university!), and I returned to Smith for my second and final year in 1984-85. When I graduated cum laude in May 1985, I felt immensely relieved and happy.

With support from my parents and FAWCO, I had overcome substantial financial obstacles and had earned a B.A. from an outstanding liberal arts college. That degree made it possible for me to stay in the United States and, two years later, to go on to graduate school.

I am now an associate professor of history at the University of Minnesota, and teaching is my passion. I feel especially committed to first-generation college students, and to those for whom English is not their first language. I believe we share this: we don’t take college education for granted. My thanks to FAWCO for making my American college education possible.

May, 2016
Kirsten Fischer
I had the pleasure and privilege of attending three days of CSW60, the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from March 14—24, 2016. The Commission was established in 1946 and is ‘dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women’. The annual sessions provide advocates for human rights of women an opportunity to influence the UN agenda. Around 6000 delegates from the 45 member states of the Commission, United Nations entities, and accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended this year’s annual session with the priority theme ‘women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development’. The session comprised the official ministerial meetings, more than 200 side events hosted by the Member States and UN entities, and around 450 parallel events organized by NGOs.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in September 2015, are the top priority at the UN and are to be achieved by the year 2030. Goal 5 is “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” The focus of the Goal 5 Targets—e.g., violence against women and girls, trafficking, early marriage, health, discrimination—were recurring themes in the events. “Plan and 50 by 2030: Step it Up”, the theme of 2016 Women’s Day, was also in focus.

The opening speech “CSW60 is the First Test of Our Resolve” by UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka gives a perspective on the 2030 Agenda. The concluding commitment of CSW Member States to the implementation of Agenda 2030 is summarized in a press release from the closing day.

FAWCO was active at CSW60. In preparation for CSW60, FAWCO joined with other members of the NGO CSW in Vienna to sign a statement on the priority theme that was submitted to CSW60. The statement was published on the UN’s website as a part of the CSW60 provisional agenda. FAWCO UN Liaison Laurie co-moderated an NGO Briefing and made a statement on refugees.

On the last day of CSW60, FAWCO along with the NGO Committee on Migration in NY, the Organization for Early Childhood Education, UNHCR and other organizations co-sponsored an important parallel event: Empowering Syrian Refugee Women and Children for a Better Future: Challenges and Innovative Solutions in Early Childhood Development. The Beat for the event lists the impressive line-up of speakers. FAWCO had a delegation of 14 members, several of whom were present throughout the session. Please read the CSW60 blog on the FAWCO website and watch for the next UN Liaison Bulletin and Forum (or subscribe online).

It was exciting, inspiring, impressive and overwhelming to attend CSW60. It was stunning to view the UN Headquarters from 1st Avenue when all the flags are flying and it was breath-taking to be with hundreds of men and women in traditional dress from all over the world. Entering the UN is literally entering another world—it is extraterrestrial and under the jurisdiction of the UN not the US. The organization, the level and quality of the event presentations and panel discussions were impeccable. Organizers and participants were engaged, committed and passionate. Many steps to implement the 2030 Agenda are in place and others are being feverishly sought. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka alluded to the fever in her opening speech: “… in your hands is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end poverty and transform gender relations irreversibly for the next generation, making the world a better place for all. Let us seize the day!”

Following are some of the side and parallel events (usually 75–90 minutes) that I was able to attend:

**Informal NGO Morning Briefings**

- **Combatting the Trafficking of Women and Girls: What Role Can the Private Sector Play in Addressing and Preventing Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery?** (A ministerial-level event organized by Hungary, Liechtenstein, and the United States of America)
- **Getting to Equal: The World Bank Group’s Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2023** (Carol Grotn, Senior Director, Gender Cross-Cutting Solution Area, World Bank Group)
- **Habitat III Agenda and Gender Equality: Safe Public Spaces for Women and for All (UN Women, UN-Habitat)**
- **Widows and the Sustainable Development Goals: Leaving No One Behind** (The Loomba Foundation)
- **Advancing Women’s Empowerment in the OIC Region (Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the United Nations)**

FAWCO will continue its work as an accredited EOSOC (Economic and Security Council) NGO. From the FAWCO website: The UN NGO Team consists of a UN Liaison leading a team of FAWCO UN Representatives in Geneva, New York, Vienna and Athens. The goals of the team are:

- **To represent FAWCO at United Nations meetings and conferences.**
- **To involve FAWCO members worldwide in supporting the UN’s development agenda, the FAWCO Target Program as well as other UN-related projects.**
- **To provide information to FAWCO members on UN activities and programs related to global issues of concern to FAWCO members.**

Out UN Liaison is Laurie Richardson (AWA Vienna) at UN.Liaison@fawco.org.

The work of the Task Forces on Global Issues and the Target Program support our UN status and the 2030 Agenda. The theme Education—Empowering Women and Girls through Knowledge and Skills is the overarching theme of the Target Program 2016 - 2019. A monthly Target Program: Education Bulletin will keep you up-to-date and informed. Proposals for the Target Project will be accepted until September 30, 2016. If you have an educational project or would like to get involved, contact the Target Chair Tricia R. Saur at: target@fawco.org.

Many thanks to Laurie for organizing and providing us with valuable information upfront, to Laurie and Erica H. for their warm-hearted mentoring during CSW60, and to the FAWCO delegation for their embrace.

If you haven’t already, please sign on to support electing a woman UN Secretary General. (Carol Strametz)
Bayeux and Giverny: Highlights of Normandy

It only takes a few days of spring sunshine to remind us that winter is behind us and summer is on its way. During a recent April visit to Normandy, the sun came out for a few wonderful days. We went to see the Bayeux tapestry and the place where William the Conqueror used to live, and Monet’s garden at Giverny.

Every British schoolchild knows the date 1066 because that is the last time that Britain was invaded. William the Conqueror crossed the body of water between the coast of northern France and the south coast of England with his Norman soldiers and fought King Harald in Battle, near Hastings. Not only did he and his soldiers take over England and its people but somebody went to the trouble of recording the event by embroidering an enormous piece of linen with all the details of it. Since learning about this in elementary school I have wanted to see the tapestry and decades later, I managed to do so.

For many centuries it was thought that William’s wife Matilda had arranged to have the tapestry made to record her husband’s amazing achievement and set her ladies of the court to work on their sewing skills. Modern historians question this but, whoever was responsible for the tapestry, a bevy of clever needlewomen must have ruined both eyesight and fingertips as they stitched away for goodness knows how many months or even years. The tapestry is beautifully displayed in the little town of Bayeux and you can see the procession of events which led up to the defeat of Harald. You can see the boats which carried the soldiers, their horses and weapons and provisions, all meticulously sewn in tiny neat stitches and you can see the preparations for the battle and the grisly details of how it developed. After looking at this incredible piece of needlework you can see how the dyes were made for the embroidery thread and how the flax was prepared for the linen, and you can also see a copy of a boat which ferried men and horses to England. Managing to coax horses onto those flimsy little boats must have been a victory in itself.

William was so fond of Bayeux and the neighbouring town of Caen that he decided to build a castle there. Recent excavations in Caen have found the foundations of his castle and it is a thrill to look at the very stones which he will have walked on. He and Matilda chose to be buried there too, though they had to ask the pope’s permission, and you can visit William’s much desecrated grave in the huge and impressive abbey in Caen and Matilda’s in a nearby priory. The pope wouldn’t let them be buried together and insisted that two places of worship be built for their remains, which tells us something about the power of the church at that time.

Monet’s garden at Giverny is less than two hours drive from Caen and by visiting it I’ve crossed off another wish on my wish list. The best time to visit the garden must be summer, when waterlilies are blooming in Monet’s famous pond, but the masses of flowers growing in Spring must be a close second. Visitors are free to wander about in the garden, cross the famous bridge over the pond and look into the house. Because it was a sunny day, the windows in Monet’s bedroom were open and we could lean out and admire what the painter himself would have seen on a warm Spring morning. Monet was a keen gardener as well as a painter and he’d planted flowers so that he’d always have something to paint. The world is grateful that he did.

Some of the flowers I photographed in the garden have been used in a printing class I have recently taken. Templates of a vivid red and yellow tulip and another of a pale blue clematis have been printed onto fabric. These will one day be turned into a patchwork quilt. I printed the clematis onto two fifty-cent cotton bags and converted them into cushion covers for the balcony furniture, and they are a happy reminder of some sunny days in northern France. The quilt may take years to complete but making it will be fun and another reminder of some spring sunshine.

(Jenny Mather)
This issue’s theme: Diamonds out of the Rough

Time to shine
by Jennifer Kearns-Willerich

This past Friday was my birthday: I turned 44. Forty-bloody-four. How? When? My mother called me to wish me a happy birthday and, when I reminded her of my age (although I highly doubt she needed reminding: after giving birth to my own two, I’m fully aware of what a memorable occasion childbirth is for so many reasons, painful and otherwise), she said quietly, “Wow, huh...?” In other words, “You’re up there now, right?” You have to love mothers: they can – and do – say things that no one else would dare to...

But she’s not wrong. As a moody teenager, filled with all the anxieties and aggressions of your typical geek-meets-freak, I could not comprehend making it to 18, never mind to my mid-fourties. And nor has it been an easy path: dysfunction, anger, self-destructiveness and body-numbing sorrow are battles I have faced. And, it seems, have so far won.

Stepping into this year, my life is largely filled with positive, happy things – but I’m keenly aware of how rocky the road to get here has been. I am not one of these “path to happiness” types. Self-reflection is something that I could do more of, but I’m just not there yet; instead, once in a while, I find myself wondering how I’ve gotten to this point and which steps I can avoid in the future to make the road less bumpy.

And yet perhaps it’s the bumps that shape us: it’s those scratches and scars, tears and arguments that slowly mould us, carve out who we really are and who we are meant to be. As life naturally chisels away at the layers, maybe it’s only then that our radiance can shine through.

Sowing my Quaker Oats
by Ericka Seifried

Maybe it’s my being set in my ways well into my 40s. Maybe it’s my accepting that the weather is reported in Celsius. Or more likely, it’s because I’m jaded after years of living way north of the Mason-Dixon line (albeit the European latitudinal equivalent). Whatever the case, I just can’t get excited about a northern European summer. It’s simply never hot or sunny long enough for my nostalgic brain to grasp that it actually IS summer!

Growing up in Tennessee, summer’s always meant an end-of-the-school-year carnival headed up by my mom, a trip to now-defunct Opryland amusement park to take a watery ride on the Flume Zoom, drive the 12 hours to go loopdie loop on the Wabash Cannonball. Then my three siblings and I would fly on Piedmont or Eastern Airlines to Winston-Salem for a three-month visit to my grandparents, where days were spent helping my grandmother do wet-sets in her beauty salon, “swimming” in their above-ground pool, anticipating the yearly reunion with summer Sunday school friends, or tagging along with my grandfather to pick up a dozen glazed doughnuts from the original Krispy Kreme store.

Armed with individual light green tubes of Clinique Sunscreen (SPF30), we played outside from sun up to sundown seven days a week, only taking breaks to watch reruns of I Dream of Jeannie, Bewitched or Love, American Style on WTBS. Sometime in June, my favorite uncle would load up our Army Surplus trunks and backpacks and drive us to a sleep-away camp tucked away in a Quaker community in the Blue Ridge Mountains. A amazing, loving place to be “free to be you and me!”

Far away from the comforts of home (read: cable TV and candy), back then the longest day of the year was often spent inner tubing down Tip Toe River, riding bareback on Duchess or Columbine, belting out campfire songs, hiking up Mt. Mitchell and dreaming of my first piece of bubble gum after three weeks on a sugar-free, meat-free, junk food-free diet. No electricity in the raised floor, tarp-covered tents of the girls’ junior camp, no siree! Nightly tick checks, back rubs and ghost stories told by loving counselors, followed by 7 am wake ups to misty mornings, rhododendron-scented trails, and a breakfast of homemade bread, farm fresh eggs and a hearty helping of bear mash. We played tetherball in 100 degree afternoons, dipped colorfully-crocheted candles or created equally psychedelic tie-dye designs on Flanes teeshirts.

Some 30 years later, I am still trying to recreate Camp Celo’s Peanut Butter Glop recipe from a foggy memory of idyllic summers at the Barrus family’s camp. And no longer wondering what my poor parents did for nearly 90 days without a houseful of kids to care for. The bar has been set high – those were the days! And now it’s my job to return this summertime gift to my own little boy.

Polishing Those Teenage Diamonds
by Pat Frickey

Oregon may be notoriously progressive today, think Portlandia and Bernie Sanders country. However in the ’50s, it was the very essence of conservative America. I grew up in the state capital Salem, populated by government workers and farmers. The sidewalks didn’t have to be rolled up at midnight; no one would have noticed because everyone was already tucked in bed by 10:00 p.m.

When I was in seventh grade, pre-teens and teens were invited to sign up for charm school at the local department store Meier and Frank. There was a minimal fee and lots of excitement. A stylish red-headed lady Sue Ferguson, who ran the local Cinderella Modeling and Charm School, taught us all the finer points of etiquette. I recall one lesson called the “Rule of 14” where we were shown how to count up the elements of our appearance, giving hairdo one point, lipstick another, dress another, etc. including a point for each piece of jewelry or accessory and each different color. If you exceeded 14 points, you were to take things off until you got back to 14 to avoid looking too busy. We were never to wear slacks or, heaven forbid, jeans when shopping in public. White cotton gloves and hats were integral parts of every young lady’s wardrobe. One invaluable lesson was on how to pick up something off the floor with knee bending rather than bending over at the waist. The most astonishing commandment, which has stayed with me since (and I have never broken), was: wear white shoes ONLY on your wedding day.

We were given a handbook to study and a certificate and an attractive hat box upon completing the course. I remember thinking like quite the sophisticated young lady, tottering a bit on my two-inch heels going along the runway to shake the hand of the staggeringly handsome and worldly store manager Gerald W. Frank. He was the talk of the town; having studied at Cambridge, then having lived in New York; he had amazingly abandoned all that to move to our town Salem. This dashing bachelor had taken time out of his busy schedule to come and congratulate each of us individually. Maybe we had all secretly hoped that some of Gerry’s (that’s what we called him) glamour and charm would rub off on us. In retrospect I think it worked.

A special thanks to my sister Mary Jo for remembering the “Rule of 14.”
Carol F.  
member from 1968 to 1971  
(member from North Carolina), then 1977 to the present

Why have you decided to be a member of the Diamond Celebration Committee? Why is it important for you? What is your goal?

I am a member of the Diamond Celebration Committee, and I want to be a part of this special event. I believe in the importance of celebrating our achievements and the contributions we have made to our community.

Which area draws your attention at the moment?

As a member of the Diamond Celebration Committee, I am interested in all areas of the event. However, my main focus is on the planning and execution of the event itself.

What prominent figure would you have loved to encounter? Why, and what issues would you have liked to discuss?

I would have loved to encounter the late President John F. Kennedy. I admire his courage, his vision for the future, and his ability to inspire others. I would have liked to discuss his ideas for a united Europe and his commitment to peace.

Which music inspires you most?

Classical music is my favorite. I particularly enjoy the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Giuseppe Verdi. I find their music to be emotionally powerful and inspiring.

What book have you read and reread many times?

I have read and reread the book "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho many times. I find the story to be inspiring and thought-provoking. It has helped me to see the world in a new light and to understand the importance of following my dreams.

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Happy Independence Day, USA!

So here we are with the American Independence Day celebrations just around the corner. How fitting to have a mini history lesson about the Star-Spangled Banner and the stars and stripes!

Although Francis Scott Key didn’t write Defence of Fort M’Henry to be anything more than a poem expressing his pride and relief to see that the American troops at Ft. McHenry had succeeded in defending the port of Baltimore during the War of 1812, his very private and emotional sentiments went on to become the national anthem that is heard many thousands of times during each of our lives. Shortly after returning from a British naval ship where he had been securing the release of an American prisoner of war, Key’s poem was set to the tune of the British song, To Anacreon in Heav’n. This was a popular tune of the times and was often sung in pubs with many different lyrics. It was...and still is...a difficult tune to sing because of its range of one and one-fifth octaves. So Mary Wienke’s Annual Tea Party

Mary Wienke’s Annual Tea Party

The year was 2001 when our pioneer film critic, Mary Wienke, took it upon herself to join the circuit of film festival venues outside of Hamburg. She signed up for the Berlinale and then decided that we should have a tea party to celebrate and share the information she had obtained from Berlin’s famous film festival. She then headed off to Cannes and, thus, had opened up a new world for all of us who were willing to venture beyond our normal boundaries. This made way for several of us who currently attend many different film festivals, which include Sundance, Tribeca, London, Cannes and many more. As usual, Mary’s tea parties have wonderful food set in a beautiful setting in her home and this year was no different. So this year’s tea was on Tuesday, April 26 where nine different film festivals, which we are widely read by a greater audience than our newsletters for the AWCH members alone. It also means that our applications to film festivals ranging from those in Hamburg, Berlin, London, and Tibeca as well as the Sundance Festival are all accepted and our members at those festivals give us an insight into films from around the world.

We all agree, however, that the main reason for our group’s success is that we have Becky as our leader and so many other members who work hard to support her. Our reviews in Currents, Hamburg Guide and KinoCritics mean that we are widely read by a greater audience than our AWCH members alone. It also means that our applications to film festivals are all accepted and our members at those festivals give us an insight into films from around the world.

Three cheers to everybody who helps make the Film Group such fun!

(Jenny Matzer)
The Opera Club
at Eugene Onegin

Kandra T.: “I recently had the privilege of seeing the amazing Russian opera Eugene Onegin. What can I say? It has now become my #1 favorite! The cast did such an outstanding job! Their voices were heavenly! The score was breathtaking! The set design was stunning! My grade: TWO THUMBS UP!!!”

Andrea H.: “Russian opera was a real departure for me, something I never imagined exploring, but I’m so glad I did! With the preparation we did as a group, I felt I was able to absorb much more from the whole work. Anchoring the story itself with knowledge about Pushkin and his crucial role in Russian literature was eye-opening. And to understand Tchaikovsky’s efforts within the context of Russian history and society, his own life and his other compositions deepened the experience immeasurably. And to crown it all, a beautiful and moving production by the Hamburger Staatstoper, and congratulating our favorite tenor after the performance. Sigh. There are worse ways to live.”

Lisa Sch.: “Everyone really liked this opera because Tchaikovsky’s music is so beautiful and the production looked wonderful. And, as usual, Elizabeth had us well prepared for all that action happening on stage!”

WangDi Sch.: “I really enjoyed seeing Hamburg Staatstoper’s Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky. Passionate love rejected through carelessness, genuine friendship tainted by jealousy and tragically terminated in a duel; deeply-held feelings suppressed out of marital duty, leading to the ultimate spurning of their love. All these universal elements are intertwined in Eugene Onegin, played out in Tchaikovsky’s sweeping music and heartachingly sung by the Hamburg Staatstoper’s Ensemble.”

Mary W.: “Absolutely wonderful production! Loved it!”

Natalia M.: “One of my favorite operas thus far. The music sweeps you along a beautiful story in a way that makes you forget Russian is a very foreign language. And the Hamburg Oper designed the best scenery sets I’ve seen there yet.”

The elegant Stifter Lounge fairly bustled with energy and enthusiasm at the opening event of the 2016-17 season. The Hamburg State Opera’s current leadership was on hand to provide satisfaction. The Club’s newest members were introduced to the art form, and opera enthusiasts are also eagerly awaiting premiere performances of Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier, the world premiere of soprano رجالية، and Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier, as well as new productions of Lulu and Alban Berg’s Die Frau ohne Schatten, and Die Zauberflöte, which has played at the State Opera since 1982. The influence of this work will be felt throughout the season to come, not least in a family-friendly variant as well as in a collaborative participation project with neighborhoods and schools.

Verdi and Shakespeare fans can look forward to a new production of Otello. Opera enthusiasts are also eagerly awaiting premiere performances of Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier, Alban Berg’s Lulu, and more.

As for operas from the repertoire, once Die Zauberflöte has whetted one’s appetite for Mozart, Opera Club favorites Le Nozze di Figaro and Die Entführung aus dem Serail will be on hand to provide satisfaction. The Club’s newest project, La Bohème, along with Hänsel und Gretel will be this year’s holiday selections. The new year will bring in a large number of can’t-miss operas by composers including Tchaikovsky, Britten, Puccini, and Rossini, among others.

“Kontinuität, aber anders,” The new Zauberflöte will give us our first clear indication of the opera house’s latest blend of old and new. Here’s hoping for an optimal, inspiring balance.

(Elizabeth Reifke)
Hamburg Ballet:

An Almost "Russian" Season.

John Neumeier, Artistic Director and Chief Choreographer of the Hamburg Ballet, presented an impressive array of nineteen productions for the coming season which will be crowned by the premieres of Das Lied von der Erde (Song of Earth), with music by Gustav Mahler, in December 2016, and Anna Karenina, with music by Peter Tschaikowsky and Alfred Schnittke, in July 2017. Anna Karenina is Neumeier’s all-embracing artistic interpretation of Leo Tolstoj’s novel, including his own set, decorations, lighting and costumes, and, of course, unforgettable dazzling choreography. This production is made in cooperation with the Bolshoi Theater, Russia, and the National Ballet of Canada.

A special place in Neumeier’s repertoire belongs to the great Russian-Polish dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Nijinskij's body of work broke the conventions of academic ballet and pushed the genre into the experimental, futuristic stance of the high modernism era. The Hamburg Ballet program reintroduces Neumeier’s homage and portrait Nijinsky, first performed in 2000, whereas the Nijinsky Gala XLIII will round off the traditional 43 Hamburg Ballet Days. Two more choreographic interpretations of Russian literary masterpieces, Die Möwe (based on Anton Tschecow's The Seagull) and Tatjana (based on Alexander Puskin's verse novel Eugen Onegin), feature in the new program alongside works set to musical masterpieces by Tschaikowsky (the Nutcracker), Prokofjew (Romeo und Julia, A Cinderella Story), and the Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach (Die kleine Meerjungfrau, Tatjana). (Anna Sizorina)

American Women’s Club of Hamburg Currents, Summer 2016

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The ice was broken. Hanseatic soul, they say, is not easy to touch—but when you succeed, you find friends for a lifetime. And this city, once so distant and so cold, has continued to embrace and nourish the talent of Neumeier for 43 years.

Neumeier was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1942: his father, Albert, a ship's captain, was German and his mother, Lucille, descended from a Polish family. “For as long as I can remember, I wanted to dance ... I was always dancing,” he recalled. John's parents tried to support this interest: they enrolled him in tap; later, he moved on to acrobatics and, finally, at the age of 10, to ballet. This was a feeling, he once said, of finally arriving "home".

As a student majoring in English Literature and Theater Arts at the Catholic Marquette University in Milwaukee, Neumeier met Father John Walsh, a Jesuit and head of the theater department, who later became his mentor and a heartfelt supporter. Neumeier discovered the essence of being an artist: destiny, dedication and responsibility.

In 1969, Neumeier moved to Frankfurt, where, in a 1971 adaption of Prokofjev's Romeo and Julia, his first full-length narrative ballet was born. While working on this production, Neumeier turned first to Shakespeare and then to Prokofjev to develop his own emotional understanding and unique vision of the play. Dance was no longer staged for the sake of a dance itself: it was designated to tell a story. This dramatic component can be found in many later ballets: dramatic, symphonic or biblical. Having moved to Hamburg, Neumeier took this production with him; it can still be enjoyed today, in the coming season of the Hamburg Ballet.

John Neumeier is not merely a choreographer; he is a creator of his own world. His background in literature and visual arts laid a solid foundation for his “auteur” productions. Like a composer who puts a story into music, Neumeier puts a story into movement: movement of the body in the form of a dance, movement of the soul in the form of feelings and movement of light and shade contributing to a stage set. Plot and music, symbols and metaphors, dance and feelings, stage decoration and costumes all come together to present a Neumeier's masterpieces, known as “Authorenballet".

Sources: John Neumeier. Picture from a Life, Horst Kogler November 4, 2010

In Bewegung, Stiftung John Neumeier and John Neumeier July 1, 2008

And many ballets!
MANET Painting the Gaze

Hamburger Kunsthalle http://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en
Through Sep 04, 2016

Nana, a beautiful young woman, wearing a white chemise, blue corset, embroidered stockings and high-heels, is looking out of her boudoir straight into your eyes. Her provocative gaze could be both an invitation or some sort of mild indignation. Nana was painted in 1877 by French artist Édouard Manet (1832/1883). It is one of three Manets owned by the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Director Hubertus Gaßner, who will retire in autumn, curated the exhibit MANET – Painting the Gaze. This truly sensational exhibit shows 60 art works by Manet, of which there are almost 40 paintings on loan from 30 international museums, from Honolulu to Chicago to São Paulo.

Manet’s disrespect for academic convention and his straightforward approach to painting modern urban life made him the center of controversy. He wanted people to actually see his art in order to get into stimulating grotesques.

In 1868 Manet painted the enigmatic painting The Balcony, inspired by Francisco Goya’s The Majas on a Balcony, 1810. The three main characters, all friends of Manet, seem to be totally disconnected; there is no hint as to what they are looking at or what the scene is about. Only the boy in the dark background looks straight at the viewer. It is probably Leon, Manet’s son. The stark contrast of colors, nearly black background, the white skin tones and clothes, and the aggressive green paint of the trellis add to the puzzle.

While the established art world had banished Manet, fellow artists, like Monet, Renoir, Degas, and Émile Zola, were eager to hang out with him at the Café Guerbois to discuss art and its presentation. Manet strongly believed that modern artists should exhibit at the prestigious Salon, an annual art show in Paris. He wanted people to actually see his art in order to get familiar with it.

The World Upside Down: Hieronymus Bosch’s Century

Bucerius Kunst Forum www.buceriuskunstforum.de/en/
Through Sept. 11, 2016

To mark the 500 years since the death of Hieronymus Bosch, the Bucerius Kunst Forum is highlighting scenes of hell and the dramatic depictions of sin that characterized Dutch art in the sixteenth century. The show will include around 90 works by artists in the generation following Bosch, with Pieter Bruegel the Elder being his best-known follower. These artists took up and refined Bosch’s pictorial vocabulary, spreading it by way of graphic reproductions. The most modern and most influential aspects in the art works of Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516) were representations of Purgatory and Hell and the incorporation of close-to-the-people topics.

The World Upside Down: Hieronymus Bosch’s Century illustrates how the reception of his work changed along with cultural and intellectual ideas from the end of the Middle Ages into the seventeenth century.

Till this day the copper engravings inspired by the designs of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder have not lost their allure. They show the absurd monsters of the Underworld, warn against sins and vices, illustrate proverbs and satirize human stupidities. Since around 1800 the fear of perdition and hell subsided, the moralizing scenes take place in the here and now; the freakish, gothic hybrid creatures morph into stimulating grotesques.

The exhibit Africa’s Top Models ‘Beauty’ – Not a Simple Subject! seeks to open up an unobstructed view of Africa and its people, from an African point of view. The diversity of African cultures reveals itself in the diverse notions of beauty that can be found on this vast continent. Every region, and each of the more than 2,000 ethnic groups, holds its own ideals, which are reflected in hairstyles, the adornment or painting of the body, a special gait, and the forms of certain parts of the body — e.g., eyes, mouth, neck, belly, and buttocks. The highly informative and fascinating exhibit challenges us to approach the question “What is beauty?” from an African perspective.

Many people denounce the ‘beauty tyranny’ of inter-

Africa’s Top Models ‘Beauty’ – Not a Simple Subject!

Museum für Völkerkunde http://www.voelkerkundemuseum.com
Through Nov 6th, 2016

Yves Saint Laurent was the first to bring African beauty to the catwalk, when he staged his "African Collection" in 1967. He also was the first designer to dare to put African models on the international catwalk.

Beauty is a subject that engages all people, regardless of age, skin color, or gender. Feminine beauty ideals have always been prevalent, in every culture, in every society, in every time period. Generally women conform to beauty norms to show themselves off as being desirable.

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Many people denounce the ‘beauty tyranny’ of inter-
national fashion and cosmetic companies. The European ideal has defined the dominant image of physical beauty in many parts of the world for over a century. The exhibit argues that, especially during the colonial period, Europeans suppressed the people of Africa as ‘blacks’, a term which generally went hand in hand with their depiction as ‘ugly’. ‘Black’ has in the meantime come to be perceived as beautiful in Europe, and black models are seen regularly on international catwalks. Yet there are independent African beauty ideals, both traditional and modern, that we still know little about.

In Africa, beauty is believed to be about being curvaceous; traditional African beauty celebrates a woman’s rubenesque figure. A girl’s ability to bear and conceive a healthy baby is very much associated with the widening of her hips and a woman’s voluptuous body implies her desirability, her value in being a suitable pick for a wife, and is also reflective of her family’s wealth. According to a Mende saying “Nothing with a vagina bears and conceives a healthy baby is very much associated with the widening of her hips and a woman’s voluptuous body implies her desirability, her value in being a suitable pick for a wife, and is also reflective of her family’s wealth. According to a Mende saying “Nothing with a vagina can be called ugly!” To praise the beauty of a man, one says, “He is like a woman.” The Mende people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone.

Some African beauty ideals, such as the special emphasis on the buttocks and the use of clothing to accentuate them, are more and more accepted as ‘beautiful’ in Western society (think of Kim Kardashian). So is the fascinating variety of African hairstyles. Even the filing of the front teeth to a point, decorative scars, or certain tattoos are now being copied in various subcultures in the US and Europe.

SNEAKERS DESIGN FOR FAST FEET

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
http://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/

Through August 28, 2016

“The Air Jordan 3 Black Cement did for sneakers what the iPhone did for phones,” stated Josh Luber, collector of rare or limited sneakers last year on TED talks making the case for sneakers as an investment. First released in 1988, the Air Jordan cost $160 - and sold out globally in minutes. And only because people camped outside of sneaker stores for days before it went on sale. Just minutes after that, thousands of those pairs were on eBay for two and three times retail.

Sneakers have secretly evolved from simple-purpose sports shoes to must-haves. They have become a worldwide phenomenon and a vital accessory for the modern city-dweller inspiring designers to ever new ideas, which you will learn in this fun exhibit.

Gabor, Fits perfectly, 2006, Agency: Serviceplan, Photo: Michael Leis, C-Print, 76,3 x 50,5 cm

There are a total of around 250 exhibits on display at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, including some 120 pairs of shoes – historic examples worn by famous sports stars, constituting a selection of prized items from private collections. Also on view are around 120 posters and promotional print materials from around the world, created by young designers and mostly distributed by large agencies – often ones with an international presence – as well as a series of commercials.

Some dozen major brands – and hundreds of lesser ones – are in competition to find favor with consumers. This struggle is being conducted less and less through price wars and is instead being fought by other means: in the battle for hip design and a cool image. Of course, there are still shoes for particular types of sport but these days a more important market is street shoes, which appear in limited editions, accompanied by elaborate advertising campaigns.

Sneakers first attracted widespread attention in Germany in 1985, the year in which Joschka Fischer wore sneakers when he was sworn in as environment minister for the State of Hessen. At the time this earned him the nickname the “tennis shoe minister”.

“Sneaker. Design für schnelle Füße”
by Karen Malinowski

1985, a significant year for sneakers and their way to homes all over the world. RUN DMC, Michael Jordan and Boris Becker helped to establish sneakers as more than mere sporting wear. 31 years later and sneakers have reached a new high. The streets are dominated by sneakers. High-end designers, meanwhile, have jumped on the idea and even high-end luxury labels like Prada, Gucci or Dior have long offered sneakers. The new exhibition Sneaker. Design für schnelle Füße at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe is dedicated to working out the emotional and cultural influence sneakers have on our lives. Old sneakers heavily worn or brand new collector items in their shiny new boxes show the entire variety of sneaker love and history. This exhibition is brilliant in so many ways and not only enjoyable for sneaker fans. I highly recommend this exhibition in my favorite museum in Hamburg.

Posters and advertisements underline the emotional relationship each and every one of us has developed with these special shoes: even if you have never worn a pair, the cultural effect is inevitable. Videos installations, with music videos and commercials, bring us back to when we were so certain that that one new pair of sneakers would make our life so much better. Though in the end, and considering my life with shoes, I can agree with the final lyrics of Macklemore & Ryan Lewis’ “Wings” shown in the exhibition: It’s just another pair of shoes. But we love them.
The figure of a slender woman, clad in a simple black garment, is hidden among the bamboo trees. She looks sad but concentrated, moving gracefully. A moment ago she appeared from nowhere, throwing herself onto a galloping horse and skillfully cutting the throat of the rider. It is Nie Yinniang, the assassin,冷冷ly eliminating corrupt ministers. She is saved. (Thelma Freedman)

This is a gently-moving film with pre- cise and long takes of open landscapes. This is a truly tragic story that has no win-ners, just survivors. The performances of Amanda Seyfried and Russell Crowe were poignant without being over the top. If you are in the mood for a real tear jerker, look no further. (Christine Riney)

Alfredo in the meantime has not only improved his figure but has become very successful at work. Carmen feels inferior and hurt and escapes home to her parents. After lots of misunder-standings, Alfredo admits to having been a tad arrogant; Carmen has found her own niche and happily the marriage is healed. (Thelma Freedman)

Set in 12th-century China, towards the end of the Tang Dynasty. Nie Yinniang can be a brutal-ly, in reality, emotions are high; sym-bolic and philosophical references to life itself are not spared. The title Ma is, of course, “mother” and we see much about the love between mother and child. “Ma” also means “breast” in Spanish. And of course, in German breast cancer is “Mamakarzinom.” Pe- nelope Cruz as Magda looks terrific in spite of her 42 years, two children of her own and more than 60 films since 1992. She won the Spanish version of the Os- cars (called Goya) for best actress in Ma. (Becky Tan)
dance performance by Awaté and her little girls serves to reignite the relationship. The second case is that of a beautiful divorced Lououna (Darine Hamze), who wants to live a liberated life with a partner of her choice rather than return to her mother’s home and supervision. However, although her lover constantly talks about her decision, he is lax to commit. When he starts criticizing Lououna’s cooking like a typical husband, she decides to ditch him. She’d like to escape to Australia like her gay brother but can’t get a visa. So she proactively opens up her own dress shop in Beirut. Finally there’s the lovely Batoul (Zain- dha Khadra) and her cute little husband Mokhtar (Hussein Mukkadem). The two have a great sex life, but Mokhtar is extremely jealous and has a tendency towards violence. He manages to divorce Batoul in a fit of uncontrolled anger by simply proclaiming divorce three times. This takes place in the hallway of the apartment building where they live, and all the neighbors in the complex witness the act, sitting around as if they were on a public square. After the divorce the two would like to get together again, but this requires that Batoul marry a different woman, their wives, or their mothers-in-law. The women all manage to take charge of their lives, suggesting that the prospects of women in a modern Islamic society are not all that dismal. Thus the movie is probably encouraging for liberated Muslim women. For those who live in a society in which religious and civil law are separate and like it that way, the message is a little less uplifting. The movie is entertaining and worth seeing because of these insights, but not a must. (Pat Nevers)

Toni Erdmann ****
Germany 2016
Opening July 14, 2016

Directed by: Maren Ade
Writing credits: Maren Ade
Principal actors: Peter Simonischek, Sandra Hüller

There was plenty of applause from the press at Cannes this year when this film was shown in the competition. In the end it won the prize of the International Federation of Film Critics, and was acclaimed as that most impossible of things: a true German comedy.

So great were my expectations that I was bound to be disappointed when I saw the film. In my view it is not a German comedy at all but a tragedy-comedy with universal meaning. Parallels with Death of a Salesman and Modern Times came to mind, stories of individuals caught in the destructive machinery of a stream-lined modern economy. And stories of those loving clownish onlookers who stand helplessly on the sidelines and try to win a smile from the ones they love. This is the story at the heart of Toni Erdmann.

We first see Winfried (Simonischek), a man in his sixties at the door of a non-descript suburban house, playing a practical joke on the mailman. We meet Ines (Hüller), his daughter, a thirtyish woman with a permanent scowl on her forehead and a startling rudeness to her father. Ines works with an international consultancy in Romania and is constantly on the phone managing her project. Ines blocks off all attempts at personal conversation with her family and neighbors.

Winfried is worried about Ines and follows her, uninvited, to Romania. What follows is Winfried’s clumsy attempt to reach Ines emotionally. This is excruciatingly painful to watch, a bit like a tooth extraction. On the one hand is Ines’ world: interminable business meetings in dreadfully poor English, mumbled agreements to nasty business deals, office parties of sterile dullness. And then Winfried’s playacting alter ego Toni Erdmann bursts in on Ines’ narrow life. Toni is Winfried as a clown in false teeth and wig, voicing one impossible request after another. This series of embarrassments and interruptions goes on and on. And Ines does react to this.

This is definitely not a light-hearted comedy, and in my view far too long (2 hours and 42 minutes), but these two characters are memorable and may well become a permanent part of German film vocabulary.

(Ann Gebauer-Thompson)

The Girl King ***
Germany / Finland / Canada / Sweden 2015
Opening July 21, 2016

Directed by: Mika Kaurismäki
Writing credits: Mika Mäkipää, Richard Chang
Principal actors: Malin Buska, Sarah Gadon, Michael Nyqvist, Lucas Bryant, Peter Lohmeyer, Martina Gedeck

This film is about one of the most extraordinary members of the European monarchy and a woman well ahead of her times: Queen Kristina Wasa of Sweden (1626–1689). Two years after Sweden entered the Thirty Years’ War on the side of the Protestants, her father King Gustav II. Adolf falls, and the six-year-old princess becomes queen-elect. By the king’s order she receives a princely—rather than a “princess—ly”—education: science, math, politics, art and philosophy, hunting and fencing. At her coronation at age eighteen she shot the courtes with her revolutionary ideas and her independence. She not only rejects several marriage proposals, she principally rejects marriage and the obligation to produce an heir. Perplexingly she abdicates in 1654, converts to Catholicism and lives in Rome until her death. Kristina’s (Malin Buska) close friendship with Countess Ebba Sparre (Sarah Gadon) and her preference for male attire led to speculation that she was lesbian. The film runs with this assumption and presents a strong-willed young woman with a defiant mind, ut- terly confused by her emotions and no one to turn to for guidance.

Malin Buska captures this character—perfectly described by the clever film title as at once male:; female, old & young, —very well. Her extravagant costumes (by Marjatta Nissinen) are fan- tastic; though period-style they look en vogue and Buska certainly knows how to walk them. Except for Sarah Gadon—who gives a lovely Ebba Sparre, and Martina Gedeck as the mentally ill queen mother, the other cast members don’t leave a lasting impression. The film seems more like a TV docudrama and shouldn’t be rushed through with a main character like this. (Carola)

She has two left hands, is chaotic and clumsy when working at her father’s country market stall. Constance hates being called a loser by her father. Enough is enough! She packs her bags for Paris where she hopes to continue her studies. The first hurdle is to find a place to live.

Monseigneur Henri, a grumpy old man, lives on his own— if you don’t count his 40-year old son. But Constance’s idea to find a boarder who can look after his ailing father. Not a good idea thinks Monseigneur and acts accord- ingly when Constance rings his bell. He is as officious as can be, complaining about the entire world and calling everyone an idiot, including his 40-year old son. But Constance is happy to move in. A job in the nearby bistro helps to get some money. After a month she has not paid the deposit yet and cannot even afford the monthly rent. She has to leave. Where would she go? Monseigneur has a sugges- tion—a very immoral one. If beautiful young Constance could make eyes at his son Paul so that he would lose inter- est in his stupid wife Valerie she could stay rent-free for three months.

Constance is shocked but she is also desperately broke. Surely, this cannot go well. Paul is surprised to suddenly be admired by this young girl. He is blooming, his self-esteem is built up. This leads to some rather sad but also comical situations. In fact, all family members are impressed with an unexpected look into their present life. Hen- ry turns out a wise old man, discovering Constance’s musical talent. She in turn deals with his hidden guilt regarding his wife’s death. Both are instinctively helping each other despite their shar- ptongued dialogue.

This French comedy is witty, emotional and has a lot of charm. It offers worldly wisdom without swamping it with senti- mentality. The well-experienced Claude Brassard (born 1936, partnered Romy Schneider, Sophie Marceau, Catherine Deneuve, etc.) and Noémie Schmidt, acting in her first full-length mov- ie, make an excellent team. They are a pleasure to watch.

(Birgit Schruppf)
A Most Pernicious Guest

Dangerous Obsession

by N.J. Crisp at English Theatre with Philip Dart directing

Sally, in the posh countryside home’s conservatory, anticipates her husband’s arrival soon. She is caught off-guard when a nicely dressed “friend” knocks at the door. John, it seems, is hell-bent on having a conversation. As they talk, with John proffering information prodding her memory – Torquay – it all comes back. Sally admits some confusion, and kindly listens; it transpires it’s really Mark that John wants to talk with. However, soon after Mark’s appearance it is chillingly clear that this is a dangerously obsessed person.

The source of John’s cold rage is his wife’s tragic car accident some weeks prior. He begins dissecting, with calculated, well-timed precision the reality, i.e. blame, for the accident. He’s not above taking extreme measures to extract any underlying truths. The very well-off Driscolls are not in the habit of self-reflection, and, whereas John has had time to ruminate on clues he found, Mark and Sally are trapped unawares. Sally’s source of solace keeps her immune to what goes on around her, whereas Mark is desperate to maintain his spark was in depicting strong women, tough plots, and the ordeals and foibles people experience, oftentimes because of their own follies.

Which Crisp’s 1987 psychological thriller, Dangerous Obsession, so richly demonstrates. The feature film version, Darkness Falls, 1999 starring Sherilyn Fenn, Ray Winstone, Tim Dutton by writer John Howlett, had key, unauthorised plot changes; Crisp was adamant his name be removed before the film was released. In 1999, Crisp was among the founders, and from 1998 to 1971, the Writer’s Guild’s chairman.

Both the plot of Dangerous Obsession, which is not fully apparent and appreciated until the very end, and the characters, whose foibles are understandable, and reprehensible, carry equal magnitude. Returning guest director Philip Dart (Candida 2015) moves the cast with chess-like precision, amplifying the tension. Dart’s decision to stick to the 1980s era is spot-on, as the play manifests that has decades-old mindset. Our voyeur is a twisted soul, whose low self-opinion is rectified by his sure-footed wife: her business acumen, her personality – or so we’re told. Adam Lilley’s voice, posture—stiff and wound tighter than a spring—elicits our indulgence toward John. And, like it or not, a certain tolerance by the end of the day. An ETH veteran, Tom Rooke, compellingly plays out Mark’s opposing, if not glib, personality, and consequencem.

Primarily a comedic actor, Rooke finds the role challenging, and satisfying. Both actors appreciate the opportunity to ‘stretch’ themselves. Also a veteran to ETH, Gabrielle Douglas’ challenge is balancing Sally’s natural duality: innocent, and realist. Which Douglas’ skilful timing and facial subtleties accomplishes. Mathias Dardeck’s set design is commendable. The crux of the affair is actions have consequences, and we all have choices that at some point anyone can be held hostage to. We can only wonder about this afternoon visit’s repercussions. (Marinell Haegelin)

DANGEROUS OBSESSION, premiered April 28, 2016 and runs until June 25, 2016. The English Theatre’s 2016/2017 season kicks-off in September as they enter their 40th year. Evening and matinee performances; tickets available at the theatre or online: ww.en-glishtheatre.de. The English Theatre of Hamburg, Larchesfeld 14, 22529 Hamburg. Tel: 040-227 70 89. U-Bahn Mundsburg.

Photos: 1, The voyeur (Adam Lilly) watching Sally (Gabrielle Douglas); 2, John (Adam Lilly) and Mark (Tom Rooke) greet one another. Credit: Riek | ETH

Queen of Puddings

Moving from one country to another often provides happy memories of different foods we eat there. A glance at the Dunkin Donuts counter in the Hanpthahof always reminds me of a humid summer evening in Charlotte, North Carolina. After a visit to the dollor cinemas we pulled up to a Dunkin Donuts Drive-Thru. For the price of another dollar (we lived frugually in the 50s) we were able to buy three piping hot tiny doughnuts. Each of these little tastes of Heaven melted on the tongue until they disappeared to be replaced by the next one. Sitting in a car with friends on a hot, Southern evening discussing the movie and delighting in the doughnuts was unforgettable.

Other happy food memories from the States include my first ever taste of pecan pie and – to me – the unusual mix of sweet and savoury food on the same plate. Cranberries are now a staple for Christmas lunch in our house and directed one of the many Christmas parties at our first Thanksgiving dinner. A neighbour in Texas who made cheese grits for my relatives when they visited from England symbolizes for me the kindness of Americans. The grits tasted – er – better than expected, but whenever I hear the word grits I’m reminded of that act of generosity.

The happy memories of my home country’s culinary delights are triggered by my first mouthful of fish and chips at the start of a visit home. The juicy cod or plaice delights are triggered by my first mouthful of fish and chips at the start of a visit home. The juicy cod or plaice and appreciated until the very end, and the characters, whose foibles are understandable, and reprehensible, carry equal magnitude. Returning guest director Philip Dart (Candida 2015) moves the cast with chess-like precision, amplifying the tension. Dart’s decision to stick to the 1980s era is spot-on, as the play manifests that has decades-old mindset. Our voyeur is a twisted soul, whose low self-opinion is rectified by his sure-footed wife: her business acumen, her personality – or so we’re told. Adam Lilley’s voice, posture—stiff and wound tighter than a spring—elicits our indulgence toward John. And, like it or not, a certain tolerance by the end of the day. An ETH veteran, Tom Rooke, compellingly plays out Mark’s opposing, if not glib, personality, and consequencem.

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60th anniversary festivities: Robin Meloy Goldsby (pictured above right) performs her own compositions and reads from her books for the AWCH and friends at the Steinway Haus in Hamburg.

Photo below courtesy of Robin Goldsby, all other photos: Shelly Schoeneshofer