

AWCH CURRENTS



THEME
VOLUNTEERING

CELEBRATE
THE HOLIDAYS

DAYTRIP
BOOK CLUB IN LUBECK

THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB OF HAMBURG, e.V.

October-December 2022 Vol. 38, No. IV
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Editorial

Helpful & Hopeful

Dear Currents Readers,

Rarely does a theme strike a chord like this one did! We should have guessed...

Why does anyone join this club? We are asked this question when we apply for membership, and there is a checklist: we join to meet people who share our interests, make friends, network, participate in the arts, carve a niche for ourselves in this city... myriad motivations, but it's a good question whether many women join for the express purpose of contributing to society. And yet, that is what so many spend their time doing.

Many of our volunteers got started in childhood, often guided by a parent or organization. Some got their start here and have ridden the energy they found in it out beyond

the club, finding new areas where their strengths are needed.

As they share their stories, everyone has something to say about the satisfaction they get from volunteering, and often they speak of a sense of connectedness: Connection to individual recipients, connection to humanity, connection to fellow volunteers...and finally, connection to one's best self, the self that is most, well, selfless.

So it shouldn't be a surprise that so many in this club are devoted volunteers. Why does anyone join this club? It's all about the connection.

Philanthropically yours,

Mason Jane & Stephanie
currents-exec@awchamburg.org

A Note from Stephanie

I would like to offer a quick farewell from my role as co-editor of *Currents*. I've thoroughly enjoyed learning more about all of you and about the intricacies of the club through the pages of this magazine. I'll still be volunteering with the club and *Currents* in other ways, but this is my final issue as co-editor. Mason Jane will continue her great work, and we've got some talented volunteers who are taking over the graphic design.

It's been an honor to work on *Currents* for the past year. Thank you for all your support!



Isbekkanal at the Alster in December. Photo by Stephanie Matlock Allen

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Vol. 38, No. IV

AMERICAN
★
WOMEN'S
CLUB OF
HAMBURG 

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HALLOWEEN DELIGHTS



BIKES & CASTLES



IMPRESSIONISM ART TOUR

President's Message

ALONE WE CAN DO
SO LITTLE; TOGETHER
WE CAN DO SO MUCH.

— HELEN KELLER

The year's end is always marked by a flurry of activity as we celebrate Thanksgiving with our AWCH family and friends, don festive clothes for our Holiday Party, and bake cookies for our annual Cookie Exchange... not to mention planning family get-togethers and making travel plans for the season. And these club events were only the frosting on top of an especially active fall season, as so many members were inspired to share and support their favorite place, hobby, interest, or charity by organizing events. A big thank-you to you all! Please enjoy the photos of these many activities in this issue.

It is also a time to think about the past year: What have we accomplished? Where are we going? As my presidency comes to an end, these thoughts are especially relevant. A friend of mine recently asked, "What have you learned over the past two years?" I was at first puzzled by the question, and my response was a shrug of the shoulders. I could only think of my own personal frustrations at seeing the boundaries of what I alone could do—limits that I have known before. But it did not take me long to realize that I HAD learned much more, and that is how important, how valuable, and how special our club is...I mean, YOU all are!

Together we have continued to build, shape, and expand a club that is rich in its diversity, its warmth, its support. In the last two years we have transitioned from "sheltering in place" to an outgoing membership that just can't seem to



Nicola and I learning the secret to making wontons from Stella.

Photo courtesy of Stella Kwong-Reichmann

get enough. We missed that warmth, we missed that support. Our calendar has been full, our attendance rates high, and our fundraising events have hit record heights. Together we can move mountains.

Have we accomplished what we wanted? *Jein*. There is still much we want to do, more people we want to help, more issues we want to change. There remains much to do—but we are moving forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the fabulous women who have worked together with me this year on the board. It is through your energy, ideas, and stamina that we can now close the books on a successful year. But the board also cannot achieve anything without the support and dedication of the MANY who do so much "behind the scenes"—to you, also, a very sincere thank you.

Yes, I have learned how special AWCH and its members are. With best wishes for a joyous holiday season!

— Carol Harbers

US Mission in Germany: an Update

By Carol Harbers
President

2022 saw many changes in the US Berlin Embassy and US Consulate in Hamburg—changes that affect how the USA is seen in Germany; how our club benefits from these institutions (and them from us!); and how our members can obtain passports, visas, and information needed for deaths, taxes, and other citizen-relevant issues.

First, the FIRST. In February of this year, Dr. Amy Gutmann assumed the position of US ambassador to Germany—the first woman to do so. She fills the position vacated by Richard Grenell in June 2020. Dr. Gutmann previously served as president of the University of Pennsylvania from 2004-2022, having made a name for herself as a political scientist.

In her opening address in Berlin, she noted that she “never dreamed that President Biden would one day call me personally and ask me to be an ambassador to the very country my father once fled.” She also defined three main goals for her term: strengthening alliances, innovating inclusivity, and defending democracy. Her reception in Germany has been very positive, and, from our perspective, things are indeed changing.

In November of this year, our club was asked to meet with Neal Frazier, the vice consul at the US Embassy, for a reception in Hamburg. Diana Schnelle, our vice president, represented AWCH and reported that Mr. Frazier was very genuinely in-



US Consul General Jason Chue, AWCH President Carol Harbers, and US Deputy Consul General Osee Liebermann

Photo by Trang Hy, US Consul General's Office

terested in hearing some of the requests of our members, including those for Social Security assistance, guidance for binational children, and the need for more frequent service days in Hamburg. Mr. Frazier said they now intend to offer a Consular Services Day twice per year in Hamburg, the next one being in the spring. This is a unique opportunity to renew children's passports and receive birth-abroad reports at the Hamburg consulate, instead of making an in-person visit to the embassy in Berlin.

Leading us to the next big change. Our “Little White House on the Alster” has closed. This was officially announced at the annual Fourth of July Party at the consulate, and, sure enough, a few weeks later the US flag was down. Outgoing Consul General Darion Akins

reportedly took many steps to reverse the decision to close the consulate, which has served this function for over 70 years, but to no avail. With the incoming consul general, Jason Chue, the consulate officially moved into the Amundsen-Haus in the Hafen City in July 2022. Located between the Elphi and Minitur Wunderland, there is no flag to be seen...but the security is still strict.

Many of us had the honor of meeting new US Consul General Jason Chue at our Thanksgiving Dinner in November. He seemed quite at home—save the presence of the security guards—as he mingled with our members and their families. In addition to Hamburg, the consulate's territory covers the states of Lower Saxony, Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein, and Mecklenburg-

Continued on page 6



Representing AWCH at the FAWCO Region 5 meeting were (from left) Nazanine, Jordan, Christine, Tracy, and Susan. Photo courtesy of Jordan Wagner

FAWCO Meeting in Frankfurt



In November, five AWCH members traveled down to Frankfurt for FAWCO's Region 5 meeting with other women's clubs in Germany and Austria. This was a great opportunity for club members to share ideas, struggles, and successes! We had many laughs, great food, and even better drinks! (Jordan Wagner)

If you've ever wanted to attend a FAWCO conference, now is your chance! The FAWCO Biennial Conference is taking place in Bratislava, Slovakia, from March 23-26. If you're interested in attending or learning more about FAWCO, please contact Jordan at fawcorep@awchamburg.org.

Continued from page 5

Western Pomerania. He told us that he has always been interested in "building bridges"—connecting cultures, economies, and opportunities.

His commitment to continue the close ties between the Ham-

burg consulate and AWCH were clearly shown when he agreed to host our annual Holiday Cookie Exchange at his residence this December. His chocolate chip cookies were some of the first to go. We sincerely wish Jason and the new deputy consul general, Osee Liebermann, a rewarding

stay in Hamburg.

Take the time to visit the new website representing the US Embassy and US Consulates in Germany, which also includes important US citizen information: de.usembassy.gov.

A Thanksgiving to Remember

By **Melissa Aziz**
Board secretary

I was excited to attend my very first AWCH Thanksgiving event since joining as a member in 2020. It was held in a big open space at DESY, which was perfect for hosting what was, quite honestly, the largest Thanksgiving dinner I've been to yet! One hundred-plus members and their families joined, bringing along an amazing collection of homemade sides and desserts to share. The club had organized the most delicious, moist turkey and gravy, and we had very happy bellies indeed after the feast.

The evening started with a warm welcome by our club president, Carol Harbers, who then introduced us to a special guest, new US Counsel General Jason Chue. It was great to have access to such an interesting guest who was spending his first Thanksgiving here in Hamburg. He even

brought a couple of bottles of wine for those in need. After the opening remarks, everyone lined up and anxiously awaited their turn to fill plates of Thanksgiving yumminess. Rumor has it that some went back for third and fourth helpings!

And then, on to the desserts! "Hold on," we were told! First would come the readings from all the "gratitude pumpkins" that had been written on during dinner. You could hear the groans of the children, and some adults, who had already carefully planned a stealth attack on the goodies on the tables. Pumpkin pie, brownies, cheesecake, cookies, and more were on display, and once word was given, the charge to the dessert tables equaled that of the main meal.

After filling up on sugar-based carbs, turkey comas began to settle across the crowd. Luckily, Tracy Moede was able to liven up the crowd with a few interactive games. This got most people moving once again, enabling them to make one final pass at the dessert table!

All in all, it was a wonderful evening which would not have been possible but for the help and efforts of many, many generous people: the set-up team, turkey team, clean-up crew, and everyone who brought so much deliciousness to share. I can't wait for next year already!



Spooky Halloween Party Left Nobody Forlorn:

'Twas Filled with Food & Games & Much Candy Corn!

By **Stephanie Matlock Allen**
Communications chair

On the afternoon of October 31, a lively group of AWCH families gathered at the Bauspielplatz in Eppendorfer Park. They brought creative food to share and amazing costumes to scare. Our own Holly Todd crafted Hollywood-worthy treasure hunts for both big kids and little ones.

The Halloween Committee worked themselves to the bone (ha!) planning, decorating, coordinating, and cleaning up after the event. So how did they do? Here are firsthand accounts from some of our young attendees:



Skeleton cake by Beth

It was fun. I liked seeing my friends, like Eloise. The Halloween costume contest was cool, and everybody had cool costumes. And I liked the treasure hunt and the pumpkin carving.

— **Anna, age 11,**
Grim Reaper,
child of Sara N.



Anna and Eloise



Carol and Michaela

It was really fun! I loved the pumpkin carving the best, and I was happy to win the costume prize. Oh, and the food was yummy, too.

— **Tashi, age 9,**
scary werewolf,
child of Michaela

Diana as
Andy Warhol



Photos by Holly Todd, Diana Schnelle, and
Stephanie Matlock Allen

★★★★

I would give this party four stars. It had candy, trampolines, and air hockey! The food was great and we carved pumpkins! They also had healthy food (yuck) that I avoided. There was only ONE person allowed on the trampoline AT A TIME. They had a pool table but no supplies, and the boys' bathroom door was kaput. There were leaves all over the place (not their fault), and small knives for pumpkins. Though it was still overall a great party.

— Holden, age 10,
Jason from *Friday the Thirteenth*,
child of Jennifer F.



The Halloween party was very fun. We did a treasure hunt that was cool. There were 45 people, all in different costumes. There was so much food and sweets there!

— Quinn, age 10,
Captain America,
child of Stephanie



Let the search begin!



On brooms they came
in deepest night
And conjured up
a blazing light.
Cackling and shrieking, they
swooped round and round;
Where their cauldron bubbled,
your next clue can be found.



Enter the forsaken
nearby gallows
Before darkness falls
on this Eve of all Hallows.
With chilling wails
the ghosts will cheer
When you find your reward
in a grinning sphere.

The girls' team eagerly begins
their treasure hunt

Follow the raised
tree-lined avenue
To Dead Man's Gulch
and your next eerie clue.
Gone are the worn and
crumbling gravestones
Under the leaves you
might find some old bones.

Fall Activities Roundup



By Carol Harbers
President

Our fall calendar was full of activities organized by members who shared their favorite place, interests, or skills with us. Unfortunately, we do not have photos of them all, nor the space to write them up, but here are a few of my favorites.

First, the two “self-help” activities: Clarins Spa Treatment and a master class in the KonMari Method.

Yes, I do think that I take care of my skin and, yes, I sometimes feel that my life is overwhelming—but nothing to do about that. Think again. Thanks to the spa treatment organized by Nanci Schmidt, our events chair, and sponsored by Clarins and Galeria, I learned how I could do much more to improve my complexion. How fun it was to go step-by-step through a full facial among a group of friends.



And thank you, Nazanine Eslamdoust, for making me realize that clutter overwhelms and to ask the question: Does this spark joy? Some of the participants of our workshop made the wise observation that we could hold our next flea market from the items we needed to eliminate. Next year.



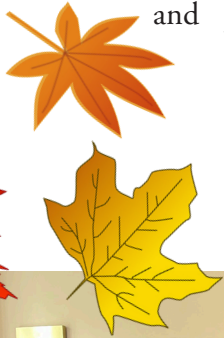
Members enjoying the spa treatment!
Photos by Nanci Schmidt and Carol Harbers



Wonton making at Stella's.
Photo by Stella Kwong-Reichmann

Then there was also the chance to be creative and learn to make things out of one's normal realm: professional-looking Christmas cards using stamping techniques and cutting dies (thank you, Sara Naumann!) and original, simple, but delicious Chinese wontons (thank you, Stella Kwong!) Already in November, my first Christmas cards were made and my freezer full of wontons to serve during the holidays!

And, finally, our chance to explore Hamburg's environs. Member Brenda Benthien offered to share the gem in her backyard: the Ahrensburg Schloss. Built in 1585 by Peter Rantzou, envoy of the king of Denmark, the mansion, with its four elegantly designed corner turrets, stayed in his family until the mid-eighteenth century. Until 1932, it was renovated and maintained by the Schimmelmann family. Today it offers an unparalleled exhibition of aristocratic culture, with original furniture and porcelain serveware, demonstrating the charm of bygone centuries. We enjoyed the tour in English—and many stayed for coffee and cake in the town of Ahrensburg before heading back on the train.



A gallant group joined me for the 25 kilometer bicycle trip from Hamburg to Ahrensburg before the tour. Following green arteries along the Eilbek Canal and then the Wandse River, we crossed the Höltzebaum green space and the Stellmoor Tunneltal before hitting our destination. Beautiful weather and beautiful landscape. Thank you to you all!



Ahrensburg Schloss tour and bike trip
Photos by Carol Harbers

A Scrumptious Dim Sum Lunch

By Adrienne Wright Bulow
Membership chair

Thanks to Stella Kwong-Riechmann, we had a culinary experience to be remembered. The Dim Sum Haus lunch in St Georg was delectable. Various steamed delicacies arrived in short intervals in abundance. The traditional Hong Kong Chinese restaurant is very authentic, according to Stella. There is talk about it becoming an annual thing. I do hope so. It was also lovely to meet some of the husbands and be surrounded by some of our long-time members' stories. Carol Battenfeld kept me entertained throughout. What a great afternoon.

Photo by Stella Kwong-Riechmann





Holiday Party at the Hamburger Kunsthalle

By Carol Harbers
President

On December 8, we celebrated our Annual Holiday Party. This year's interesting twist was starting the event off with a tour of *Breathing (Atmen)*, an exhibition at the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Split into two groups for the tour, we explored this unconventional exhibit on the existential topic of a seemingly unconscious biological process—unconscious until “one’s breath is taken away.” Observing only a fraction of the exhibition (composed of more than 100 works) and from the vantage point of our very different tour guides, our members had plenty to compare when we gathered for the reception at The Cube restaurant.

With over 55 members attending, the festive three-course dinner and gift exchange was a wonderful opportunity to visit with each other before the holiday season took off in full swing. Thank you to all who helped put this together!



Photo: Thomson & Craighead (*1969/*1971)
Several Interruptions, 2009 (Video)



One of the two
groups touring
the exhibition



Anna, Frances, and Holly
Photos by Carol Strametz



Members enjoying the delicious meal
Photos by Venita Kaleps



Cookie Exchange, Caroling,

Continuing a long tradition, AWCH members met at the US consul general's residence to chat, sing, and exchange cookies. Jason Chue was supported by his team, including the newly arrived Deputy Consul Osee Lieberman and their administrative assistant, Goschka Witoslawski. We were also happy to see two other familiar faces: Susan Ellbow, US consul general in Hamburg from 2001–2004, and Diana de Los Reyes, who, now retired, has helped organize this club tradition for more than 25 years.

A highlight was clearly the debut of our new choral group, the AWCH Songbirds!



Everyone brought two dozen cookies to share. Photo by Frauke Rademacher-Heidemann



An afternoon with friends: Mindy, Andrea, Ulrike, and Marinell.

Photo by Trang Hy, US consul general's office

Trang Hy and Jason Chue of the US Consulate General's office socialize with Geysa, Amanda, and Elizabeth.

Photo by Carol Strametz



& the AWCH Songbirds' Debut!



The Songbirds are: Nancy (at piano), Monika, Ulrike, Holly, Geysa, and Amanda.
Photo by Carol Strametz

The fledgling AWCH Songbirds choir performed for the first time under Nancy Tilitz's enthusiastic direction at the Cookie Exchange. They've been having fun rehearsing in Nancy's atmospheric and conveniently located gallery under the train tracks in the Dammtor station.

Interesting in joining the Songbirds? Contact Nancy at chorus@awchamburg.org



A Time of Giving

In keeping with the season of giving, AWCH held its traditional food drive preceding and during our Thanksgiving Dinner. Two carloads of food and hygiene articles, as well as 256 euros, were donated to Hamburger Tafel e.V. The organization is an important hub for distributing food and goods to Hamburg charities that provide warm meals for the homeless and the many refugees arriving daily from Ukraine. A big thank you to Melissa, Adrienne, and Susan for collecting goods.

AWCH Membership Chair Adrienne Wright Bulow (right) and Cornelia T. load up some of the AWCH food donations for Hamburger Tafel.
Photo courtesy of Adrienne

VOLUNTEERING SPECIAL

“As you grow older,
you will discover that
you have two hands —
one for helping
yourself, the other for
helping others.”

Audrey Hepburn

Catching the Rain for a Better Future



Tribal people preparing the land for a watershed project.
Photo by Ulrike Henn

By Carol Strametz,
Carol Harbers, and Ulrike Henn

Volunteering takes many forms...and can make an impact both near and far. Our “far-from-home project” was brought close to our hearts after Ulrike visited the Paregaon Khurd hamlet in Maharashtra, India, in 2010.

The hamlet was a recipient of a FAWCO-initiated development project carried out by the Integrated Tribal Watershed Development

Programme (ITWDP), now known as the Nandanvan Trust. Ulrike’s arresting and colorful photographs, as well as her moving recollections of the transformation of the land and its people brought about by the project, were captivating.

Nandanvan uses watershed development (“catching the rain”) to revitalize the desertified land in rural areas of Maharashtra. Watershed development not only restores ground water and regreens the land, it also increases agricultural productivity and

income for the tribal communities—providing environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Nandanvan also takes the next step by promoting education, health, and sanitation through follow-up projects, and, collectively, Nandanvan helps the tribal people secure livelihoods and a chance to live with dignity.

In 2017, the FAWCO Foundation launched a new development grant (DG) category called “Environment–Nurturing our Planet.”

Father Robert D’Costa, the director of Nandanvan, had visited Hamburg shortly before the announcement and given AWCH members updates on Paregaon Khurd and other projects. It didn’t take us long to realize that a project for Nandanvan would be perfect for a DG nomination.

A core team set out to develop and nominate the project “Hazr-wadi Open Well.” The 2018 grant of \$4,500 was awarded for the construction of a concrete-lined open well with a pipeline and a pump. This well now provides an adequate water supply throughout the year, not only allowing for the irrigation of a second crop that can be sold, but also improving the hygienic con-

ditions with clean water. That year we also organized a very successful fun(d)raising event (“The Tree Thing”) at the Museum for Arts and Crafts to raise money to plant trees in the area.

This successful beginning has spurred us on to nominate projects suggested by Nandanvan for other DGs.

- In 2019, we nominated the project “A Kindergarten for Tribal Children in Rural India.” We argued that to perpetuate the positive changes that watershed development has brought to the area, it is essential that children, especially girls, receive an education. Fundamental learning skills and habits for attending

public school can be taught in kindergarten. The project was awarded the \$5,500 DG donated by AW Surrey Hope. Our “on-line” information and fundraising evening in November 2020 provided funds to buy needed supplies for the kindergarten.

- In 2020, we nominated the project “Trees for Sustainability” for a DG in the category “Environment.” The \$5,000 grant was awarded to buy 1,500 cashew trees to plant on 40 acres to secure a watershed in a neighboring region and to provide a second crop for cash income for 40 families, stopping the devastating migration for seasonal work.

- Our nomination “Harvesting



A family in their small hut, demonstrating the need for a storage building.

Photo by Ulrike Henn

and Storing for a Better Living” in 2021 was awarded the \$4,000 DG in the category “Environment” to finance the construction of a storage building for harvested grains and seeds. The outstanding money needed to complete the building was raised at our Pre-Loved Book Sale, graciously hosted by Michaela Anchan in 2021. Not only does the storage building, which will be used by 22 families, protect the harvest from bad weather and pests, but it will allow the farmers to take advantage of market fluctuations to increase their income.

- In 2022, both of our nominations for Nandanvan projects—“I Will Learn!—Keeping Tribal Children in School” and “Regreening Degraded Land in Rural India”—were awarded \$4,000 DGs in the categories “Education” and “Environment,” respectively. The projects continue to implement previous projects supported by our efforts but also extend the area to hamlets in neighboring districts.

Our volunteer work comprises communicating with Nandanvan about potential projects, writing grant proposals that are precise and concise with a 150-word summary that will stand

out and attract the votes of FAWCO member clubs, reporting on the progress of the projects, and raising awareness and funds within AWCH. We are thankful to have Michaela Anchan as a new team member. We work on a proposal together and consult with the AWCH Philanthropy Collective, especially Brigitte Bernard-Rau, to arrive at the summary extraordinaire.

We sincerely thank the members of the collective and the many club members who support this organization and their projects. Our next India awareness event and fun(d)raiser will be another Pre-Loved Book Sale, again graciously hosted by Michaela Anchan, in January. There will be an update on the Nandanvan projects and a chance for members to support this far-from-home project by donating and buying pre-loved books. We hope you can join us!

We are proud and honored that, through AWCH, we have been able to support Nandanvan through the FAWCO Foundation Development Grants. Knowing that these environmental and educational projects ensure the sustainability of the watershed and have greatly improved the lives of many is our reward.



Ulrike Henn, Carol Harbers, and Carol Strametz share their favorite UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) during the AWCH SDG campaign in 2019.

Photos taken by our family members

Involuntary Volunteering

Or How I Was Raised to Always Get Involved

By Stephanie Matlock Allen
 Currents co-editor &
 AWCH communications chair

My earliest volunteer experience began around age eight, when I would spend summers toiling on political campaigns at the behest of my mother, who worked for a local US congressman. My siblings and I called it “involuntary volunteering,” but the supply of free snacks kept us coming back.

Somewhere in those innumerable hours spent stuffing envelopes and delivering flyers door-to-door, I accidentally learned a lot about community, public service, government, and the value of making connections. I was often inspired by the passionate volunteers who were there voluntarily!

Those lessons in community organizing and volunteerism stuck. As a young adult, I found myself saying “yes” to all sorts of interesting experiences. In Oregon, I co-founded a “friends of the farmers market” group. We signed up members and organized farm tours, canning classes, book exchanges, and fundraisers. We switched the entire market to a “zero waste zone,” eliminating disposable plates and utensils at the food booths.

I replied to a newspaper article where a neighbor sought help publishing a printed newsletter and a website showcasing the history of our town. At age 25, I found myself drinking tea in the parlor of a spritely and tech-savvy 80-year-old woman who became a lifelong friend, collaborator, and mentor.

We launched lots of new projects together, and she showed me the value of building a stronger community. We still talk often.

One of my more unique volunteering experiences was directing a TV show at a public-access

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Left: My son, Quinn, began delivering neighborhood newsletters when he was a baby strapped to my back. With every issue, his involvement increased. Here he is at age three taking one to a neighbor's doorstep.

Above: It took a lot of negotiating, organizing, and dozens of volunteers to get these "Zero Waste Zones" instituted at an Oregon farmers' market 15 years ago.

Above: I lived in a beautiful Boise neighborhood filled with amazing volunteers! In 2018, I hosted our first "Volunteer Appreciation Picnic" to properly thank my dedicated team of neighborhood helpers.

Photos by
Stephanie Matlock Allen

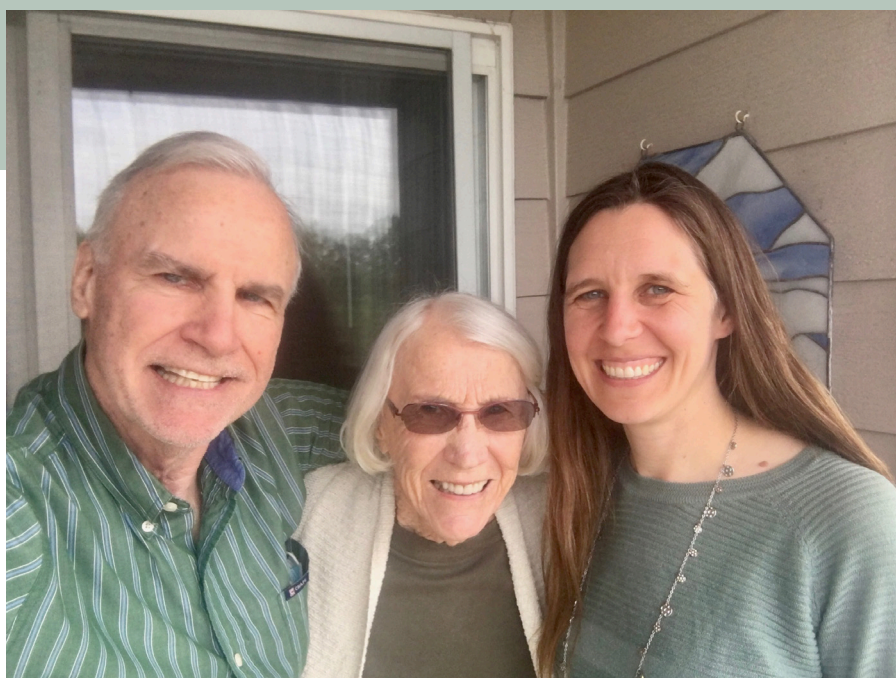
Who Is Volunteering For?

"Volunteering is for the birds! If a job is worth doing, it's worth being paid for." So said my friend's mother-in-law. We met at a coffee morning, and I was so taken aback that I didn't have a reply. I'd been telling her about the Great Books Literature Program, which had recently been introduced at my daughters' (and her granddaughters' school.) The children had loved it, and I'd enjoyed teaching it. The children were intrigued to learn that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions they were asked, and they visibly relaxed when they considered this new concept. It was an important one, as the children were, in my opinion, rather over-controlled in Monroe Elementary School in the 1980s.

The program is an introduction to literary criticism that begins with young children and continues into adulthood. I was invited to attend a weekend workshop with other volunteers, and then we spent one afternoon a week in local schools in rural Connecticut putting it into practice. The children were given a short story or extract from a novel to read at home. They re-read the story at the beginning of the lesson and then answered open-ended questions set by the program and asked by the leader. The children were encouraged to think and discuss and always enjoyed sharing their answers with the rest of the group. There were some lively debates as their confidence grew.

What could my reply have been to that woman's comment, and what could I have said without sounding pompous? Volunteering is partly about self-gratification and the satisfaction that comes from feeling useful and helping others. It's also about companionship and meeting others. And it's about doing something worthwhile. It's 40 years too late to answer that self-satisfied woman drinking her coffee in a neighbor's house but the best reply could have been, "I volunteered because it was fun and we all enjoyed ourselves."

– Jenny Mather



With my friend Virginia and her son, Tom, in Salem, Oregon. Together we published newsletters, websites, and historical walking tours. They are two of the most inspiring people I know!

Photo by Tom Green, Jr.

Continued from page 20

television station. But, of course, it wasn't only directing—no volunteer gig ever stops with one task! I set up lights and operated cameras, created graphics, and learned to run audio. I was paid in free food and incredible friendships: the pinnacle of any volunteer experience. Although I moved away, that film-review program still airs, more than 20 years old and always produced entirely by volunteers!

There have been so many ways to find fulfillment by giving of my time. I spent a couple of years weeding out invasive plants at a desert preserve in Idaho, and I tended to a school farm during the summer breaks. I helped found a charter school, and I swung a hammer for Habitat for Humanity.

I joined the board of my neighborhood association and became deeply involved in community activism and organizing fundraising events. I also edited our

neighborhood magazine and led a delightful team of 50 volunteer deliverers. And, in a lesson of involuntary volunteering, my kid also dropped off publications door to door—just like I had as a child!

When I moved to Hamburg, I transferred what I've learned from those experiences to the American Women's Club of Hamburg, where I am honored to co-edit the magazine and create the newsletter, serve on the board, and help with events. I'm eager to contribute even more in 2023.

I recognize that I have often had the privilege of time to devote to these various community groups. But I was also trained—at a young age—to make it a priority, and to find a way to contribute to my own community and make life just a little bit nicer for those around me. I'm happy I can keep doing that together with all of you.

A Former Newcomer Helping New Newcomers

By Holly Todd

In 2015, I was living in Hannover, and I learned of a local German “course” taught by volunteers to newly arrived refugees. It gave them not only basic communication skills but was also a place to meet other people until they were admitted into official integration courses. Appalled by the war in Syria, I was also feeling apprehensive about how life in Germany might change as the country took in over a million refugees that year. The news warned of the incompatibility of Islam with German democracy. I wanted to see for myself what the refugees were like and, as someone who had once been a lonely, frustrated newcomer in Germany, I felt strong sympathy and wanted to help. German wasn’t my native language, and I had never taught English, but I was told I should just show up and check it out.

The day I arrived, with very little fanfare I was handed a workbook and assigned to a table and a group of three refugees. During short breaks and after the two-and-a-half-hour classes

(three times a week), the general approach was explained to me. Since neither “pupils” nor “teachers” were required to attend,

I had different groups of one to four refugees with varying needs every week or two, sometimes every day. The majority were Syrian, but others came from Africa, other Middle Eastern countries, and the Balkans. You had to be creative and flexible to get such culturally and educationally diverse individuals communicating in German.

It was tough but never boring, and from day one, I loved it. Among the most gratifying moments was a short period where I taught an older Bosnian woman who had been in Germany for decades and a very young man from the Ivory Coast who wore great hats and had a wonderful laugh. The only things they had in common were a minimal education and a strong conviction that they couldn’t learn a new language. Somehow they started feeling small successes in relation to one another that propelled them both forward, for a

few weeks anyway.

My favorite pupil was a Syrian named Abdullah who was terrible at language learning but was friendly, funny, and warm-hearted. He began bringing along his young, pregnant wife, Rasha, who turned out to be as quick as he was slow at picking up German phrases in spite of heavy morning sickness. I began helping the family (they had two boys in kindergarten) outside of class, which involved seeing them through several moves; helping with schooling, work, and health issues; and accompanying them on many visits to social and immigration services and the employment bureau. What began as mentoring deepened into friendship, and I was at Rasha’s side with Abdullah when their daughter was born in 2016.

When I moved to Hamburg a year later, my German teaching days came to an end, but this past year I helped Rasha and Abdullah again when they had to find yet another place to live in the midst of a new refugee crisis caused by the war in Ukraine.

Why I Volunteer

By Tracy Moede
 Coordinator of AWCH's
 From the Heart Pillow Project



I have not always been a volunteer. I did a little of this and that in the kindergarten and schools when my daughters were little. Finding the time to be an effective volunteer with small kids is a challenge. I did feel I wanted to do something for the AWCH, but it wasn't feasible until they were a bit older.

Over 10 years, I served on the AWCH board in three positions: membership, FAWCO rep, and treasurer. I enjoyed my time working with other board members, moving our club forward and doing our best with all members in mind.

However much fun that was, the strong interest in volunteering began when I became the coordinator of the From the Heart Pillow Project (FHPP). Susan Stanley-Witt and I arrange working bees, purchase materials, and sew and deliver

pillows and cloth carrying bags for Redon bottles. This is a job I thrive in. It does not need my attention every day, but when the Asklepios Mariahilf Krankenhaus in Harburg calls, we dive into action. This is, by far, one of the most rewarding and satisfying activities I have been involved in.

Can you imagine? After an eight-hour working bee in my home, we are surrounded by sewing machines, ironing boards, pillow filling, and thread and fabric scraps up to our ankles. But the results are amazing—piles and piles of colorful pillows and bags waiting to be delivered to recovering breast cancer patients. And do we get feedback—so much positive and grateful feedback! The efforts made by our working bee group provide such joy, care, and emotional support. This is one of the main reasons I work for the FHPP: knowing

that the work I do is not only successful in its goals but is also recognized and appreciated.

After retiring from teaching, I was looking for a more ambitious pursuit. Both Becka and Ally had received the Dual Cultural Award from The FAWCO Foundation, and I felt strongly it was time to pay it forward by looking for something to do within that organization. I was quickly assigned the position of vice-president of programs due to an unexpected vacancy, and with no experience and a huge learning curve ahead of me, I accepted. I was a bit hesitant and very unsure but found that I had the organizational skills to get the job done. After four years in that position, I remained on the board as vice-president of communications. It is here that I am not only doing for others but am profit-ing from my experience as well. I am now confident

Oldies but Goodies

I volunteer. I am aware that I lead a very charmed life, and I feel the need to give back. I was always active in my children's school years, being a PTA mother and selling snacks at the breaks. I am a partner in the From the Heart group sewing for breast cancer patients. Amongst other volunteer work.

I think the most unusual volunteer work I do is visiting dying people. I am a Sterbebegleiter: a terminal care volunteer. In Germany, it is mandatory to do a year-long course for this type of volunteering. When did I start doing this? Gosh, I can't remember, over six years ago. What does it actually entail? I spend time with my oldies, as I call them. The usual reaction I get if I tell people is shock. Why would I voluntarily visit dying people? I do it because I can. I think I have a gift for it.

I care about the people I visit, but I don't have an emotional history with them. I just know them as old and sick. If a patient tells me they want to die, I can accept that and not judge them. Their family members, of course, react differently to such statements. When I visit someone, I sometimes listen to music from the '40s, '50s, or classical with them, or I just talk to them. I ask them about their lives and families. I usually hear the same stories repeatedly, which I don't mind because a lot of the people don't have teeth or they speak unclearly so it takes a few tellings to piece the story together.

I also pray for them. My belief in God is a very good support for me during my visits and otherwise. I offer the patients prayer; I pray out loud and they listen. I have never had anyone say no, even those who claim not to believe in God. I pray that they experience God's love and that he calms their fears. Dying can also be scary for many. My oldies say the prayers are a comfort emotionally. Physically speaking, hospices and senior residences offer palliative care, well-dosed pain relief. I don't want my oldies to suffer. I often liaise between the patient and the nurses about ailments or needs. My advantage is that I have no expectations. I don't want them to get dressed, wash, or drink something. I don't have an agenda. I am just there to listen, show them love, care, and hold their hand. It is that simple.

– Susan Stanley-Witt



enough in my skills as a web content manager to work on the new AWCH website. It is a job that is enjoyable but can be challenging and frustrating. I learn so many new things every darn day; it is fun to find the challenge and solve it on my own.

Why do I volunteer? The words satisfaction and rewarding are standard answers, and I suppose they do describe the feeling I have when I do something for others. Happiness, fulfillment, gratification, pride, contentment, and achievement, though, do a better job of getting to the root of the motivation.

Next Sewing Bee Open House Tuesday, January 10

Join us any time between 15:00- 22:00 to help assemble pillows and bottle bags that will be donated for use by breast cancer patients. We will meet at my home in Bönningstedt. For more details and to RSVP, email heartpillows@awchamburg.org

The Beginnings of My Journey into Volunteering

By Shelly Schoeneshoefer

When I think back to where it all began, I think of my grandmothers. Both of them did work for their communities and churches. One grandmother did bake sales and crafts with children, especially those in hospitals, since she had had more than 24 operations herself due to her frail bone structure, and she wanted to help others who had suffered just as much as she had. My other grandmother, who wasn't the easiest person, turned out to be a super heroine for volunteering in Olivette, Missouri.

This I was reminded of while attending my uncle's hundredth birthday party: My relatives all had stories about her, especially from the time of the Great Depression. Since theirs was one of the few families in their district that hadn't lost their farm and had food and shelter, they decided that if people wanted to help out on the farm for a day or two, they would get three square meals and a place to sleep. These people were only allowed to stay a couple of days, since there were so many families in need work-

ing their way towards California, and my grandmother wanted to help as many as possible. She also made and sold quilts, using the money to keep everything afloat. She was always busy canning and preserving jars of food to hand out to the flood of travelers.

My volunteering started with becoming a Bluebird in second grade, which was part of the Campfire Girls organization, founded in 1910 by Dr. Luther Halsey Gulick and his wife, Charlotte Vetter Gulick, in Maine. Charlotte came up with a Watchword, WoHeLo, which means "Work, Health, Love." This was the first non-sectarian organization in the US, which suited me since I love meeting people from different backgrounds to expand my view of the world, which wasn't easy for me since my family lived in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, a popular place now, but back then, we were fairly isolated. In 1975, the Campfire Girls decided to admit both boys and girls. I recently found my Campfire Girl vest and an old newspaper clipping from where we did volunteer work



Crabapple Tree

Camp Fire Girls of Bergen Elementary School plant a crabapple tree at Bergen. The girls saved money for the tree from this year's candy sales.

Denise Bonds, president of the Bergen 4th grade Camp Fire Girls, presented the tree to Susar Brown, one of the Gamma unit teachers, who was representing the school. Leaders of the girls are Jo Casterline and June Allendorf.



**My beloved
Campfire Girl vest,
still bright and
inspiring!**

Photos by Shelly
Schoeneshoefer



in order to collect money that was used to buy a tree near our school. The tree is still there and is now accompanied by more planted trees. (This reminds me of our FAWCO grant where we sponsored trees for a village in India.) What can be more wonderful than planting trees and watching them grow? This year, I reached out to several ladies from the Campfire Girls to share what we remember from our childhood times. Most of them still had their vests or beads, and they all agreed that it truly was their path into the volunteer work that they do until this day. We sold candy and cleaned our local lake, creeks, and surrounding areas. We stuffed envelopes and volunteered at the local elderly home. We formed life-long friendships, and all in the name of helping others.

Carrying on a Legacy of Caring

When I was a child, I observed—but did not fully appreciate—how my mother shared her time and creative talents to help our church group organize donations of supplies for food-insecure families in our community. She took extra care that these families were presented with beautiful baskets full of healthy foods and useful household supplies so as to be more of a gift than charity.

As I got older, I came to see the true impact of what such service can be not only for those in need, but also for those who do the work. While it could sometimes be a challenge—I remember her annoyance at receiving outdated jars of maraschino cherries as donations!—she never failed to put her hand up to help organize the logistical efforts involved in sourcing, packing, and delivering these food baskets. It was a monumental and ongoing project, yet it was ideal for someone with her organizational abilities.

When I first arrived in Hamburg, I looked for ways to volunteer—but with limited German language skills and a busy schedule, it was hard to find the right opportunities. I'm really grateful to the AWCH for offering members so many chances to volunteer and participate in an important service in our adopted communities.

And while the folks in these communities benefit, so do we—as we're able to get together and have fun, too—from running/walking the Laufend Gegen Gewalt, to collecting food for Hamburger Tafel, and swapping books to support the Nandanvan Trust. I recognize and appreciate how much fun I have participating in these activities. (My husband jokes that volunteering is my "dopamine hit.") For that, I'm grateful to the AWCH Philanthropy group, FAWCO, and to the members who facilitate these opportunities to help out in the community and enjoy each other's company.

– Sara Naumann

THE CLUBS WITHIN OUR CLUB

BOOK CLUB

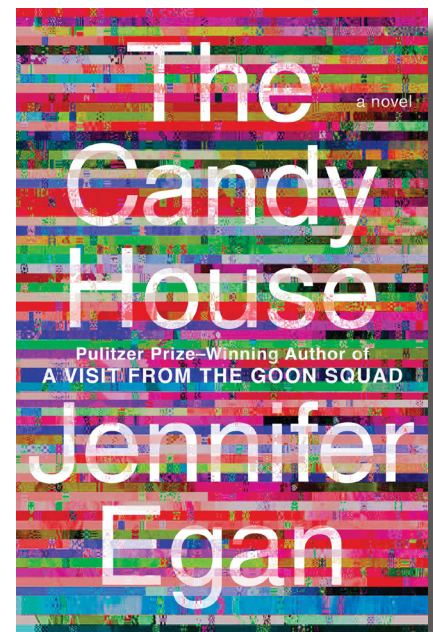
REVIEWS

The Candy House by Jennifer Egan

Review by Carol Strametz

For our September meeting, we decided to read *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan and to combine this with an event featuring the author and book at the Harbourfront Literaturfestival in Hamburg. The term “candy house” is synonymous with the bad trade-offs people make with technology. The killer app “Own Your Unconscious” allows people to upload their life memories—even those forgotten—to “the cube,” share them, and access others’ memories. This app is an exaggerated version of what we have now—the trade-off of our digital privacy for services. The book introduces a multitude of characters, many already familiar from Egan’s award-winning 2010 novel *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, which looks at tech in its early stages of music sharing. Many of these protagonists in *The Candy House* choose to encounter their own memories and those of others in the collective consciousness, but some despise it and become “eluders” who erase their online identities only to be tracked by “counters.” This is the backdrop for Egan’s compelling and beautifully written novel about love, loss, redemption, and individuality.

It was a pleasure to experience Jennifer Egan live. It was interesting to hear what she had to say, e.g., that the storyline was pretty much in place before the technology entered the story. She is impressive—brilliant, inspiring, quick-witted, and not to be intimidated. The moderator was a disappointment: it wasn’t obvious that he had read or understood the book. The readings by a well-known German actor were nice but much too long. It would have been much more fun to have heard more from Egan.



**Getting to hear Egan
speak was an exceptional
treat!**

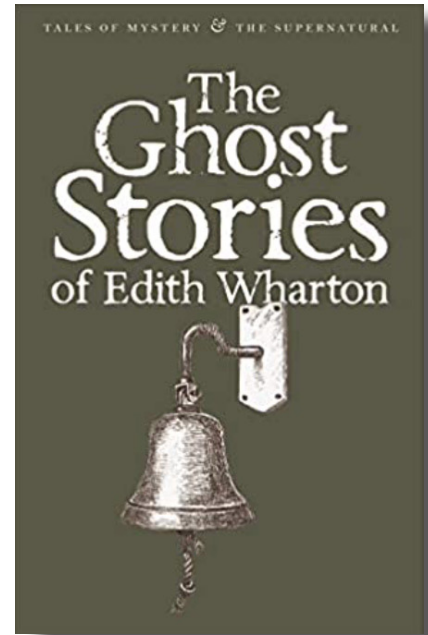
The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton

Review by Carol Strametz

With Halloween just around the corner, we decided to read this collection of masterly stories of horror and unease by Edith Wharton (1862-1937). Wharton is one of America's greatest writers, who is best known for her novels of social realism (*The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Frome*, *The House of Mirth*) but who is also a master of the traditional New England ghost story genre. Her ghost stories link the unconscious with the haunted house, and her captivating descriptions of the rooms, halls, and grounds eerily take the reader into the supernatural world. Here the ghost stories remain well-grounded in worldly manners and are a social commentary on issues such as violence against women, the corruption of capitalism, fear of death, and the loneliness of old age.

It was a good read and perfect for the season.

The stories in the collection: The Lady's Maid's Bell (1904), The Eyes (1910), Afterward (1910), Kerfol (1916), The Triumph of Night (1914), Miss Mary Pask (1925), Bewitched (1925), Mr. Jones (1928), Pomegranate Seed (1931), The Looking Glass (1935), and All Souls' (1937)



The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton: Our Take

“One can only relish the writing—the best way possible to get ghosted.”
—Tine Hestbaek

“Wharton can really create a scene and knows her way around sprawling manor homes, creating just enough of a chill to hint at the presence of ghosts in her delightful choice of words and ideas in precise prose.”
—Venita Kaleps

One can only relish the writing—the best way possible to get ghosted.

The Candy House: Our Take

“It was such a pleasure to hear Jennifer Egan talk about her work. My only complaint was the reading of her work, in German, three times, about fifteen minutes long each. I would rather that time was spent on interviewing her! She is very eloquent and it was fascinating to hear the connections between *A Visit From the Goon Squad* and *The Candy House*.”

—Michaela Anchan

“Getting to hear Jennifer Egan speak was an exceptional treat! She’s one of my all-time favorite authors, and it was lovely to hear her speak about the motivations behind and inspiration to continue with the characters from *A Visit from the Goon Squad*.”

—Adelina G.

Buddenbrooks Tour in Lübeck

By Michaela Anchan

Inspired by this year's summer reading of *The Magician* by Colm Tóibín and *Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann, on Friday, September 30, the AWCH Book Club took the train to Lübeck for a day trip. The group very generously allowed a male interloper—my father was in town for a week, so he joined us too. We were lucky with the weather—an absolutely perfect, blue-sky day greeted us as we made our way from the Lübeck Hauptbahnhof to meet our guide for the morning.

Bettina met us at the Holstentor, always a fabulous and impressive start to a Lübeck day. She had crafted an English tour for us that took in all the usual Lübeck sights, but with a *Buddenbrooks* “theme.” We saw the salt warehouses and talked about Lübeck's role in the hanseatic trade. The group members had visited many of the other hanseatic towns, so it was interesting to compare notes.

The Marktplatz and Rathaus are a Lübeck highlight, and Bettina had plenty of stories for us—it is thrilling to imagine Thomas Mann growing up there and to think of how Lübeck looked in his time; he lived there until the family moved to Munich in 1891, when he was just six years old, but returned often to visit family.

Bettina was also able to point out to us many spots that were used for the filming of the various *Buddenbrooks* movies and TV series—the most recent being the



Classic Lübek! Photo by Michaela Anchan

2008 version. We stopped at the Buddenbrook House—actually the home of Thomas Mann's grandparents that he used as a model for the Buddenbrook family home, and the frontage of the house was used as that in the 2008 film. The Buddenbrook House served as a museum for many years but is currently under major renovations and expansion. The government has purchased the neighboring properties and the new center will (so the website promises) offer “more *Buddenbrooks*, more of the Mann family, more literature, more interactivity, more education, more research, and more independent discovery.” It is due to open in 2025. During the years of construction, however, there is a small shop and information center, “*Buddenbrooks* on the Market,” close to the Rathaus.

In the beautiful Marienkirche, we were lucky to see the incredibly elaborate atomic clock strike noon and the poignant “Broken Bells”—the church bells that were left to rest as they fell after the World

War II bombing. Our tour ended after a walk to the other large gate, the Burgtor, stopping on the way at the Katharineum (the school of Thomas and Christian Buddenbrook), the Heiligen-Geist Hospital, and the Sievers Thorweg, one of the picturesque “back alleys” of Lübeck.

A day out in Lübeck needs, of course, a big German lunch at the astonishing Schiffergesellschaft restaurant—we had a lovely lunch that felt very well-deserved after our walk, with lots to discuss, too.

After lunch, my dad (who had a wonderful time and felt very welcomed by everyone) and I had to hurry back to Hamburg, and the rest of the group had time to stroll back to the train station via the famous Niederegger store and the other main street shops.

With much thanks to our two treasured Carols—Carol Strametz and Carol Harbers—for their wonderful organization and to the rest of the group for being such great company.

IN TRANSLATION

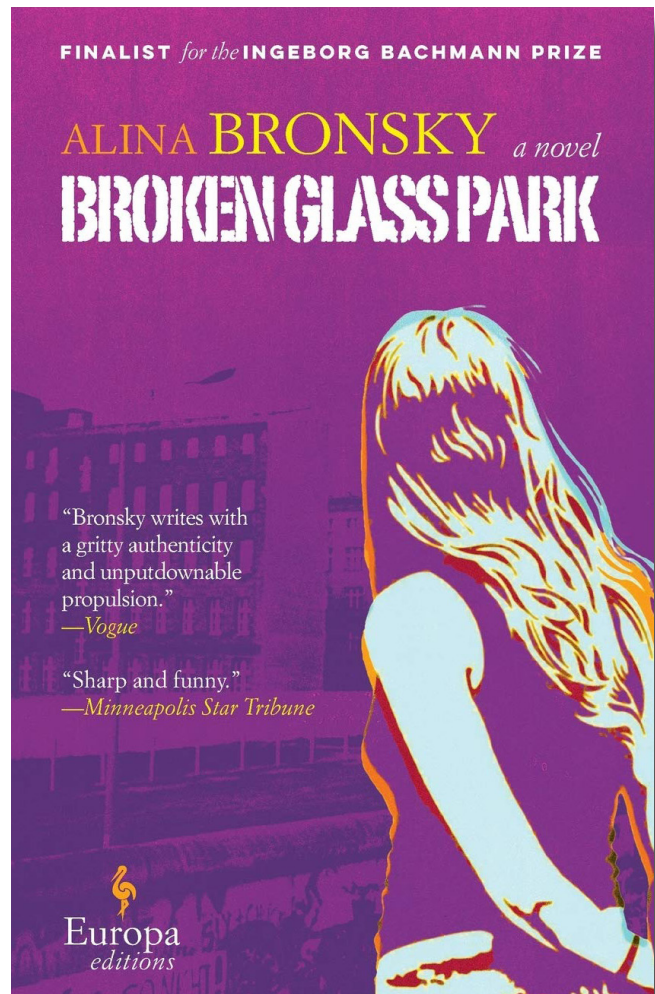
By Michaela Anchan

The list of German must-read books compiled by Deutsche Welle does not list a book for every year, but some years, like 2008, have two listings. These two books are excellent reads, both looking at trauma and darkness from very different angles.

Broken Glass Park was Alina Bronsky's debut novel, published in German in 2008, and the English translation by Tim Mohr was published in 2010. Bronsky is a Russian-born German writer living in Berlin since the early nineties, and she writes under a pseudonym that she describes as representing her "German-speaking self."

I'd describe *Broken Glass Park* as a tragicomedy. The protagonist is candid, sarcastic 17-year-old Sascha, who, like the author, is a Russian immigrant to Germany. She has witnessed her stepfather's murder of her mother, and she is dealing with the consequences of the trauma in her own unique way—by plotting to murder her stepfather. The story is meandering and dark, touching on issues of identity and immigration, and is ultimately a coming-of-age story for Sascha. Bronsky reminds me of Ottessa Moshfegh in her tendency to write unusual, distinctive female protagonists. Another more recent novel of Bronsky's, *Baba Dunja's Last Love*, is the story of an elderly woman and a small community of survivors who have returned to live in a fictional version of the Chernobyl region, some years after the meltdown. *Baba Dunja* has a similarly unique, dark humor, and I'd recommend this one also. *Broken Glass Park* was nominated for the Ingeborg Bachmann Award in 2008 and for the German Young Adult Literary Prize in 2009 and was made into a movie (*Scherben Park*) in 2013.

Jenny Erpenbeck's *Visitation* (*Heimsuchung* in the original) has won almost too many prizes to list here. It is an excellent English translation by Susan Bernofsky (published 2010)—which must have been challenging for a book so focused on language. Bernofsky was also



the translator for Erpenbeck's well-known 2015 novel *Go, Went, Gone*.

Visitation is a short novel, with a piece of land at its core instead of a character. It traces one property beside a lake in Brandenburg and all the tenants who have passed through it. Only one character remains throughout—the gardener, who starts as a young man and stays on the land until old age, and through him we trace the seasons, the rhythm of the trees, the flowers, and the lake. The storms of world wars arrive—crockery is buried in the garden, Russian soldiers pass through, a Jewish family has the property taken from them. Owners come and go, the lake freezes, neighbors arrive and leave. The stories are generational, and they twist and blend; there are echoes and repetitions, scenes told from different viewpoints. It is a quiet, thoughtful, brutal book and gorgeously written. A book to read slowly, to savor and to think over.

HARBOR EXPLORERS



COFFEE AND A VIEW

October's monthly meet-up of the Harbor Explorers brought a group of eight to Deichstrasse, one of the oldest streets in Hamburg. Our meet-up started at the Cantine Papa Lisbeth, a newly opened restaurant with a small but very tasty and affordable lunch menu. After lunch, we enjoyed a short walk on Deichstrasse, comparing the seventeenth-century representative façades on the street side with the warehouse fronts on the canal. A few of us then headed over to the St. Nikolai—or what remains of the church. The impressive 147-meter-high tower is all that remains of the church, which was the world's highest sacred



building when it was built in 1874. We took advantage of the beautiful weather to take the glass elevator to the top of the tower for a panoramic view of the area. However, even more impressive and new for me, was the historic war museum housed in the crypt of the old church. The small but impressive exhibition shows historic pictures of the devastation caused by the bombing in World War II and the propaganda of the time. A good place to bring visitors. The Harbor Explorers are taking a break during the cold months ahead, but I am sure Ann will come up with some new exciting places to visit in 2023. (Text and photos by Carol Harbers)

MAHJONG



**FOR BEGINNERS AND
EXPERTS ALIKE, COME AND
PLAY!**

Photo by Stella
Kwong-Reichmann

AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB OF HAMBURG E.V.

Join Us! ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

January 22, 2023

REGISTRATION | 5:00 p.m.

AGM | 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

SOCIAL HOUR | 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

DESY, Bldg 9a

ART GROUP

A TOUR OF THE LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER EXHIBIT

by Deborah Steinborn

On September 17, a dozen AWCH members and friends (and two husbands!) got a private tour of a unique art exhibit at the Kunstverein in Hamburg. The exhibit, *Flint is Family, Act III* from the American photojournalist, artist, and community activist LaToya Ruby Frazier, is the final part of a photo series that documents the infamous Flint, Michigan, water crisis.

The water crisis began in 2014 after the city's drinking water was contaminated with lead and possibly Legionella bacteria. It continues to afflict residents of the American city today.

Flint is Family began when Frazier traveled to Flint in 2016, commissioned by *Elle* magazine to document the water crisis caused by the city's infrastructure and its effects on the community. While she was sent there as a photojournalist, Frazier felt compelled to stay and do much more. So she teamed up with poet, activist, and mother Shea Cobb, who collaborated with her for the next five years. The two set out to document the stories of Flint residents and to look for ways to get safe drinking water to them. The result: an impressive series of photographs organized in three acts that follow Cobb in her fight for her family's and the community's health and well-being. Frazier documents the personal costs of corporate and governmental irresponsibility.



The group learned a lot from curator Nicholas Tammens.

Photo by Holly Todd

Curator Nicholas Tammens, a native of Australia, guided our tour in English. Frazier, he noted, is able through her photographs to show how industrial and governmental mismanagement of the environment has a direct and serious social impact on local communities. Flint is just one particularly egregious example.

Frazier captures the stories of Flint residents movingly, in subtle, seemingly simple shots that reveal so much more. On one side of the exhibit, there are black-and-white photos of residents struggling to carry exorbitantly priced water in big heavy bottles. These starkly contrast the color shots on a far wall. In one photo, clean, clear water flows into the mouths of children

in brightly colored clothing after an atmospheric water generator is successfully launched.

In this final act, Frazier shows how she, Cobb, and a friend named Amber Hasan—three African-American women from working class backgrounds—were at the helm of bringing resources and care to a community under attack. Indeed, that Frazier was so actively involved in getting this generator up and running further blurred the lines between art, journalism, and activism. In a good way, agreed tour attendees during a discussion at the Kunstverein.

Frazier's exhibit was part of Hamburg's *Triennale of Photography*. It is now at the University of Michigan through 2022.

MARKK MUSEUM

A TOUR OF BENIN: LOOTED HISTORY

by Diana Perry Schnelle
Vice President

On September 21, a group of us took a guided tour at the MARKK museum. Holly Todd arranged for an American researcher at the museum to give an English tour of the ongoing exhibition *Benin: Looted History*. The exhibition brings together MARKK's entire collection of artworks from the Kingdom of Benin (in present-day Nigeria), which primarily features works of bronze, wood, and ivory. These artworks were looted in 1897 during the British colonial occupation of Benin City, and the works were then quickly dispersed throughout the world. Many of these looted artworks passed through Hamburg's port, where local museums, such as MARKK and the MK&G, had the opportunity to buy them. MARKK is exhibiting its whole collection one last time so that people have a chance to see these incredible works of art before they are restituted to Nigeria.

In addition to focusing on the incredible techniques and artistry of the works on display, *Benin: Looted History* does an excellent job of providing the historical context for European colonial occupation of this part of West Africa, using animated videos in addition to traditional documentary sources. The exhibition also focuses on the highly political and decades-old question of whether European nations and the United States should return these stolen artworks to Africa. Since the complicated legal negotiations and logistical arrangements around the restitution process are still

ongoing, the end-date of the exhibition is unclear—which means the exhibition could be up for a few more months. MARKK itself has played a key role in this larger conversation about restitution, as the museum's director, Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner, has been at the forefront of international committees engaged in returning the so-called Benin Bronzes to Nigeria.

Germany returned its first sculptures in July of this year, following France's return of Benin artworks in 2021. And just last month, on November 28, the Horniman Museum in London became the first public museum in the UK to retribute bronzes from Benin to Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments. This historical move draws greater attention to other British museums that have so far resisted these calls, most notably the British Museum.

After our AWCH tour, some of us stayed to hear a lecture from British curator and scholar Dan Hicks, who is a professor of Contemporary Archaeology at Oxford and curator of World Archaeology at Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. In his talk and a subsequent discussion with Dr. Plankensteiner, Hicks argued the case for institutions to reassess how they collect, display, and hoard the treasures in their care. While I get the sense the talk wasn't everyone's cup of tea, I found it extremely interesting—as was the exhibition and the insightful tour our group was fortunate to have.



In addition to the Benin bronzes, the exhibit included other works inspired by or relating to colonialism.

Photo by Holly Todd



Holly Todd (center) shared a wealth of information with our group, including this painting, *Mädchen mit Stier* by Lovis Corinth, 1902. Photo by Carol Strametz

IMPRESSIONISM & GERMANY

HOLLY GIVES US AN EXPERT LOOK AT KUNSTHALLE EXHIBIT



In November, AWCH member and art historian Holly Todd guided our group through *Impressionism: German-French Encounters* at the Hamburg Kunsthalle, a thematic exhibition drawn from the Impressionist holdings of the museum.

We learned a lot about German art and its relationship to French art while enjoying works by Manet, Monet, Degas, Gauguin, Lieberman, and others. Holly shared her expertise and interesting anecdotes to give a very insightful tour, cherished by all. (Carol Strametz)

Ballettänzerin by Edgar Degas, 1891, shows a dancer performing, with the view partially blocked by musical instruments.

IN HAMBURG

Cultural events throughout the city

When the Right Keys are Released, the Melody is Sweeter

By Marinell Haegelin

Romance in D by James Sherman, presented by the English Theatre of Hamburg, Clifford Dean directing

Seasoned director Clifford Dean chose *Romance in D* for its timelessness and charm, while capturing the emotional and festive season from the Jewish and Christian celebratory perspectives in American playwright James Sherman's oscillating romantic comedy. Music plays a key part in transitioning onstage action, i.e., characters' encounters shift their circumstances in each scene. Dean knew what feeling he wanted each song to convey; together with Paul Glaser's input, the melodies nostalgically compliment, tickling emotive memories.

The stuffy bachelor is enjoying music and wine when a knock at the door rudely interrupts his quiet evening alone. Charles, finally opening the door, finds the new tenant from 4D next door. Unbeknownst to him, his music has interrupted Isabel's suicide; obligingly, he turns it down. The following day, George Fox, arriving in Chicago from Florida, bolsters his daughter's spirits with out-of-date videos. Uninterested, Isabel admits to being stupid as George persists, grateful to her neighbor in 4E. In his mid-sixties, the widower is nicely gregarious, generous, and caring.



L-R: Joanne Hildon (Helen), Jonny Magnanti (George), Brian Tynan (Charles) and Helena Ashwell (Isabel). Photo © Stefan Koch

Meanwhile, next door Helen is praising her son, calling him a hero as they share their weekly dinner she brought. Ever the matchmaker, Charles adroitly sidesteps questions about 4D's marital status...for a while. Helen is an energetic, curious widow itching to have some fun, yet worried about her forty-plus son. No wonder then, when George goes to thank Charles and instead meets Helen surreptitiously delivering groceries, they hit it off. Subsequently, Isabel visits Charles to thank him, and they engage in conversation. She learns he's a musicologist—a student of music as an academic subject—and he learns that she's a poet, thus opening further discussions. Having established their artistic connection, music and words, they intuitively

At The English Theatre

Romance in D continues through January 7. Alexi Kaye Campbell's breakthrough drama *The Pride* premieres January 26, running through March 25. Evening/matinee performances; tickets online (eth-hamburg.de) or at the theater, Lerchenfeld 14, 22081 Hamburg, Tel: 040-227 70 89, U-Bahn Mundsburg.

understand each other. Isabel finally gets up the nerve to mention dating; Charles's hesitation nips that in the bud, and then she suggests

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When I told my teenage daughter that I would be reviewing this film, she wailed with envy. Evidently the trailer has been all over TikTok for some time, and all the kids are just gaga to see it and, judging by the trailer, they're in for a scary treat. Alas, they actually are not. Every scary moment is in the trailer. Really.

A pretty young nun (**Jacqueline Byers**) is haunted by memories of her abusive mother, who the nun believes to have been, in fact, possessed by the devil (non-spoiler: she was). Furthermore, the nun has reason to believe that she was, and is, the devil's actual target, and he's still after her. She aspires to become an exorcist, a profession that's apparently just a guy thing until a sympathetic priest (**Colin Salmon**) allows her into his classroom at Hogwart's School of Sundry Arcana and Exorcism (okay, I made the name up, but it's basically that).

Once she has her foot in the door, the nun demonstrates the power of the feminine touch on possessed



© Telepool

The Devil's Light (Prey for the Devil)

★ ½

USA 2022

Opened Nov. 3, 2022

Directed by: Daniel Stamm
Writing credits: Robert Zappia, Todd R. Jones, Earl Richey Jones
Principal actors: Jacqueline Byers, Virginia Madsen, Christian Navarro, Colin Salmon, Posy Taylor

unfortunates, in particular one angelic/demonic little girl. There is a deep, dark secret in the nun's past that makes her vulnerable, which I'm sorry to say I saw coming from a mile away. There are gross special effects that recall every possession movie you've ever seen, starting with *The Exorcist* (spiny head, anyone?) and otherwise it's all run-of-the-mill jump scares. And does the devil get the poor nun in the end? It's IN THE TRAILER! 93 minutes. (Mason Jane Milam)

Romance continued from page 37

a meal together (to dig deeper into his situation). Helen and George, wiser from life's experiences, are easygoing, unrestrained, whereas their children cautiously inch toward romance weighed down by past encumbrances. When Hanukkah and Christmas arrive, again it's music that plays a part in bringing the side-by-side apartments together.

James Sherman has written, performed, directed, and taught playwriting and improvisation for more

than a half-century, with theaters producing his plays throughout the US and abroad. Following *Beau Jest's* theatrical success, Sherman wrote the screenplay for and directed the 2008 film. He's a member of the Dramatists Guild of America.

Dean's drama school teacher told him, "Don't direct a play if you can't see something beautiful in the play, and if you can't cast it yourself." The camaraderie Brian Tynan as Charles Norton, Helena Ashwell as Isabel Fox, Joanne Hildon as Helen Norton, and Jonny Magnanti as George Fox imbue their characters

with is tangible, entrancing. Dean suggests it's because they're secure and happy in their roles. Concurring, the thespians like the play and the nuanced undercurrents of its dramatis personae.

Audiences can easily identify with each character's human nature and the play's sentimental yet laugh-out-loud domestic humor and poignancy.

Regrettably, Brexit limits thespians to a nine-week limit, so don't dally or you'll miss this smartly executed, fun-filled venture.



© Walt Disney Germany

The Banshees of Inisherin

★★★★

Ireland / UK / USA 2022
Opening January 5, 2023

Directed by: Martin McDonagh
Writing credits: Martin McDonagh
Principal actors: Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson, Kerry Condon, Barry Keoghan, Gary Lydon

The end of a life-long friendship is always a tragedy; perhaps even more so when it occurs in a small, tight-knit community like that of the fictional island of Inisherin on the west coast of Ireland. Everyone knows everyone there and, as the community is so small, there aren't many options for socializing. When Colm (**Brendan Gleeson**) decides one day that he no longer wishes to interact with his long-time best friend Pádraic (**Colin Farrell**) due to the latter's utter dullness, life on the island begins to go sideways.

There is much to appreciate in *The Banshees of Inisherin*, with its superb cast, understated screenplay, and beautiful cinematography. It's a joy to see Gleeson and Farrell together again and **Kerry Condon** is an utter delight as Siobhan, Pádraic's sister and the sole voice of reason. Likewise, **Barry Keoghan** continues to be one of the most intriguing actors of his generation, with his off-putting portrayal of the disturbed son of the local policeman.

It is notable that the story takes place in 1923, at the height of the

Irish Civil War when the country was split between the pro-treaty Irish Free State and the anti-treaty Irish Republican Army (IRA). The events are referenced a few times throughout the film, and while the allegory is not particularly hammered upon, it is rather easy to draw parallels between two former friends on a small island fighting over inanities and the larger ideological war occurring on the Irish mainland. Still, *The Banshees of Inisherin* is more focused on examining the ramifications a small act can have in a small community.

With its top-notch acting, scenic beauty, and clever script, there is something to appreciate here for any lover of understated black comedies. However, like many of **Martin McDonagh's** previous works, it certainly leaves a lasting melancholic feeling long after watching and is certainly not suitable for those looking for a light film to lift spirits. *The Banshees of Inisherin* is funny, sometimes bizarre, and very often meaningful and will certainly go down as one of McDonagh's best movies. 114 minutes. (Rose Finlay)

Minding his own business at the Parisian skateboard park, Sebastian's (**Robinson Mensah-Rouanet**) good deed backfires and Mom (**Caroline Anglade**) is not impressed. Days away from a trip to Prague, his antics change everything. After frantically contacting her topmost choices, Cécile phones Noémie (**Alice David**) and is not left hanging waiting for an answer. Although dangling while giving rock-climbing instructions with Gas's (**Syrus Shahidi**) attentiveness from above, her sister says yes. Dropping Sebastian off at the

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Belle & Sebastian-Ein Sommer Voller Abenteuer

★★★

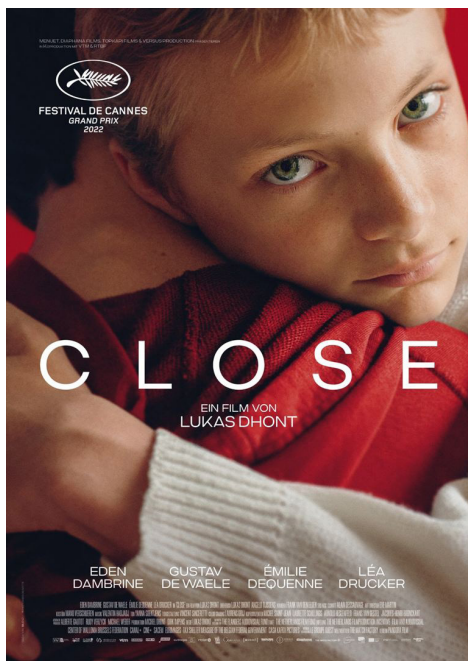
Belle et Sébastien: Nouvelle génération
Belle and Sebastian: The Next Generation

France 2022
Opening January 5, 2023

Directed by: Pierre Coré
Writing credits: Cécile Aubry, Alexandre Coffre, Pierre Coré
Principal actors: Robinson Mensah Rouanet, Michèle Laroque, Alice David, Syrus Shahidi, Aurélien Recoing



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Close

Belgium / France / Netherlands
20233

Opening January 26, 2023

Directed by: Lukas Dhont

Writing credits: Lukas Dhont, Angelo
Tijssens

Principal cast: Eden Dambrine,
Gustav De Waele, Léa Drucker,
Émilie Dequenne

Close is Dhont's coming-of-age film about the changing friendship between two adolescent boys, Leo (**Eden Dambrine**) and Remi (**Gustav De Waele**). In the beginning stages of the film, which take place in an idyllic rural community in Belgium during a summer vacation, Leo and Remi are longtime best friends and do everything together. Whether romping through the fields of flowers, racing on their bikes, or running on the seaside, they are happy and carefree. Then fall comes, and they start secondary school with new classmates and new challenges. Some students begin to bully them and make comments about them being "together." Leo denies it vehemently, and the unpretentious friendship between the two begins to fall apart. Leo distances himself more and more from Remi. He joins the "in group" on the playground and even starts training with the hockey team, a very pronounced male sport. Leo's sudden change of heart takes its toll on Remi as the film marches on to a tragic and very emotional climax.

The most outstanding component of *Close* was, in my opinion, the superb acting on the part of Eden Dambrine. That a 13-year-old boy could express so much joy, pain, or loss just with his eyes, sometimes without even uttering a word, was remarkable. Also, the supporting roles of Gustav De Waele as the talented but very sensitive Remi, **Léa Drucker** as Leo's caring mother, and **Émilie Dequenne** as Remi's suffering but understanding mother deserve commendable mention.

I also admired Dhont's ability to successfully lead us through so many different emotional stages, such as when we experience the joy of a childhood friendship and then the pain of its disintegration, or Leo's nagging guilt and, of course, the pain of loss, each character having to deal with it individually. 105 minutes. (Karen Schollemann)

Belle continued from page 39

sheep farm though, Cécile feels their mom Corinne's (**Michèle Laroque**) ungraciousness; obviously Noémie did not consult her. Wearily, Sebastian and "Mamie" settle into a routine—she gives directions that the 10-year-old halfheartedly follows. Taking on local kids' dares, the city boy meets Corinne's neighbor Yves (**Aurélien Recoing**) and Belle for the first time. Subsequently, that night he returns to see the dog; what he sees instead prompts him to do another good deed, the consequence of which he does not understand until his grand-mère, aunt, and he take the sheep and

goats to the French Alps for summer feeding. When Belle appears, actions speak louder than words and the two grow stronger together. Until Gas turns up. By then, any attempt at finagling only seems to backfire.

French author **Cécile Aubry's** successful book series *Belle et Sébastien* spawned a few films and a television series featuring the characters she created. Director **Pierre Coré** and **Alexandre Coffre's** adaptation retains the uplifting spirit of the boy's (only six in the 2013 film) and dog's bonding, although something is lost in its converting. This version is a hodgepodge of well-known

classics, e.g., *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri, and the general shallowness of the additional characters. Undoubtedly, Coré was challenged working with his principals, a boy and a Great Pyrenees dog, although that likable pair, and particularly Laroque, carry the film. The locations are breathtaking, the production values sound. The film is in French, and the German subtitles are too quick and needed a dash of yellow for readability. Nevertheless, *Belle & Sébastien* will excite people's imaginations and warm the cockles of youngsters and youthful heart's alike. As people say, "To err is human—to forgive, canine." 96 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)

A metronome paces the opening sequence of *Ennio*; his daily routine is crosscut with excerpts from family, friends, and colleagues: “He wrote music without playing it,” “individualist,” “ahead of times,” “in the first notes, you know it’s him,” before entering his uniquely personal studio. Scores are strewn everywhere, piled high, and yet for this creative genius, frightfully organized. Cozying to the topic sans *braggadocio*, the maestro talks about his life beginning in Rome in 1928; Italy was his life-long residence. Explaining that he knew what enthused him, his father, Mario, a trumpeter, had “decided I’d be a trumpet player.” At 12, Ennio began studying at the Saint Cecilia Conservatory, receiving a degree in trumpet in 1946 and in arrangement in 1954 with a 9.5/10 from the great Italian composer/educator Goffredo Petrassi.

In 1950, Ennio met future wife Maria Travia and transitioned from jobs playing trumpet to an RCA Victor studio arranger; writing radio programs’ background music led to film work, and he learned intriguing techniques. Retaining that toolbox, he started ghost-writing music for film and theater. In 1956, he and Maria married, and to support their growing family (four children), he arranged pop music (Paul Anka, Mina, Andrea Bocelli, etc.) for Italy’s RAI broadcasting service. Morricone’s debut film score was Luciano Salce’s 1961 *Il Federale* (The Fascist); he went on to score over 500 films and more than 70 award-winners, plus all of the films by Italian directors Sergio Leone (childhood schoolmates) and Giuseppe Tornatore. When Bruce Springsteen first saw *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966) and heard the music, he thought, “There’s something going on here.”

At home and comfortably seated, Ennio’s lively de-

tailed descriptions of “three-tone chords,” Bach, or describing (while humming) countless songs/scores he composed are incredibly impressive. He laughs and jokes while recounting the breadth of his career, his passion for playing chess, and about creative innovations used for productions lacking funding, e.g., whips cracking, gun shots, jew’s harp, trumpets, etc., in Leone’s so-called “Dollars Trilogy.” Of Tornatore’s *Cinema Paradiso*, Ennio says, “Working on that film brought me a lot of joy.”

Morricone’s legendary, divergent, creatively eclectic style opened unexplored vistas for composers, while also influencing artists across the broad sweep of music and film genres from westerns to Dario Argento horror/cult to experimental movies. Guitarist Pat Metheny admiringly says, “He’s the only one who understands the guitar,” Hans Zimmer believes “Morricone’s very good at creating a character with sound,” while Joan Baez says of their collaborative song *Here’s to You* for Giuliano Montaldo’s *Sacco & Vanzetti* (1971), “That song’s not just pop”; and Bernardo Bertolucci says “[He] also knows how to use silence.”

That comradery permeates director Giuseppe Tornatore’s masterpiece, *Ennio Morricone—Die Maestro*. Morricone’s prolific body of work, from jazz to neo-classical cantatas to television and advertisements has, as Bruce Springsteen succinctly summarizes, “Has probably been listened to and influenced more people, especially in the last 20 years.” Scarcely covering the small man’s larger-than-life contributions to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the film’s great emotional depth and illuminating archival material has heart—Ennio Morricone’s legacy. 156 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)



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Ennio

Ennio Morricone—Die Maestro
The Glance of Music

USA 2022

Opened December 22, 2022

Directed by: Giuseppe Tornatore

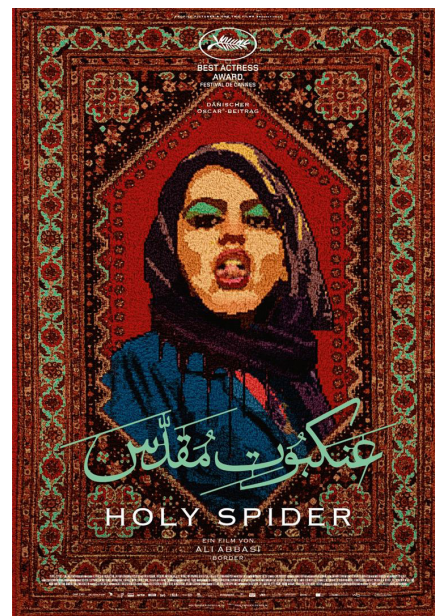
Writing credits: Giuseppe Tornatore

Principal actors: Documentary

After a gentle kiss and a promise of, “I’ll be back before you awake,” the young nocturnal streetwalker roams dimly lit streets searching for customers and a hashish cure-all in **Ali Abbasi**’s double-whammy thriller about societal aberrations. Before the break of day, that mother’s promise is broken. A zealot roams Mashhad, Iran’s second-largest religious destination city intent on purging the impure to right societal wrongs. Time and again the nightrider lures prey into his web on his scooter, later dumping the tightly cloaked bodies. A passing car’s headlights highlight the killer’s unique ring. In another area of Mashhad, the hard-working family man Saeed (**Mehdi Bajestani**) finds stability through prayer, and time with wife Fatima (**Forouzan Jamshidnejad**) and children. As more women disappear, the Iranian media frenzy increases; the killer is monikered “Spider Killer.”

Arriving from Istanbul with her nose bent to the story, Rahimi (**Zar Amir Ebrahimi**) is prompted by Sharifi (**Arash Ashtiani**) to wear her headscarf—to do otherwise is an affront to the morality police. Concurrently, the serial killer loses control; the body count mounts. Ironically, the victims’ trade and the police mindset precludes investigating thoroughly. Rahimi takes more risks, Sharifi tries to keep up, and together they realize the web’s complexity. It is spun so tightly it protects Spider Killer, and the stakes are high. Inconceivably, Spider’s family and friends rally round. One said, “He did the right thing. He should have continued.” Shockingly, the court’s ultraconservative faction lackadaisically regard the prisoner’s declaration of blamelessness, of being merely a (self-appointed) enforcer against the impure, with Mohammed’s approval, no less. Tirelessly, Rahimi and Sharifi investigate, along with the murdered women’s families. Nevertheless, the hardliners’ pro-morality stance seems indomitable.

A student during Saeed Hanae’s murder spree in 2000-2001—16 women were killed before he was caught—Iranian director **Ali Abbasi**’s aim was to rectify the then-perplexing societal and civil/legal response. Abbasi and **Afshin Kamran Bahrami**’s screenplay creates the strong female journalist to counterbalance male violence and “underline the complexity of the issue and the stakes on different sides, especially on behalf of the victims.” The policeman tells Rahimi, “Know your place, Miss!” It is about the deep-rooted misogyny within Iranian society, which is not specifically religious or political but cultural. The cast is brilliant—**Zar Amir-Ebrahimi** won the Best Actress award at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, and production values excel. Kudos to **Nadim Carlsen**’s night cinematography predatoriness, and **Martin Dirkov**’s score. *Holy Spider* is Denmark’s entry for Best International Feature Film at the Ninety-Fifth Academy Awards. 116 minutes (Marinell Haegelin)



© Alamode Film

Holy Spider

★★★★★

Denmark/ Germany / France / Sweden 2022
Opening January 12, 2023

Directed by: Ali Abbasi
Writing credits: Ali Abbasi, Afshin Kamran Bahrami
Principal actors: Zar Amir Ebrahimi, Mehdi Bajestani, Arash Ashtiani, Sara Fazilat



© X Verl

Skin Deep

Aus meiner Haut

*** ½

Germany 2022

Opening February 2, 2023

Directed by: Alex Schaad

Writing credits: Alex Schaad, Dimitrij Schaad

Principal actors: Jonas Dassler, Mala Emde, Maryam Zaree, Dimitrij Schaad

Does the soul really exist? If our mind and body were separated, how much of what truly makes us who we are would remain? These are some of the questions raised by the intriguing new German production *Skin Deep*. We are introduced to Leyla (**Mala Emde**) and Tristan (**Jonas Dassler**) who are offered the chance to undergo a transformative two weeks where their minds and bodies will be swapped with another couple. Soon, it is revealed that Leyla suffers from a debilitating depression, and where she finds the body-swap experience an extreme relief from her mental illness, Tristan finds it discombobulating. Conflict arises when Tristan seeks to end the experience early, sending Leyla into a desperate spiral.

Skin Deep takes place in an alternate reality where body-swapping is considered to be a slightly abnormal transcendental offering of a spiritual retreat, rather than an utterly mind-blowing feat of science. Accepting that is relatively easy, but as the film goes along, the premise begins to feel a bit shaky. In the opening of the film, we are introduced to the reality that this procedure can have its downsides, and yet it seems that even after many years, there have been no protocols put in place, no questionnaires for the participants, nothing. On the one hand, the film wants us to understand that this procedure has its risks, but on the other, it seems that no one (not even the government) has felt the need to practice any ethical precautions. It lends the film a rather underbaked quality that is really unfortunate.

Also, it is a bit bizarre that no one has suggested other solutions to Leyla's mental illness nor seems concerned about the impact such a procedure might have on her. Has she tried therapy? Medication? Anything? Tristan tellingly seems to have written her suffering off as Leyla simply having a tough time for a few years (despite seeing her withdraw from all of the things she previously enjoyed). Is this somehow a representation of the German attitude towards mental health? Is it easier to conceptualize swapping bodies than recognizing depression and seeking appropriate medical support?

While *Skin Deep* is a high-quality production with an intriguing premise, something is left to be desired in the final product. There were missed opportunities throughout to make some profound points about philosophical questions and the ending is contrived and unsatisfying. Nevertheless, it is largely an enjoyable film that certainly makes you wonder, who would I really be if I were no longer in my own body? 103 minutes. (Rose Finlay)



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