

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

CURRENTS

Fall / Winter 2019 Vol. 35, No. 4

www.awchamburg.org



GOOD TIDINGS

President's Message

As 2019 draws to an end, it's a good time to reflect on the AWCH year.

We were very honored to announce and welcome our new Honorary President, Yumi Akins, who moved to Hamburg in July this year to join her husband Darion Akins, the newly appointed U.S. Consul General in Hamburg.

We are also very pleased to welcome the 38 new members who joined our club in 2019. We're looking forward to getting to know each of you!

The AWCH board has started working more efficiently and professionally since our web engineer obtained a free license and set up Google G Suite for Nonprofits. We initiated a survey for members to receive feedback on their views of and visions for AWCH. We have started a comprehensive evaluation of our club communication with the end goal of better internal and external communication and a new website. We have also continued our rewarding partnerships with the U.S. Consulate General, the Amerikazentrum, and the Women's Council of Hamburg (Landesfrauenrat).

We have had many successful events this year—the National Women's History Month *Visionary Women*, 4th of July Celebration, Halloween, Thanksgiving, the Holiday Party, the Annual Cookie Exchange hosted by our Honorary President, and the Club-O-Rama. We bade farewell to our departing Honorary President Kathrin Yoneoka in style. We have enjoyed exclusive tours in Hamburg and have come together for a wide variety of activities. The activity groups that meet on a regular basis have also celebrated special events and outings. The German Conversation Group was started up again to help members embrace German by practicing with friends and peers. The Hamburg Helpers not only have reached out to new members to help them adjust and feel at home but also have strived to connect members in the various Hamburg neighborhoods. Under the umbrella of the FAWCO Target Program Health, our FAWCO Representative has started the Women's Circle and Get Up & Move groups.

All the groups and committees within our club—Activities, After Work Drinks, Archives, Art Group, Book Club, *Currents*, FAWCO, Film Group, From the Heart Pillow Project, German Conversation Group, Get Up & Move, Hamburger Helpers, Mahjong, Membership, Mom & Bumps, Newsletter and Social Media, Opera Club, Philanthropy Collective, Stitch 'n' Bitch, Theater Group, Website, Women's Circle, and Women's History Month—and our guest, the Amerikazentrum, participated in our Club-O-Rama with creative and fun presentations for the face-to-



At our December board meeting, we presented Aysa Kafes and Martine Rasper, from the 5th Hamburg Women's Shelter, holiday gifts for the 19 women and 11 children currently staying at the shelter.

face meetings. It was awesome to have all our group coordinators and committee chairs together. They have done and do an amazing job of supporting and bringing members together for social, cultural, and educational activities and for philanthropy.

AWCH gives back to make a difference. We do this exclusively through our members who participate in our fundraising and contribute their time and expertise. We are grateful to proudly report donations of a total of \$8000 in 2016–2019 to the global FAWCO Target Program *Hope Beyond Displacement*; fundraising of €2000 for the upcoming global FAWCO Target Project *Health*; winning nomination for a FAWCO Foundation Grant of \$5500 for the project *Kindergarten for Tribal Children in Rural India*; donation of a Stolperstein (Stumbling Stone) in remembrance of Lea Heymann; donation of From the Heart pillows and drainage bags to the Mariahilf Breast Cancer Clinic; donation of quilt squares for the FAWCO 25th Anniversary Friendship Quilt; donation of €435 and nonperishables to the Hamburger Tafel (local food bank); and donations of a total of €1000 to and support of the 5th Hamburg Women's Shelter.

Heartfelt thanks to all the board members and dedicated volunteers who have devoted themselves to make the 63rd year of AWCH so successful and memorable!

Wishing you all a healthy and happy holiday season and an amazing 2020!

Sincerely,
Carol Strametz
AWCH President
December 2019

AMERICAN
★
WOMEN'S
CLUB OF
HAMBURG 

Currents Magazine

© 2019 American Women's Club of Hamburg e.V.
 Postfach 13 04 05, 20104 Hamburg
 Website: <http://www.awchamburg.org>

Bank Information:

American Women's Club of Hamburg e.V.
 Sparda Bank Hamburg
 IBAN: DE75 2069 0500 0000 9117 71

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The First Annual CLUB-O-RAMA

On October 23, the AWCH hosted a club-wide membership drive called *Club-O-Rama* at the Amerikazentrum Hamburg in Hafencity. This first-time event provided an exciting opportunity for members and sub-group coordinators to drum up interest in our club and its numerous activities with current and prospective members. Many interested guests had a unique chance to talk to active members and ask questions about the club's history, future plans, and other details about membership.

The event showcased the activities and plans of the AWCH as well as several (if not all) of the sub-clubs including Membership, FAWCO, Philanthropy, Archives, Hamburger Helpers, Website/Tech, Newsletter/Social Media, Theater, Film, Art, Book, Opera, Mahjong, Heart Pillow

Project, Stitch-n-Bitch, Moms 'N' Bumps, German Practice Circle, Currents, Women's History Month, Get Up & Move and Women's Circle. Our friends at the Amerikazentrum Hamburg also hosted an information table to promote its mission and had a gift-bag raffle at the end of the evening.

President Carol S. opened the event and introduced the evening's lively MC, Julia R. Members and guests alike were delighted by an uplifting interlude of music by singer/songwriter Caroline Cotter (carolinecotter.com), who shared her voice, acoustic guitar strumming and emotional tales from the U.S. and life on the road. Guests were able to buy signed copies of her latest CD as well. Ms. Cotter

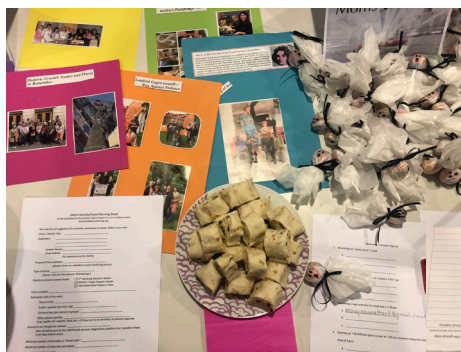
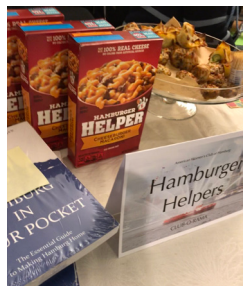
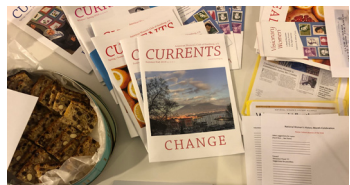
also happens to be the goddaughter of the club's membership chair, Holly T., and is currently touring throughout Europe. Another highlight was the introduction of Yumi Akins to our club. Ms. Akins has since been named the Honorary President of the AWCH, which will undoubtedly bring new insights and inspirations to her role as traveling spouse to newly-named Counsel General Darian Akins. We are honored to have her join our club and look forward to working with her during her tour of duty.



Our first Club-O-Rama focused on bringing together and informing current members but next time around the board plans to expand its outreach to attract more potential members. Nevertheless, several attending potential members did join the club or plan to join at the start of the new year. While it may not be repeated every year as some at-

tendees urged, AWCH will definitely do another Club-O-Rama in the future. The evening provided a wonderful chance for all members to get-together in a relaxed atmosphere and to meet interest group coordinators face-to-face. Many signed up for new activities and upcoming events. Over 30 AWCH members volunteered their time to man info tables in addition to setting up and cleaning up, and providing refreshments and delicious small bites to guests. Without the tireless dedication of our board and members, the AWCH would not be able to pull off amazing and entertaining events like this. Special thanks to Tracy M., Carol S., and Holly T. So, a million thanks again until we "o-rama" once more! (Ericka S.)

CLUB-O-RAMA Highlights!





Good Tidings From Rural India

I'd like to share some great news! The day before Thanksgiving, I telephoned with Robert d' Costa, the Director of the Integrated Tribal Watershed and Development Program (ITWDP) in Maharashtra, India. Two of their projects have been our nominations for the FAWCO Foundation Development Grants and were awarded. In 2018 ITWDP received money to build an open well in Hazarwadi, a small hamlet with around 100 inhabitants. The well was completed in fall 2018. In 2019 money was received for a kindergarten for tribal children in Hazarwadi.

Unfortunately, this area has suffered a drought for the past two to three years, with the situation becoming very critical this summer. Each week 10,000 liters of water were being delivered by truck and

dumped into the newly constructed open well—but this barely made a dent in its 500,000-liter capacity. The countryside was scorched, no crops, and no food; and the tribals were starting to migrate in order to survive. Finally in September the area received sufficient monsoon rains to make the landscape green again and replenish the ground water. The open well is now filled to the brim—there will be a first crop for food and a second crop for income as well as plenty of water for drinking and domestic use. After a dedication ceremony in late November, construction of the kindergarten began and they hope to be finished by the end of the year (see photos). Robert made me promise to tell all the ladies of AWCH that he expresses his thanks to us in his prayers everyday. (Carol S.)

The Hamburger Tafel Is 25!

The Hamburger Tafel celebrated its 25th anniversary this year. The idea of helping the needy through donations of fresh or packaged food originated in New York City (The City Harvest) in 1982. In 1993 this concept was brought to Berlin, and one year thereafter to Hamburg. The Hamburg chapter was started by Annemarie Dose and is now run by her grandson, Mats Regenbogen. There are over 900 Tafel in Germany, which benefitted 1.6 million "guests," as the people assisted are called, last year. This is an increase of 10% over the previous year. In Hamburg more than 40 tons of food are brought to 20 thousand needy people at 27 locations every year. The Hamburger Tafel is the biggest social welfare program in the hanseatic city. The food comes from supermarkets, producers, and restaurants. One can



also attend cooking classes at 20 different locations and learn everything from how to chop onions to how to fry chicken breasts. Participants get recipes and detailed instructions on how to cook/prepare the groceries received. I was at Lidl last Monday morning and saw boxes of fresh produce being carried to a Tafel van, and I must say I got a warm fuzzy feeling! (Susan S.-W.)

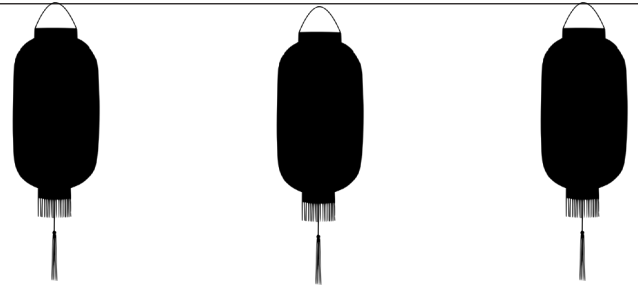
AWCH Philanthropic Collective

A Collective is a group that shares a common interest, issue, or objective. The AWCH Philanthropic Collective is planning for 2020 and is looking for people who share an interest in giving. If you have time, skills or ideas. A little or a lot. It all matters!

Let us know how you would be interested in contributing. Or just let us know to keep you in mind in 2020. Email me: [Christine R. fawcorep@awchamburg.org](mailto:Christine.R.fawcorep@awchamburg.org).

Areas of Interest for Example:

- *FAWCO Target Project
- *Fundraising
- *Community Service Days
- *5th Hamburg Women's Shelter
- *Environmental Concerns



Language, Lanterns & the Holidays

Interview with Yumi Akins
by Beatrice King

On the evening of October 23, while dozens of the Club’s members hustled and bustled about the Club-O-Rama event, I managed to grasp ten short minutes with Yumi Akins, our new honorary president. She has recently moved to Hamburg with her husband, the newly appointed Consul General. Tailoring my questions to this issue’s themes, Yumi and I discussed her experiences living in other countries, holiday traditions in Japan and *Currents’* special question: *Where were you when the Berlin Wall fell 30 years ago?*

Born in Japan, Yumi met her husband Darion while working in her country and moved to the United States. Darion’s job took them to Malaysia, India, back to Japan, then Australia, Indonesia, the U.S. and finally here to Germany. I asked Yumi if she had any tips for adjusting to new cultures and she recommended attending courses at the local language school in order to immerse oneself fully into the language of the new culture. Yumi has learned an array of languages and said that Hindi was the hardest language to study.

Are there special events or traditions around the holidays in Japan?

Yumi explained that the Japanese New Year is a public holiday, which lasts three full days in Japan, following the Western Gregorian calendar. Another large celebration in Japan is *Obon*, a festival taking place over three days in August, which commemorates deceased ancestors. On the first day, the family visits the graves of their ancestors and invites them back to their home by lighting *chochin* lanterns or huge

bonfires. The second day is a day of rest and remembering the family members at home. On the first day, the family sends their ancestors’ spirits back to the graves, again by guiding them with lanterns.

Yumi’s favorite American holiday is Thanksgiving, not only because it falls around the time of her birthday, but also because the holiday is similar to a celebration in Japan, Labor Thanksgiving Day. Before the Second World War, the holiday commemorated thanking the harvest. However, in 1948, the Constitution of Japan emphasized the importance of labor and workers’ rights. Today, Labor Thanksgiving Day celebrates both the harvest and the labor forces in Japan. As Yumi has lived in countries across the world, she said that her family always tried to show great appreciation for the culture’s holidays. The Indian holidays were the most different from Western culture in that India had many celebrations year-round.

Where were you when the Berlin Wall fell 30 years ago?

“I was only 15 years old when the Berlin Wall fell. I clearly remember watching the news on TV with my parents.” Yumi had never visited Germany before the Fall of the Wall. I asked her if there was any “talk of the wall” in Japan pre or post fall. Yumi explained that as a young girl, she was not sure if there was active talk, but that the Second World War and its aftermath left a strong impact on Japan. She said that anything along the lines of the war and its aftermath led to much discussion among the Japanese people.



Halloween at BallinStadt



It was another successful Halloween party for the AWCH on October 30. This year the fun relocated from the U.S. Consulate General to the BallinStadt Emigration Museum, where several club members and their families enjoyed a night of spectacularly spooky fun! A private room was reserved for club members, where many children's games and interesting craft activities kept the little ones happy while adults enjoyed some great conversation and good food. The wonderful creepy conversation starters set up at each table were greatly enjoyed by kids and adults alike.

Monique B. also delighted the children with creepy face painting. The decorating committee really outdid themselves with so many spook-tacular decorations for costumed children and adults to feel right at home in. For this we need not only to thank the BallinStadt team and the AWCH team headed by Holly T. and Shelly S. (Monique B., Carol H., and Anne-Marie S.) but also the fantastic props from Shelly S. and Charis H. and their 2019 Halloween crew.



Participating in an eerie black light ghost hunt was a highlight of the evening for all the children. The museum outfitted an entire wing to serve as a haunted house where children, some accompanied with parents, were given a black light flashlight to find little black light ghosts drawn on surfaces throughout the installations in the building. All their effort was rewarded with candy treats, of course! (Addy G.)

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Annual Thanksgiving Celebration

What a time to be thankful! Many Americans consider Thanksgiving to be one of the best American holidays, as it celebrates the gathering of friends and family and, of course, stuffing our bellies full of good food and drink. This year the AWCH celebrated the annual Thanksgiving dinner at the DESY research institute in Bahrenfeld with over 120 guests. Consulate General Darion Akins and his wife, Yumi Akins, who is now the honorary president of the AWCH, made a special appearance, wishing us well during the upcoming holiday season. While the grownups talked, children rushed up and down the stairs, hiding under tables and chasing Paolo the black Labrador around the room, filling the atmosphere with warm memories of our childhoods.



The feast commenced with the carving of the great turkey, and all the sides had disappeared by second helpings. Nonetheless, we still had space to devour pecan pies, Nutella brownies, and cheesecake.

Many members lovingly filled cartons and lugged heavy bags to our Thanksgiving collection for the Hamburger Tafel e.V. food bank, as well as 25 Euros in cash. The Tafel staff was especially grateful that many of us answered

their call for badly needed nonperishable staples and hygiene articles. The giving continued, as the yearly charity raffle brought the wonderful night to an end, raising over 550 Euros for the 5th Hamburg Women's Shelter, our local charity for 2019-2020.

In the last few minutes of the party, participants filled Tupperware and pots with leftover turkey for the next day's traditional turkey sandwiches. It was nice to hear that so many of the evening's members were also hosting their own Thanksgivings the following weekend, sharing the festivities with their extended German families or co-workers. Happy holidays to everyone! (Beatrice K.)



A special thanks to the Thanksgiving committee members—Carol S., Christine R., Julie R., and Tracy M.—for arranging the room and decorations, the long-list of helpers with spouses (thank-you, too!), the music and sound, and, of course, the delicious turkey and gravy! And to Stich 'n' Bitch for helping with the table settings.



How Do Our Members Keep the Holidays Healthy?

Holidays can be very stressful. To begin the day relaxed, I do a 20-minute yoga class from a DVD, followed by some physical therapy exercises. Both help mind and body prepare for the day.
—Mary W.

Less caffeine and alcohol — and more sleep! And whenever possible, no alarm clocks.
— Andrea H.

Consume less, move more, and buy local is my mantra in general. Specifically for the holidays: consume fewer cookies, walk after each major feast, and use old magazines to gift-wrap presents.
—WangDi S.

I plan to make the holidays healthier NOT by eating less turkey, stuffing, and pecan pie, but by taking MORE after dinner walks, ideally in a winter wonderland.
—Pat F.

I am considered the health freak in our family — eating salad throughout the year, even in the deepest winter. I try my best to entice my loved ones to join me for long walks along the Elbe and through our picturesque neighborhood in Blankenese; along the way, we usually stop over for a hot chocolate or tea. Having a healthy balance between aerobic and stretching exercises keep me fit and relaxed and has helped me to concentrate during this busy and exciting season!
—Charis H.

I'm keeping my holidays healthy by substituting almond milk in recipes requiring milk and raw honey for sugar. So far I've successfully made pumpkin cheesecake, Dutch "Stamppot," and mac n' cheese with wonderful and yummylicious results!
— Julia R.

I run around checking off things on my calendar. For example: film press showings or invitations from the club. Then there are Christmas markets, ballet, and Irish dancers. There is interaction with friends and family: writing at least 50 Christmas greetings to send around the world, the birthday of my six-year-old niece, and babysitting grandchildren at least two days a week. My daughter and granddaughter, age 18, will be here from Brooklyn on December 28 for New Year's and that means more running around, musicals, and dinner with 16 relatives in Hamburg. There is no time to be anything other than healthy.
—Becky T.

I plan to eat as low-carb as possible. This is always the best way for me!
—Geysa W.

Staying Healthy During the Holidays

by Lizzy Schärfig

“WAhh-choo,” my son sneezes. I stop folding laundry and watch him carefully, hoping it was just a dust sneeze and not the beginning of a cold. No second sneeze follows. I let out a breath. We might be okay. But an hour later his nose starts to run, and I know we’ve got a rough couple of days ahead of us. He’s caught another cold. I carry him upstairs so I can look through the medicine cupboard and make a list of anything we’re running low on. After all, the pharmacy closes at 6 p.m. Or 1 p.m., if it’s a Saturday. Pharmacies that are open 24 hours exist only in my fantasy here.

The lack of drugstores open late at night are not the only hard part of living in Germany when one is sick. The lack of real medicine is another. Somehow I’ve come to believe in all

the German health superstitions, like that you can get a urinary tract infection from sitting on a cold bench, or that if there’s an east wind (*Ostwind*,) you have to bundle up extra. Air itself can be dangerous: beware the draft (*Luftzug*), as well as stale air (*schlechte Luft*,) which is why it’s so important to air out the house each day (*Luften*.) I take my son outside every day for the fresh air (*frische Luft*), but not before putting a hat on his little head.

Unfortunately, I haven’t developed as great a faith in the homeopathic remedies that Germans believe in. As much Angelica root balm (*Engelwurz*) as I smear on my son’s nose to keep it clear or the ointment with thyme that I rub on his chest to help his cough, well, it doesn’t seem to help in the least. And those suppositories for general un-wellness — come on. What wouldn’t I give for some baby aspirin?

My mom is a pharmacist. She puts great store in modern medicine, as I suppose anyone in her line of work would. When I was little, my mom only needed to take in my runny nose and red eyes before she rummaged in the medicine drawer and pulled out a bottle. The medicine always tasted gross, but

she promised that was the sign that it would help me. She had no doubt I would get better. Her faith in our home pharmacy — and a bit of rest — was absolute. My mom was not the overly-affectionate type of mother, but she took my childhood illnesses seriously and knew exactly how to treat them. Now I call her when I’m concerned about my son’s health. Competent, is how I would describe her.



I often wish we could have access to some of those stronger medicines, even if they aren’t so good for the body all the time. Once you’ve grown up with Nyquil®, it’s hard to just drink chamomile tea or breathe in saltwater steam. In an act of desperation two years ago, I asked my parents to mail a decongestant to me, because I was worried about getting another ear infection

(and being told just to make an onion compress for it). The drug is one that you can pick up without a prescription at any Walgreens in the U.S., but it was flagged by the German customs, and I got a letter of warning. The decongestant was confiscated and destroyed. I’ve played with ideas of how I could smuggle some good old U.S. cold medicine into Germany, but it seems too risky at the moment.

So where does that leave me? With a crying baby and only an ointment to rub on his chest. Is belief a big part of these remedies? Belief in what or who? I hope that my doubt doesn’t show through when I’m administering tea to my sick son when he’s older. I think the biggest factor in my getting better when I was little was that my mom always had faith the medicine would help, even when I could see she was worried by my high fever or wracking cough. Maybe I have to try harder to believe in the remedies I give my son. I want him to believe that what I’m giving him will help him get better. Because that’s part of what makes a good mother, I think — your child’s knowledge that you are doing all you can for him, that you yourself are certain what you are doing is the best. I want to be competent.



Make the Holidays Healthy by...

Making Gifts for Friends!

Hot Pressed Oils at Stella's Workshop



On a cold December evening, eight AWCH ladies made their way through the dark streets to the home of Andrea M. in Barmbek. Carrying empty bottles, decorative ribbons, and oil, we mounted the stairs and bustled around a cozy table decked with wonderful dishes donated by members of our group, and within minutes we were filled with good cheer. Jennifer, Andrea, and Stella came up with the idea of creating an evening where women would make homemade hot pressed oils, with Stella K. R. sharing her

expertise. The plan was to make the perfect Christmas gift for anyone who cooks as well as to learn about making creative oils for cooking at home. Stella has been making these exotic fragrant oils for over three years and selling them at the market. The idea came to her many years ago when she was standing outside the Dean and DeLuca deli in New York, where they sell hot pressed oils for extravagant prices, and she decided she could learn to do that. So among boiling pots of oils, herbs, fruits, garlic, and chili, we filled and decorated our bottles, and were all quite pleased with ourselves as we thanked our gracious hosts for the evening. (Shelly S.)



Not Letting the Weather Get You Down!

Ohlsdorf Cemetery Tour

On what was hoped to have been a sunny Sunday in late September, a group of AWCH members braved the reality of the damp Hamburg weather for a very informative (and wet) tour of Hamburg's Ohlsdorf Cemetery, the 4th largest cemetery in the world. Opened in 1877, it is a non-denominational cemetery, meaning it is open to burials of all religions, although there is a separate section reserved for burials in accordance with Islamic rites. Currently, about 40% of all burials in Hamburg take place at the Ohlsdorf Cemetery. The lovely English-speaking tour guide was full of interesting facts about the history of the cemetery itself as well

as the details of statues, flora, and fauna. Nearly 1.5 million people annually visit the grounds, which are maintained by over 200 full time gardeners. The cemetery includes 12 chapels, three museums, and graves of soldiers from over twenty nations. There are six memorials in the cemetery commemorating Nazi-era deaths, including the Memorial for the Victims of Nazi Persecutions, the Monument to Victims of the Hamburg Firestorm, and the Memorial Grove for the Hamburg Resistance Fighters. In recent years, Hamburg decided to transition the cemetery into a multi-use recreational space, expanding its maintenance and focus into



an urban park. Another AWCH tour is tentatively planned for May, when thousands of rhododendrons should be blooming throughout the park. (Andrea M.)



Joining Friends to Make Crafts!

Crafting and laughing is certainly a healthy way of relieving stress around the Holiday time. Several AWCH members joined Shelley at her Studio 42 for a Christmas Ornament Workshop on December 2. „Crafting, chatting, snacking, catching up..what could be better before the Silly Season really gets crazy?“ says Jess M. on our Facebook group. The resulting “baubles” can be used to decorate the tree, give as gifts, or wear as earrings to the next Holiday party.



Giving Healthy Presents!

Five Elements in the Kitchen

Recipes from *My Friends in Chinese Medicine*
edited by Angelika-Marie Findgott

Angelika-Marie Findgott

Five Elements

Recipes from *My Friends in Chinese Medicine*

in the Kitchen

“Let medicine be your food and food be your medicine” —Hippocrates

Winter is the perfect time to review a cookbook full of healthy recipes based on Chinese medicine. The recipes in this book show you, step by step, with great pictures on how to make the dish but also the Chinese Medicine Energetics that align with the ingredients.

What are Chinese Medicine Energetics? Well, in Chinese Medicine food is considered medicine and is used to nourish and harmonize the body, mind, and spirit. Each ingredient has distinct characteristics/energetics that either help to balance

our bodies and promote good health, or that create an imbalance which ultimately results in sickness. Whether a particular food is beneficial is determined by its effect on the human body.

You will find easy recipes for curry, salads, lamb stew, for vegetarians, vegans and meat lovers. I tried the “Eggplant and Mushroom Lasagne” which was delicious. Next up the minestrone. A great Christmas present for someone looking for healthy options.

<https://fei-an-li.com/>

Review by Christine Riney



FAWCO Region 5 Meeting Living, Laughing & Learning in Leipzig

A weekend of Exploring Personal and Global Health & Well Being took place November 15–17. Angelika McLaren (AWC Berlin) and Frauke Rademacher-Heidemann (AWC Hamburg) did such excellent work planning this regional. FAWCO clubs were divided into regions in 1997, and the idea of yearly regional meetings started shortly afterward, with Frauke being one of the originators in planning for Germany. Having a regional in Leipzig was an ingenious idea, although it made extra work for Angelika and Frauke, as there is no FAWCO club there which could have offered support. Yet much was accomplished in just one weekend. I especially enjoyed Ronald Kötteritzsch talking about the history of the city and its role in the opening of the border

between East and West Germany. Also, the quiz to determine “How German am I” was so hilarious! We recognized ourselves in our attempts to adjust to this country. Hamburg was well represented with 10 club members but was outdone by Berlin with 11 members. Otherwise, members of clubs in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Munich attended. Only Augsburg was missing from this regional. FAWCO-related attendees also came from 10 other European cities. I was thrilled to meet up with old friends from former conferences and to make new friends as well. The next Region 5 meeting will be in Vienna in November 2020. Maybe we will see you there?! (Christine R.)

What We Can Do for Our Own Health

A very informative presentation during the FAWCO Region 5 meeting was given by Dr. Thomas Grünewald, Chief Doctor at the Clinic for Tropical and Infectious Diseases. Dr. Grünewald spoke about the necessity for re-immunization and about social immunity (herd immunity) that, when maintained, may result in the eradication of diseases. Unfortunately, free riders, people who choose not to be vaccinated themselves and their children, pose a significant danger to herd immunity; one of the latest results of this practice is the recent outbreak of measles in Europe, including Germany. According to Dr. Grünewald, measles is particularly dangerous because it undermines the immune system of a person by “deleting” immune memory: the body “forgets” antibodies against previously-encountered pathogens. Consequently, the measles vaccine protects us not only from measles itself but also from many other dangerous illnesses. (Anna S.)



The 25th Anniversary Friendship Quilt “A Stitch in Time”

Is Finished!



Every year since 1995, FAWCO members throughout the world have contributed their creativity and sewing talents to The FAWCO Friendship Quilt. To our AWCH members Anne C., Tracy M., Susan S.W., Jess M., Carola, and Shelly S. thank you; they are lovely.

The greatly coveted finished product is raffled each year at the FAWCO annual conference in order to raise money for The Foundation’s programs and charitable causes.

Tickets are ready to purchase now! Direct through www.fawcofoundation.org, order form here or contact with any questions Christine R. fawcorep@awchamburg.org.

Leipzig: Larks, Music, and Peace

"What? You're going to Leipzig! Bring me a Leipziger Lerche," said my friend Regine. That took some research. A *Lerche* is a lark, i.e., a bird, and how does one transport a bird, or even acquire one? Should I research pet shops? My arrival in Leipzig solved that problem. A Leipziger Lerche is sold in bakeries. It is a small cupcake with a hard, crispy crust, filled with marzipan and one red cherry or a spot of strawberry marmalade. From the Middle Ages until the 1800s, larks (the bird) were considered a delicacy, and were on every menu. Sadly, they were becoming extinct, so that in 1876 King Albert wisely forbade the capture and consummation of larks. Local bakeries, however, picked up on this traditional idea and began making baked versions of "larks." The red cherry inside represents the bird's heart.



Leipzig, here I come! I must admit I went to this FAWCO conference because I had never visited Leipzig, in spite of 55 years of residing in Germany. My only impression of Leipzig was from the International Festival for Documentary and Animated Films, which has existed for over 60 years. I loved staying at the Radisson Blu Hotel next to the opera house, just a few steps from the beginning of one of the many pedestrian streets running through downtown. Christmas markets were being set up everywhere. Each year, over two million guests swarm into Leipzig during the four-week Christmas markets. I'll admit that I skipped part of the conference to take a city bus tour; the next day I participated in the city walk-around. Both were led by guides telling me all about the fascinating city of Leipzig, population 600,000.

Naturally we heard about Goethe, Bach, Schiller, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, etc.; we ate at the Auerbachs Keller and listened to beautiful music at the Thomas Church. Leipzig is proud of having been influential in the reunification of Germany. In the beginning, small groups of Christians and non-Christians began meeting at the Nikolai Church (founded in 1165) on Monday evenings for peace prayers. This encouraged discussions, as well as demonstrations, which grew—all under the observation of the police and the Stasi. "Peace" was the word, and peaceful it was: demonstrators carried candles with one hand and protected the flame with the other. Thus, it was impossible to carry a club or throw a stone. Leipzig: I'll be back. The 63rd annual Leipzig documentary/animation film festival is October 26 to November 1, 2020. (Becky T.)



Marches for Peace in Leipzig with Ronald Kötteritzsch

I was lucky to attend the FAWCO Region 5 meeting in Leipzig 30 years after the weekly *Friedensgebet* (prayers for peace) grew into peaceful demonstrations for civil rights and freedom in East Germany. Frauke and Angelika invited the conference participants to follow in the footsteps of those East German citizens during a Leipzig city tour in the company of Ronald Kötteritzsch, a witness to and a participant in those historic events. Mr. Kötteritzsch gave us a first-hand account of life in the DDR, civil rights, STASI practices, and the relationship between the state and the church. On Saturday we had a chance to visit the famous Nikolai Kirche and the churchyard. (Anna S.)



(top) Leipzig: Fall 1989; The participants of the silent march on 9.11.1989 underline their peaceful demands with candles. Photo: Friedrich Gahlbeck, Bundesarchiv Blied.

(bottom) Nikolaikirche in Leipzig with the Peaceful Revolution Monument (1989) Photo: Dirk Goldhahn [Public domain]

In Focus: 2020 Education Awards

\$45,000 in education awards are available to you, your children, or grandchildren!

Are you interested in learning something new? On a quest for self-improvement? There are \$20,000 worth of awards available to members to do just that. Whether you want to increase your writing ability or get a university degree, there are options for you! Maybe your child or grandchild wants to take an arts, science, humanities, or vocational course, or are interested in studying in the USA. \$25,000 divided into five awards is available.

This year one of our members was awarded \$5,000 to further her education. Maybe next year it could be you or your child. The deadline is approaching, so learn more at **FAWCO Education Awards** now! Questions? Contact Christine at fawcorep@awchamburg.org

Academic Awards 2020

These awards are intended for children of FAWCO or FAUSA members.

Arts Award \$5000

For undergraduate or graduate study in the history, theory and/or practice of the performing arts, visual arts, film and media arts, architecture, and graphic arts.

Sciences Award \$5000

Sponsored in part by AIWC Genoa and the Bacigalupo family, in memory of Frieda Bacigalupo Nata

For undergraduate or graduate study of scientific subjects (e.g., biology, chemistry), mathematics, medicine, engineering, environmental studies, computer science, economics, or business administration.

Humanities Award, sponsored in part by AAWE Paris, in memory of Gertrude de Gallaix \$5000

For undergraduate or graduate study in the fields including, but not limited to, education, law, social studies, history, and languages.

Vocational Award \$5,000

For an individual enrolled in a training program or a course of study at a trade school, either of which will conclude with a vocational certification.

Dual Cultural Award 2020

This award is intended for children and grandchildren of FAWCO and FAUSA members.

Dual Cultural Award, sponsored in part by the AWC Bern, Donna Erismann in memory of Susanne Erismann and Elaine Terlinden of AIWC Düsseldorf \$5,000

To be used to attend a semester of American high school or an academic or structured educational summer program in the United States.

Member Awards 2020

These awards, for FAWCO and FAUSA members, recognize the diverse lives of our members, their achievements and their never-ending quest for knowledge and self-improvement

Shirley Kearney University Study Degree Award \$5000

For continuing or resuming studies in an undergraduate or graduate level university degree program.

Women in Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine \$5000

In Honor of AWA Dubai's 21 years serving the international community of Dubai

This award is for the study of STEM disciplines including the study of chemistry, computer and information technology science, engineering, geosciences, life sciences, mathematical sciences, physics, and astronomy.

FAUSA Skills Enhancement Award \$5000

This award is for acquiring new skills or enhancing already existing ones. This will allow a FAWCO or FAUSA member to become more capable, competent, and confident by acquiring the skills to improve performance in any given field.

Continuing Education Award \$5000

Sponsored by Mary Stewart Burgher of the AWC Denmark, in memory of Pauline "Pete" Arnold Schweppe

For a FAWCO or FAUSA member to further their education at university or an equivalent level through courses, workshops, and certificate programs. Subjects can encompass all areas of interest—*inter alia*, journalism, writing, the arts, and philanthropy—excluding STEM and medicine subjects.

**Landesfrauenrat
Hamburg e.V.**

The Landesfrauenrat Hamburg (LFR), or Hamburg Women's Council, lobbies for women's political and socioeconomic rights. It is the largest women's alliance in Hamburg representing 60 women's clubs. The AWCH has been a member since 1986.



LFR awards Prof. Sabine Stövesand the "Hammonia 2019"

With the annual Hammonia Award, the Landesfrauenrat (LFR) recognizes a woman in Hamburg who has steadfastly worked toward gender equality. This year's recipient is Dr. Stövesand, Professor of Sociology at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. Fittingly, the awards ceremony on November 4 took place at Schorsch, the Integration and Family Center (IFZ) in the Hamburg district of St. Georg. To get there from the main train station, one needs to cut through the Hansaplatz, which is dominated by the fountain with the beautiful Hammonia (see box).

After welcoming the invited guests, LFR president Cornelia Creischer introduced Sabine Stövesand, who gave an energetic and heart-warming presentation of her **StoP** initiative. From its beginnings in Hamburg-Steilshoop in 2010, the project has expanded to five other districts in Hamburg, as well as to Dresden and Vienna. **StoP** stands for *Stadtteil ohne Partnergewalt* (City District without Partner Violence), perhaps better translated as **Say no to Partner Violence!** The concept is based on the importance of the community in fighting domestic violence. "If we do not work at the level of the community, we cannot change anything," emphasized Prof. Dr. Stövesand.

Violence in partnerships does not take place in a vacuum — neighbors, friends, acquaintances, and relatives hear, suspect, and know something. Out of fear and insecurity, people are too often silent. Violence in partnerships is not a private matter—it is a violation of human rights. StoP shows how members of the community can make a difference.

Dr. Stövesand's initiative starts at the level of the neighbourhood: she organizes get-togethers so that community members get to know faces and names. Involving people of different ethnic backgrounds, genders, and ages, she builds support groups and starts educating these groups about partner violence. Victims learn not to feel ashamed but are instead encouraged to break their silence and seek help; perpetrators are confronted and get support to change their behaviour. The impact Dr. Stövesand's work has had in confronting domestic or partner violence was highlighted by three women—a grandmother, mother, and daughter—who joined the ceremonies to express their gratitude for the StoP program.

The evening ended with wonderful Latin American music and a buffet provided by the IFZ in Schorsch. Walking past Hammonia to go home, I had to think that it is a pity that heroic efforts of so many *Hamburgerinnen* go for the most part unnoticed. Truthfully, did you know who stood on the high pedestal on this busy square? (Carol H.)

(For more information see StoP website: stop-partnergewalt.org)

Hammonia Herself

Have you ever wondered who governs the great city of Hamburg? No, not literally, allegorically. Hammonia is the ancient name of the female personification of Hamburg. Her debut as the symbol of Hamburg occurred in the 18th century, replacing the Virgin Mary as the Protestant Reformation took Europe by storm. Artists, musicians and sculptors depict Hammonia as a beautiful goddess wearing a crown and holding a ship anchor. She represents Hamburg's Hanseatic values such as freedom, welfare and trade.

While Hammonia's most famous sculptural portrayal stands at Hansaplatz in St. Georg, her watchful presence can be found across the city and throughout time. Take a stroll across the Brooksbrücke and you will find a statue of Hammonia welcoming you into the city. From 1855-1965, the class of SS Hammonias sailed as ocean vessels for the Hamburg-American Line. In 1828 Georg Nikolaus Bärmann composed the Hamburg hymn, which features Hammonia. Heinrich Heine included her in his 1844 work *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*. Hammonia's manifestation appears all across Hamburg, including guarding her citizens from the top of the city hall. (Beatrice K.)



Critical Questions to Hamburg's Mayor

For months the LFR had been trying to schedule an appointment with the first mayor of Hamburg, Dr. Peter Tschentscher. Talks between women's organisations and Hamburg mayors have a long tradition—73 years to be exact. During the late afternoon of November 17, it finally happened. Twenty-five women representing 20 women's clubs in Hamburg convened at City Hall. We were welcomed by the mayor in the impressive Phoenix room. LFR President Cornelia Creischer moderated the discussion, in which two of the topics from the campaign #HamburgJetztGleich — #HamburgEqualRight(s) Now) — were selected. The campaign was launched this year by LFR and pro:fem (an Association of Women's and Girls' Institutions) with the goal of inciting political action; to that end, the two organizations have established eight specific demands for the promotion of gender equality.



(see Frauenorte.org and Garten der Frauen.de)—although Dr. Rita Bake, an initiator of both endeavors, was quick to point out that the Ohlsdorf Women's Garden was not exactly "recent", being founded 19 years ago. Must we continue to wait so long before we are acknowledged?

The first topic of discussion was "Violence Against Women," which was appropriate due to the recent U.N.-designated International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25. Throughout Hamburg, bright orange lights illuminated buildings and the harbor to advance the long-overdue awareness of the violence that prevents women throughout the world from enjoying fundamental human rights and personal freedom. The LFR representatives reminded Dr. Tschentscher that international treaties, such as the Istanbul Convention of 2011, still need to be translated into national and local law to ensure comprehensive protection for women. This includes support of women's shelters and protection of women from violent partners.

The second topic was the introduction of a gender-equitable budget in Hamburg, which would be an effective instrument for creating transparency in the distribution of public funds and towards implementing Article 3 §2 of the German constitution, which ensures equality between men and women. The LFR has been an active advocate of gender-equality in budget decisions for many years, helping to define the criteria for its implementation. But the Senate has been quiet regarding this subject since 2018. Dr. Tschentscher ensured us that the Senate had finally passed a bill to guarantee permanent gender-equality guidelines for the Hamburg budget during the last few days. This announcement, together with the recent implementation of an "Equal Opportunities Monitor" (<https://www.hamburg.de/gleichstellungsmonitor/>), was met with relief, encouraging the LFR executive board and its members to fight on.

The meeting ended with a group picture and a quick look at the Christmas tree in the lobby. The general feeling of the LFR delegation was that such talks are important for getting our voices heard... even if we are still waiting for Tschentscher's Twitter feed with the announcement of the #HamburgJetztGleich campaign. (Carol H.)



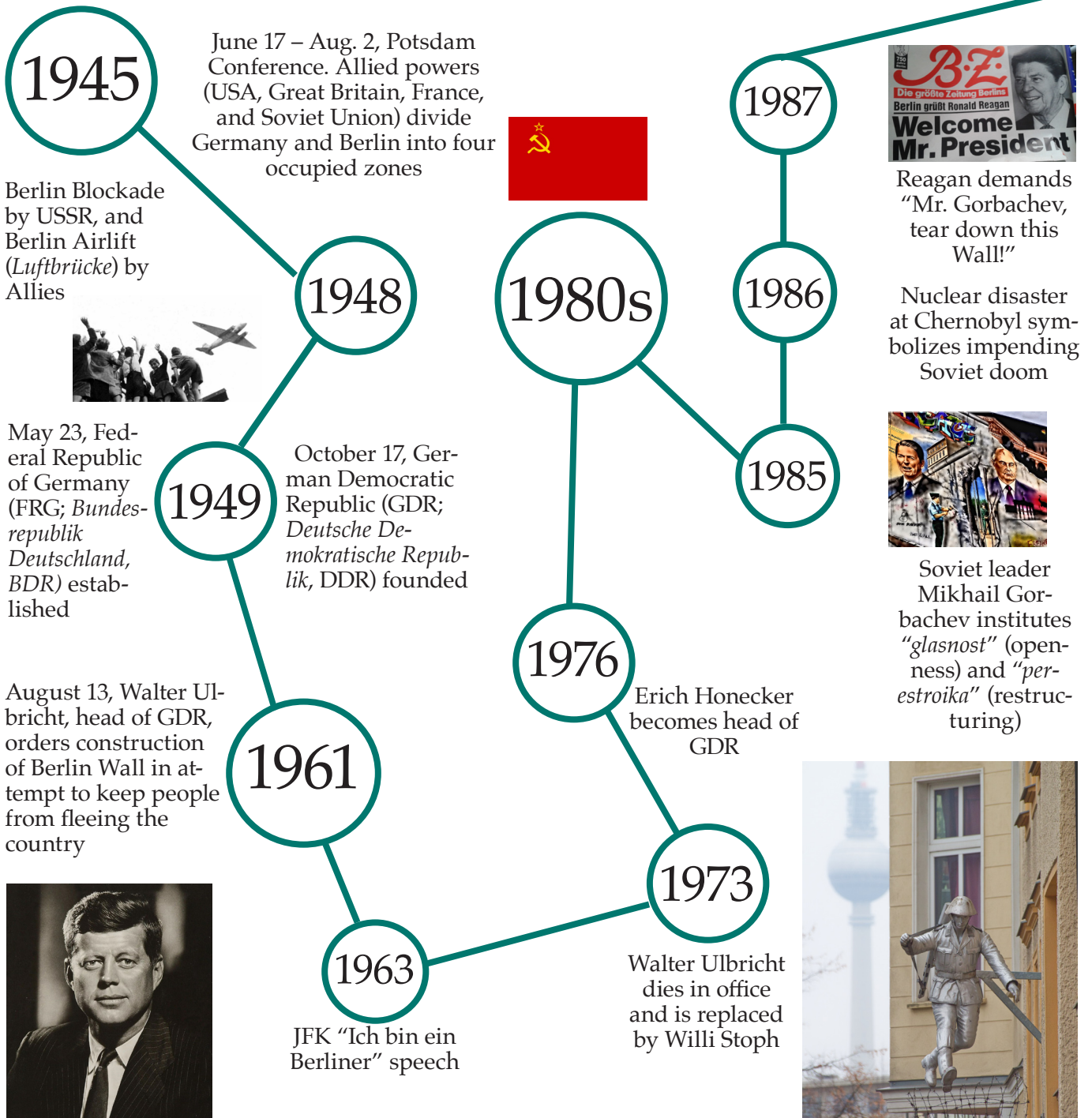
The campaign's advertisement starts with the good news: "Half of Hamburg's citizens have equal rights." Dr. Tschentscher smiled as he realized what the bad news would be. Ms. Creischer was quick to ask what the mayor could do to rectify the situation. "Well, I can start with advertising the campaign on my Twitter feed," he responded. "And what else?" replied Cornelia Creischer. The mayor then admitted that, as a man, he felt he was a poor representative for women's rights. The women in the circle were quick to impress upon him that that was exactly the point—without male (and political) voices speaking up against inequality, the campaign would be doomed.

As mayor and member of the SPD, Dr. Tschentscher is acutely aware of the inequalities and problems facing women in Hamburg, including unequal pay, the housing shortage, protection for prostitutes, and domestic violence. The mayor also alluded to his awareness of the "recent" efforts to acknowledge the women who have shaped Hamburg's history

Special Theme: 30 Years Since... *The Berlin Wall Fell*

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked an extraordinary event not only for Germany, but for the rest of the world. In 1961 Germany was officially divided into East and West and was officially reunited on October 3, 1990. Leading up to this glorious event, the 1980s behind the Iron Curtain brought forth a rollercoaster of events, including economic disaster, nuclear explosions, mass demonstrations, and political transformation. The Berlin Wall sliced through neighborhoods, streets, and apartments, symbolizing disharmony and captivity. When the Wall fell and Germany was restored, the world felt this healing integration as the Cold War came to a close.

Photo: US Air Force



1989

Sept. 4 Monday Demonstrations begin in Leipzig



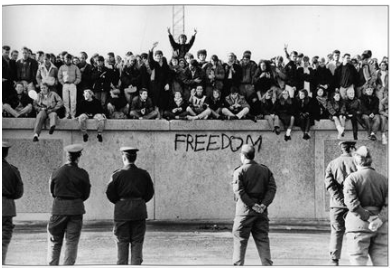
Sept. 11 Hungary allows East Germans to cross boarder to Austria

Oct. 4 Dresden, Leipzig, and East Berlin celebrate 40th GDR anniversary, which turns to mass protests

Oct. 18 Honecker removed as East German leader, replaced by Egon Krenz



Photo: Uni of Minnesota Institute of Advanced Studies



Nov. 9

During an evening news conference, East German spokesman Günter Schabowski announces the opening of the border. He mistakenly claims that trips abroad could now be applied for without proof of eligibility and that the policy would go into effect immediately. Overwhelmed by crowds of East Berliners, border guards open the gates.



Photo: Chronik Der Mauer

Nov. 4 500,000 people gather in Alexanderplatz, central East Berlin, for the country's largest pro-democracy protest

1990 October 3, East and West Germany are reunited



Photo: Cyril Doussin from Flickr



BERLIN

30th Anniversary Party 2019

by Beatrice King

In honor of the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the city of Berlin was transformed into a week-long festival of celebration. On November 3–10, 2019, famous landmarks hosted mass art exhibitions, parties, films, light shows, and more. I lived in Berlin for two semesters during college and still visit at least twice a month. It's not every day that the entire city morphs into one giant party, but upon our Friday night arrival, my friend and I threw ourselves into the action. From seeing a light show at the East Side Gallery to hearing a sound check at the Brandenburg Gate, we ended the night at a punk rock bar in Kreuzberg and watching the city drown in fog as we drove home.

On Saturday, November 9, we walked from Alexanderplatz to Unter den Linden, pausing for *Gliihwein* at the yearly Wintermarkt at Potsdamer Platz, and, for kicks, an extra two miles through the Tiergarten

in order to arrive at a less-full security check for the big party at the Brandenburg Gate. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered a speech, discussing the importance of unity and freedom in moving forward into the future. A pop band, a futuristic dance performance, and another speech followed, but the crowd did not yet feel the energy of the party in the freezing cold until two crazy rappers took the stage by storm. However, their explosive rage and chants of *endlich wieder Krieg* ended in mass booing. The party took a turn for the better once the techno portion of the night began. By this, I mean children, teens, and older adults stayed for the entire two-hour techno rave. What a way to end the night! As my friend said to me, "no other city in the world could transform into an all-age united party like Berlin. Truly amazing."



Photo: by Riesebusch from Flickr

Q&A

Did you ever think the Berlin Wall would fall?

Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<p><i>Yes, I did think the Wall would fall, since I'm an optimist and couldn't imagine how such a system would remain tenable.</i></p> <p>Brenda Benthien</p>	<p><i>No, I definitely grew up during the Cold War. I did not imagine that Reagan's call to tear the Wall down would become reality.</i></p> <p>Mary Frances Ludolph</p>	<p><i>Yes, my father impressed upon me early that Germany should never have been split into two parts. During the Cold War, I wasn't so hopeful about reunification, especially since I had been living in North America for 13 years by then.</i></p> <p>Monika Bal</p>	<p><i>No, I didn't think so. I grew up during the cold war area with the fact that there were two Germanys due to the loss during the Second World War.</i></p> <p>Ulrike Henn</p>	<p><i>Yes, considering the historical waves politics go through. However, not during my lifetime.</i></p> <p>Frauke Rademacher</p>	<p><i>No, I didn't think the "Mauer" would fall. Having lived through Nazi-Germany, the Second World War, the "Befreiung" in 1945, the construction of the "Berlin Wall" and establishment of the East Germany regime.</i></p> <p>Heide Käkenmeister</p>



Photo: Chronik Der Mauer

Q&A

Where were you when you heard the news of the Wall?

I was watching TV in my dark living room with tears running down my face as I heard the news.

- Monika Bal

I was spending two weeks in a diabetes clinic outside Hamburg when the "BILD" news stated that Mr. Honecker would step down, which had to be seen to be believed. I guess we were hearing it on the radio, while my husband, who was working for an American Company was at headquarters in New York, called me.

- Heidi Käkenmeister

I heard the news on the radio at home in Hamburg.

- Deborah Ockert

I was in Hamburg and heard the news on the radio while unpacking after 10 years of living in the US. Suddenly I had the exhilarating feeling of having picked the right time to come back. Over the next few days, there seemed to be an endless stream of Trabis (DDR cars) coming into town. When I went to the Fischmarkt that Sunday, I was especially stunned how many people had filled their Trabis with boxes of bananas and ficus plants (Gummibaum), two things they obviously were not able to buy in the DDR.

- Ulrike Henn

I was in Munich when the Wall fell, drinking beer with my sister since November 9th is my birthday! We watched the whole event on TV. My (German) husband was on a business trip in Tokyo, where there was a lot of excitement among Germans – they were all invited to the embassy. - Brenda Benthien

I probably saw the news running at the community center at my college campus in D.C.

- Mary Frances Ludolph

Throughout my day at school, we had heard radio reports of commotion in Berlin. When I arrived home from 7th grade, I started on my homework and first caught sight of the Wall crumbling when I walked past the TV and saw the news reports. At the time, the event for me was far away and I couldn't imagine the consequences or what it meant for the people living in the GDR.

- Sarah T.

I was at home ironing when my husband walked through the front door and said, "The Wall fell!" and I said, "What wall?"

- Carol Battenfeld

I was in the car from Hamburg airport to Lüneburg when I heard the news. I stopped the car and it took a while before I realized the meaning of this news. The next day my husband and I drove towards the border near Lauenburg and met all the 'Trabis coming in our direction. We stopped, like so many others, and shook hands with people that had never been in West-Germany (across the river Elbe in visual range, a 'stone's throw' away).

- Frauke Rademacher



We were glued to the news for days and were watching as the wall came down and the masses of East Germans flooded into the West. The guards no longer tried to stop them. We were in the middle of history. - Marilyn Richter

Had you ever lived in or visited Berlin or the DDR before the fall of the Wall?

Q & A

During the years of the Wall I travelled twice to Berlin, for very short business trips, always by plane. It was stunning! West Berlin seemed like a colorful island surrounded by gray. Even so one could not really see the Wall from above it was clearly outlined by the gray life outside the western sectors. No red, yellow or blue cars, no colorful signs, just a sort of steel gray mass.

- Ulrike Henn

I visited Berlin once with a group of international students in 1976. As the only German, I entered the East not via checkpoint Charlie. My American boyfriend was barred from a disco: his jeans were not acceptable, like a construction worker...

- Monika Bal

I never lived in the DDR, but I visited East Berlin once on a business trip to West Berlin. Having to pass the border at 'Checkpoint Charlie' with my US passport, going through frightening body-checking-control, riding the train along the east side of the wall with guns pointing at the West, all in order to visit the famous Brecht Theater in East Berlin, was an experience I had never gone through in my protected western world.

- Frauke Rademacher

In 1979 I went to Berlin for the film festival and wanted to cross into East Berlin and visit the Pergamon Museum. I also wanted to experience what it would be like to be in a communist country, which made my husband very nervous. He said he didn't want me to go but I went anyway. It was a sobering experience. One of my most vivid memories was riding on the underground from West to East. You could see the soldiers standing on the platforms of the empty stations as the train passed by without stopping. I kept telling myself how lucky I was to be on the side of freedom. - Marilyn Richter



My family and I lived in Berlin in the 1980s. I belonged to the American Women's Club Berlin, which at the time was only military wives. The Consulate in Berlin invited us hear Ronald Regan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate. We were escorted to the front of the crowd in a military bus and heard Reagan exclaim: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." In late October 1989, we moved to Halstenbek (Pinneberg) in Hamburg and two weeks later heard the unbelievable news on TV. I was so exhausted from the move, but my husband and our four kids jumped in the car and drove straight back to Berlin on November 11!

- Thelma Freedman

I had visited East Berlin 3-4 times before the Wall fell and always felt intimidated by the East German guards at the Checkpoint Charlie crossing. After watching them roughly interrogate people in the line ahead of me, I was always relieved when I was not the subject of their abrupt questioning. In March 1990, I crossed the border near Lütbeck on my way to Schwerin and entered the tiny building to get a day visa. When the elderly woman ahead of me exited the visa office, the border guard noticed a white thread on her dark blue skirt and asked if he should remove it for her. It was then that I realized that the East Germans, especially those with everyday contact with foreigners, were trapped by their positions of power and once the Wall fell, they were able to let their guard fall as well.

- Tracy Moede

As a student I visited the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie and the DDR side of Berlin in 1971. I was an exchange student from the USA and was invited to Berlin by the Federal Republic of Germany to visit Berlin and take part in a week-long seminar on the two Germanies. Along with other international students, we heard lectures on the politics and culture of the divided country. It was interesting to learn that all Germans present were convinced that Germany would never be reunited, while almost all international students presumed a unification would certainly take place in the future!

- Deborah Ockert

Stories from Around the WALL



I didn't really think the fall of the Berlin Wall could happen. I lived in West Germany 1964-65; and visited West and East Berlin in December, 1964, with my high school exchange program while spending a year with a German family in Celle. It was quite a shock to see the city so divided, and the East so dreary. And of course Celle was not so far from the border of the two Germanys. All of the American students were put up in West Berlin families that December, and they had more volunteers to take us than they needed. My "family" lived in a small flat and gave me Grandma's room for the three-night stay. Grandma slept on the couch. They had a picture of JFK on the wall in their living room and told me how grateful they were to the Americans; they wanted to do something to show their gratitude. It was quite a political/history lesson for a 16-year-old, and one I never forgot.

- Allene Pistorius

I remember visiting my mother's relatives who lived in the former DDR on the other side of the Elbe river a few times. There was always a general nervousness while crossing the border: checkpoints of simple huts straddling border crossings, transit areas, watchtowers, German shepherd dogs, the particular odor of a typical industrial strength disinfectant the searching of the car for prohibited items such as news magazines, and recorded materials. (They confiscated *Der Spiegel* and my Simon & Garfunkel tape! But it was returned on our way back.)

Our relatives, a family of four, eventually made it out of the DDR years before the Wall fell. They had long been on a waiting list for the *Ausreiseantrag*. Suddenly a date was given, we were



informed they would be "freed" within the next few days. My relatives boarded a train and headed straight to Hamburg, where we picked them up at Altona Bahnhof where we fell into each other's arms on the platform, with flowers and streamers, long hugs and tears of joy. They spent the first weeks with us in our home. It was summer. So much was emotionally overwhelming

for them and I remember how I wanted to "protect" them from too much outside "culture shock" and suggested spending the first few days just walking around the block and taking it all in little by little. .. But no, they wanted to see the Alsterhaus department store and ride the escalators the very next day. So, we did. That evening I made chamomile tea for several upset stomachs.

- Venita Kaleps



My first date with my now husband, Carsten, was on November 9th, 1989. We went to see a movie on the Reeperbahn, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, one of the most depressing films I've ever seen and a really bad choice for a first date. It was my choice, I'm embarrassed to admit. When we came out of the movie theatre, the Reeperbahn was full of Trabant cars (cheap East German cars) and *Ossies* (East Germans) looking for ways to spend their *Begrüßungsgeld* (the DM 100. "welcome money" they received when crossing the border). It took a few minutes before we'd figured out why all of the East Germans were there. The atmosphere was fantastic! The *Ossies* were friendly and wanted to ask questions like 'what is a Döner Kebab?' My husband and I have been together for 30 years and it was definitely the most memorable first date ever.

- Susan Stanley-Witt



On November 9, 1989, my husband and I were in West Berlin. At 22:00 we were watching television in our hotel when suddenly the program was interrupted to announce that the border between East and West Berlin was open. We ran out into the street, but all was silent – almost too deadly silent. The only spark of life was a huge Coca Cola truck getting ready to hand out free drinks. The next morning my husband went off to his medical convention (the reason for coming to Berlin), and I ran over to the Wall, where people were already climbing to the top, helping others up, dancing, sitting, and cheering. We all chopped off pieces of stones from the wall for souvenirs (which I still have). I ran over to the nearest street between East and West, which might have been at Invalidenstrasse and saw that it was full of East German Trabi cars. I stood with everyone else right next to the cars as they drove into the West—all of us knocking on the car roofs, yelling, “Willkommen.” Back in Hamburg the streets were full of Trabis, many with flowers or chocolate under the windshield wipers as a greeting.

- Becky Tan

My husband and I were on a business trip to Berlin the weekend of Oct. 7, 1989. We had been following the rising unrest and the situation in Leipzig and decided to cross the border and take a walk around Alexanderplatz on Saturday afternoon. This was the 40th anniversary of the DDR, and huge official shows of power were expected. We were surprised to see that all the borders to the east were completely closed on that day, although the noise coming over from helicopters and planes was deafening. Later that day in West Berlin we watched TV, seeing Honecker and Gorbachev inspecting rows of tanks and heavy weapons, which seemed ominous to us. So a month later, back in Hannover, when we watched the buildup of tension with the Monday demonstrators and the border openings in Hungary, I expected the situation to end badly. The Prague spring was not that far in the past and I had a feeling of dread that evening that the whole situation would end with Russian tanks as it did in Prague. I turned off the TV for a while that night, it was unbearable to watch. Early the next morning I watched the pictures of all those Trabis rolling through the checkpoints and the welcoming people in West Berlin in disbelief and joy.

- Ann Gebauer-Thompson



About a week before the Wall fell, I came home from a dinner party and saw my German husband watching the news. He had tears in his eyes, and he told me that Willy Brand had just boarded the freedom train and that this was an incredibly historic event. That night, he told me the wall would fall. A few months prior to that I was

in Washington, DC, at the house of some foreign-service friends. One was a Harvard graduate and headed the Berlin desk. The other was buro chief in Bonn. Both men were certain that the wall would not come down and they claimed they had inside information. I said that was not true, the wall would fall, and they were out of touch with the sentiments and reality of the German people. This was the one time I was happy to prove them wrong.

- Marilyn Richter



Photos: Chronik Der Mauer

Stories from Inside the WALL

West Meets East

by Anne Crocker

A few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, I visited Berlin on a trip that defied all sense of time. There was the opulence of a large modern western city with a hint of Cold-War intrigue and a throw-back to the post-war politics of an occupied Germany. Being part of the US military community in Germany meant following certain rules when traveling to Berlin. Driving through the DDR was only allowed on one highway. Upon checking in at Checkpoint Alpha on the East/West border we were issued our travel packet, to include a sign to be displayed should we be stopped by East German police that instructed them to take us to a Soviet soldier. (What? We're supposed to entrust our safety to the Soviets? It's 1987, not 1945).

When processing through the Soviet checkpoints, someone had to enter a building to slip our travel documents under a partition where an unseen person, but under the eye of multiple cameras, stamped them so we could proceed. The benefit of this arrangement came when traveling into East Berlin. Our car couldn't be searched, we had to hold our passports up against the window as East German guards weren't allowed any contact with us, but it also meant we could change our money into East German marks at a much more favorable western exchange rate. My purse, bulging with East German marks (the coins by the

way seemed to be made of the same material as play money), I was ready to go on a shopping spree. The only problem was that there just wasn't anything to buy.

The big department store had long racks loaded with clothes -- one style, one color. Not a lot of browsing to do. The Nikolaiviertel was a nice shopping area with little shops, but when you went in the counter was right inside the door and you had to ask the clerk



to get something if you wanted to look at it. Needless to say, most of my money went back with me; I wish I could have spent it in the stores in West Berlin. Once we left the shopping area and toured around the city, the decay became apparent pretty fast. Many buildings looked as though the war had just ended and newer ones had the architectural appeal of the Soviet bloc style. It was a very grim contrast to the beauty of West Berlin. The other contrast was the Wall itself.

On the west side, it was filled with graffiti and occasional view-

ing platforms into the east, while on the east, it was pristine white and guarded so no one could get close. While there, I couldn't help but imagine the old Berlin, where cafes and dancing dotted the boulevard Unter den Linden and people were enjoying life. At the time, I didn't think it would just be a few years before Berlin became one again...

On an interesting note, I did buy a street map while in East Berlin and found it comical that in the narrative on the map, the wall was built to keep out the corrupt and fascist influences of the west, not to keep people from leaving. I wish I still had that map; it would probably be a collector's item. And, yes, we did have the opportunity to flash our "Take me to a Soviet soldier" sign, but the policeman just shook his head and told us to move along. While no actual intrigue occurred, the hint of it made traveling to the divided city a unique and memorable experience.



Cold War? Cold Winter! Berlin 1985

by Holly Todd



In 1985, I came to Berlin to do research for my dissertation on the work of the Berlin artist Max Liebermann (1847-1935). I stayed in a barracks-like enclave of dormitories with the alarming name Studentendorf Schlachtensee (Slaughter Lake Student Village). While most of the other students who lived there were enrolled at the nearby Freie University, I commuted every day up to what once had been the “center” of the old Berlin and was and still is now the site of the state library, the Stabi or Staatsbibliothek. Along with its post-war yellow companion, the Berlin Philharmonie, and the glass and steel Nationallgalerie, it loomed at the edge of a no-man’s land along the Berlin wall. Today, it is hard to imagine that the bustling Potsdamer Platz was once the abandoned bombed-out desert I looked onto each day from my spot in the Stadtsbibliothek reading room until it got dark at 4 p.m.

It was a bitter winter and my first German purchase was a pair of cheap moon boots. I remember shivering at bus stops, but the worst cold I experienced was in East Berlin. To get there I took the S-Bahn to Friedrichstrasse where everyone had to get off and go through the glass hall nicknamed the “palace of tears”. I remember shuffling in line past armed guards with German shepherds, putting my passport on a convey-

what seemed liked miles against icy wind whipping through the wide, deserted, concrete Stalin-esque avenues. One weekend I accompanied a West German couple I knew on a visit to East German friends. Wrapping us in blankets when we arrived and serving canned pears and rye bread spread with goose fat, their tiny drab apartment seemed the warmest and liveliest spot in town.



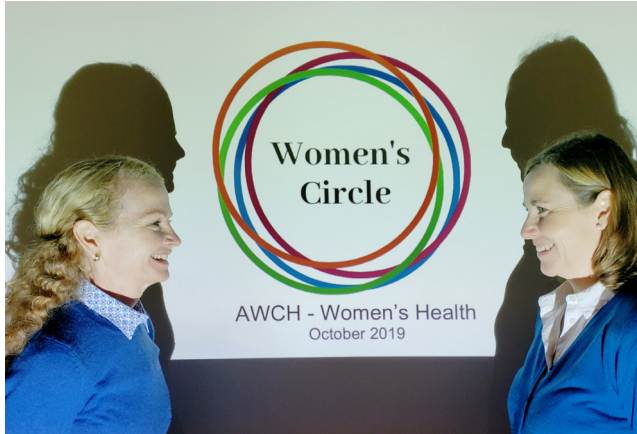
or belt and wondering if I would ever see it again. Each time you crossed you had to change 25 Westmark into into 25 Ostmark and then try to find something to spend it on, which usually ended up being old books. Once a curator at the Pergamon Museum let me borrow her dissertation and “sneak” it out across the border to photocopy and a few days later sneak it back in and return to her. Restaurants were few and far between, often with long lines, limited menus and sterile food. On weekends East Berlin was like a ghost town with nothing open except the museums. Just to find a café you had to walk for



Photo: Chronik Der Mauer

OUR CLUBS

within Our Club



Women's Circle Holds Two Workshops



“ I always learn something at Anna’s seminars. This time I learned that if something terrible/traumatic happens to me that it helps to write it down in a journal. Putting it down on paper allows the separation of the action and the resulting feelings, normalizing it. Don’t beat yourself up about what you did or didn’t do. Ask yourself ... what would my best friend say to or advise me? Most importantly make sure you have a good support group you can go to for help. —Susan S.-W. ”

“ Thank you very much for the useful and competent seminar on November 21 in Women’s Circle. I already applied your advice and I am happy to say—it works! —Emilia J. ”

Hormones and You

On October 21, AWCH member Marion Brockmann (a naturopath for physical therapy with experience practicing in the US and Germany) led a women’s circle seminar to share her knowledge of the importance of hormones. We learned that not only are hormones involved in our main bodily functions and our sense of well-being, but also their delicate and complicated balance can be easily disrupted. One of the primary times that hormone levels shift is during perimenopause (which can last from ages 25-48) and menopause (which can occur between ages 45-55). Hormone fluctuations can cause unpleasant side effects from sleeplessness, weight gain, loss of libido, skin changes, and depression. However, she cautioned against taking hormone supplements as an easy fix: many are synthetic and not an exact

replacement. She advocates taking only bio-identical hormones and only if necessary, but says that many other measures can also support hormone health. These include many things we probably already know we should be doing, such as eating a clean diet (avoiding sugar and dairy), drinking plenty of water, reducing stress, and exercising. She also said that German doctors are not always well-informed about the most natural approaches, and recommended working with a naturopath. There were lots of questions for Marion after she finished her presentation; she stressed that every body is unique, hormone changes are complicated and hard to generalize and that we should take small steps towards embracing the best lifestyle we can for overall good health. (Hilary W.)



The workshop on November 21, 2019 was inspired by the poem of Virginia Satir, a great American family therapist...

I Am Me

In all the world there is no one else exactly like me.
 I own everything about me—my body, my feelings, my mouth, my voice.
 I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, my fears.
 I own all my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes.
 ...
 And as long as I am friendly and loving to myself I can encourage me.
 ...
 I can see, hear, feel, think, say and do.
 I have tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive
 And to make sense and order out of the world of people
 and things outside me.
 I own me and therefore I can engineer me
I am Me and I am Okay.

I am Me and I am OK

One of the most recognizable arias in the opera repertoire is sung by Queen of the Night from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*:

*"Hell's vengeance boils in my heart,
 Death and despair blaze about me!
 If Sarastro does not through you feel the pains of death,
 Then you will be my daughter nevermore:*

*Disowned be you forever,
 Abandoned be you forever,
 Destroyed be forever
 All the bonds of nature.*

*If not through you Sarastro will turn pale!
 Hear, gods of revenge, hear the mother's oath!!!"*

This iconic aria is so memorable not only because of its extraordinarily demanding vocal technicality set by Mozart, but also because of the character's all-consuming anger and vengeance unleashed through the daunting music. After all, we are all to varying degrees accustomed to outrage, frustration, and irritation. Few of us are able to let our feelings out like the Queen of the Night; we may, however, find it irresistible to kick cans, slam down gas pedals, bang on doors, or shatter vases to let our emotions rip, thus making our own sound bites in a fit of rage.

"Anger may be a secondary feeling. It can sometimes be triggered by something deeper..." says Anna, a mental health professional and a member of AWCH, in her workshop titled **I am Me and I am OK**. Anna began the workshop by explaining the triangle relationship between Mind, Relationship and Brain, and their respective development stages from infancy through adolescence to adulthood.

She highlighted the most important, perhaps often overlooked relationship of all: the relationship with oneself. The individually coded DNA marks each of us a unique, authentic, intimate entity with our own appearance, character and temperament.

The key benefit of Anna's workshop is to learn a set of evaluative tools consisting of pointed questions to provide clear directive, nudging us to think outside of our emotions. They help us reflect and define our individual attributes and their roles in shaping significant personal events. They also help us look at the components and functionalities of our social networks, the psychological associations we established with those connections from their influence and impact in our lives. By summarizing and analyzing the results we become astute 'engineers' to understand the innermost mechanism in us to build meaningful relationships with ourselves and for ourselves. In a rapidly changing and globalized world supercharged by ideologies, technology, and even climate change, only when our relationship with ourselves is nourished, nurtured, and cherished, will we be able to withstand the persistently shifting environment.

Anna's workshop on self-assurance is part of the Women's Circle's lecture series dedicated to women's health. Like the three trials of Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* to achieve personal enlightenment and happiness, our journey to a healthy being is also a sustained process that requires determination, patience, practice and encouragement. The Women's Circle, initiated by Christine R., AWCH FAWCO representative, provides just such "a place for women to come together, learn, discuss, share, empower, and inspire each other." (WangDi S.)

Book Club: *Trees, Gilead, and Algorithms*

The Overstory by Richard Powers

Publisher: W.W. Norton (2018)

ISBN 978-0-393-63552-2

Awarded 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

The Amazon was burning and the world was watching as I read our September book *The Overstory*, regarded as a love letter and a eulogy to the planet's lungs.

In this tree-mad novel, which Powers spent six years preparing, he is passionate about trees. On the first page alone trees speak, sing, experience pain, dream, remember the past, and predict the future. In long italicized passages, he explores trees, tree landscapes, and forests, giving them a voice. Trees have existed from 350 to 400 million years. 98% of the four vast forests that were around when Europeans arrived in the New World have been eliminated. Most of today's remaining forest in the U.S. is secondary-growth.

It is the vital ecosystem of primary-growth forests that is explored here, as opposed to the secondary-growth forests and tree plantations of today. Vast logged areas seen from the air are often bordered by thin "Potemkin" woods, deceiving a car driver's eye. "No one has seen an old-growth system come back after clear-cutting. They are guessing it can take a thousand years until the inter-dependency and connection all comes back in. It's harder than it seems to challenge the economic destiny of mankind."

A climate-themed epic, this book is about taking the non-human seriously. The nine characters in this book (too many) all come from different backgrounds. Each of them is marked by a dramatic moment or loss in their lives, or they realize they've flubbed it, taken a course in life that needs to be re-directed, which triggers a kind of conversion moment that brings them all into connection with a greater thing—nature.

- Douglas, a Vietnam War veteran, is shot out of an Air Force plane in the sky, and his life is saved by landing in a banyan tree. After spending five years replanting trees for major companies, he becomes disillusioned when he discovers that his work is useless.
- Noel is the heir to a family art project: a chestnut tree that survived a great blight on their Iowa farm was photographed on the same day every month. As family generations come and go, as lives fly by, the tree flip-book becomes a kind of time-lapse of one living being, as if it were a silent film revealing how a single tree majestically spirals into growth, lifetime and treetime.
- Patricia is a field biologist with a hearing dis-

ability. She spends most of her childhood and adulthood enthralled with trees. When she accidentally discovers that trees are capable of communicating with each other, sending signals through the air chemically, sharing immune systems, her research is widely mocked.

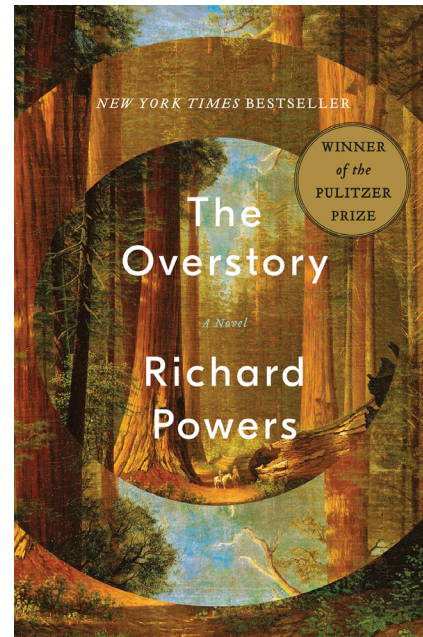
With time, her work is redeemed and expanded upon. When she travels to the Brazilian rainforest she is "drugged" by the glory of the green world: "Myrtles that all flower on a single day. Trees that make rain, that tell time, that predict the weather. Seeds in obscene shapes and colors. Stilt roots and buttresses like sculpture and roots that breathe air. Solutions run amok. The biomass is mad." Her book is a breakthrough, and, like a green prophet, she is sought by elite groups to answer the question, *What is the single best thing a person can do for tomorrow's world?*

- Neelay, paralyzed by a childhood accident climbing a tree, becomes a computer game programmer and creates an addictive virtual Earth game popular world-wide. After reading Patricia's book about trees, his insights steer him into using technology and programming "learners" to develop a system for growing back *the world* with artificial intelligence.

More characters include a lawyer who asks whether trees can be said to have legal rights, a psychologist who studies how people blind themselves to catastrophes, an amateur actress, a woman back from the dead...

At first the many characters do not seem the least bit related, but gradually everything connects, and many of the protagonists converge in a California redwood forest to protect it. They join a group of nonviolent radicals and give themselves "tree" names. But it turns radical. This imitates the tactics of Earth First! in the 1990s, when environmental activists and tree-sitters tried to block the logging industry. *A people! United! Can never be defeated! A forest! Once blighted! Can never be re-seeded!*

There is a vast amount of material and a mob of protagonists in this book. The character narratives



remain mostly short story-like summaries but are grouped together where they slowly merge and “grow” together in book sections: ROOTS TRUNK CROWN SEEDS. This is where another greater story develops, an “over-story”—one measured in lifetime(s) and one in treetime.

Tackling all of this in an environmental novel shows Power’s enormous ambition. Known for his “cerebral” books, he has triggered a debate among contemporary literary critics about what good fiction in a novel should be—usually it goes by the rule that people are central characters; here that is not the case. Better presented in a journalistic report? But what if character or human emotion wasn’t the only thing fiction could be about? Can’t a novel be about the world, science, ideas, the environment? Powers remakes the landscape of environmental fiction, where there are important questions to answer.

In *The Overstory*, Powers lets his lawyer character, Ray, speak for him, and he blames the collapse of human civilization on fiction itself: “The world is failing precisely because no novel can make the contest for the world seem as compelling as the struggles between a few lost people.”

As we nibbled on our hummus and very small broccoli “trees” at Studio 42 in Altona, we all agreed that we should respect and love trees, last but not least as absorbers of CO2.

As this article was being finished, a famous teen-aged climate activist gave a passionate speech in New York, admonishing some 60 world leaders for their lack of action. The summit came days after several million people took part in a global climate strike led by youth activists. (Venita K.)

The Testaments

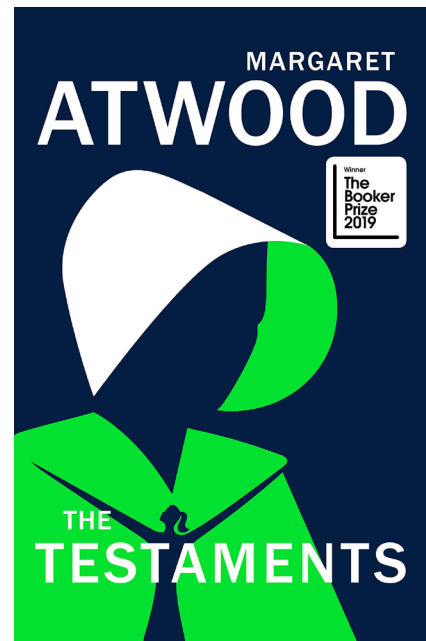
by Margret Atwood

Publisher: Nan A. Talese (September 2019)

ISBN: 9780385543781

Winner of the 2019 Booker Prize

For our October book group meeting, we read *The Testaments*, Margret Atwood’s sequel to her iconic novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale*. *The Testaments* is set 15 years after the end of the first novel, and is a direct narrative told from the point of view of several women. In a surprising twist, the main character from the first novel is missing almost entirely from this continuation. Instead, an antagonist from *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Aunt Lydia, is the featured protagonist. The storyline of this sequel moves quickly between characters and locations, causing it to be much more action-packed, while at the same time much less shocking than the first novel. The members of our book group were split on opinions of *The Testaments*. Some were of the opinion that it was quickly written because of the TV series, and that it was missing the deep meaning and poignant effect of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Other group members, myself included, find this sequel to be more maturely written, explanative, and more interesting than *The Handmaid’s Tale*. (Anne-Marie S.)



Hello World

Being Human in the Age of Algorithms

by Hannah Fry

Publisher: W.W. Norton Company (September 2018)

ISBN: 0393357368

“Algorithms are the **invisible pieces of code** that form the gears and cogs of the modern machine age...” They are analogous to a recipe that described the step-by-step procedure to take the ingredients (or input) to give you the chocolate cake (or output). For a computer, algorithms are essential to solve a problem or reach a goal. As this clearly written and entertaining book points out, algorithms “have given the world everything from social media feeds to search engines, satellite navigation to music recommendation systems...They’re inside our hospitals, our courtrooms and our cars. They’re used by police forces, supermarkets and film studios.” A fast read, the book gives many amusing and horrifying examples of both the power and weakness of the algorithms that are slowly creeping into our everyday lives. It points out their good side and their bad side. The names of the chapters: Power, Data, Justice, Medicine, Cars, Crime, Art, and Conclusion reflect both its broad spectrum of topics and its simplicity. Reading *Hello World* should be a requirement for everyone who wants to stay in control. (Carol H.)



Film Group Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary

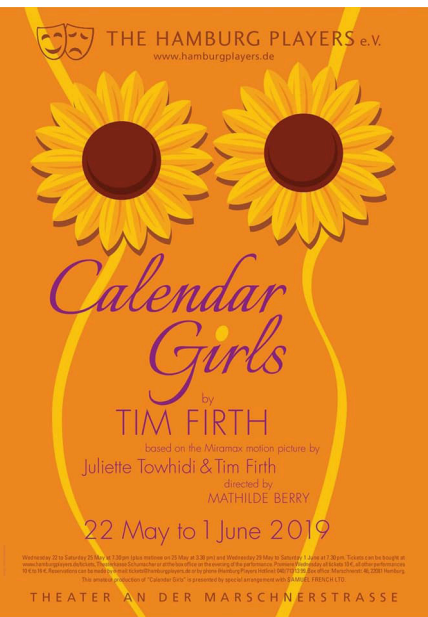


The film group celebrated its 25th year on December 2nd when 23 members met for a delicious meal at EAT Restaurant, Gerhofstrasse 18, right off Gänsemarkt. In 2019 members attended many film press conferences and wrote reviews for 243 films. The group was accredited for seven film festivals in Hamburg, Berlin, and the USA. They published two special editions of *Currents* dedicated to the Berlinale Film Festival and international festivals. Their latest publication, to appear soon, describes the Filmfest Hamburg, for which

11 group members were accredited. Their film reviews have appeared on the club website and kinocritics.com, in *Currents* magazine, and in the city publication *Hamburg Guide*. They can be proud of their exceptional teamwork with excellent results over the last 25 years. (Becky T.)



English Theater Group Celebrates One Year



The AWCH English Theater Group gathers every couple of months to take in and appreciate the talented English-speaking theater production companies Hamburg has to offer. The Hamburg Players are the city's oldest English-speaking amateur theater group in Hamburg (founded in 1965). This past year, the English Theater Group was entertained by their who-done-it performance of *Death in High Heels* (featuring our very own Julia Rodriguez-Buis), as well as the tear-jerker story of close female friendship in *Calendar Girls*. The English Theater of Hamburg, comprised of professional actors hired out of London, kept us in



suspense with the *Woman in Black*. In addition to these two production companies, The University Players and Savoy Theater also offer live and film showings of English-language theater performances. The English Theater Group generally gathers for a meal prior to the show and it is always a fun night out with fellow club members. (Andrea M.)

Stitch 'n' Bitch Celebrates Christmas



Opera Club Celebrates and Debates Don Giovanni

Our group of operagoers will be talking about the Staatsoper Hamburg's new *Don Giovanni* for a long time to come. With wonderful performances from the extremely fine cast and orchestra under the baton of renowned maestro Adam Fischer, Mozart's music was a joy to hear. This production, however, most definitely falls into the category of "love it or hate it," leaving many open questions. With not one but two revolving sections of the stage, one inside the other, were the extremely dominant visuals entertaining or distracting? How about that silent amphibious dancer character—love? death? intriguing or seriously annoying? We'll just have to return next year and continue our discussion. (Elizabeth R.)



Get Up & Move Celebrates Fall

Our intrepid AWCH members are still going strong walking into winter! Here are some Fall snaps of the lovely ladies from the Poppenbüttel and Altona groups.



Some Like it Hot!

While summer took a break in Hamburg this July, AWCH-member and Zumba® teacher Anne-Marie S. kept up the heat with hot Latin beats: Salsa, Reggaeton, Merengue, Hip Hop, Cumbia and more. Anne-Marie had found a studio at a great and convenient location in Eppendorf and every Monday taught "the moves" to a very enthusiastic and motivated group of up to 10 members. Anne-Marie has a lot of experience teaching Zumba® and knows how to break the moves down so even people who are new to this cardio dance workout can join in and have fun. A busy work schedule put an end to the class—but a BIG thank.you to Anne-Marie for getting us to move! (Carola A.)



Art in the City

by Holly Todd

"Iconic" American Art at the Bucerius

Amerika! Disney, Rockwell, Pollock and Warhol

www.bucerisumkunstform.de

Until January 12, 2020

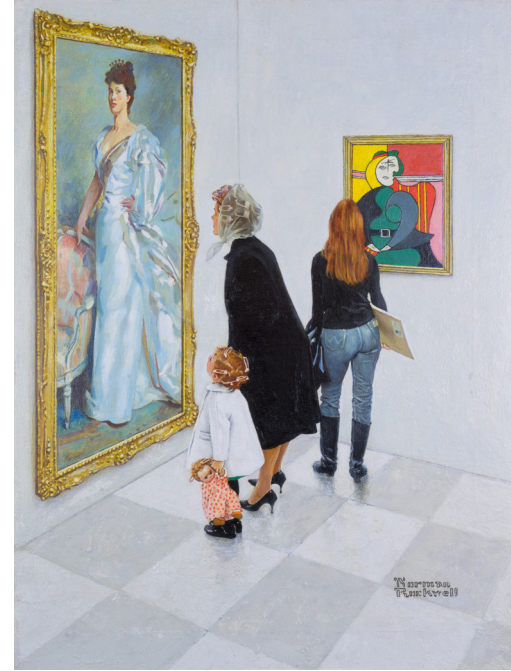
AWCH enjoyed a fun American evening in November at the Bucerius Kunst Forum. We were treated to a curator's tour of *Amerika! Disney, Rockwell, Pollock and Warhol* by Kathrin Baumstark, the young new artistic director of the Bucerius. Showing the work of Walt Disney, a commercial filmmaker, or even Norman Rockwell, a magazine illustrator, in an art exhibition is just as surprising as the juxtaposition of the abstract paintings of Jackson Pollock with Rockwell's meticulous realism and the pop art of Andy Warhol. What ties these four together is that each fundamentally shaped the world's image of the United States and American art, and did so from positions outside of, or directly in opposition to, traditional ideas of high art.

Walt Disney (1901–1966) captured imaginations by bringing pictures to life in animated film and television and theme parks. Operating a large studio-workshop much like Lucas Cranach or Peter Paul Rubens in earlier times, Walt Disney's name appears as the "author" of his works but many other artists' hands were involved. Dr. Baumstark told us that the medieval manuscript illumination and Japanese prints that influenced the look of *Sleeping Beauty* were due to an artist called Eyvind Earle, but the extent to which he or other artists actually painted the intricate background interiors of *Sleeping Beauty's* castle, or the quite modern, boldly

calligraphic thorny hedge surrounding it, remains unknown. Also on view in various overlapping combinations are the transparent celluloid sheets or "cels" with figures painted on them that were "swapped out" in front of the background images to create individual frames. One can imagine what a huge production animation was before digitalization with over 20 frames required per second of film. Occasionally the artists' names are known and we were surprised to learn that frighteningly powerful charcoal drawings of a swirling pack of snarling hunting dogs were by a woman called Retta Scott.

Walt Disney was apparently the first filmmaking fan of fellow commercial artist and visual storyteller Norman Rockwell (1894–1978). A painting by Rockwell hung in the Disney offices and Disney wrote that his staff considered Rockwell "a god." Later Steven Spielberg and George Lucas amassed important collections of Rockwell's work while Spielberg also based film scenes on Rockwell images and helped finance the building of the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass. Rockwell's detailed, realistic and fondly satirical illustrations of mostly wholesome American life appeared

on the covers of magazines like *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* for over 40 years. The exhibition documents Rockwell's creative process from carefully orchestrating tableaus which he photographed through the highly detailed charcoal and pencil drawings he made from the photos to the finished oil paintings and their reproductions as magazine covers. All 323 of the artist's *Saturday Evening Post* covers from 1916 until 1960 are on view.



The realist Norman Rockwell surprisingly liked modern art. Dr. Baumstark showed us an abstract painting he had originally created and used in a tableau for a 1962 *Saturday Evening Post* cover called *The Connoisseur*. The painting, which later won first prize in a local art show, was based on works by Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). As Rockwell's title implies, Pollock's work is "highbrow," definitely not intended to appeal to the masses. And yet, dying young, Pollock came to embody the stereotype of the American rough-shod, maverick innovator by apparently thumbing his nose at fine art in the most radical gesture imaginable by dripping and splattering paint all over monumental canvases. Pollock and his contemporaries pulled the center of the art market to New York from Paris after the second world war with their large-scale abstractions that adorned corporate headquarters as a kind of cold war antithesis to the social realism of the Soviet Union and its socialist satellites. While none of Pollock's better known, large paintings could be included in the exhibition—he worked with non-conventional paints like enamel and car paint, which don't adhere well to canvas and cannot be transported easily—the Bucerius is showing some fine small ones from the Tate, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, as well as German collections.



Andy Warhol: *Silver Liz*, 1963, Sammlung Froehlich, Stuttgart © 2019 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Foto: Sammlung Froehlich, Stuttgart



Mistaken by many Bucerius visitors for typically mural-like Pollocks, they in fact make up another tongue-in-cheek homage to that artist, this time by Andy Warhol (1928-1987). Commissioned by an Italian yarn manufacturer, Warhol's abstract looping skeins of color were created with yarn dipped in paint and ink. Abstraction, however, is the exception rather than the rule in Warhol's art. Sixteen years Pollock's junior, he went a step further in breaking the boundaries of fine art, apparently eliminating the artist's hand and eye altogether from art making by using commercial printing processes to recreate "found" commercial images, like Campbell's Soup cans or celebrity photos from gossip magazines. Warhol owned Norman Rockwell's portraits of Jacqueline Kennedy and Richard Nixon, both subjects of his own art. In 1977 Warhol told *Interview*, a magazine he founded, that he considered Walt Disney the greatest living artist and that Disney had been the first artist to influence him. Warhol painted Mickey Mouse in his *Myths* series, which also included Santa Claus and Superman, fascinated by Mickey's omnipresence as the symbol of the global Disney corporate identity. Norman Rockwell was quoted saying, "I never call myself an artist," while Warhol claimed that he never called his work art.

Disney's *Fantasia* will be shown at Zeise Kino in Ottensen on Feb. 5 at 11 a.m.

Norman Rockwell: *Picasso vs. Sargent*, 1966, National Museum of American Illustration, Newport RI © The Norman Rockwell Family Agency
 Jackson Pollock: *Reflection of the Big Dipper*, 1947, Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam © Pollock-Krasner Foundation / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019

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Until March 1, 2020

Luckily there is still lots of time to see this exhibition bringing work by all the major French Impressionists together in Hamburg for the first time: Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Eva Gonzalès, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir as well as the “Post-Impressionist” Paul Gauguin, just to mention the most famous. Like the “Northern Light” exhibition of Danish painting shown at the Kunsthalle last summer (see *Currents* Spring / Summer 2019), these works belong to the topnotch private collection of the insurance magnate Wilhelm Hanse; his wife Henny left the collection to Denmark in 1953. Because their usual venue, once the Hansen’s home and now the Ordrupgaard Museum outside of Copenhagen, is closed for a major expansion, the Impressionist paintings have come to Hamburg after touring to Paris, Canada, Italy, Switzerland and Prague.

The fun begins in the Eiffel-Tower-themed elevator taking visitors up to the exhibition on the second floor of the Kunsthalle’s otherwise severe Galerie der Gegenwart. The first rooms set the scene for the emergence of Impressionism in France, with a selection



New Bucerius Location

For many of us, AWC’s November Director’s Tour was our first visit to the new premises of the Bucerius Kunst Forum, the international exhibition center operated by the ZEIT-Stiftung (the foundation of the weekly national newspaper *die ZEIT* published in Hamburg). The “new” Bucerius opened its doors just around the corner from its former location last summer. Having given up its visual prominence as next-door neighbor to the Hamburg town hall on the Rathausmarkt, the Bucerius is now more integrated in bustling city life. There are entrances on both the Alter Wall

street and onto a new Bucerius Passage indoor shopping center accessible from the Neuer Wall street via a pedestrian bridge over the Alsterfleet canal. These allow you to take a shortcut through the building while doing errands and to easily take an art breather from work or shopping. The Passage is also connected to an underground parking garage. Columns and terrazzo floors create a link to the old Bucerius and in some ways, the new Bucerius has an even better relationship to its



distinguished neighbor with wonderful closeup views of the Rathaus’ courtyard façade. When lit up after dark, these will make a fabulous backdrop for evening events centered around a dramatic 5-story atrium. Most importantly, the museum now has a much more generous exhibition space and flexible floor plan, 220 m² larger than the old Bucerius with more state-of-the-art movable wall partitions, both natural and ultra-modern LED lighting and the latest climate control technology. All of this will help to guarantee that world class museums—in the past, including the Prado, MoMa and the Louvre—continue to loan valuable works of art to the Bucerius, which has no permanent collection of its own. Fans of the vegetarian buffet in the basement of the former Bucerius will be sorry that did not make the move is gone. And fans of the old building may be dismayed to hear that Uniqlo, the Japanese casual clothing retail chain, is rumored to be moving in. Just think, it could have been Burger King!





of earlier 19th-century artists who either taught or influenced the Impressionist painters. One of these is romantic painter Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), whose painterly, shadowy portrait of a woman sitting with inclined head and cigarette in hand begins the exhibition. This is the artist's friend, the novelist George Sand listening rapt to her lover, the composer Frédéric Chopin, who can be seen playing the piano in another fragment of the painting now in the Louvre. A gorgeous, sensitively painted *Windmill* by Camille Corot (1798-1875), is the earliest of many landscapes by the artist in the exhibition. Corot was among the first artists to regularly paint finished oil sketches like this from nature regularly—out of doors instead of in the studio from drawings.

Not surprisingly, considering his sea-bound home country, water features large in Hansen's collection, which includes seascapes by the pre-Impressionist Barbizon painters Jules Dupré and Charles-François



Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), *Bliühende Pflaumenbäume in Éragny. Das Haus des Künstlers*, 1894; Öl auf Leinwand, 60 x 73 cm, Ordrupgaard, Kopenhagen © Foto: Anders Sune Berg

Daubigny and a frothy, impasted coastal scene by realist painter Gustav Courbet. A characteristic beach scene under a tall sky by Eugene Boudin, can be compared to an oil sketch by his student Monet, in which the younger artist begins to develop his signature, flexible, open-brush strokes to capture the subtly colored, moody scene of a luminous sea under an ominous sky. An early work by Monet's fellow Impressionist Edgar Degas, a sketched view through an open door of children playing on the threshold, was created in New Orleans during his visit of his Creole mother's family in 1873. The off-center spatial composition here and balance between clear, masterful drawing and selective painterly blurring demonstrates Degas's intuitive method for capturing a momentary impression.

Camille Corot (1798–1875), *Die Windmühle*, um 1835–1840; Öl auf Leinwand, Ordrupgaard, Kopenhagen © Foto: Anders Sune Berg



Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), *Mädchen auf der Wiese (Isabelle Lambert)*, 1885; Öl auf Leinwand, Ordrupgaard, Kopenhagen © Foto: Anders Sune Berg

Mature impressionism is represented in portraits by Berthe Morisot, seasonal rural landscapes by Camille Pissarro, an outdoor dancing café by Auguste Renoir and a Cézanne *Bathers*. Paul Gauguin is a particular later focus of the collection, with a large group of works painted in Arles, Pont-Aven and Tahiti. Gauguin was married to a Dane and lived in Copenhagen briefly before turning to painting full-time. A favorite work of Wilhelm Hansen was a late *Basket of Pears* (1882) by Édouard Manet; the painting was brought out for guests as a visual desert after dinner parties. Hansen, who frequented Paris to oversee a branch of his insurance business there, was guided in his art purchases by the important French art critic and author Théodore Duret.

It is nice to dream of an Art Group overnight excursion to revisit these lovely works at the Ordrupgaard Museum when it reopens in 2020, a special year of Danish-German Friendship.

Theater in Hamburg

Welcome, to Hotel Chaos

by Marinell Haegelin

Funny Business

a farce by Derek Benfield at
The English Theatre of Hamburg
with Robert Rumpf directing

Ferris is in the lobby busy doing nothing while managing sis's seedy little hotel, when she phones. Belatedly, she warns a notorious newspaper hotel critic's arrival is imminent. Subsequently Henry, staying in the honeymoon suite, pops down looking for his lady friend with whom, he admits, he is having an illicit affair. Ferris assures, "It's under my hat," with a wink, nod and an extended hand, palm-up. Before long, Angela turns up and assuming she is Henry's lady friend, Ferris sends her to the honeymoon suite! Soon after that, the awkward Judy arrives. Confused, Ferris undiplomatically blurts out, "You don't look like someone with a secret." (Psst! They're all up to their eyeballs in secrets and fabrications.) Charging up and down stairs and in and out of rooms, Ferris gets fed-up. They're short staffed, desperately need a good hotel evaluation, and he didn't get the name of the critic. Further exasperating is elderly Mr. Johnson, who won't vacate room 2, although a new guest has arrived. Once the old coot catches wind of ladies on the



Debbie Radcliffe, left, and Stephan Chance



Jan Hirst, left, Stephan Chance, and David Habbin

premises, there's no budging him. In a tizzy, as Ferris shuffles bewildered guests around, chaos abounds. Edgar storms into this confusion, unabashedly contributing with his overbearing, sanctimonious attitude, plus thunderous ranting. By now, the entire hotel's running hither and thither (because of alternative misdirection). Ferris is frantic, the women frazzled, Edgar's aghast, Henry's acquiescing, and Mr Johnson's unmanageable. With Ferris jumping from one conclusion to another, will this ever sort itself out?

British dramatist Derek Benfield has penned more than thirty hit comedies. As an actor, Benfield easily shifted from theatre to television and film. Known for clever one-liners, in *Funny Business* Benfield focused on the plot's ludicrous situations instead, writing liberally alliterated dialogue to delight audiences.

Veteran director Robert Rumpf revealed two components key in producing a farce: organization, and collaboration. This comprises sorting out pertinent documentation for each actor/character, costume (Patricia Royo) requirements, health care coverage, and more. Rumpf pointed out,



in a six-character play finessing characters onstage interaction is imperative, adding that this group of actors is terrific. Organization extends to collaborating with creatives and other staff. Set Designer Mathias Wardeck brings a to-scale model of the stage to each production, whereby props' positioning with onstage action is figured beforehand. This set is divided into three sections; the hotel lobby center stage, with two elevated rooms left, and right. Hence, lighting (Heiko Bottner) is pivotal in directing audiences' attention.

The London thespians concur two aspects were particularly challenging: Text (dialogue) and timing, along with making two-dimensional characters believable. Feedback from the audience really helped the thespians identify whether they were emphasizing the dialogue's absurdities accurately, since, read-throughs don't quite convey this. English Theatre veterans Stephen Chance, Jan Hirst, and Debbie Radcliffe are delighted to return to Hamburg.

As Ferris, Chance's role is dialogue-intensive with numerous alliterations, e.g., "we're very discreet," that shift position within a sentence, requiring extra concentration during performances. Also, during the play Ferris is constantly moving about, i.e. going offstage (entering/leaving guest rooms) to reappear onstage (in the lobby). Chance explained when he walks out a door/offstage, it sometimes takes a second to resynchronize to the action. As Angela, Radcliffe felt her character's assertiveness, and imbibing, needed humanizing. When action switches (stage left to right) certain actors' freeze; Radcliffe makes sure her poses are comfortable. For Hirst as Judy, most challenging was determining her character's personality, since her moods continually change. What's Judy hiding, and why? New to English Theatre audiences are David Habbin, Blake J. Askew, and Gil Sutherland. Sharing musicals and opera backgrounds, Habbin as Henry and Askew as Edgar concurred being continually onstage took adjusting. For Edgar's rants, Askew exercises his vocal cords beforehand propos music training. Sutherland's challenge and concern was that Mr Johnson not appear as a doddering buffoon, since his outward manifestation contradicts inner



David Habbin, Gil Sutherland, middle, and Stephan Chance

complexities. Point of fact, Mr Johnson adds comic relief to this briskly paced farce.

Listen carefully to remember each character's lies, and mix-ups, because by the play's intriguing end, all the participants' true colors show. This entertaining insider's view of "hotel monkey business" is the perfect antidote to winter blahs, assuring audiences' an uproarious evening.

FUNNY BUSINESS premiered November 14 and runs until February 1, 2020.
 APOLOGIA, Alexi Kaye Campbell's gripping and fresh play premieres on February 13, and runs through April 11, 2020.
 Evening and matinee performances
 Tickets available at the theatre or online:
www.englishtheatre.de
 The English Theatre of Hamburg,
 Lerchenfeld 14, 22081 Hamburg, Tel: 040-227 70 89, U-Bahn Mundsburg

Photo credits: © Kock, ETH



Photo: Robert Recker

So when Jennifer L. said, "Hey, who wants to go see Gayle Tufts?", I didn't hesitate a moment to buy tickets. On November 25th, approximately 30 of our members and partners crowded into the seats at Schmidt Theater to hear Gayle read from her newest book called *American Woman*. In her performance she highlighted the political turn that the U.S. has taken and the sudden need she felt to find a new direction. She described the bridge she has always tried to build between the U.S. and Germany, with their commonalities but many differences. She explained how each country has left an imprint on her and has given her the ability to grow. All of this has led to her ultimate decision to obtain a German passport, making Germany her new home country.

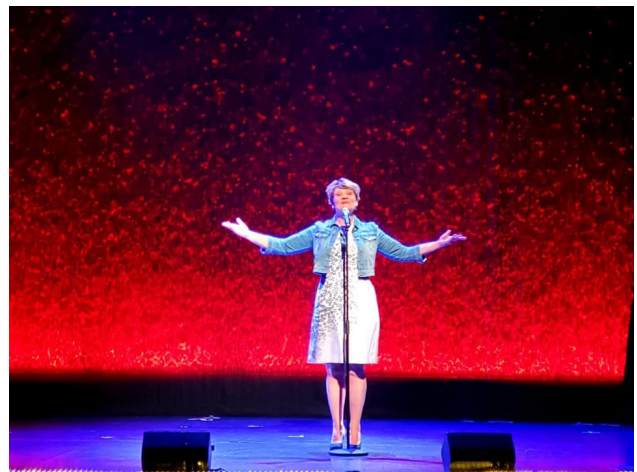
Gayle Tufts and AWCH

by Shelly Schoeneshoefer

American Woman

A solo evening with readings,
comedy, and music at
Schmidt, Hamburg Theater Reeperbahn

Living for more than 25 years in Germany, Gayle Tufts is a mentor for many of us expat American women. She is a singer, a comedian, as well as an author of four books. Yet she insists that she is really just an entertainer and, by golly, that is exactly what she is. It is strange to think back to the first time I ever met Gayle Tufts. It was at our 50th AWCH anniversary party, where she spent the evening entertaining us with many of her antidotes. She was hilarious and I could relate to almost everything she said, especially since back then I was just beginning to adjust to life in Germany.



The evening was very successful. As we all filed out to find our way back home, we mused over the things we had heard and how they impacted on our own lives and experiences. I thought to myself, "What have I learned since I came to Germany?" I am certainly not the same person who arrived here 23 years ago. Where will this adventure take me next? Thanks to Gayle Tufts, I know there are many answers to these questions—which I can contemplate over the holidays.



Film Reviews and more...



The Farewell *****
 Opening December 19, 2019
 USA 2019

Directed by: Lulu Wang
 Writing credits: Lulu Wang
 Principal actors: Zhao Shuzhen, Awkwafina, Tzi Ma, Diana Lin



Based on *An Actual Lie*. So this film begins.

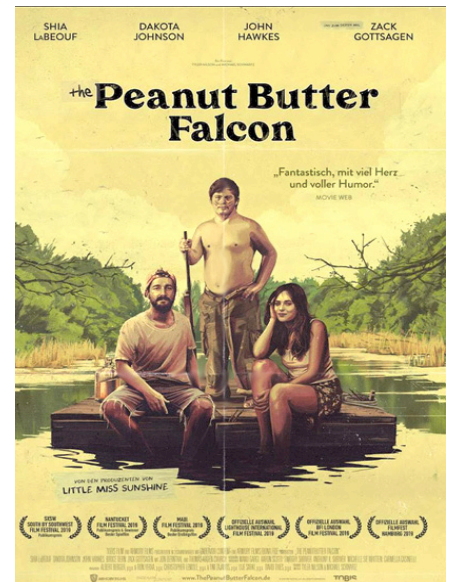
Perhaps the lie is the one unemployed, twentysomethingish Billi (Awkwafina) is keeping from her parents. She has just received a letter that she has been turned down for a Guggenheim Fellowship; this academic failure is a slap in the face to the high-achieving Chinese immigrant daughter. Billi just can't tell her parents the truth about the letter of rejection.

But soon the viewer senses something much larger is looming than a lost fellowship. Billi learns from her parents, father Haiyan (Tzi Ma) and mother Lu Jian (Di-

ana Lin) that her beloved Chinese grandmother Nai Nai (Zhao Shuzhen) has been diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. The family travels from New York to Changchun to say goodbye. There is a secret pact all family members must keep: No one dare tell Nai Nai the truth about the medical diagnosis. "People don't die of the cancer, they die of the fear." Billi struggles to keep up the pretense that their visit is to celebrate her cousin's wedding. Nai Nai is the most important person in her world. Shouldn't she know the truth?

Filmmaker Lulu Wang's movie is based on her own life. She, too, like Billi, immigrated to the States as a six-year old; she, too, had a grandmother who was diagnosed with lung cancer. Wang first told the story on an April 2016 episode of *This American Life*. The radio broadcast/podcast eventually came to life in this heartwarming movie.

Billi is sullen, gloomy, always slouching until she returns to the arms of her devoted grandmother Nai Nai. (The actress Awkwafina is brilliantly cast as Billi, the polar opposite of her role as the zany Peik Linhe in last year's hit film *Crazy Rich Asians*.) The importance of the failed Guggenheim Fellowship recedes into the background as Nai Nai's zest for life first infects and then embraces an ever more joyful Billi. Two very different cultures clash in *The Farewell*, happily the message at the end transcends both. (Pat Frickey)



The Peanut Butter Falcon *****
 USA 2018

Opening December 19, 2019
 Directed by: Tyler Nilson, Michael Schwartz
 Writing credits: Tyler Nilson, Michael Schwartz
 Principal actors: Shia LaBeouf, Dakota Johnson, Zack Gottsagen, Thomas Haden Church, John Hawkes, Jon Bernthal

Being kept against his will at a retirement home—because of Down syndrome—Zak's (Gottsagen) passionate about professional wrestling, and specifically The Salt Water Redneck (Haden Church) whose video he tirelessly watches. Aspiring to emulate his hero, the 22-year old is determined to attend Redneck's wrestling boot camp. Equally, Carl (Bruce Dern) is fed up with Zak's infatuation, so helps his roommate escape. Concurrently, Tyler (LaBeouf), a fisherman, is escaping archival Duncan (John Hawkes) and sidekick Ratboy (Yelowolf) after his stunt backfires. So, both are on the lam from authorities when fate intervenes. In the meantime, Eleanor's (Johnson) personal concern for Zak precipitates taking leave from work to attempt tracking him down, about the time Tyler's early resistance subsides, alongside realizing Zak's usefulness.

Along their quirky journey, and under Tyler's tutelage, Zak learns

hunting and gathering, to swim, and imbibe, whereby an unforeseeable bond forms. It strengths at garrulous Blind Jasper John's (**Wayne Dehart**) while building a raft. Then solidifies sailing the Outer Banks of North Carolina. When Eleanor shows up and with a contrary plan, as one they dig in their heels; with little coercion, she joins the runaway rascals. Still, hard decisions have to be made, and scores need to be settled, but not before dreams are given a chance.

Co-writers-directors **Tyler Nilson** and **Michael Schwartz's** debut film is a funny, clever warm-hearted adventure for all ages. At its heart is personal self-confidence, and its soul is an individual's dignity. LaBeouf, Johnson and Gottsagen's chemistry resonates and sparkles onscreen, seamlessly blending with their characters; the seasoned veterans' nuanced, easy performances underscore the film's unconventional disposition. Its atmospheric richness and authenticity displays cinematographer **Nigel Bluck's** prowess, plus editors **Nat Fuller** and **Kevin Tent** dexterity, and **Zachary Dawes**, **Noam Pikelny**, **Jonathan Sadoff**, and **Gabe Witcher's** eclectic musical magnetism.

The film's backstory accounts for its originality: the directors wrote the screenplay around Zack after meeting at a camp for disabled in 2011, and learning of his dream to be a movie star. That personal context in his character's archetypical innocence elevates the script, and Zack's personality lights up the film. Along the filmmaking journey, people they knew made allowances regarding permits, payments, and reduced costs for rights to best-known songs used.

Oftentimes, directors must metaphorically represent the story-arch's pivotal point; in *The Peanut Butter Falcon*, it is unrivaled: the release, the freedom, and the resolution. To quote Carl: Friends are the family you choose. 93 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)

CUNNINGHAM *****

Germany France USA 2019
Opening Deember 19, 2019

Directed by: Alla Kogan
Writing credits: Alla Kogan
Principal actors: documentary



This visually stunning 3D documentary, full of his writings and quotes, reveals a source of **Merce Cunningham's** powerful presence, "No matter how small the movement, you should do it as if it were the biggest possible movement in the world." This is based on archival footage of Cunningham, his company, collaborators, with Kogan's new filming of his landmark dances, "not recording work but transforming his ideas for theater," following his ideas on extending the movement. Energy explodes from his every move, and zooms in so many directions, from teaching himself to knit surprising costumes, to teaching himself Russian, practicing every breakfast for chance communication with visiting dancers during the cold war/ McCarthy era.

Follow his start in early wartime 1940s, through the first thirty-year struggle to keep a company, and after. His creativity attracted upcoming, likeminded visual artists: Rauschenberg, Johns, Warhol, and life partner John Cage. "We are a group of human beings, we do something, present something. Interpretation is left

up to the audience." (Nancy Tilitz)

Latte Igel und der magische Wasserstein *****

Germany 2019
Opening December 25, 2019

Directed by: Mimi Maynard, Regina Welker
Writing credits: Martin Behnke, Andrea Deppert
Principal actors: animation voiced by Ashley Bornancin, Danny Fehsenfeld, Leslie L. Miller, Byron Marc Newsome, Eric Saleh, Gunnar Sizemore.



Latte is a little porcupine living in the woods with his friends: a rabbit, a raven, a squirrel, beavers, a toad, a lynx and more. The rabbit is the head of the group and must call an important meeting to discuss a mutual problem: there is no more water, except for just a small jar full, or even less: a small snail shell full. Something must be done. The problem lies in the fact that their magic water stone has been stolen by the bears and taken away. It must be retrieved, and reestablished in its designated home. But how? Latte has no family, so independently makes her way to search alone. Soon she is accompanied by her squirrel friend and they take off down the road to the land of the bears. Naturally, there are adventures along the way. Latte even befriends another porcupine,

whom she thinks might be her father. The bears, led by Prince Amaroo, are living in wet luxury, even performing a water ballet for fun. They are proud of having stolen the magic water stone to improve their own lives. Latte plans to bring the stone back to its original resting place, but both she and the bears have not calculated the intentions of the wolves.

This is a fun, fast-moving film for all ages, with cheery music and bright colors to take us along on a road movie. Each animal is a character, quite interesting in its own personality. It is based on a book of the same title, written in 1958 by Finnish author **Sebastian Lyeck**, now age 90 (born 1929). He received a German prize for this work in 1959 and, since then, has written sequels. So, now already a third generation can enjoy the books as well as the film. Interestingly, Latte is a boy in the book and a girl in the film. (Becky Tan)

JAM ****

Japan 2018
 Opening December 26, 2019
 Directed by: SABU
 Writing credits: SABU
 Principal actors: Sho Aoyagi, Keita Machida, Nobuyuki Suzuki



SABU, whose real name is Hiroyuki Tanaka, is a well-known guest at international film festivals all over the world. He started his career as an actor, but since

the 1990s his main interest lies in directing. One of his first internationally successful and premiered movies was *Postman Blues* in 1997. His films very often portray ordinary people who, through some twist of fate, end up in extreme situations. *SABU* follows his protagonists with deep empathy and respect, and *JAM* is a classic example of this kind of black-humoured comedy.

In *JAM*, three stories, which take place in one single day, come together in a ludicrous but brilliant finale, which in fact you see twice, once in the opening scene, and then again towards the end (I say towards, because you should not miss an additional scene at the end of the credits). Set in the coastal city of Fukuoka, we have Hiroshi (**Sho Aoyagi**), an over-the-hill pop (enka) singer, whose main audience consists of single middle-aged women. After one of his concerts, he gets kidnapped by an obsessed fan (**Mariko Tsutsui**), who takes him to her apartment and forces him to compose a song for her which he should perform at his next concert (the scene is reminiscent of 'Misery'). We also have Tetsuo (**Nobuyuki Suzuki**), who, fresh out of jail, looks for revenge on two other low-level gangsters who had abandoned him to take the fall for their crime. Tetsuo is also pushing his grandmother, sitting in a wheelchair and suffering from Alzheimer's, around the city, aimlessly. And we have Takeru (**Keita Machida**), a chauffeur, whose girlfriend is in hospital in a coma, after she was shot in a police chase years earlier. A clairvoyant told Takeru that a few good deeds done every day would heal his girlfriend. He notices the two gangsters apparently looking for a ride, and offers his help, not knowing that they are planning a hold-up. We breathlessly watch everybody's lives come together like bullet trains crashing together. 102 minutes; Japanese with German or English subtitles (Ulrike Lemke)

7500 *½**

Germany 2019
 Opening December 26, 2019
 Directed by: Patrick Vollrath
 Writing credits: Senad Halilbasic, Patrick Vollrath
 Principal actors: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Carlo Kitzlinger, Aylin Tezel, Omid Memar



Few mediums are as stark and ominous as security-camera footage. In this case, it opens the movie and sets the tone. You see vaguely Middle Eastern-looking men in an airport, going through pat-downs, coming in and out of the restroom, looking terrifyingly normal, and you just know something awful is afoot.

What follows takes place entirely in an Airbus A319 cockpit. It's cramped and stuffy and too small for the high drama that follows, which is, of course, the point. There is no music, nothing to detract from the feeling that you're crushed in there with them, experiencing it all in real time. What happens in the passenger area is seen only on a small black-and-white screen in the cockpit – more security camera footage, the action gone from banal to horrifying. While I find it regrettable that the hijackers (because that is, of course, what they are) are Middle Eastern, on a mission to avenge Muslims everywhere, I find it curious that our protagonist (**Gordon-Levitt**) is American. He

is a pilot with a German airline, living in Berlin with a Turkish-German girlfriend (**Tezel**) and young son. His girlfriend is, in fact, on the plane with him, as a flight attendant with the same airline. While her ethnic heritage is conspicuously noted, as is his inability to speak German, neither fact ends up figuring in the story. Which makes these facts feel contrived, ploys to move the language to English and secure wider release for this, and otherwise, German film. And to demonstrate that, no, there's no racial profiling here—the hijackers ethnicity notwithstanding.

That said, the movie is otherwise very effectively nerve-wracking. The most upsetting violence happens outside the cockpit, although it gets pretty gruesome inside, too. Mainly, it's relentless, just heart-thumpingly tense, punctuated with terrible cruelty. While this could easily get exhausting to watch, the director changes up the pace just enough to sustain interest. That, plus excellent performances all around, make for a compelling cinematic experience, though not one for the easily over-wrought. 92 minutes (Mason Jane Milam)

PAVAROTTI *****

UK / USA

Opening December 26, 2019

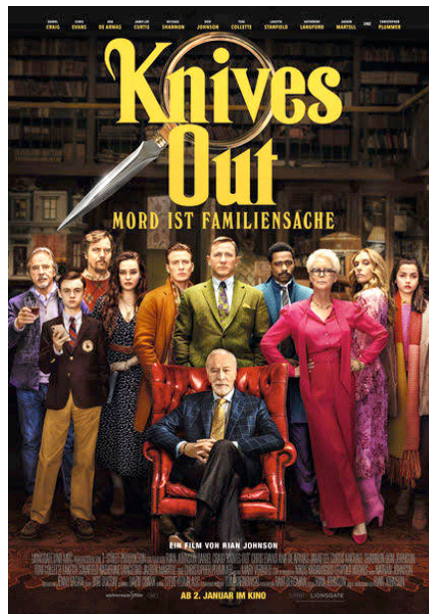
Directed by: Ron Howard

Writing credits: Marc Monroe
Principal actors: Luciano Pavarotti, Bono, Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras and many others

This is a true and faithful documentary film about legendary singer Luciano Pavarotti's real life as well as his life behind the cameras. **Ron Howard** has made an excellent biographical documentary from birth day to his death (1935-2007). Using family interviews (including disappointments), as well as a vast archive of images, makes the movie more palatable. A charismatic pretentious singer, who always enchanted the audience, shone on stage around the world among his admirers. With

a unique voice and brilliant versatility, he has always moved audiences all over the world. The magnetism and Italian charm that he possessed, contributed to him always deciding in a way he took and that made him one of the greatest singers of the century a tenor, but superstar.

The film also shows the emotional part of the singer, his friends and colleagues. It does not hide his affairs without going into the deep details, except the éclat caused by his young and devoted last love. (Geysa Wiemann)



Knives Out—Mord Ist Familiensache (Knives Out)****1/2

UK | USA 2019

Opening January 2, 2020

Directed by: Rian Johnson

Writing credits: Rian Johnson
Principal actors: Daniel Craig, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas, Jamie Lee Curtis, Don Johnson, Michael Shannon

Writer-director **Rian Johnson's** clever, witty tongue-in-cheek whodunit delivers refreshingly fun entertainment. As the Thrombey clan's devious antics mount, one laugh-out-loud moment trips over the next. Why, for all anyone knows, perhaps the family patriarch wrote *Knives Out* before his untimely demise.

Lieutenant Elliott (**LaKeith Stanfield**), with Trooper Wagner's (**Noah Segan**) assistance, calls

family members in, separately, for questioning subsequent to famed crime writer-cum-publisher Harlan Thrombey's (**Christopher Plummer**) death. Marta (**Ana de Armas**), the caregiver, found Harlan's body and now the family, having recently celebrated dad's 85th birthday, must tolerate these interlopers. First is Linda (**Jamie Lee Curtis**) the eldest, followed by husband Richard (**Don Johnson**)—spoiled son Ransom (**Chris Evans**) is unavailable; next, Joni (**Toni Collette**), widow of Harlan's second son Neal and mother of Meg (**Katherine Langford**), then Walt (**Michael Shannon**), wife Donna (**Riki Lindhome**) and 16-year old weirdo Jacob (**Jaeden Martell**). Inconspicuously in the background listening, and watching like a hawk, is the renowned Kentucky sleuth, Benoit Blanc (**Daniel Craig**). Discovering whether suicide, or not, is why Blanc was hired. As each person talks, audiences' see the narrative play out in real time, without any fabrications. Two exceptions are Greatnana Wanetta (**K Callan**), and Fran (**Edi Patterson**), the housekeeper. When Marta acts out the evidence, at Blanc's behest, he acknowledges, "[S]omething's afoot, eh Watson." On balance, Harlan simply wanted to fix some things before closing the book... and does he ever.

Easily wearing their characters' eccentricities, the stellar ensemble obviously has fun dancing circles around the thickly intricate screenplay. Like a bloodhound, **Steve Yedlin's** cinematography leaves no stone unturned highlighting lil' nooks and crannies, while **Bob Ducsay** snips with aplomb. **David Crank's** crafty production design goes hand-in-hand with **Nathan Johnson's** evocative and spirited music, e.g., the opening sequence alone offers pointers to Harlan's psyche. *Knives Out* original, guile plot is enticingly inserted with identifiable clues and red herrings and, its baiting suspense holds until the last knife drops. 110 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)

The County (Heradid, Milchkrieg in Dalsmynni) ****

Iceland 2019

Opening January 9, 2020

Directed by: Grímur Hákonarson

Writing credits: Grímur Hákonarson

Principle actors: Arndís Hrönn Egilsdóttir, Daniel Hans Erlendsson, Hafdís Helga Helgadóttir, Þorsteinn Gunnar Bjarnason, Þorsteinn Bachmann



After winning an Oscar for *Hrútar* (Rams), **Grímur Hákonarson** has once again herded us to an Icelandic farm where Inga (**Arndís Hrönn Egilsdóttir**) wakes up to find herself a widow now forced to run the dairy farm alone. The tragic truck accident leaves questions unanswered; the more Inga digs for the truth, the more she realizes that the long-standing community co-op is corrupt. Her awareness of the situation unearths an inner-strength she didn't know she had, and instead of joining the herd of corrupted farmers, she plans to resist to pressure of the co-op.

This low-key drama takes ordinary moments and crowns them with a sense of black humor, making this film no ordinary tale. Iceland's cinematography adds a very special atmosphere where its desolate landscapes

breathe sorrow, yet with anger seething from below. The landscape definitely plays a strong role in Hákonarson's film, as does the humor. There is a strong female protagonist filled with rage at the inner-workings of the local community. Both this film and *Kona fer í stríð* (Woman at War) present us with the role of a modern woman who is seen by her community as crazy and out of control, rather than as a heroic archetypical figure. The storylines clearly refer to mythology in a contemporary setting. The characters struggle to find their paths in a modern society filled with corruption and misunderstandings yet probably won't face the heavy consequences their counterparts did in the past. It does give us pause as to the state of our societies in which we live. Do corruption, tyrants, and a sense of hopelessness surround us, with no way out? Hákonarson is clearly an optimist, but he does note that there is a high cost. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

1917 ****

UK | USA 2019

Opening January 16, 2020

Directed by: Sam Mendes

Writing credits: Sam Mendes, Krysty Wilson-Cairns

Principal actors: Dean-Charles Chapman, George MacKay, Adrian Scarborough, Andrew Scott, Richard Madden

Sam Mendes chooses singular topics; his debut feature film, *American Beauty* (1999), was about a suburban middle-aged father's sexual infatuation with high school daughter's best friend. It earned Mendes a Best Director Oscar®—one of only six first-time directors with that distinction—and became a classic. This story is no different. It is about a message, and takes place on the Western Front during the First World War, 1914-1918; although a small event, the consequences are huge. Co-written with **Krysty Wilson-Cairns**, it goes without saying Oscar® winner **Roger**

Deakins' choreographed cinematography adds depth and texture to every unimaginable sight pulling us deeper into the story, apropos the opening sequence.

Initially, Blake (**Dean-Charles Chapman**) and Schofield (**George MacKay**) think the summoning is for some routine matter. Instead, a General (**Colin Firth**) orders them on a seemingly impossible mission: deliver an urgent message to Colonel MacKenzie (**Benedict Cumberbatch**) by morning. The General, knowing Private Blake's brother is with the regiment, stresses consequences will be dire if they fail. No small feat: first they must traverse "no man's land," and once behind enemy lines find a specific French village, then forest, to lead them to the Second. With odds against them and hundreds of men's lives dependent on them, over the top of the trench they go into the unknown.

The cast is exemplary, in addition to **Mark Strong**, **Daniel Mays**, **Richard McCabe**, **Anson Boon** and **Claire Duburcq's** cameo appearances. Editor **Lee Smith's** timing is fluid yet conversely succinctly brisk; Oscar® winner **Thomas Newman's** variable score builds on the action onscreen, even if at points too loud; Production Designer **Dennis Gassner** obviously labored to recreate that period under those conditions.

A consummate storyteller, Mendes shows nary a battle scene; instead, the effects of combat on nature—downed budding cherry trees (true)—plus the foiling by nature, humans—a lone surviving child, and those still involved in the theater—"There's only one way this war ends... last man standing." The complexities of warfare's senselessness emerge as details, scattered like crumbs across a dinner table, to capture our awareness, appall, and compassion. "Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne, He travels fastest who travels alone." Rudyard Kipling 110 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)



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

Holiday Party



The Holiday Party at the Aspira Club Uhlenhorst was another success, with much laughter, a three-course dinner, and a fun new gift exchange. Our special thanks go to Teresa PYL and Carol S for organization and Tracy M, Andrea M, Charis H, Marion B, Shelly S, and Stella K-R for the decorations and program. Thank you and Happy Healthy Holidays!

