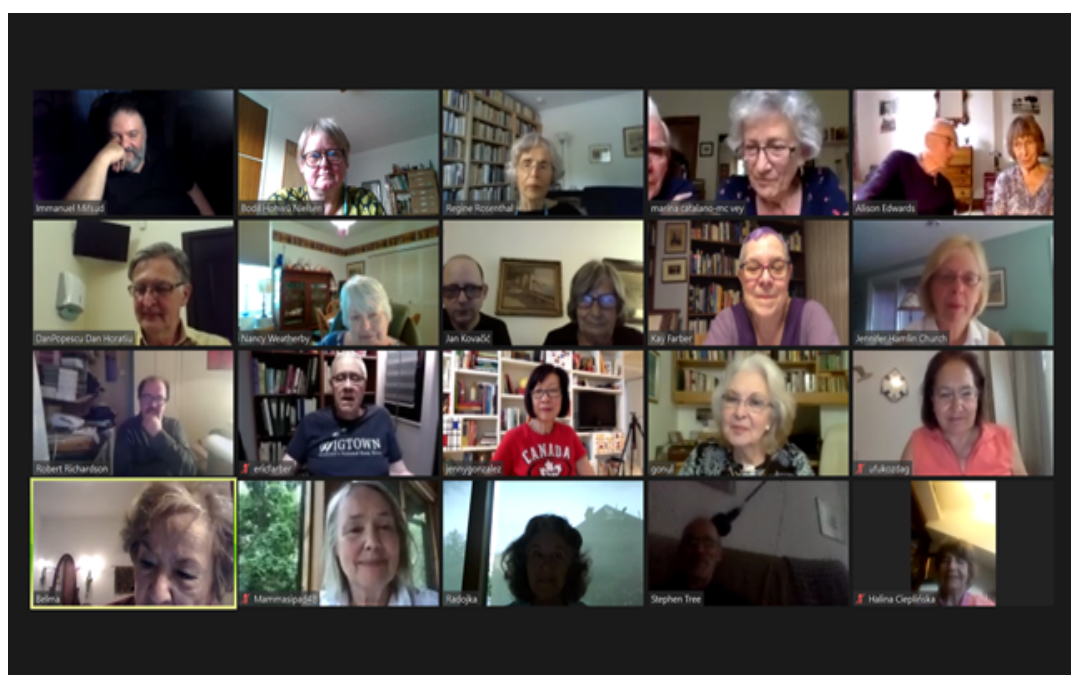


ISCLT IN THE TIMES OF COVID -19

**A Booklet to celebrate ISCLT's 45th anniversary
(1975 – 2020)**

By Marina Catalano-Mc Vey and various other authors



INTRODUCTION

As you all well know, in 2018 we celebrated Belma's well deserved retirement as Executive Secretary. I cherish this picture: ladies in red! Last year at Vicoforte, I was honoured to step into her shoes. ISCLT has always been very important to us both and we wish to keep its spirit alive because we believe in the idea it embodies.

This year is ISCLT's 45th anniversary and I was originally planning to celebrate with you all. Very few Societies last so long and keep being so vital!



Ladies in red - 2018

But Covid-19 destroyed all our plans! For the first time since ISCLT's founding in 1975, the July conference had to be cancelled. An unprecedented decision. Dismayed and disappointed, we exchanged several sorrowful and regretful emails. It became apparent how important our being together during the conferences was for many of us, how inspiring and pleasant the idea of sharing cultural activities, leisure time and personal events together. We realized how much we would miss it all.

"I have to do something," I thought, stubbornly unwilling to accept that something as beautiful as ISCLT would suffer from a nasty, silly virus! Therefore, I decided to organize Zoom-meetings to keep us in touch during the summer and allow us to work on some projects, including this Booklet, an online-publication to celebrate ISCLT's 45th anniversary.



Marina, June 2020

At first, we had to get accustomed to the Zoom-platform. We tried for a month and finally we could master it fairly well. It was great fun to meet each other on the screen, to talk and share our worries and problems due to the restrictions. It was interesting to see everyone of us in her/his environment, scattered all-over the world. It was like having access to our homes, as if we would invite our ISCLT friends into our private worlds. Unprecedented, too.

Then, we decided to organize various readings and even our traditional Final Banquet!

I was so delighted by these meetings that I have decided to keep organizing them from time to time during the year, especially because we have experienced wonderful surprises.

First of all, we met on the screen long-time members who had not been able to attend the conferences in the past for various reasons.

Secondly, we met some of our younger members who, due to their personal family or work situation, have been unable to join us at the conferences.

Thirdly, it has been a great pleasure to have frequent, private correspondence with so many members.

So... here we go with new ideas and proposals! Zooming has become an official way of transmitting ISCLT's vitality and values.

Thank you all who have participated and believe in ISCLT as much as I do.

I hope to see you all in Croatia next year.

Marina Catalano-Mc Vey

Executive Secretary

Vercana, 2.11.2020

Anti-covid masks and sense of humour!



REMEMBERING FRIENDS

It has been a sad year for ISCLT. We have lost two long-time members we greatly appreciated, admired and loved: **Jeff Metcalf** and **Richard Rice**. We cherish wonderful memories and are grateful for the moments we spent together. Rest in peace, dear friends.

Jeff Metcalf



Richard Rice



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PART I

FOR MY ISCLT FRIENDS – PROSE AND POETRY

Texts assembled by Marina Catalano-Mc Vey



**Teruel (Spain)
2016**

A Speedboat at Laulasmaa - An unforgettable event

By Marina Catalano-Mc Vey

Adaptation from a short story published in IERI OGGI DOMANI
(Giovane Holden Ed. – 2015)

ISCLT's venue was at Laulasmaa, Estonia, in July 2007.

One day, walking in the park, Jeff Metcalf, David Kranes and I heard music coming from a one-storey building. Beautiful: a violin, a violoncello, a piano. We entered the place. Three young musicians wearing jeans and T-shirts were playing. ...

"That was marvellous!" we said when they stopped.

The youths thanked us in excellent English. The boys were from Estonia, Krijstian and Janis. The girl, Alissa, was from Latvia. They had all attended specialisation courses in London, where the violinist's father was conductor of a symphony orchestra.

"We are rehearsing and will participate at a festival on a small island near here in four days. My father has a house there and has restored an old barn in which we organise an international symphonic music festival every summer. It is always lovely to return here to our forest and be inspired by our sea," Krijstian, the violinist, said smiling.

"Why don't you come to the inauguration on Saturday?" Janis then asked.

We accepted with enthusiasm and enquired about how to get to that island.

"Don't worry," Krijstian said. "We're organising a speedboat service from the pier which is about 3 miles from Laulasmaa. My father will take care of that." ...

The following Saturday, we were picked up at five o' clock in the evening. Krijstian had advised us to wear sports clothes and good walking shoes. About ten people came on board, among which some ISCLTers. The high sun enjoyed itself by chasing after the clouds that were pushed by the salty-smelling wind.

After about half-an-hour of driving on sandy, disconnected lanes, we arrived at a rocky pier. The sea had an obscure, pallid appearance and was slightly agitated.

The speedboat was waiting. It was a long, narrow boat without seats. There were, on the other hand, many big, shiny metal bars laid out like a fishbone. A man approached us and distributed thick, bulky overalls which looked like space suits with hoods and visors. Everybody stared at each other.

"Float if accident," the sailor said, indicating the overalls. ...

We took off our shoes and, with great difficulty, managed to put them on. The sailor helped us to close the big zipper and to put on the hoods.

"I can't breathe!" Jeff laughed while the sailor was struggling with his zip.

"Are we going into orbit?" I asked.

"I wonder if we will come back from this adventure!" said a tall man, whose overalls were ridiculously short.

"I feel I'm wearing a diving suit!" Edward said.

We finally completed that strange “ceremony”.

“Come on, let’s sit in front, so we can see something,” I suggested.

The next problem was to get on board. We could hardly move and the boat was bobbing up and down. The sailor signalled to move towards the front.

“Where shall we sit?” I asked perplexed.

The sailor pointed at the large, metal tubes situated on the boat. ...

Like so many zombies, we all managed to get on board and started laughing. There was a touch of magic in the air inviting a strong desire for adventure. The motor had just been switched on and grumbled slyly for a while. The boat moved away from the pier pitching and rolling slowly. The laughter was transformed into attentive silence.

“At this speed, we’ll arrive tomorrow!” Jeff exclaimed giggling.

Once we reached the open sea, the motor roared. The prow was lifted suddenly and the boat leapt up as if it were a racehorse pawing impatiently at the starting post.

We screamed! We grabbed at the tubes before us. White, powerful sprays of water lashed at us on both sides. An aggressive shower of foam everywhere. Edward and I could only see the raised prow before us. The waves had now become violent. The boat climbed on the white crests of the waves and then smashed into them with heavy thuds.

“Who knows if we will ever come back!” Edward said. I stared at him with my wet, misty glasses, bent over my tube which I grabbed terrified.

“How crazy we are!” he shouted into the wind, laughing.

That “gallop” lasted half-an-hour. When the island came into sight, the boat began to slow down its crazy pace. The prow lowered to its normal position. We reached a wooden dock, where a youngster and two robust men, wearing black military life jackets, were waiting for us. One of them had a rifle on his shoulder. In fact, everybody noticed it and remained quiet. We clumsily got off, looked around and crowded together. The youngster smiled and indicated to us to take off our overalls. ...

The two men spoke in Estonian, so nobody could understand them. They signalled to us to follow them. The dishevelled and perplexed passengers silently walked along a path with traces of old, heavy vehicles. We entered a dense forest of pine trees. After about ten minutes, we arrived at a clearing. A very old Russian military truck was waiting for us, as indicated by the writing on a green curtain at the rear, with enormous well-consumed, rubber tyres.

Everybody stopped and looked around. The two men opened the curtain at the rear of the vehicle, indicating that we should climb up the ancient ladder into the truck. We all did so, slowly and with circumspection. Once on board, we sat down very close together on the side wooden planks. The curtain was closed and secured. Then the two men got into the cabin, turned on the engine, which deafened all of us with a loud noise.

“I think I’m missing something?” murmured Rich, sitting next to me.

“It’s like we’re in wartime!” replied Edward trying to smile.

“I feel I’m in a washing machine!” I exclaimed.

A jolt much stronger than the others caused several passengers to fall to the floor. We all broke out laughing nervously. A certain fear was apparent.

The truck stopped after twenty minutes. Other male and female voices could be heard. The curtain was opened and the ladder was placed into position.

“Welcome!” said a man in English with a very deep voice.

“Welcome to our forest!” echoed a female voice, silvery and joyful.

He was about forty, with grey-blue eyes, tall with very short brown hair, military-like. She was younger, slim and athletic with long, smooth blonde hair. Her smile was warm and natural. They both wore jeans. We began to feel better, happy to be able to communicate in English with someone looking “normal”. We all began to relax. There were cordial introductions, warm handshakes.

The forest had opened up into a large, sunny plain. A wooden building with a red-tiled roof basked in the sun. In the garden, under a corrugated roof, there were tables: one had been set out with plates and glasses and with a bunch of wild flowers in the centre. The man, Igor, and his daughter, Vera, explained to us that we were now in an immense, magical green area which had been occupied by the Russians during the war. He was originally Russian. He had grown up in Finland, where he had worked as a civil engineer and had also run a large hardware store. A life which had exhausted him. Then, coming to spend a holiday at Laulasmaa, he and his family had discovered this isolated place in the heart of the forest. They had fallen in love with it. So they had decided to live there six months a year and to build a small, simple hotel. It always felt like Hansel and Gretel when they came there in summer.

“Sit down and have a quick dinner before the concert,” he said.

We were hungry. So we willingly accepted. We were served an excellent roast meat with various side dishes and red wine. Igor was a source of interesting information and from this transpired the existence of other unknown worlds, thoughts and attitudes.

After dinner, vodka was served. We started laughing, relaxing. Then Igor accompanied us to the truck. Another bumpy journey! It lasted ten minutes. We left the forest. We crossed over fields full of wild flowers and descended towards a receding bay with dark, calm water. There was a stone house with two chimneys, large white wooden windows and a flowery garden with rambling roses dancing in the breeze. Two dogs ran about, free and happy. They gleefully ran towards the truck, barking joyfully.

At a short distance from the house, could be seen the enormous, completely restructured barn, situated at a slightly higher level on a hill. The straw roof, the wooden beams and the spotless walls stood out against the dark pine trees which grew tall and dense in the background. The sky had freed itself of the afternoon clouds. The evening light was very bright. It was all extraordinarily beautiful. We got off the truck, admiring the place at the end of the world, as if it were an apparition.

“Welcome to our paradise!” Krijstian greeted us warmly. “Did you travel well?”

There was a shower of “thank yous” and many comments regarding the beauty of the place. Then he showed us the path that led to the barn where the festival would be

held. There were shining candles, placed in round, glass vases all along the white stony track. A very suggestive atmosphere.

He excused himself, saying that he had to go to his father. We happily chatted, expressing our surprise. When we reached the grassy hill where the barn stood, we were greeted by two girls dressed in local costumes, who showed us the entrance and where the toilets were. The ladies took advantage immediately. We turned to the right and arrived at a low building with many wooden green doors. There were cards on each door bearing one of the words: Soprano, Mezzo Soprano, Tenor, Baritone and Basso.

“Incredible,” I murmured. “It’s like living in a fairy tale!”

The toilets were narrow spaces and consisted of a hole inside a wooden block. There was no chain to pull in order to flush with water. Instead there was a sack full of soil smelling of pine needles and a spade. Outside the cubicles there was an enormous bucket and a water source which could be activated by turning a wooden branch.

When we informed the others of our toilet adventure, all the men excused themselves and set off curious and incredulous towards the toilets as well.

Other trucks had arrived with many more people who were walking decisively towards the barn. It was still daylight, an extraordinarily clear evening.

On entering the barn, we were welcomed by a dreamy atmosphere. Reverential. The semi-darkness absorbed us greedily. Candles were flickering in glass bowls along the walls. The high, wooden ceiling had been recently restructured. Long, shiny pinewood benches were like those in a church. The environment smelled of pine, straw and newness. The lower walls were of rough, grey stone and the upper walls were covered with clear, wooden panels. The flooring was made of dark coloured, square stone slabs. The atmosphere was intimidating. It gathered and embraced all the people with the solemnity of a cathedral. The public walked quietly, whispering softly as they sought a favourite spot. We ISCLTers chose to sit in the second row. We were enchanted by the place, aware of the special experience we were living.

Then the concert began. Krijstian’s father briefly explained, in both Estonian and English, when and why this manifestation was born. He spoke about his international project to involve young, talented musicians. Then he spoke as a father and, with a proud smile presented his son, Krijstian and introduced his musician friends at the piano and the violoncello. He explained that although they were young they had played all over the world. They bowed slightly and gratefully smiled for that praise. Their white shirts made them look like ghosts. Their dark trousers disappeared in the semi-obscurity. The pianist’s blue dress emphasised her tanned skin and neckline.

They began with Beethoven. Krijstian’s violin raised its moans with the delicacy of the rising fog. His shadow and that of his violin danced on the candlelit walls. He was like a goblin. The intense, sorrowful notes rose, entering the wooden beams of the roof, attempting to free themselves and enter the sky. The piano and the violin ran after each other, they insulted each other, they sought each other and loved each other. The violoncello listened, accompanied and consoled them.

Then Mozart, Debussy and again Beethoven. Once more, that sensation that we were running towards the sky. The audience paid total attention, enchanted by the beauty of the scene. We listened to the music, moved and astonished. The applause at the end thundered for a long time.

After an hour and a half of a dream, reality returned to the visitors. It was now dark outside. It was time to set out on our return journey. Only the lights in the house clarified the night like the stars. The dogs were sleeping and did not move when the numerous, departing vehicles dispelled both the silence and the darkness. The trucks followed in a single line for a while, then our truck turned to the right onto a bumpy path. We passed by Igor's hotel, sound asleep, and then reached the pier, where the sailor and the speed boat were awaiting us. This time we were quicker at putting on our overalls. We had had practice. Edward and I decided to sit in the rear of the boat. A good idea. We were more protected from the spray of water and from the continuous banging of the prow on the water's surface. The crossing seemed to be shorter.

The group sat in perfect silence. Smiles on our faces. Our eyes reflected the one hundred candles that had flickered inside the barn. The memory of such stupendous music in our souls.

How everything becomes a habit, I thought. We now knew what to do, how to behave and what to expect. The itch for adventure that we had experienced on our first journey to the island had disappeared. There remained a great sleepiness and the spell of an unforgettable, magical experience.

Letter to Marina

By Belma Baskett

Dear Marina,

September, 2020

You have asked us to send a letter to other ISCLT'ers. Just as I was at a loss when Bodil asked for a post-card, I could not think of anything to write. Corona may have stunted my imagination. Just as I had received an unusual post-card I could share with Bodil, now I have received an unusual letter which I am going to share with you and ask your advice. The letter like the post-card is signed, COVID-19. Below is the letter:

*Dear Grandmother Belma,
I am glad you read my post-card and shared it. (You could have thrown it away even without reading—I was afraid of that) Therefore I am encouraged to write this letter. Since my friendship with your grandson CAVID, I do not feel much like a virus anymore even though I tried and did my best as a virus. I realize that CAVID has influenced me so deeply that slowly I would like to change so that I can be accepted as a human being. I do not think it is impossible having learned about Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection that explain how simple organisms changed and developed into more complex creatures and finally into human beings. I would like to change and develop. I am bored, tired furthermore ashamed of being a virus and the dirty work I did. Mea Culpa. Please forgive me and help me to change and develop into a human being. I shall be eternally grateful to you and this may be the most meaningful work you have done. I know it will be difficult, I know it may be a long road full of many impediments but with your help I can surmount any difficulties, I encounter. Please, help me.*

*Your ever devoted grandson
COVID 19*

Dear Marina, I do not know, how I got involved in something like this. No, I know. COVID is my grandson's friend. I cannot blame my grandson for being a role-model. But I do not think I can take such a responsibility. In the first place I doubt it is possible with due respect to Darwin and the talk that viruses undergo mutations. I am at a loss at what to do. Another point is can I forgive COVID 19 for all the pain, suffering and losses he has caused. Yes, he did not know better but still... Then I remember ET, the film. Who was ET? But then he was almost human. Just yesterday I saw an ad for a new film THE NEW MUTANTS, who are those mutants? Are such phenomena already happening?

I am at a loss. I am writing this letter to get advice. I hope one of you ISCLT'ers or Marina, you can help me.

Yours in distress,

Belma

P.S. It also occurs to even if it were possible and he became a human being, suppose he became an evil one. There is no guarantee, given his past and the history of human crime. Yet anybody asking for help needs serious consideration You see how confused I am. Please help. Tell me what I should do.

B.

Letter from Istanbul #4 - Dear all!

By Eric Farber

Dear All,

Three weeks! Three weeks is how long either of us has left the apartment. I look at the outside world through our large front windows. There isn't much to see. Beyond the garden fence lies the esplanade, which on a warm, sunny day like this would normally be thronged with walkers, joggers, ownerless dogs, and the many feral cats Istanbul is famous for. Now, there is nothing and no one except a police car that passes every five minutes or so, enforcing the restrictions that grow stricter by the week. This weekend, for the first time, the entire city has been locked down for forty-eight hours.

Now for a brief interruption by Kay: I don't quite agree with Eric's comment that there isn't much to see. After having cleaned the front balcony, especially to deal with the mess the crows create, I try to spend time sitting there every afternoon. It's still cool, so I wrap myself up while I read and watch. I find myself spending more time than I would have expected simply looking at the beauty of the spring growth, the changing light on the water, the cats exploring the garden, and the many birds calling, flying, and alighting. Every now and then, a neighbor from our building emerges with a pet dog to walk around the garden. It throws me off to see a human; it disturbs the gentle, quiet pace of the scene. *Now back to Eric.*

Beyond the esplanade lies the water and beyond it, on the far shore I see the minarets of the Blue Mosque, the outline of Hagia Sophia, and the pavilions of Topkapı Palace, the great monuments of the Old City. As I look, I wonder how many times Constantinople was cursed by the plague during its many centuries. I know that ours is only the latest.

Books – without them my world and Kay’s would seem much narrower. This is a time for big books. I’ve just finished Maynard Solomon’s biography of Ludvig van Beethoven while Kay is halfway through Richard White’s *The Republic for which It Stands, the United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*.

The details of Beethoven’s life are extraordinary. We expect the lives of geniuses to be so, but Beethoven’s delusions and emotional conflicts were such that they make the greatness of his music all the more astounding. And à propos of that music, my reading of the biography has me listening to more of it than ever, and I’m afraid I’ve brought Kay along with me. At the moment we’re listening to all the symphonies successively in order, a thing we’d not done before. Next, we’ll do the same with the piano sonatas.

Since we are confined at home for a period whose end we cannot yet foresee, it’s fortunate that we love our apartment. Coming to Turkey unprepared, as we did more than fifteen years ago, it took something to get to this point. When we first looked for lodgings to rent, friends that we taught with introduced us to a couple of men in real estate who took us to look at apartments not far from the school. They were hideous. In our experience in America, apartments for rent were usually shown close to move-in condition. Not so in Turkey. What we saw were filthy, with holes gouged in the walls, and even the light fixtures ripped from the ceilings. We were at a loss until someone suggested we look at the neighborhood of Moda for a place to live. On the day we discovered Moda, we went to an *emlakçı* (real estate agent) and in our rudimentary Turkish uttered the single word *temiz*, which means ‘clean.’ The agent we chose had no English and so took us to meet his young friend Murat Çulha who worked for his father’s real estate company. It was a fortuitous meeting because, today, Murat is a life-long friend who has helped us with difficulties more times than we can remember. He helped us find our clean apartment where we lived for three years until we found and bought our present apartment where we expect to spend the rest of our lives.

We hope those of you who are social-distancing and spending days at home are not suffering too much from cabin fever and have the resources at hand to beguile the hours and entertain yourselves.

Love,

Eric

Letter from Istanbul #5

By Eric Farber

Dear Family and Friends,

In our apartment, as we pass our locked-down days serenely, reading, writing, planning meals and cooking, housecleaning, listening to music and watching movies, we are aware that for others, maybe even for some of you, life is far from serene. We know this from the news and from your own accounts. We read of the fear and anxiety felt by the huge number of suddenly jobless people who may never have expected to be unemployed. We note the impersonal death-toll statistics and know that for thousands and thousands of the grieving living those deaths could not be more personal.

Although we aren't experiencing any of this sadness first hand, we realize we are bearing witness to a time unique in our lives. We are not old enough to have lived through the years of World War II, so as Americans, we have never experienced anything like what is happening now. We think about the events unfolding worldwide and we are stunned. We don't have the capacity to take in all that is happening and not happening. Looking at photos of places we know well – Times Square and Grand Central Station in New York City, Place de l'Étoile in Paris – and seeing them entirely empty of people and traffic shows us that a massive change has taken place and makes us wonder if life can ever return exactly as it was. There are many opinions, but nobody really knows.

In 1722, Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*, published *A Journal of the Plague Year* that describes the devastation wrought in the City of London by the bubonic plague in 1665. It's interesting to note some of similarities and differences between that account and what we know is happening today in another great city three-and-half centuries later. Covid-19 is causing many deaths in New York City, yet it is not so deadly as was the bubonic plague. Hardly anyone who contracted that disease survived, and death came very quickly. Yet, the plague of 1665 was largely confined to London and its immediate surroundings. Early on, the wealthy and anyone else who had a second home or refuge in the country went there. Most of those who wouldn't or couldn't leave the city shut themselves up in their lodgings. Exceptions were those who flocked to the churches to pray for deliverance and forgiveness for their sins. Often, those churches were empty of clergy who had either died or run away. The God-fearing narrator of Defoe's book referred to the plague biblically as a "visitation."

With an overwhelming number of corpses, New York has resorted to mass graves for unclaimed bodies. The same was true in London, but where New York's bodies are

interred in simple coffins, those in London were tossed into trenches pell-mell in whatever state they died. In London's case, the topmost layer of bodies had to have six feet of earth over them.

For the poor, food was and continues to be an issue. London in 1665 did not have New York's food banks and pantries but the city magistrates gave food to the poor using funds provided by generous donors.

Defoe's narrator states that the city could have prepared better for what happened. As the plague advanced slowly from the western parishes, those in the east were slow to acknowledge the threat and prepare for it. There has been a similar lack of preparedness all around America in 2020.

Finally, there is the matter of quackery. In London, charlatans sold potions that they promised would ward off or cure the disease. Some of these were in fact poisonous and caused death on their own. In 2020, we read that Internet fraudsters have been offering similar useless cures while our own president has vaguely suggested that injecting disinfectant into our bodies might kill the virus. How far have we come from 1665?

Wish you all a safe and healthy spring,

Eric

Letter from Istanbul n. 6

By Kay Farber

Dear Friends and Family,

May 11, 2020

Free at last! After seven weeks of full-time confinement, yesterday those of us over 65 were allowed out for four hours into otherwise locked-down Turkish cities. So it was that Eric and I walked out the front door of our building shortly after 11 a.m. and into a changed world with nearly all stores, bars, cafes, and restaurants shuttered, their empty terraces swept clean and their tables and chairs stacked against their outer walls. On our normally traffic-choked main street there were no moving vehicles to be seen. Everyone was walking, and we pedestrians were nearly all over the age of 65. What a shock! We

had known that our neighborhood had quite a few elderly, yet were not prepared for the numbers of masked seniors we encountered on this warm Sunday afternoon. It really was a sight to see.

To be walking around wearing cloth masks that covered our noses and mouths felt strange. Breathing through the cotton caused our eyeglasses to fog up. We were out and about but still confined. At one point we chatted with our friend and neighbor Belma while maintaining the appropriate social distance between us. We later visited with our friend Katie, she in her building's doorway, we out on the street. At our bank's ATM, I put on latex gloves before using the keys to withdraw money. The only sights around us that seemed normal were the ownerless dogs and feral cats sleeping and sunning on the sidewalks. We wondered what they thought of the closed shops and masked humans wandering around. On our walk home we stopped at one of our favorite restaurants, closed except for take-out orders and only on the weekend. We each took home a kuzu-shish durum, a wrap filled with bite-sized chunks of tasty lamb. It was the only food we had eaten in the last seven weeks that we hadn't prepared at home.

Other changes around the city we know only from news reports. As in other parts of the world – mountain goats on the empty streets of a Welsh town and thousands of flamingoes invading Mumbai, India – dolphins can be seen in Istanbul's waters. Dolphins in the Bosphorus, amazing!

In the apartment we resume our routines. Cooking and cleaning occupy us more than they ever did. For the past 35 years, until recently, we'd had the services of a weekly cleaning woman. Now, we are re-experiencing what vacuuming, moving the furniture, dusting, scrubbing the bathrooms, and cleaning the bird shit off the balconies feels like. It has given us new respect for what our cleaning people do.

As for cooking, it's fortunate that Eric doesn't mind doing it. What can I say? I'm a lucky gal. Eric has been our family cook for decades and is quite efficient preparing our daily meals. (Perhaps I should have said, "usually quite efficient" – last night he left out half the ingredients of the dish he made. No wonder the final result wasn't more flavorful.) We've always liked variety and a current pleasure is trying new methods and recipes. Eric recently cooked penne pasta as if it were risotto by adding broth a cup at a time on the stovetop until it became al dente. Yesterday morning, before going out for our walk, he made a Dutch Baby, a large pancake, in the oven using the most basic ingredients. We ate it with maple syrup. Eric's been baking more than usual, cookies and muffins among other things, real comfort food. Cooking and baking so much requires a lot of ingredients so each weekday we make out a shopping list and hand it to our masked super at the apartment door. A short time later he delivers the goods. We very much appreciate his efforts. In the same way, our friend Ilker comes once a week with other items we need.

It's so kind of him to do this. I'm the coffee drinker in the family, and Ilker is the owner of my favorite local coffeeshop, Tribu. Unfortunately, for him, his shop is currently closed due to the pandemic. Fortunately, for me, over the past few weeks Ilker has brought me two new French press coffee pots to replace the two I've broken. I seem to have gotten clumsier while in lockdown.

Reading the news of the day during these trying times is both fascinating and depressing. Little Richard, born Richard Wayne Pennington in Macon, Georgia, has died at age 87. His death is poignant for us, as it must be for some of you. For Eric, a member of the first rock 'n roll generation, Little Richard's hits, along with those of Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, et al were the soundtrack of his adolescence. I came to this music a bit later, via The Beatles, and then discovered the wonderful originals.

So many days of quarantine and restricted movement give us lots of time for reflection, a rare benefit of the pandemic. It has us thinking about all we used to take for granted in our lives.

Love,

Kay

Letter from Istanbul #7

By Kay Farber

Dear Friends and Family,

May 26, 2020

This is the 66th day of our enforced lockdown, and the big news is that Eric and I have had haircuts. Although it didn't bother me, Eric was afraid he'd soon be looking like Christopher Lloyd in *Back to the Future*. Now, we can see his ears again. A few days ago, Ali, his barber, came to the apartment and in fifteen minutes on our front balcony with Eric wrapped in a bed sheet, Ali had him looking like his pre-pandemic self. My haircut was more radical. Gone is my dyed red hair with purple highlights. Yalçın, my hairdresser, came and gave me a buzz cut. I love it, and so does Eric. I was so relieved with how it came out, and am very happy with my silver hair.

For the last three Sundays, those of us 65 years plus have been allowed out for a few hours while other populations are restricted, and the city is shut down. The exercise was

nice, but with nowhere to sit, nosh, have a coffee or buy anything except baked goods, it wasn't very satisfying. We are now told that it will be the middle of June before things open up and our lives begin to be normal. But what will normal feel like?

Normal has begun to feel locked down. With all we're doing, the hours pass quickly, and we don't have to wear masks indoors. I must admit that I relish the quiet, sitting on our balcony, reading and looking out onto our garden, watching the birds, cats, and hedgehogs. I don't miss the human noise and hubbub of what we considered normal in the past.

At this stage in our Beethoven 250 project, we are absorbed by Professor Robert Greenberg's lectures on the 32 piano sonatas and are slowly listening to them with a knowledge and intensity we hadn't known before.

I've finished author Richard White's *The Republic for Which It Stands, The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*, and Eric is reading it now. The Reconstruction period in its political and social divisiveness has parallels with our own. Abraham Lincoln said that "A house divided against itself cannot stand." He fought a war to hold our house together. Who is fighting the battle now?

Evenings we go the movies, or rather we bring the movies to us. We sit in our knock-off Eames chairs in front of the screen, taking breaks as needed for drinks, dinner, etc. Our viewing runs a gamut of subjects and styles. We watch old movies, many of which are long-time favorites. Recently, we finished watching all 24 re-released B-movies produced by Republic Studios, restored by Paramount, and curated by Martin Scorsese. Some were a hoot, some were better than expected, and some – well, we could have done without. Then, there are the current releases we read reviews of. Recommendations from friends are another category. We subscribe to a service called MUBI that adds a new title each day and keeps it available for one month when it disappears. Many of these films are strange and unknown. Some are refreshingly worth watching. Two evenings ago we saw our first film from Belarus. *Crystal Swan* is by director Darya Zhuk and depicts a young woman disc jockey in Minsk and her efforts to get a visa and go to Chicago where she wants to immerse herself in house music that she loves. Last night we watched a strange Canadian movie, *Ghost Town Anthology*, and liked it more than we'd expected. We never know what we'll see on MUBI.

So, dear readers, your Turkish expatriates are not suffering. We are doing and seeing and listening to things we might not if we weren't locked down.

Love,

Kay

Mirth from the Earth

By Vjera Balen

I am an early bird. I wake up without the help of an alarm-clock between 5 AM and 6 AM. I listen to my favourite radio-programmes: “6 Minutes of Poetry” at 6 on the Cultural Programme, then I switch to the First Programme in order to listen to the “Spiritual Thought” (being an agnostic, I have to catch up on my religion). What follows is “Brush Up Your Grammar”, and, finally, my favourite: “What Happened on This Day”, referring to historic events on the respective date.

The historic event on 22nd March 2020, the one that will be remembered as the worst earthquake in Zagreb since the one in 1880, caught me on my way out of the bathroom. Luckily enough, because I somehow felt more protected in that small, tiled place.

Perversely, instead of thinking: “This is the end, my friend”, I suddenly remembered the title of Jules Verne’s book: “Journey to the Centre of the Earth”.

“Mom!” wails my baby son Martin, aged 45, from his room, having fallen from the couch.

“Hurry up! We have to run out!” I try to rush him.

He takes his time as usual, but I, fully dressed, don’t have the patience to pull on my tights, but just put on my snow boots, my late aunt’s moth-eaten fur coat, a hat, and the wrong pair of glasses (the ones for reading). Sure enough, I forget to take my cell-phone, my documents, and some money.

We run down 4 flights of stairs. There is no one yet in the streets. It is early Sunday morning! Eventually, people do gather around the Round Pavilion in my neighbourhood, built in 1938 by the world-famous Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović, author of the equestrian statues of Indians at the entrance of the Grant Park in Chicago. The Pavilion was first designed to be an art gallery, then converted into a mosque during the quisling regime in the period of WW II, only to become a Museum of the Revolution in post-war Yugoslavia and, finally, a place for exhibitions since 2006...

People gather in groups, trying to keep the required distance suggested by the doctors during this corona business.

My son disappears together with his cell-phone. There I am, all alone, with hardly anyone to speak to, freezing. By the way, it is a cold day with snowflakes, the first one after a spell of mild weather.

Nobody wants to talk. They all obey epidemiologists’ orders. Even people I know are pretty reserved and find an excuse to get away from me. I am dying to hear the news

report. Finally, someone, at a 3 meter-distance tells me that the magnitude of the earthquake was 5.3 Mw, 5.5. ML.

After being snubbed by my reserved countrymen, I finally run into some gregarious French people. Two young women and a man. What the heck are they doing in Zagreb during the contagion?

“Oh, but we work here”, they explain, in English, of course, my French being a bit too rusty. One woman comes from Tours.

“Oh, the battle of Tours and Poitiers!” I cannot help showing off.

“How come you know that?”

“Well, I went to school, you know. Besides, a good friend of mine, Jacqueline lives in Tours, and she sent me this beautiful postcard with the reproduction of Jeanne d’Arc in shining armour by Ingres.” In order to impress them, I brag a little about my translation of Mark Twain’s novel “Jeanne d’Arc”. “You know, he was an atheist, but he really admired her, and even believed that she heard all those voices from heaven.”

“Oh, but Jeanne d’Arc is nowadays the favourite symbol of the extreme right. You know, nationalism, fervent patriotism.”

Don’t I know it? All the streets surrounding the Pavilion used to be named after heroes of the Resistance Movement in WW II, but have recently been renamed after some obscure medieval Croatian dukes.

Anyway, to humour them a little, I turn to the guy who comes from Toulouse.

“Do you know this joke? There is this American who wants to buy two train tickets to Toulouse and says: “Two to Toulouse”, but the man at the *guichet* answers mockingly: “Bla, bla, bla, bla!”

My French friend is not impressed. He knows a better version of the joke.

Vesna! Finally, Vesna appears – Vesna, our ex Foreign Minister and an ex-student in my English class. (Teaching English by the audio-visual method was my first job after graduation.) The bright, cute little girl has in the meantime made quite a career, as University professor and well-known liberal politician during the Social-Democrat government.

What is more important at the moment, she lives just across the street, and on the ground floor. I complain about being cold without tights and she invites me to her apartment as I dare not climb all those stairs to my place, the earth still trembling. Vesna produces a pair of thick black tights and a pullover, and allows me to pee in her bathroom.

(Since Knausgård’s confession about the minutiae of his bodily functions, I think it has become perfectly legitimate to mention peeing in a text.)

Upon returning to the square I realize Martin is nowhere to be seen. I ask a young guy if he could possibly call my elder son who lives across the river, and tell him I am safe and sound. (Not that he would worry too much!)

I go round and round the mulberry bush, pardon, the Round Pavilion. It has almost been 2 hours since the earthquake. All the neighbouring streets are cluttered with rubble.

One of the two towers of the cathedral has been badly damaged, and the cross fell from the top. Ominous sign?

Yes, according to a passer-by saying rather predictably:

“This is punishment from heaven for our sins!”

And then: Oh! I spot a young woman carrying a cup of coffee to go. Where on this trembling earth has she found it?

“At the newsstand over there!”

“But I have no money on me!”

“Here you are! Be my guest!”

“But how can I give it back? Do you live in a neighbourhood?”

“Oh, come on, ma’m, don’t worry, just go over there and get yourself a nice cup of coffee!”

She turns her back on me.

Only after freezing there for about three hours do I have a brainstorm. Why, my first cousin, Nina, who has a beautiful garden, lives less than half a kilometre away!

Right, but when I get there, it turns out that Nina and her husband, Željko, are just about to leave for the seaside, to be safe at their summer place on an island. While preparing for the trip, they put me to sit in a deck-chair in their garage, and tuck me in with a blanket. Nina, who is a doctor, gives me a sedative, but I ask for a sandwich.

“No sandwiches”, says she.

“I’ll bring you one from upstairs,” offers her amiable husband. “How would you like your sandwich?”

“Oh, ham and cheese would be nice.”

“Would you like it with cucumber?” Željko goes out of his way being a good host. Cucumber sandwiches, Oscar Wilde and Lady Bracknell spring to mind.

But Nina puts her foot down.

“What’s the matter with you? Don’t you see we are in the middle of a disaster?!”

So I am left without cucumber and cheese, having to gobble only two thick slices of bread and some salami.

“Now, you had better go straight home”, Nina suggests, slipping more sleeping-pills into my pocket.

The earth is still trembling slightly, indulging in its mirth (or perhaps rage?). Back on my fourth floor, I ignore warnings on the radio that everybody should stay out. Martin finally comes home bringing along some derelict whom I’ve never seen before. I kick him out on account of corona, threatening to call the police.

On the following day another cousin, the one living in Zadar, calls to ask how I fared during the earthquake.

I give her my report, and then, solicitous to please, ask her whether her home was damaged.

She is dumbfounded, so I add: “Ah, yes, you have been spared because your flat is on the ground floor.”

“No”, quoths she. “I have been spared because I live in Zadar.”

P.S. Sure enough, Zadar was hit by an earthquake, albeit a milder one, two days later.

Oh, my prophetic soul!

My friends, my international family

By Alison Edwards

Blakeney, Glos., Uk, 18th August 2020

Dear ISCLT friends,

It's good to have the chance to write to you collectively – my friends, my international family. I want to devote this letter to celebration of the member who introduced me to ISCLT. Some people knew her much better than I ever did, and many won't remember her at all, but she's worth remembering. I'm talking about Pauline Sulyok.

Pauline and I both belonged to a postal poetry newsletter; people sent poems, and then comments were exchanged. She and I shared an unspoken belief that our poems were the best we found in this newsletter, and certainly we respected each other long before we got into correspondence. That came about because of a young contributor who wrote very immature and quite annoying verse. Pauline, who could be blunt in criticism, had written a scathing comment. Rather than start a public debate, I wrote to her personally to suggest that the poor boy deserved something a tad more constructive. Of course there was more to the letter than that, but at the end of her reply she wrote 'Well, you deal with him. I'm away for the next fortnight at a literature conference in Germany.'

This was Todtmoos, 1999. Eager to know more, I waited till August and then asked her about it. As a result, I soon found myself treading for the first time that narrow passage between Richmond station and Sam and Belma's gracious Gateways flat, introducing myself, enjoying a superb lunch of Belma's making, and being invited to attend ISCLT 2000 in Santillana del Mar, Spain.

Pauline lived in Vienna, so I didn't meet her in person until we landed at Bilbao airport. Alasdair was there too, Alasdair Mackinnon of blessed memory. On the bus to Santillana

those two talked non-stop, as only reunited ISCLTers can. But I saw a lot of Pauline in that memorable fortnight, my first conference, which of course had me addicted from the start. We talked, we shared a poetry reading, we sat together on trips. She was so interesting – but, but. Spending so much time in her company I started to notice the repetitions, the forgetfulness. ‘Aren’t we going home now?’ she asked as we stopped at the restaurant in Bilbao where we were to have the end-of-first-week dinner (and what a meal that was! Seven courses – I heard later that it nearly broke the bank. I sat with Tony Bloomfield: his last conference – how glad I am to have met him).

At Santillana only one or two other people had noticed Pauline’s forgetfulness. I made discreet inquiries. ‘But she used to be sharp as a tack!’ one member said. And certainly, when she talked of literature, she still was. I was reassured, and looked forward to seeing her again.

Nice, 2001: Pauline arrived, thinner, vaguer. Everyone noticed the change now: on that first afternoon she asked someone to buy cigarettes for her, but then declined to pay for them, forgetting how she’d come by them. She had terrible arthritis now, and soon ran out of painkillers; she had gone to the pharmacy, she said, but found it shut (it may have been a Sunday?) We still did our joint poetry reading. I was a little worried that she might get up and leave, or produce pictures of her grandson, as she had during a small workshop I gave. But we ISCLTers are tolerant beings, aren’t we? As Alasdair said, ‘She’s not in a nest of vipers! It doesn’t matter what she does.’ And the reading went well.

In her room in the big, pink, creaky old convent building we stayed in that year, Pauline had a full-sized bath, set on a low platform. One day she tripped on the corner of the platform and fell, hurting her back quite badly. She came to no more papers, joined no more outings. I found myself carrying her meals up to her room. She became sunk in misery. If someone hadn’t shepherded her through the airport when we left, I don’t know how she’d have got home.

She did get back to Vienna, but ISCLT never saw her again. I had two addresses for her, one in Vienna, one in England. Belma tried to track her down, and so did I, but we failed. Someone had visited her in Vienna, finding her even thinner, even vaguer; but soon after that she had slipped below our radar.

I came to ISCLT on Pauline’s coat-tails, and she deposited me and then flew away. I shall always be immensely grateful to her, and a sadness at the mystery of her fate will always be with me. Godspeed, Pauline.

Alison

Reflections on ISCLT

By Robert Richardson

I am sure there are many reasons why ISCLT has lasted so long, but the one I will highlight is the balance of programming that has evolved. For a conference to be two weeks, a now established fine-tuning helps retain its attraction.

There is the overall division between activities and free time. We are invariably in an often beautiful, and always interesting, location, and enough free time is available to explore it individually or in small groups.

Being a conference concerned with both contemporary literature and theatre, the activities are themselves varied: with the morning dedicated to papers and discussions on novels and poetry (not forgetting our coffee and biscuits at the mid point), and parts of the afternoons used for workshops on particular books or writers and rehearsals of short plays. These plays then feed into a programme of evening performances that also include poetry and prose readings, slideshows and movies.

The organised day trips add wonderfully to the mix, as do the legendary, to us at least, ISCLT parties, each one hosted by members from a particular country or group of countries, and with related drinks and music. The final, even more legendary, ISCLT banquet might be seen as the world champion of these parties. I am a devotee of the Bauhaus, and the parties there were vital to its success. I think the same might be said of ISCLT, too.

When I mention to conference-wise academics that ISCLT is for two weeks (though there are members, like me, who are sometimes “one weekers”), I sometimes see their eyes roll in disbelief, but ISCLT is a little bit different and very special. A lot is packed in, and two weeks means it is never too frantic: with a leisurely pace, literature can be enjoyed, and we present our prepared efforts in the context of having fun as well. I also like to tell people that at ISCLT I have encountered acute literary judgements. I recall a member, Tony Bloomfield, introducing the work of Michael Ondaatje quite a few years before he became well known by winning the Booker Prize with *The English Patient*. The ISCLT antennae were that year working particularly well.

My first ISCLT was at Dubrovnik in 1988, when the Programme Chair was William Pratt. For the following year I was planning a series of events celebrating the 70th anniversary of the origins of the Imagist poetry movement, under the title *Homage to Imagism*. William Pratt, a professor at Miami University, Ohio, is one of the world’s leading authorities on Imagism, and he agreed to organise and Chair an academic symposium, and this took place at the HQ of the Poetry Society in London: one of the papers was given by Alan Rodway, a Reader at the University of Nottingham and another ISCLTer. In 1990, AMS Press in New York published the book *Homage to Imagism*, coedited by William Pratt and myself. Subsequently, and stretching into the new

millennium, we have worked together on other Imagist related events. These have included a day of academic presentations and activities at the literature venue within London's Royal Festival Hall. This shows an example of ISCLT launching collaborations that are later developed. In our ISCLT lives, Professor William Pratt is Bill and I am Bob, because ISCLT, above all, is about friendship and our own ways of celebrating an internationalist outlook.

Letter from the Bosphorus

Life in the Time of Corona (excerpt)

By Gönül Pultar

...

My Corona life started on Thursday, March 5, 2020.

My eldest son Giray had started on a master's degree in France in the fall of 2019. He came back to Turkey for the Xmas break, then went back. He phoned one day and said, "if you are thinking of coming and seeing me while I am here, now is the time, the academic year will end before you know it." So my daughter Eren and I bought Istanbul-Paris round-trip non-refundable plane tickets for departure on March 5 and return on March 12. One week's leave was the most she could ask – and obtain – from her office—little guessing that she was seeing those colleagues face to face for the last time for a long time to come.

We immediately booked an airbnb apartment in Paris. On the Rue du Cherche-midi, more or else right in the middle of the Left Bank, it could accommodate four, as both Giray, studying in Rennes, and my husband's grand-niece İdil, an undergrad in Reims, would be coming and spending the weekend with us.

It was only after all had been settled that, sometime in February, Eren and I started registering news about this mysterious disease originating in China in a place called "Wuhan," which we had never heard of before. And whenever I started reading about China, my attention would be diverted each time to the fate of the Uyghur Turks in the hands of the Chinese authorities. That is such a tragedy that news about the virus and its misdeeds would pale. The present Turkish government, which seems to consider interest in Turks as a sacrilege to Islam and almost a manifestation of impiety, never registered

the plight of the Uyghurs, but it did finally manage to perceive the developments in the world. All flights to and from China were stopped, then with Korea, Iran and Italy. Ports of entry to land routes on the east of the country were also blocked.

Thus, as our departure date approached, so did the sense of danger the disease presented for us, and Eren asked me to make a quick decision. If we did not go, we would lose the whole of the airfare, and a substantial amount of the airbnb fare. "But if by any chance you get infected, you will be losing so much more," she warned wisely.

Days of indecision followed. I did not want to put *her* at risk either.

The First Mask

Then one late afternoon I found myself asking for the price of face masks in a large pharmacy: 125 TL each, they said. (For us in Turkey, a *lira* is what a *euro* is in the EU.) But they had run out of stock.

The next day, I phoned this neighborhood pharmacy which has home delivery service. 75 TL, I was informed. And they had plenty. I immediately ordered two.

Talk of the Corona virus had well started in the country by the end of February. On March 5, as soon as we arrived at the airport, Eren and I took out the masks from their packages and put them on. We entered the airport building wearing them. Few people had any on. But *we* wore them until we entered the airbnb apartment hours later. We had realized by then that these masks were very important and thus valuable, so we put them somewhere safe. In retrospect, they were, if not the flimsiest sort, not the most protective face masks against Covid 19 either. But we did not know that at the time. Neither did we know that one cannot use the same mask forever.

As we left on March 5, we knew we were traveling into danger. Besides our wearing masks, Eren took with her a portable refillable spray of Eau de Cologne. We were to make sure, all throughout the trip, if possible not to touch anything she did not disinfect first; if not, to wash our hands immediately. In fact, I remember washing my hands constantly, then spraying them with Eau de Cologne all throughout the trip, although she kept telling me only one of the two measures was enough.

Did we know before we left that in Paris theaters and concerts as well as visits to museums would be out? I remember starting to look at theater tickets at first but then giving up the idea as the time to leave approached. The worries of the Louvre Museum staff had led to its being closed on March 1 (it would reopen on March 4 only to be closed for a long time to come on March 13, along with the lock-down). Once in France, we could see

progressing, even during the one week we spent there, the interest shown to Covid 19. If one followed the news, one became aware of the ever increasing number of cases, first in the hundreds, then in the thousands. But these took place, as far as we or anyone we saw or met were aware, in some mysterious corners of the land, not in Paris, not where we were located. In fact, my friend Christine had difficulty making reservations for Saturday evening in a restaurant *en vogue*. People were going out and about, living their normal lives. ...

Whether at the café at the corner where we had breakfast, the neighborhood restaurant where we ate once, the Asian take-away where we once shopped for dinner, the Raspail organic open-air market through which we walked one day, the *Deux Magots* where we had Sunday brunch, *Le Danton* on the Boulevard Saint-Germain where my friend Aynur took us to lunch, the trendy *A la Petite Chaise* on the Rue de Grenelle where Christine finally found a table, or the *Musée Fondation Louis Vuitton* where my former student from Bilkent University Yasemin took us to visit and where we ended up having a succulent snack complete with wine, as well at the *Chartier* where Eren and I, deciding to play the tourist, ate on our last evening in Paris, no one had any mask on, and no one practised "social distancing." The term had not been invented, or at least to my knowledge not widely used, at least not in the context of the Corona virus. No one cared. People were out to enjoy themselves. And we were – enjoying ourselves. Indeed, we had a lovely time. I had a lovely time. Walking through the *Jardin de Luxembourg* was a dive into my childhood, crossing the *Boulevard Saint-Michel* brought back memories of my student days...

Nor was it any different in Reims, where, after visiting the Cathedral "unmasked," we went on a visit of the Pommery champagne caves for which İdil had bought tickets beforehand. Reims is right in the middle of champagne country, is said to be its unofficial capital. We were made to tour first the ancient subterranean chalk pits that had been turned into caves, and which had served as shelter from bombardments during World War I. And always, surrounded by other tourists, young and old but especially young, all of whom, including the guide taking us around, all of us in fact, were without any masks, moving about without observing any social distancing. ...

Our return trip went smoothly. We wore masks on the train Rennes-Paris, and as soon as we arrived at the Gare du Montparnasse, we got on the *autocar* taking us to Charles de Gaulle. Our masked life had started. Again, on the plane there were very few people wearing masks, and no social distancing whatsoever in the seating arrangement.

However, there had been one big change back home. A Covid 19 case had been confirmed in the country on March 11, and Turkey was now on high alert. We passengers were told we had to self-isolate for fourteen days after we landed in Istanbul. Forms were

distributed and we were asked to write down our coordinates. Being 65+, I would be phoned to twice during the fourteen-day period, and my "file" closed only after I reassured the state doctor on the line that I was perfectly fine.

To this day, Eren says it is either a miracle we did not get infected with the virus while in France, or else that we did get infected but never showed any outward symptoms.

Self-isolation

Just in case we had been infected, we decided I would not go back home, as my husband had just turned eighty and was a heart patient, both elements being "risk factors." I accompanied Eren to her apartment. That is where I would spend the mandatory fourteen days. It is not a large apartment, but the living room opens into a lovely small garden, so we did get to go out and sit there whenever we felt like it. Naturally, the one-week interlude had been supposed to be a well-earned short break, there was much waiting for me. Change of plan, of course.

The next morning, even before Eren had time to inform her office that she had returned but had to self-isolate for a fortnight, *they* phoned and asked her apologetically not to come to the office. Everything went fast after that. The same day, Friday, the Cabinet had a meeting and decided to shut down all schools and ban all public gatherings in Turkey, from concerts to football games, starting Monday. On Monday, Eren's company took the decision to work from home. In France, President Macron decided on total lock-down. Giray and İdil, whose courses in Rennes and Reims had suddenly both become online, were able to leave the country just before it started and reach Turkey. In the meantime, the situation in France had not gone unnoticed in Turkey. Those landing at airports coming from Corona-infected countries had to quarantine in a state-controlled public facility, not just their own homes. The government did not trust its citizens after a group returning from *umrah*, the off-season pilgrimage to Saudia Arabia, had come back infected, and left to their own devices to self-isolate, had instead disseminated the virus nationwide. ...

Under Lock-down

I had moved to my own home by then, and Eren had accompanied me. It was good being reunited with my husband, good to be facing again the familiar view of the Bosphorus, to be back in my ordinary life. But it was not as ordinary as before: the self-isolation had not ended for me. While Eren and I were under quarantine, the government had decreed a lock-down for all citizens below 18 and above 65 during the week (and total lock-down, for all citizens during week-ends). However lovely the view from our living room, however much larger this apartment, it was still immurement. The danger from Covid 19

still loomed, and I was warned not to use the elevator to go to the apartment on the first floor which my husband and I were using as an office. ...

Our ordinary lives were transformed. Eren was working from home. Giray had online courses then exams from his home, and his wife Meltem also worked from home. Many projects had to be abandoned. The wedding reception in June was out of question now. Our dreams were deferred as if they were rotten meat thrown out even before stinking too much. The only light in our lives was the daily evening family meeting on Hangouts: Giray and Meltem participated from the apartment they lived in Osmanbey, Selçuk from Berkeley, CA where he found himself when all flights between Turkey and the USA were discontinued, his wife Deniz from their apartment in Fulya, and we three from our apartment in Kabataş. It had become a ritual. ...

On WhatsApp, my former classmates were at the end of their tether. They felt suffocated by the lock-down of the 65+. "Why are we imprisoned thus?" asked one, "what did we do, what are we guilty of?" voicing what many were feeling. ...

Gönül Pultar

Letter to ISCLT friends

By Mimi Rice

The ZOOM Final Banquet Bodil just organized reminded me of one of my favorite Final Banquets, "Fantasy and Fantastic" at Harlaxton Manor, England in 1985. Jessie Ball and I planned the pre banquet cocktail party to a fare thee well followed by a sumptuous banquet in the castle ornately ceilinged dining hall. The traveling cocktail party started in a panelled chapel with the organ played by Bob Bellflower. Cocktails may have been served there and carried around. From there the partygoers moved to the solarium where Tony Bloomfield and Bob Bellflower were digging in the garden to find the skull of "alas poor Yoric". Then on to the a tower on the castle grounds where the gardener (Rich) was making love to Lady Chatterly (Mimi). Up the hill Veronika and ??(her husband?) were dancing or being chased in the woods (I missed seeing that part) and the conclusion was the appearance of Gregory Gregory in brilliant red robes on a steps of a fountain proclaiming...something. (Played by a large voiced and sized Canadian). I'm not sure if Queen Victoria made an appearance at the Banquet or not but

she surely did in a performance on the stage in the chapel (our main meeting room) by Alistair.

It was an interesting fantastical conference in a castle that was a campus for Indiana University? Parts of the castle were reserved and restored for tourists and special events. We were in sort of dormitory spaces with rickety elevator and breakfast of eggs and baked beans! I think Gordon Bennett was recovering from spine surgery and if I remember the right place and time, Rich and I played tennis with him (can't remember his partner or if it was just Rich) but it was pretty amazing. Alastairs performance as Queen Victoria was a highlight of the conference. He was costumed from the trunks of one of our Turkish members!

The Harlaxton ISCLT was my second after Marzell in '83 (Rich's third - first was Athens in '81). We came to Siklos, Dubrovnik, Svendborg, Park City, Kazimer-Dolny, Estonia and our last one was Vicoforte. So many friends to be missed and so many stories to tell. Let's keep finding ways to share them.

To all - stay safe and fantastical!



Mimi's drawing

A Memory of Vicoforte – 2012

TO ISCLTers: A MESSAGE IN POETRY

POEMS by Pat Kreutzer

ARS POETICA

While we're slaughtering adjectives

I say

Kill the commas

Wretched teardrops

marching insolently across the page

Blot them out

There's enough grief in this life

without their annoying

drip

drip

drip

And what about periods

Impertinent Prussians

parading in pointless unison

Kick them out

Question marks

continually questing truth

Whose truth

Quash them

Colons and semicolons

ponderous

twisting

turning

currying favor

Crush them

Exclamation marks

Deflate them

Hot air balloons every one

pop

pop

pop

Let words stand alone

Let them soar

simple

pure

unadorned

A Saarinen arch

CITIES BY THE SEA

I always love those cities by the sea-
 they seem to sparkle in the morning light.
 By nightfall, there's a haze, more like a glow
 of pink to lavender, to indigo.
 From ancient times, their ports invited trade,
 not just of spice and silk, but of ideas.
 The most important gemstones were ideas,
 which traveled with the goods across the sea.
 Strict bills of lading tracked the facts of trade
 and whether loads were heavy or too light,
 what space to set aside for indigo,
 how much was needed for the dye to glow.
 Then letters were exchanged; so came the glow
 of friendship and transmitting of ideas.
 In Salem, Massachusetts, indigo
 as ink became a link from sea to sea.
 New thoughts, new ways of life were mental light.
 From Salem to Calcutta there was trade
 of changing nineteenth century thought; trade
 of customs: roles of women, then the glow
 from sacred values seen in bright new light.
 Bold Unitarian ministers' ideas
 were heard in Hindu homes. Men sailed the sea;

exchanged a crop of thought for indigo.
 The fertile fields were equal: indigo
 and freedom. Church and temple saw this trade.
 Calcutta's "Wheel of Knowledge" crossed the sea
 to Salem. New held concepts then could glow
 and spark the red hot embers of ideas
 that fueled imagination's dazzling light.
 Fact: ice from Walden Pond: ballast, not light,
 was packed in holds of ships, like indigo,
 in straw, to cool Calcutta's, not ideas,
 but food, iced drinks, refrigeration's trade
 that soothed the body, let the mind calm, glow.
 Thoreau noted this triumph of the sea. *
 Thus was the sea a catalyst, a light
 that made minds glow, not dark like indigo,
 but bright like trade, that treasure of ideas.

* "The Pond in Winter" - from 'Walden' by Henry Thoreau

POEMS by Ian Lukins

BALLOON

After I was pumped up
 my life got a new look.
 My horizon widened,
 and, I must admit it,
 I became swell-headed –
 full of self-importance.

I needed to free myself,
 get away, see the world
 while there was still some time.
 I had nothing against
 the little kid, as such.

But, when she slipped her grip
that was it. I was off –
all eager to travel.

We balloons live short lives,
and dangerous ones too –
easily burst to death,
popped to a quick shrivel
by clumsy, human fools,
who hold us back with string.

They fail to see our need –
our urge to fly up high
into the vast blue sky,
carried floatiferous,
wherever, by the wind's
gusty imaginings,
experiencing things
before life's air seeps out.

ARTY

There was no hate, no hurt in you.
You carried us, wheeled us in your barrow,
cuddled and comforted us when we fell.

Our words would flow swiftly through you,
passing unhindered by thought – so it seemed –
though warmed by a light of innocent love.

Blessed with a special gentleness,
mild in everything, pure of sin,
who, in their right mind, could blame you for anything?

Your name reflects life's irony.
Arty, you were precise, good with your hands,
could whittle a stick into a whistle,
blow a mystic muddle of notes for us –

more a Merlin than an Arthur.

You could repair our broken things.
 Strong, you'd chop, stack wood, carry in the coal,
 keeping yourself wholesome, clean and tidy,
 working tirelessly with no complaint –
 more artisan than artist.

Not having car or bike, you walked
 miles and miles – knew all the paths, local lanes,
 every single track that crossed field or hill.

Nature's curly, black-haired rover –
 you could frighten strangers and be taunted,
 until they realized your gentle soul.

Uncaged, you carried the absurd
 label of birth's difference nobly.
 Who, then, chose to bury you with no date, no name?

Dan's Digital Maze

By Karl-Heinz Westarp

Lifelong we seek for safest roads,
 Broad, bright - and free of ugly toads.
 We trust our eyes, direct our feet,
 Surmount the obstacles we meet.
 Reach goals afar and close -
 Yet all now turns morose.

Roadsides are dug and cables laid,
Tall data towers worldwide raised:
High and low are well equipped
With PCs, Tablets, iPhones smart
Which clouds of data easy slipped -
Resulting in a loss of heart.

Simple digits one (1) and Oh (0)
Lead to algorithms galore
Flitting worldwide to and fro:
How can one stand this anymore?
Amazing how this man-made maze
Leaves us wise one in a haze.

Rescue from the mess we ask
Which is your, not our task.
Let old crossroads become straight,
So we can carry this life's weight.

Dan's Nemteanu drawing
which inspired Karl-Heinz Westarp's poem



Who's zooming who

By Maja Kovacich

I rushed to my room
because I discovered
ISCLT has been moved to zoom.
We don't need to go far
Marina will make each of us a TV star.

Now we are on the screen.
That is where we want to be seen.
We shout and wave friendly
but Marko says they can't hear you, sadly.
It is absurd.
I want to be heard.

Poet I am not.
An artist I'll never be.
But I can feel the presence of glee.
I only know to put rhymes in order
so as to entertain my friends across the border.
They expect me something to say
so while I rhyme I write and pray.

Some know how to recite.
Alison, Bob and Immanuel
gave us such delight.
It was unusual and new to us all
but it was enough to hear a call
from ISCLT friends
who will patiently wait
for the venue of '21 to be great.

Your venue chair Maja

I am sending you my love with music

Michela Gallo



Covid Rap

By Mick Jardine

I want to thank you good people for gathering around
 To listen to what I'm about to put down.
 My topic for today is the coronavirus
 That has the world in its grip and has begun to divide us
 Into people who catch it and people who don't
 Those who wear masks and those who just won't,
 Those who choose to lie all day upon a crowded beach
 And those who try to isolate beyond Covid's reach.
 There are some who promote what they call herd immunity
 To sacrifice oldies for the rest of the community,
 While others, I am glad to see, prefer to shield the vulnerable,
 And find the idea offensive just to kill off the less durable.

Pandemic division is at its worst in the States
 Where political difference has evolved into hate,
 So while Trump supporters greet his illness with a curse
 Others like me think it's what he deserved,

As he chose to spread Covid wherever he went
 Rather than risk being branded a one-term President.
 In Trump's opinion, "This flu-like germ
 Is a dirty Commie plot to prevent my second term,"
 Adding, "Come on Covid – think you'll take me on?
 You can never defeat this son of a gun.
 I'll bash yer, I'll smash yer, I'll rip yer to shreds,
 I'll kick yer ass back to the Land of the Reds."
 Trump's tweets inform us he's stronger than ever
 And can master this virus cos he's brave and he's clever.
 His "Proud Boy" supporters are raring to fight
 All virus believers who threaten their right
 To bear arms for Donald and shoot blacks on sight.
 They say, "You don't need a visor to ward off the devil
 Or to inject a vaccine to eliminate evil."

Britain's not much better with Tories in power;
 I live in a divided country getting worse by the hour.
 Our care homes were ravaged by Covid 19
 With protection and testing nowhere to be seen,
 The old were dumped from hospitals to circulate the virus
 To low-paid carers who say, "Our bosses will fire us
 If we don't come in sick and risk our own health
 So our privatised care homes can increase their wealth."
 Here profits come first so more lives will be lost
 To protect Tory donors who must not be crossed.
 Huge swathes of the public realm have been brazenly given
 To the host of big companies who've recently striven
 To get the Tories elected – now it's pay-back time:
 "We reward friends," says Boris, "and it's surely no crime
 To hand billions to companies with no relevant experience
 To stop the pandemic despite all the evidence
 That they haven't got a clue as to what they're doing,
 But who gives a damn when it's the poor that they're screwing?"

"We're all in this together," the government assured us,
 But it's largely the poor who are catching the virus,
 It's largely the poor whose jobs are shut down
 And will suffer the most from new local lockdowns.

You'd think this a country with magical immunity

The way Boris proceeds with total impunity,
 With his massive majority from a recent poll
 The threat from Covid he thought rather droll
 And happily mixed with the sick and near dead
 Ending up, just like Trump, on a hospital bed.
 He made no preparations despite early warning
 So now he presides over a country in mourning,
 With worse stats than any other European nation
 For tracking, tracing, treatment and infection.
 A second wave was avoidable if you can track down and test
 And the PM promised us we'd have the world's best,
 But this was just another of Johnson's lies and dreams,
 The hallmark of a corrupt and calamitous regime,
 Forcing desperate people to travel far and wide
 To try to get tested and then being denied.

The greatest divide is between profits and lives
 As governments determine who and what will survive,
 Schools and unis must re-open so workers can return
 To kick-start the economy and allow them to earn.
 But this made inevitable a Covid second wave
 As it's impossible to keep communities safe,
 When thousands of youngsters who are asymptomatic
 Are moving round and mixing among those who are static.
 Despite obvious risks university VCs
 Demand face-to-face teaching to keep students pleased,
 So they won't litigate for return of their fees
 Or threaten the profits their accommodation guarantees.

Our schools have no provision to trace or to track,
 While to balance their books heads give teachers the sack.
 Schools must provide child-care whatever the threat
 And if a few teachers die, well, that reduces the debt.
 Johnson says, "A dead teacher is sad but a small price to pay
 To keep wheels turning and hold Covid at bay.
 Some workers in the North must be sacrificed
 For the good of the rest of us – it's just the roll of the dice."

This virus is transmitted through aerosols not drops,
 And travels more than two meters when somebody coughs,
 So social distancing is an absolute must

But try it on schoolkids who travel by bus;
 Masks lower the risk, though some can't bear them,
 And students in seminars don't have to wear them.
 The young may not have symptoms but some will spread Covid
 To staff or to loved ones, but our leaders aren't bothered,
 As they all send their own kids to safe private schools
 And mock British voters as blindfolded fools.

As I speak lockdown measures are being brought back
 In places where thousands are getting the sack
 Through no fault of their own but because of neglect
 By a government which clearly has no respect
 For the lives of those who could only just manage
 But need more protection from pandemic damage
 Made much worse by government blundering
 Which has left the rest of Europe wondering
 "Why did we try to persuade them to stay?"
 Let them embrace Donald Trump and the US of A.

So as we look back on months of a widening breach
 Between young and old, the poor and the rich,
 A deadly virus which should have brought us together
 Has revealed some countries as more divided than ever.
 Yet there's one organisation that is bucking the trend
 Where solidarity and harmony will not break nor bend.
 It will rise above divisions brought by Covid 19,
 To show a better way forward than populist regimes.
 Instead of division and living in dread,
 ISCLT is planning for better times ahead.
 Despite the cancelled conference and papers gathering dust,
 Covid hasn't stopped ISCLTers from keeping in touch.
 Thanks to Marina, though isolated in our separate rooms,
 We're sticking together through the wonders of Zoom.
 And though it can't prevent the spread of the virus
 ISCLT provides the means to inspire us,
 To keep in good health and maintain communication
 In the face of those who prefer atomization.
 We'll keep alive the flame of friendship and good cheer,
 'Til we can all meet in person – let's wish – by next year!
 With that wish I'll conclude my pandemic Rap -
 If you like it raise a glass – or feel free to clap!

PART II

THE THEATRE AND US

Texts assembled by Eric Farber



The Fantastiks – Eric’s Memoir

By Eric Farber

As I suggested this compilation I’ll begin it.

In 1960 I was 17 and living with my family in Chicago. By that time I had seen a few straight plays in old downtown theaters and knew I loved the theater. If I had ever seen a musical I don’t remember what it could have been, but when I heard of one called *The Fantastiks*, I wanted to see it. I remember that I went alone; in the middlebrow neighborhood of my childhood none of my young friends seemed to have any interest in going.

The Fantastiks was an altogether new theatrical experience for me. Instead of a large auditorium with a proscenium stage and a curtain, the musical was performed in a hotel ballroom in Chicago’s Southshore District on what I later learned was a thrust stage. Its small cast was backed by an equally small orchestra, and there was hardly any set, only a bare indication of two houses with a wall between them.

As for the story, it was a romantic allegory told mostly in song and featured a boy, a girl, their two fathers, and a narrator named El Gallo. I loved the songs like “I Can See It” and “Try to Remember” that evoked a world of “moonlight and magic.” I felt I was witnessing something very special, which, in fact, I was. The production I attended was a very early one of a play that would run off-Broadway in New York for 42 years and 17,162 performances. Once during those years, when Kay and I lived in New York, I was pleased to introduce her to this wonderful show.

A special Theatre experience

By Jetta and Karl-Heinz Westarp

Marina mentions your idea of collecting 'special' theatre experiences. There are many, but I was deeply impressed by Rich's impersonation of Mark Rothko in John Logan's play *Red* in Vicoforte in 2012. He and Mick did a fine job, so I thought that could be mentioned in your planned collection.

Martin's First Appearance

By Marko Kovacich

Inspired by Belma, I remembered my very first attendance of a theatrical performance in a small town near Zagreb. It was fifty years ago.

A very good friend of mine had a boyfriend, Martin, who was an actor and who lived in a nearby town that had a renowned theater. The word was out that Martin was arriving to our town with his theater troupe and a part in the play they were going to perform. We all wanted to attend that important event and see Martin act. My friend's name was Carmen. Her parents attended wearing their Sunday best, friends and relatives gathered and we all took seats in the front rows. The excitement grew as the play began and progressed but Martin never appeared in the first act. We enjoyed the play regardless of the fact that in the second act still there was no sign of Martin. Carmen and her parents were bewildered and we all sat there wondering and expecting. Then in the third act, towards the end of the play, the protagonist had to be assaulted on stage and finally at that moment Martin came out and jumped to protect the actor from the assault, waving his hands from left to right and shouting: "I will save you. I will protect you." Soon after the play was over and we all left feeling disappointed and cheated. His girlfriend wasn't to be seen for days.

At the conclusion of this story let me tell you that soon Carmen and Martin were married and Martin became one of the most popular actors in Croatia, even Yugoslavia at that time, in one of the most popular series, and his popularity lasted until his recent death and beyond it.

My First Experience of Theatre

By Belma Baskett

I grew up on the Bosphorus in Istanbul. When I was growing up I was not aware of the theater very much or even at all. At primary school, a group of us danced in colourful paper skirts a kind of Spring dance once. In middle school no theater, nothing. I think the circus came to our area once or twice but we did not go. My family thought it was for the riff-raff. There may have been a tent theater performance near-by in the Summer once or twice but it was considered too bawdy.

When I was in high school my English teacher Miss Teszar at the American College for Girls and Mr. Boyd, the English teacher at the boys' section of Robert college, decided to put on a Shakespeare play, *Twelfth Night*. The play may have been chosen because most of the action takes place in Constantinople. Miss Teszar asked me to ask my parents if I could play Olivia. I asked at home, adding my teacher wants me because the play is from Shakespeare and my English is good. The answer was: "We sent you to that school to get a good education not to become an actress."

So the play was rehearsed and performed without me. I went to the performance and the actor who stole the show was Tunç (pronounced Toonch), as Malvolio, Olivia's vain steward. He had the most remarkable costume. He had a bright green velvet outfit, yellow stockings and was "cross-gartered". Everytime he recited, "my yellow stockings and cross garters", the audience went wild. He also had some real memorable lines we all remember: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness"... His "midsummer madness" took over the play. The audience sympathized with the "madly-used Malvolio" although he was "sick of self-love". Tunç was tall and handsome with green eyes and wavy auburn hair. I do not think we ever met. There was a girl in my class who claimed she was suffering from T.B., a pun on tuberculosis and Tunç Baykan's initials. I do not think she had met him, either. She came from an even stricter family than mine.

High school ended and I started Ankara University. My first class was in this huge amphitheater which I had entered from the top. As I climbed down from the top to the front where I wanted to sit, it seemed there were only boys in the class and some of them started beating a popular dance tune on the desk tops. I pretended not to hear and continued climbing down. Two-thirds of the way down I saw Tunç get up and walk toward me. He asked me to come and sit with him and his friend. The dance tune stopped immediately. I had a protector, my "Knight in Shining Armor". Within the year we were married.

Il Piccolo Teatro – Milano

By Marina Catalano-Mc Vey

When I was a university student in Venice, I was passionate about literature and hungry for theatre performances. It all began when I was a teenager and was the only one, out of eleven grandchildren, who had happily accepted to accompany my grandmother to the theatre in Venice during the opera seasons. I was sitting there in the stalls enchanted, clutching my hands together, lost in the music but above all intently watching every detail on the stage, following the acting process more than the singing. My fascination for the theatre was born at that time.

During my high-school and university years, I progressively intensified my attendance at the theatre everywhere I had a chance to do so.

I used to go to Milan in order to see the performances at IL PICCOLO TEATRO, where Giorgio Strehler was directing many plays and tragedies in those days. Students were invited to see the general rehearsals free of charge and I certainly did not miss those opportunities.

During my final university year, Strehler put on a special version of *King Lear*. People often discussed that project and I read several contrasting articles about it. I therefore decided I wanted to see the performance for myself and went to Milan. It was indeed the most extraordinary theatrical experience in my life and has remained in my memory as the most remarkable, impressive performance I have ever witnessed.

The IL PICCOLO TEATRO's stage was rather small and the famous tempest scene in Shakespeare's tragedy started in darkness. There was a huge construction in the centre of the stage, like a gigantic wooden crate, made of rough planks. The lights came on slowly, progressively illuminating the scene. The wind started blowing and increasingly roared into the violent sounds of tremendous gusts. Louder and louder. The tempest was deafening and scared the audience. We were all sitting in total silence, in the grip of enormous panic, mesmerized.

Many years later, while tensely awaiting a hurricane in the Dominican Republic, the awful feeling of that moment came back to me. Terrifying.

In the theatre, after a while, when the tempest had reached its peak, the wooden crate started to open at the top. The planks began to slide open very slowly, like a flower blossoming under a magnifying glass or like broadly opened arms which were lowered in a trembling motion.

At the centre of the crate, on a raised stained wooden base, stood Lear. Blind, his long hair wildly moved by the wind, forlorn, wretched. He was wearing a long white tunic, dirty and torn. His back, now hunched, had lost the proud, majestic attitude he once possessed. His eyes, covered with blood. His mind going crazy. The storm kept on raging. The wooden planks, lowered to touch the stage, uselessly rested there. An image of despair and hopelessness froze the audience. A deep sense of tragedy hovered over everyone. Then in the middle of the roaring tempest, Lear slowly stepped down onto the stage, turned towards the empty crate and fell on his knees shouting at the top of his voice, louder than the sound of the wind. The tempest suddenly subsided. The echo of the storm and of Lear's desperate cry resounded strongly in the air – a moment of recognition. Lear could no longer see, and totally lost his mind. But in so doing, he could finally see the truth and recognize his past mistakes.

The audience did not stir. The power of that scene gripped our minds and souls and has found a special, permanent place in my memory.

Discovering Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*

By Kay Farber

From the moment Eric and I moved to New York City in 1979, going to the theatre was an important part of our lives. Broadway, Off-Broadway, Off-Off-Broadway, Actors' Showcases: We took it all in. But we weren't much interested in musicals.

That changed for me, thanks to two men in my life – one a good friend and co-worker, the other my dear husband, and thanks to two off-site meetings I attended while working at two different consulting firms.

First, at a meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, in the mid-1980s, I'd brought along my new Walkman, one that accommodated two sets of headphones. My friend Steven brought along a cassette tape he'd made of the new Stephen Sondheim musical he was crazy about: *Sunday in the Park with George*, inspired by the pointillist Georges Seurat and his painting "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." One evening, after we were free of corporate obligations, we sat on my hotel room balcony listening to this amazing music. I was transported by the songs, by the singing, by the story (as described by my friend). From then on, I was obsessed with this show. I listened to it

constantly; it was my soundtrack. At that point, the show had closed but I was thankful to have the music alive inside me.

Later, in 1987, as I was working at a different company, Eric joined me at a corporate meeting in Chicago. We saw that *Sunday in the Park with George* was being performed at the Goodman Theatre. As he knew how important this musical was to me, Eric made a point of trying to get tickets for us. When we learned that the show was completely sold out, I was ready to accept that we wouldn't see my beloved Sondheim musical, but Eric was unstoppable. On our last evening in town, he insisted that we stop by the theatre to see if there had been any tickets returned. There were! Two seats a few rows back from the stage right in the middle of the row. Perfect seats.

Experiencing the brilliant production of a show I knew so deeply was overwhelming. Transporting. At the final curtain, I was in tears, unable to leave my seat for many long minutes.

Today I'm still moved by this play, with its exploration of what art means to an artist, and why we need to experience the artist's creation. The play's final words, Georges Seurat's final words, still speak to me: "White. A blank page or canvas. His favorite. So many possibilities ..."

The Wonder of Theatre

By Alison Edwards

Theatre doesn't just happen in buildings with raked stages, tip-up seats, circles and galleries, dressing-rooms, stage doors and experienced audiences.

One of my first teaching jobs was in a very good girls' school, a state school with an enlightened head teacher and some illustrious senior members of staff. Miss S, Beryl Jones – I used to call her Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the one year I overlapped with her – had spoken up for Lawrence in the Lady Chatterley trial, and her sister Peggy, quieter but no less impressive, was my head of department. In my first term at the school, I sat with Peggy at the Senior Drama Festival. Each class, or form, in the upper half of the school had chosen a one-act play, cast and rehearsed it in their own time, and after about three weeks were presenting it to the rest of the school. On Drama Festival day lessons were suspended, because there would be nine plays to watch. Each form was

allowed up to three consultations with its English teacher, should it feel the need. Essentially, everything was done by the girls themselves. The whole event generated enormous enthusiasm.

I was so impressed by my first Senior Drama Festival that I turned to Peggy and asked if there was a junior one too. 'Oh yes,' she said, 'it's in the spring term. You're in charge of that one.' But in truth the overall organiser didn't have much to do. The kids provided their own costumes and props, the hall platform had good heavy curtains, and the large audience sat on the floor. It was just a matter of settling the order of the performances.

I never knew any class fail to produce a play. A favourite memory is of one girl – Celia, her name was, and she went on to be a well-known local amateur actor – stepping out through the closed curtains with every appearance of nervousness and introducing her form's play in a shaky voice, concluding with a squeak – 'I hope you enjoy it!' – and fleeing back through the curtains. Their play had everyone laughing from start to finish. And that one was in the Junior Festival.

This strong drama tradition had a sequel after the Advanced level exams. At the end of the summer term, a time when, today, the 18-year-old candidates disappear and get summer jobs, all the girls came back to put a play on for the whole school. Again, everything was done by them – choice, direction, casting, costumes . . . One year the Upper Sixth chose *Waiting for Godot*. Half of it. One half is very like the other, after all.

I thought, Beckett! Wonderful, but what will it mean to the juniors? 11-year-olds – how will they respond? I thought they'd be puzzled, perhaps bored. I was a bit worried.

The day came. It was so memorable. I can still see the girl who played Lucky, hear that long speech, 'barefoot in Connemara . . .' It was a great performance; I relaxed and enjoyed it. And so did the school. The smaller girls, like the bigger ones, were riveted, spellbound. That was true theatre.

I was lucky to teach in that school, with the two Miss Joneses. Girls were lucky to go to it. The school went comprehensive, and coeducational, while I taught there, and at around that time huge numbers of Pakistani immigrants arrived in West Yorkshire. The noble aspirations of the comprehensive system, which I still uphold, were undermined, both by that influx of young people who knew no English, and by the prejudice of too many white parents who withdrew their children and sent them off to one of the dozen or so private schools within driving or bussing range. The drama festivals soon died, the headmistress and Peggy retired soon after the big change, and the school, though, I maintain, doing a wonderful job in the face of its difficulties, became a different kind of institution.

Later I taught at its sister comprehensive, which had fewer problems, but still struggled with the dearth of well-motivated pupils whose parents wanted them out of the town. But at this other school the English department believed in theatre trips. One term, between its seven members, the department ran twenty theatre trips, to Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and the small amateur theatre in the next town, Bingley. These days, that tradition has been stifled by expense and by paranoid health-and-safety considerations.

In the 1960s the children of Keighley, West Yorkshire enjoyed a grounding in theatre quite unequalled there since.

Performance in/and Language

By Regine Rosenthal

Dressing up in whatever fancy clothes and paraphernalia we found in the big chest in the attic was my older sister's favorite game. I played along, not quite sure about my role in all of this. Later, as a high school student, I discovered my love for serious drama acted out on stage and at times, when guest performances with famous actors came to town, I waited in long lines to secure tickets for the play. In these days, watching classical drama live on stage, whether comedy or tragedy, was always a highlight to look forward to. In addition, we studied drama as part of the curriculum in middle and high school and I especially remember the times when we actually staged, for parents and family, the play we had studied, such as *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Der zerbrochene Krug/The Broken Jar*. It was great fun when we actively tried to bring theater to life.

The highlight for me came in my junior year when guests were expected from our French sister city's high school. At that point, we were reading *L'Alouette/The Lark* by Jean Anouilh in French, a modern drama on Joan of Arc and her inner struggles to live up to the pressures of saving her country from the enemy. Thus, when the visit by our French counterparts was announced, our teacher picked two scenes from the play to have us perform for the guests, students, and parents. For some reason, which is not clear to me to this day, she chose me for the role of Jeanne d'Arc or Joan. Anyway, the labor of learning the role in French and rehearsing it endlessly in front of my critical classmates commenced. Usually not comfortable in the limelight, I initially was not so sure I was doing a good job. But slowly I realized that performing in French was an entirely different

affair. In fact, the foreign language helped me to step outside myself and inhabit a different person. It liberated me to express the whole depth of feeling required in my specific scene – Jeanne’s doubts, agony, and sense of responsibility that threatened to weigh her down. The morning of the performance arrived, I became deeply immersed in the role and brought it to life on stage, apparently to great success. Yet what floored me afterwards, was the reaction of my French teacher. Instead of savoring the favorable response by the audience, she became genuinely concerned about my future. “I hope this doesn’t convince you to become an actor,” she said, “let me speak to your parents.” In her view, it was mandatory to study the great playwrights of a culture, to analyze the plays from a critical point of view, even to have the class put them on stage. But to choose acting as a profession was another story altogether.

She should not have worried. My life took a different turn, leading eventually into the academic world. In fact, my 1985 two-week Salzburg Seminar with Sacvan Bercovitch and Emory Elliott did not feed into my theater interest but rather stimulated my critical scholarly path in our discussions of “Contemporary American Literature: New Perspectives.” However, it did unexpectedly and just as importantly, introduce me and four other fellows to ISCLT. It was Bob Belflower, a returning Salzburg fellow, who first told us about the many attractions of this theater, literature, and fun-loving society. Our yearly ISCLT meetings finally brought me back to my love for the theater. Initially just watching and admiring the play-acting of professionals and gifted amateurs in our group in briefly rehearsed, yet often wildly imaginative productions, I rediscovered over the years my own amateurish acting inclinations. Under the direction of Belma Baskett, my last stage appearance was in the role of one of three parallel, long-term lovers of the British poet Philip Larkin in Ben Brown’s 1999 *Larkin with Women*. Here again, I noticed that the deepest reward in playing these roles is liberating myself from the perceived emotional constraints of using my native tongue to express myself more freely in a parallel language.

Born to love Theater!

By Jennifer Church

My first real theater experience occurred when I was about nine years old—1959 or '60. For Valentine's Day, my parents took me into Boston on a Sunday afternoon to see "My Fair Lady!" It was a play, my parents had said; a musical, to be specific. I didn't know what that was, but I was excited about going. Up to that time, every play I knew of took place either in someone's back yard or on the raised "stage" in our school cafeteria. This "Lady" play, I was told, would be in a real theater.

As we arrived, I saw women wearing furs and men in suits. I felt very grown-up. My father led us through the crowded lobby and up a stairway. I had never walked on such thick carpeting. At the top of the stairs, a man met us and looked at our tickets. (He was an "usher" my mother said. He showed us where to sit.) We were in a balcony, and could look down at the seats below. Above us was the biggest, brightest chandelier I had ever seen. Maybe it was my first; I might not have known the word before. But I knew, now, that this play would be something special—special enough to deserve both the sparkly brilliance of that chan-de-lier and the richness of the huge red curtain that hung in velvety folds, hiding the stage. (In our backyard production of Hansel and Gretel, we had used an old bed sheet.)

Mother and Dad pointed out the "orchestra pit" (another new term) where I could just see the tops of the musicians' heads and little lights on their music stands. They were making a lot of noise but not much music until, magically, everyone got quiet. The lights went dimmer and dimmer until we were sitting in the dark. I held my breath. Suddenly, with a crash of symbols, all the musicians began to play—and before I knew it, the music was inside me: soft and sweet, then fast and exciting. I wanted to bounce, to clap along, to sway with the changing melody. Then the curtain opened, wider and wider until I forgot about the curtain altogether, because now there were carts full of flowers, men with bright bandannas and caps, women with long skirts and shawls and colorful hats. I wondered how they all fit on the stage without bumping into each other, especially when they began singing. And then...they began dancing!

That was when I fell in love: when the men magically found space in the middle of the stage and began a wild and wonderful dance. First it was just a few, then more joined in. Now all the men were leaping over boxes, running up stairs two at a time and jumping from the top, all the time singing, something about luck. That's when I saw him. Him! He was tall and handsome and he could kick high up in the front—or kick both legs out to the side in mid-air, which made him look like he was flying. I was in love by the end of the song, and my imagination took over: Surely he was my true father; perhaps I'd

been adopted? If I ran downstairs and jumped up on that stage, I would know all those steps, too, because I belonged there. I was meant to be there, with him. He would recognize me as his long-lost daughter, put me on his shoulder, and we would dance and fly together!

I was aglow by the end of the show.

“I guess you liked that musical,” my Dad said as we walked to the car. I certainly did. I held his hand tightly, but I couldn’t tell him about my “true father” on the stage. He wouldn’t have understood. I’m not sure I did, either, but I smiled the whole way home.

“Can we go to the theater again?” I asked that night.

It was theater I fell in love with. Theater and dance. I’m still aglow!

Theatre Is My Life

By Joseph Schoep

I have always loved the theater. As a child, I was fascinated by the colorful Sunday rituals in our Catholic church with the intriguing smell of incense and the booming sound of the organ. In my eyes, a truly grand opera. Years later, as an altar boy, I became part of the spectacle. In boarding-school we staged operas such as Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* and Lortzing’s *Zar und Zimmermann* in which I, as a choirboy, also took part. I grew up with stage performances and when I heard about the theatre session of the Salzburg Seminar in Schloss Leopoldskron, once the home of Max Reinhardt, where he staged his legendary *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I wanted to be part of the group. Ever since the theatre – especially what we call Musiktheater – has been my passion.

Now I live in Berlin. With its three opera houses, the city is a true Eldorado for every opera lover. Three years ago, just before it closed to make room for a new Ring, I saw Wagner’s fifteen-hours tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a legendary production. It was acclaimed as the tunnel production, which brought music lovers from all over the world to the city. In all four parts, the tunnel representing time, is the dominant image. It gave me the feeling of an endless journey through the tunnel of time through which the

gods and spectators alike have to go on experiencing the timeless virtues and vices of power, love, corruption, greed, etc. With Wagner's music, it was a truly moving musical experience. I think I saw furtive tears in the eyes of my Dutch neighbor.

Theatre Story

By Radojka Vercko

In the early seventies (in 1972 or 1973), Roger Blin was performing Beckett's play *Endgame* in our National Theatre Drama, directing and playing the central character of Hamm. At that time, I had already done some work on Harold Pinter's plays and in that period, experimental theatre was thriving, not only in my country, and I got interested in the theatre of the absurd, an affection that has never faded away. I always find it relevant in our search for values and meanings in life. The play had a strong impression on me and contributed to my later decisions and choices of literary pieces that I wished to explore. In that period, I also became involved in some immediate work for the theatre, thanks to a friend of mine, who started his career as a theatre director and needed help in translations from English texts. I enjoyed cooperating with him and with the actors for the first play he was putting on the stage very much, finding good solutions for the script, which had a rather inadequate official translation. This was the kind of work I liked very much.

I could hardly wait for the opening night of the play. It was outside Ljubljana, but when the day arrived, it turned into a chain of misfortunate events that never seemed to stop. I drove to that place with a group of other friends and colleagues. Due to the heavy traffic on the road, we were late for the play – 8 minutes. The play had not started yet. They were waiting for us, the audience was in the hall already, our friend the director stood alone in the entrance hall, pale with anger, holding our tickets in his hand. The atmosphere was tense, my seat was in the middle of the third row and while I was reaching it, I tripped on a crooked step in the stairs and almost fell. I was dragged backwards to the rim of the stage where two extra chairs were fetched for me and for another belated friend, a student of philosophy at that time, who had also been involved in the production of the play. The lights went out, I relaxed and started to enjoy the play. But after several minutes, I noticed that my neighbour and his chair were leaning dangerously in my direction. His eyes were closed, he had a tired expression on his face and his chair was making creepy sounds. He was a tall, heavy, bearded guy, I decided to support him and his delicate chair, just to prevent another shameful event. I managed to keep the situation calm till the end of the play. After the performance, we went to a restaurant to celebrate the opening night. Our

car made ten false turnings on the way to it, but the rest of the night was calm and pleasant. The play was a success. Several weeks later, it came to a Ljubljana theatre and only then I enjoyed it properly. That opening night with all the unnecessary and stupid misfortunes had no negative impact on the image of the play and its criticism. For another half a year I continued working on translations for the theatre, I made a test translation of another play for the experimental stage of the Drama, but there my cooperation ended; the play was not put on the programme because of a lack of funds.

Every visit to a theatre is a special event for me. Usually, I enjoy the expectation of the day and the memories of the performance are quite different, never so circumstantial.

A Witness

By Michael Edwards

To witness a revolution is something which only a few have the fortune, or perhaps misfortune, to experience. Once in a lifetime is quite sufficient.

In 1956 I was in Germany, coming towards the end of my compulsory military service, experiencing the boredom of a young man with very little to do, and very little money to deploy on the better things of life.

With the enthusiasm of youth, I believed that it was of great importance to be in the know, up with all the latest fashions in clothes, home furnishing, food and drink, politics, international affairs and the Arts (with a capital A). The sources of all information, indeed of wisdom, were the Sunday newspapers. Pre-eminent was *The Observer* which, as well as telling you to carpet your hall and stairs in orange wall-to-wall carpet and paint one wall of your sitting room dark brown, carried the highly authoritative theatre reviews of Mr. Kenneth Tynan. Between Tynan and the almost equally respected Harold Hobson of *The Sunday Times* the fate of a dramatist's efforts would be blessed with success, or doomed to failure.

It may have been boredom which led me to the cheapest seats in the London West End theatres – and cheap they certainly were, much the same price as the cheapest seats in our local cinema. I had been sent away to boarding school at eight, and gradually lost touch with the schoolmates of my early years. Boarding schools also had ridiculously long holidays, during part of which all the local lads (and lasses) of my age were back at their

desks. It seemed natural to take the train to London (a mere 12 or 13 miles) and spend an afternoon watching Olivier or Gielgud or Scofield or Richardson. How it came to be that I always went for the classics and despised contemporary playwrights I cannot be sure, but it may be that it had something to do with the literature I was studying at school, or the 16th and 17th Century history which I lapped up from a wonderful teacher. For whatever reason, I rejected plays with well-crafted plots about upper middle-class families living in houses with servants, French windows and tennis courts. (Anyone for tennis?)

I think that, with the benefit of hindsight it is generally agreed that the London stage in the early 1950s was running out of steam creatively, and was catering a diet of escapism to a very middle-class audience who really preferred to avoid coming face to face with the realities of the society around them.

Kenneth Tynan's review of a play called *Look Back in Anger* hit me like a blow to the solar plexus. Suddenly someone was saying that there are fundamental problems with English society, and with the world of work, that some people are not middle class, and that there is more to relations between men and women than find a good match for your daughter before she gets left on the shelf. And the list of what's wrong seemed to go on and on. It wasn't just a new way of the theatre looking at the world, it was a way of looking that I recognised as authentically representing my own experience.

How good a play it is, I'm not sure, but in its time it said things that need to be said, and it opened the door for a revolution – characterised as a new realism – not just on the stage, but soon after in literature, in television and in films.

As you can imagine, I saw it on the first opportunity I had, and once its explosive force had cleared away the 1930s hangovers like Noel Coward and Terrence Rattigan I became a fan of contemporary theatre alongside my old loves of the classics.

So, I was a witness to a revolution, and unlike most revolutions, it was one with a happy outcome.

Nicol Williamson's *Hamlet*

By Robert Richardson

It was London in 1969. The fashion-led and pop music-centred frivolity of Swinging London (after The Beatles moved from Liverpool to the capital) had to some extent been supplanted by an “underground” influenced by the counterculture of San Francisco, but with its own distinctive twists of psychedelia and left wing or anarchist politics.

A production of *Hamlet* at the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm began with considerable media attention, and this was focused on Marianne Faithfull playing Ophelia. She had scored several pop music hits, the first, “As Tears Go By”, was written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, and she was now in a relationship with Jagger: they were the pop power-couple of late 60s Britain.

The media frenzy continued, but the narrative changed. When the reviews began appearing, the big story was Nicol Williamson's performance as Hamlet. It became clear this was very special and might be considered as one of the 20th century's most important interpretations of the role, ranking alongside Gielgud and Olivier.

Being described as sensational, it was, for sure, a hot ticket, and the details of how I came to see it are now somewhat vague. From the year, I think this is the explanation: at that time I was living very close to London and studying at a further education college, where I was also a member of an evening drama group. Our leader was George, a young English and Drama lecturer and a recent Cambridge graduate. I am fairly sure it was George who acquired some tickets and took a small group of us to the Roundhouse. More certain is the impression made by Nicol Williamson's incredible acting. Over fifty years later, it is something that remains with me.

I had already seen Laurence Olivier's Oscar winning film of *Hamlet*, and the enduring and most iconic scene was for me, and I suspect for many others, the ‘To Be or Not to Be’ soliloquy, shot as a powerful Romantic pose accompanied by a dream like voice-over, luxurious in a poetry of indecision. If Olivier's performance might be seen as one kind of measure, then Williamson took that measure and willfully smashed it to pieces. Where Olivier was reflective, Williamson was dynamic. His performance, though, was beyond the merely energetic, it was manic. As a broad outline, I often describe it as playing Hamlet as a nervous wreck. Hamlet's prevarications were not philosophical musing, but a living reality of frustration and rage. There was a ratcheting up of his desire to exact the cruelest possible revenge on Claudius. Williamson realised that with Shakespeare the poetry can be trusted to take care of its self, and he traded a carefully

enunciated rendering for the power of a singular performance. His nasal voice at times modulated into one extremely suitable for expressing an aggressive bitterness. He eschewed declamation in favour of a more conversational tone and moments of cutting cynicism and sarcasm.

The other role Williamson is most remembered for is Bill Maitland in John Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence*, performed, earlier in his career, to much acclaim in both London and New York, and it was also filmed. The character is in despair at the state of his life, and the nervous anger Williamson presented, a frightening intensity on the brink of madness, might be seen, at least in part, as a template for his portrayal of Hamlet.

As a person, Williamson was complex, troubled and difficult. He had a problem with alcohol and a proclivity for fast living. When playing King Lear at a small theatre in north Wales, the director cancelled the second night, knowing Williamson would party so hard after the first night that it would not be possible (the performances resumed again on what should have been the third night). He also had anger management problems, and on more than one occasion landed blows against a fellow actor or a producer. At one point in the 1970s, he walked out of The Dick Cavett Show, at the time one of America's leading chat shows, just prior to a scheduled appearance. His own volatility was it seems imported into Hamlet, understanding the character partly, and inevitably, through those aspects of himself he must have considered valid for his incendiary interpretation.

Later in 1969, it was decided this production must be filmed for posterity. As with the play, the director was Tony Richardson. I did not watch the film, thinking it might subvert my memory of its theatrical origins. Until now, when I decided it would probably be a valuable addition to this piece. All of the sets were within the Roundhouse, which, as its name suggests, is a theatre-in-the-round (used as both a rock music and theatre venue). For *Hamlet*, it also became a film studio. The film is not just documentation, but valid as cinema, and the many close-ups do not in any way detract from Williamson's performance, on the contrary they provide yet another cause for admiration. Stating the obvious, it is, though, a recording of Nicol Williamson playing Hamlet and not the actual Nicol Williamson I was privileged to experience in a performance now lost forever: a series of moments on a particular night, when something approaching farce occurred: Williamson's pacey movements shifted the dagger round his waist to the middle of his back, where it dangled between his legs. In response to the phallic connotation, there were a few giggles from the audience, and I doubt if I was the only one thinking 'if he sits down now, he will have a nasty surprise.' He didn't, and that part of the action soon ended. Did this detract from his performance? At that point, a little bit, since it became unintentional Brechtian alienation, and if he wasn't aware of it, and I don't think he was, a type of dramatic irony might also be argued. In retrospect, it emphasises a strength of

theatre: it is an art form that inhabits the actual stuff of living, with all its unpredictability. In film there would have been a 'take 2' and I am pleased that I saw the "real thing" when that could not happen. Theatre also means a third dimension, and it was amazing to be close to the actual space Nicol Williamson was moving through, because movement was a crucial part of his performance. Nevertheless I would encourage people to watch the film. On dvd it arrived quickly from Amazon, though there were only a few copies available. The one I received was produced for the Italian market, but it was fine and the subtitles could be switched off. There are a few extracts on YouTube, and again I would encourage tracking down everything there with Nicol Williamson, including interviews. Why? Because he was an exceptionally great actor, and there are never many of those.

The Theatre and I

By Stephen Tree

It's existential. It's part of me. It's the theatre. The possibility to transcend, to go past the mundane obviousness of things to a higher, deeper grip on experience in a kind of concentrated time. Great performances exist, can only exist, in the actual moment when they happen. They need preparation, craft, careful planning – and, obviously, a receptive audience. And there's the rub. I find that I am getting choosy and difficult to please, easily bored. As a well-known connoisseur said, when asked whether from time to time he would try some mass-market 'vino': "Life's too short to be wasted on bad wine", or on poor or mediocre shows – in my personal view.

I did however discover a new medium for myself, the only art form our civilization has developed on its own, and that by mistake, by believing, wrongly, that the ancient Greeks must have been singing their plays: Opera, our great Renaissance invention. Where two art forms fuse into a new whole, into an artistic world carrying, lifting you, ideally, to new heights. OK, the staging is sometimes so-so, the singing not always what you love to hear; but if it works, or partially works, you are transported through time and space and, by melding story and music, you are allowed to experience the creativity of great composers: be it in the *Coronation of Popea* by Monteverdi; in *Medée* by Cherubini, in Janacek's *Jenufa*, Shostakowitch's *Lady Macbeth of Mensk*, or in the impossible story of Meyerbeer's only comic opera with a lovely serenade to a goat by a mad shepherdess – to mention just a few of the glorious experiences which have so much enriched our lives.

And it is an art form that has the advantage that, like music, unlike the theatre, very unlike the ballet (which, as a *New Yorker* author so elegantly said, watched on TV is “like reading Pushkin with Google Translate”) allows itself to be transferred to other media, allowing me to share one of my favorite productions of an early opera:

Dido and Aeneas by Purcell/Tate of 1668; in a production of 1996, a bit longer than an hour, with Maria Ewing, which – despite the fuzzy picture, is a wonderfully convincing performance, very simple, not trying to be clever, concentrating on the story and the music.

I Fell in Love with Acting

By Sharyn St. Clair

I fell in love with acting when I was chosen to be the lead penguin in the 1st grade play.

Scores of school plays later, my love of theatre was cemented. I grew up near Detroit, Michigan. My parents were minor theatre buffs and I tagged along as often as they would let me. I remember the Fox Theatre, and numerous other small theaters around the Detroit area. One time as a child, I saw the movie, *West Side Story*. I loved it so much I saw it 3 times, and I remember thinking, what a good play it would make, not realizing it was a stage play first...in 1957.

Years later at the age of 21, and just out of college, I left for San Francisco to start a career as a flight attendant. What a wonderful town to enjoy all kinds of live productions! I dragged my flying buddies to some performance every time I could. From the rollicking laughter enjoyed by *Beach Blanket Babylon* to *Hair* – where I took my visiting mother, with the understanding that there was nudity at the end. She loved it!!

Later with a small family of my own, my husband and I started a yearly tradition, getting all dressed up and taking our 5-year-old daughter to the San Francisco Opera House to see *The Nutcracker*. Then our son. That tradition lasted for years.

Moving to Los Angeles brought a whole new experience of theatre. From the Shubert Theatre where my daughter saw *Cats* for the first time, to the Magic Castle to see magic shows, to the Pantages to see everything from *The Lion King* to *The Lion in Winter*.

Moving to England in 2000 was a dream come true for any theatre buff and especially me, where 'going to the theatre' was as important as 'going to the grocery store'. The plays are too numerous to mention, but oh how I enjoyed those lovely, old world, theatres. Nothing sleek and modern for me... in fact I had to be dragged to the National Theatre only because I think the outside is so unattractive. How short-sighted!! Seeing Benedict Cumberbatch as Frankenstein (in the play of the same name) at the N.T. was a highlight of my theatre going for sure. So many plays, so little time!! Moving back to the states was a heat-break for a theatre buff...

Now I am living in Austin, Texas (for a bit) and have had the pleasure of taking my granddaughter, Savanna, to see her mother's favorite play *Cats*, as well as *The King and I*, and taking my daughter to see *Hamilton* (well, it's unique!).

How life goes around in a beautiful circle:) I have not only had the pleasure of seeing so many wonderful stage productions, I've had the privilege of being in a few myself and feel the 'boards' under my feet.

What an amazing gift to escape for a couple of hours and totally leave this world and venture into another! I've never thought of this until writing this article, but I hope my grandchildren will have as many fond memories of going to the theatre with me, as I did with my parents and children. The beauty of the sets, expert casts, incredible music, the imagination of the writers and producers, the work it takes to put on any production, reminds me of just what an amazing experience 'going to the theatre' really is.

My Experiences in the Theater

By Emily Kisber

My first experience with the theatre was as a little girl. My father played the flute and I was taken to the theatre to see him play in the orchestra for the *Pirates of Penzance* and it was very exciting. I was more interested in watching my father than the stage. I idolized my father and still do!

The second time was when I was in Chicago on my way to camp about age 14 and went to the Shubert Theatre to see *South Pacific*. I was seated in the middle of the first row of

the balcony and when the curtain went up I almost fell over the balcony, it was so spectacular. I loved Mary Martin in that performance.

The third time was when I was traveling in Europe about age 17 and went to see *Aida* in Rome at the Baths of Caracalla with all the pageantry and all the animals on stage. That was amazing.

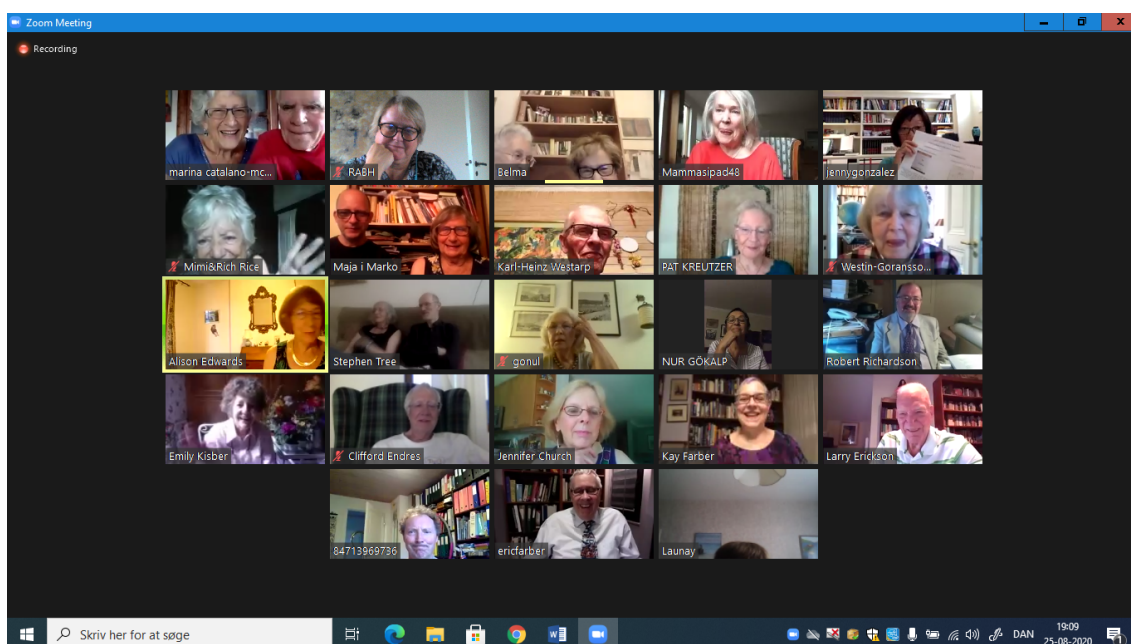
But it wasn't till Stuart my husband died 27 years ago and my friend, the director of the Horizon Theatre (we had been supporting this theatre for years ever since they started), called me and said "We are doing something down here that I think you might like." Jeff, the director, changed my life! I joined the Senior Ensemble and under his direction I became an actress and a writer. It's been wonderful ever since.

PART III

ISCLT VIRTUAL FINAL BANQUET

August 25th 2020

Master of ceremonies: Bodil Nielsen



3/11 - a dark and desperate day in my diary
 A whole school is spent home and within 24 hours we are all virtual teachers and students
 The city is quiet the people hoard toilet paper and empty supermarkets for dry pasta
 The roads are empty
 The skies are empty and blue
 We watch the sky form below – not above
 An unknown virus and hospital staff on overtime
 We distance ourselves from each other
 We wear face masks and wash our hands
 We stay at home and spring clean like never before
 Instead of travels we use the hash tag Staycation
 We hope a vaccine will bring back normality
 The earth overshoot day 2019 was 29 July – in 2020 it was 22 August – FOOD FOR
 THOUGHT

ISCLT 2020 Final Banquet wines

Recommended by Jenny Gonzalez

White Wines in the time of Corona.....



A Coroa Godello 2018 - 100% Godello, a native grape of Galicia, from the Valdeorras DO. On the nose, ripe yellow apple notes, with some savoury and salty character, making it an ideal seafood wine. While lean and fresh, it has a lovely texture and mouthfeel.



Otañón Vetiver Viura 2014 - A complex white from the Rioja region, 100% Viura grape (also known as macabeo). Pear and quince, with brioche and chamomile notes, a wine with juicy acidity and light tannins which foreshadow further harmonization with time in the cellar.

Red Wines in the time of Corona.....



A dense, dark, brooding super tuscan; quite closed in on itself. Patience required to experience its full potential. But already, with decanting, this 100% Sangiovese will open up showing layers of black cherry, plum, lavender, spice and leather. A blockbuster wine that portrays a naked grape cloaked only in the terroir of the winery's oldest vineyards and the blessings of a superb vintage year.



From the faro doc in eastern sicily, a heroic blend of nerello mascalese as the lead, with 3 other sicilian grapes in supporting roles - nocera, nerello cappuccio and nero d'avola . A full-bodied wine that charms in a typical sicilian way - starting with notes of black cherry, blackberry and baking spices, with earthy mineral notes. it has a lingering finish with velvety tannins.

Have a wonderful time!

A Covid-19 Postcard (March- April) – From the Dominican Republic

By Marina Catalano-Mc Vey



My fabulous beach



Growing orchids



Playing with our precious little one



Our Dominican family



Thinking and worrying



Playing with Maria Antonietta

Dear friends,

We were on holiday in the Dominican Republic. The first two weeks were fantastic, on my gorgeous beach! Then the covid-19 drama broke out and we found ourselves stuck in Santo Domingo for two months: no flights back to Italy. No doctor available for Edward who needed treatment. Then five days in a clinic. Excellent place but a room

without windows. No beach, no pool, no theatre, no favourite fish restaurants. No rum parties nor barbeques with friends. No cappuccinos for Edward at his beloved Italian coffee places (tragic enough for him). No nothing! Curfew from 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. Shopping in supermarkets only from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., the allowed time for old people, once a week! The lockdown changed our lives, our habits, our minds. I felt imprisoned and thought for the first time in my life what it must be like to be jailed. The loss of freedom, of personal choice, made me suddenly appreciate all those simple things we take for granted that we could not do anymore.

We heard the News in English, Spanish, Italian from morning to evening. Incredulous, worried, perplexed. We became aware that we belonged to the category at risk, i.e. in other words, we were old, without any discount or illusion. We exchanged videos and interviews per whatsapp with various corners of the world. Covid-19 day and night. Then I ignored them all. Useless. Too contrasting their opposite opinions. I felt uncertain. OK, I thought one day. We are better off here than in the dramatic situation in Italy. Let's see the positive things we have:

- Games with our precious little one, Amanda Amelia, and her dog Maria Antonietta,
- long conversations with our Dominican hosts and friends, Amanda and Salvador, a nice cocktail in our hands, no haste, no obligations,
- cooking and cooking and cooking - each of us in turn was the chef of the day,
- cleaning scrupulously the big house and the small garden, all together, as we had never done before, sort of fun,
- growing orchids, learning about their origin and the variety of plants, taking daily pictures to immortalize their immense beauty,
- walking in the garden along the same round path as prisoners do, I imagined,
- talking on the phone with friends all over the world, even those we had not heard for years,
- reading, writing, watching old photos, telling jokes, laughing, playing cards, more reading and writing, more laughter.

Then, suddenly, a call from the Embassy. We were offered the opportunity of flying back to Milan on a charter emergency flight. A rare opportunity. We packed in a rush! Obviously we forgot things there! The next day waiting for a taxi, sudden deep sadness broke out unexpectedly. Tears and hugs were endless and tender. Saying goodbye to our friends was hard. Hugs and tears. That awful covid-19 had made us all four feel so close, so beloved! Our Dominican family.

Stay safe, all of you

Marina and Edward

A Covid-19 Postcard

By Belma Baskett

Dear Grandmother Belma,

My name is Covid and 19 is my age or what my age would be if I were a boy.

I consider myself one of your grand children since I grew up with your grand son Cavid who is 19 years old. I listened to all the good advice you gave him and I want to tell you how I profited from your advice. You always told him to choose to do what he can do best and do the best with it. Being a virus the best I could do best was to cause an epidemic but remembering your advice I did better, I caused a pandemic. Thank you Grandma.

Covid' 19

Kay sends her greetings from Istanbul

By Kay Farber

Hedgehogs!

Yes, you heard right. Hedgehogs are my biggest discovery during this time of COVID. I'd been a big hedgehog fan for quite some time, and never realized that they live in Istanbul. Right here in Moda, my neighborhood. One evening I spotted one as Eric and I were sitting on the balcony looking down on the garden. I was surprised and thrilled. For many nights I'd see one hedgehog and assumed he was living a solitary hedgehog life. That was until one lucky night when I spotted five of them. I may not be able to travel as I used to, but now I have hedgehogs. Life continues to present some bright moments even during this time of the pandemic.

Kay

Poem To Old Friends Who Have Never Met

By Peter Meinke, Poet Laureate of Florida

Read by Mimi Rich in memory of Rich Rice (who loved it)

When I'm not wishing I could find a unicorn
I wish all our old friends knew each other
The very least they deserve
is the pleasure of each other's company

We'd go down by the river
and the rocks would hum
with this rich collection of men & women
They would look around and see themselves
no longer isolated

no longer points in the darkness pointing nowhere

but as links in a magnificent chain of
impossible flowers
girdling the world and their talk
(they are all talkers)
would burst like spray in the sunlight

and I would smile
saying nothing
with a bottle of beer in my hand
and a small white bird banging in my heart.

Senior Chat

By Alison Edwards

Ruth? My cousin, yes, she's doing fine.
 Well, sort of. She's not the girl she was, of course . . .
 – Same age as you, as all of us – eighty-plus . . .
 I know, it's absurd. I don't believe it either.
 When did you see her last? . . . Really, that long?
 She's certainly had a problem or two since then –
 a back operation, ooh, eight years ago?
 And her eyes aren't good. She has problems with her balance,
 can't feel her feet . . . What? No, it's not that bad,
 she manages . . . Same house, she'll never move,
 such a lovely house. But there are a lot of stairs . . .
 actually, yes, she is afraid of falling,
 she's just applied for a button, you know, those things
 you wear round your neck, to get the neighbours to come,
 if you do have a fall . . . Poor Ruth? Oh, not at all,
 you mustn't get me wrong. She copes, she's good.
 What keeps her well, she says, is her morning swim
 in the Pond . . . I said, The Pond! On Hampstead Heath,
 you know – the Ladies' Pond . . . Oh, every day.
 Gets up at six. She wouldn't be without it,
 swears by it – makes her feel a million dollars! . . .
 Even in winter, yes, but I think she may
 give it a miss this week. It's down to six . . .
 six degrees, yes. She doesn't swim when it's five,
 and she doesn't want to risk a cold this week,
 she's got her exhibition coming up,
 and she's playing the Trout on Sunday . . .
 No, darling, not a fish, the string quintet. . .
 Violin, yes. Or perhaps, this time, viola , , ,
 Both, she plays both, yes. Either. She learnt the stave –
 it's different, you know, for viola – just last year . . .
 Have to keep going, don't we? Use it or lose it! . . .
 Lovely to talk to you, Jane . . . Of course I will,
 I'll give her your love, and I'm sure she'd send you hers.
 Thanks so much for ringing. We'll keep in touch . . .

Love to! We'll do it after your operation.
 Good luck with that. I'll give her your love, yes. Bye . . .
 What, dear? Don't worry, you'll be fine, I'm sure.
 Just eat well, go for walks, get lots of sleep.
 And afterwards you could always try the Pond.

Post Card to My ISCLT Friends!

By Jennifer Church

Greetings, from steamy southeast Michigan...

...where, like most of you, I have been “self-isolating” for nearly six months.

There's been no travel--but I do have a beautiful flower garden. I had to cancel three trips to New England to see my 94-year-old mother--but I learned to zoom, and have written three or four letters every week. No teaching at the prison either; I can't imagine how difficult this time has been for the inmates—I have new classes planned, as soon as it's OK for me to “go back to prison!”

But mostly, in these covid-19 weeks, I have been writing. And I thank ISCLT for that...

Six years ago at St. Jacut de la Mer in Brittany—my first ISCLT—I read an essay I had written about my grandmother Hilda and her Uncle Harry. He was a bachelor philosopher who had left England for America at age eighteen. She was a difficult child of fifteen when she came to America to live with him—just for a year, she thought. These two intriguing characters are also well known to Alison and Michael, as Aunt Hilda and great uncle Harry; and at St. Jacut, Alison and I discovered we both had been writing about them. For me, the essay I read in 2014 became the first chapter of a much longer story, based on the many letters and diaries these two people left behind. I have shared other excerpts of this manuscript-in-process at other ISCLTs since then.

As 2020 began, I had just finished a book for my university and decided it was time to focus on Harry-and-Hilda. When the corona-virus hit, I took it as a sign. I embraced the stay-at-home order, embarked on a hermit life, and wrote with a frenzy. Alison and Michael, and Nancy who lives near me in Michigan, have been great supporters, reading and responding to every new chapter.

I'm not done yet...but I can see the light!

I credit ISCLT for keeping me going. Nancy and I have discussed the story over endless cups of coffee. Alison has given me fascinating tips on British English. Michael drove me all around Bristol for onsite research before our Gdansk conference—and recently helped me understand the importance of jam to the English! Feedback at my summer readings always inspired me. Now, I can't wait to share the finished product next summer at ISCLT 2021!

Until then, best wishes. Be safe. Stay healthy. Keep savoring books and plays and good conversation, even if it's not face to face. Wine is good, too! See you in Solin!

Jennifer Church (jhchurch@sienaheights.edu)

A Postcard from Nancy Weatherby



So sorry I won't be with for the final banquet. I'm am at the shores of Lake Superior and we have no cell or internet service.

I've driven 15 miles just to get this message to you. :-)

My greetings to everyone!

I miss you all.

Nancy

A Few Notes on Henri Chopin

By Robert Richardson

I first met Henri towards the end of the 1970s. He had a stall at a book fair in Cambridge. Henri also gave a performance of some of his sound poetry. Although I was already interested in Concrete Poetry (and produced a tape/slide on it for one of my college assessments), I had never heard anything quite like it. I actually tripped over one of his cables, and this led me to chatting with him. It was one of those occasions when there was an immediate mutual liking, and he invited me over to Ingatestone. I can't remember whether Jean was at this book fair or not (I think she was there, but can't be sure).

At the time, I was a full time student (of Communication Design) at the Faculty of Art and Design, North East London Polytechnic (now University of East London), and living in Stratford, East London, so Essex was quite close. I visited Henri and Jean a few times at Ingatestone. I remember lunch outside on a sunny day, and Jean, who was English but had lived with Henri in France for many years, telling me that she had to cook French style, because the shock of English food to Henri would have been too great.

It was not long after this they moved to Leigh-on-Sea. I actually visited them more times at Leigh-on-Sea than Ingatestone. My overall and general memories are that it was a very smart and impressive terraced house in a suburban street. As at Ingatestone, Henri and Jean were very friendly, kind and generous towards me. They would invariably include me in a beautifully cooked meal. When I came to leave, Henri would present me with a gift: a print or his latest publication and/or a recording. They were both fun, but also took seriously the creative work Henri was producing and the particular positions he took in visual and sound poetry.

An impression I had was that, while living in England, Henri was much in demand, for performances and/or exhibitions, in other European countries (and further afield, e.g. Australia). He seemed to have always just returned from somewhere or was about to leave.

Some particular memories I have of Leigh-on-Sea are as follows: It was there that Henri informed me that he had swallowed a miniature microphone on a thread, to record the inside of his own body. When I asked him what it sounded like, he replied, "It sounds like a factory. It sounds like Fords at Dagenham." He then played it for me, and it did.

I must have visited Henri and Jean at Leigh-on-Sea in 1981, since I recall Henri being very enthusiastic and happy about François Mitterrand being elected President of France for the first time, and he had sent a letter of support.

On a more personal note, it was in Leigh-on-Sea that Henri and Jean taught me how to reverse into a parking space. We were in their car, and I mentioned it was something I had never been able to do. They said words to the effect “if you can’t do that in Paris, then you might as well give up on life.” They then showed me how it was done, and it worked: from that moment I could do it.

After a year’s teacher training in south London, I moved, in 1982, to Grimsby, where I worked as a lecturer at a further education college on courses for the young unemployed. I must have visited them in Leigh-on-Sea after that, because I remember that while sitting round the lunch table I asked Jean’s advice on how best to approach people who were illiterate (she was a Head of Department in the same sector).

While in Grimsby, I was informed by Henri that Jean had died. This came as a shock and upset me a great deal. Due to work commitments I couldn’t get to the funeral. I wrote to Henri apologising, and he replied with a card saying “Don’t worry, it was a black farce.” I’m very annoyed at myself, because I can’t find that card.

After Jean died, Henri moved to Paris, and I lost contact with him for a few years. I was at the point of trying one final Christmas card, and thankfully he wrote back (it was one of the explanations I had suspected: he had moved apartments, and my previous cards hadn’t reached him). Once back in touch I wanted to do something for him (something in return for all the kindness he had showed me over the years). I was quite well established in Grimsby, and “patch funded” a visit to Britain for Henri at the end of 1990. This included performances in Grimsby, Hull and Lincoln, with a final performance in London at The Voice Box (as the literature venue within the Royal Festival Hall next to the Arts Council Poetry Library was then known).

I had the funding to hire a sound technician and his equipment, and the three of us travelled around together. I saw Henri at work testing tape recorders and speakers: he was a perfectionist who always knew what he wanted. The Grimsby performance was on the Lincoln Castle, which was once the Humber ferry and had become a floating pub. I helped, with another guy, carry down to the bar area, where Henri would perform, a paralysed man. We then brought down his wheel chair, and he was quite happy scooting around. At a later date I discovered it was Robert Wyatt (the drummer/vocalist of Soft Machine etc), who, apparently, was a fan of Henri, and lived in Louth, a market town about 15 miles away.

It was during this 1990 visit, at my house in Grimsby, that Henri composed the typewriter poem dedicated to me. He produced it in front of me, and his years of experience meant he had an impressive speed and dexterity: inserting the paper both vertically and

horizontally. However, parallel to this must have been a level of spontaneity: otherwise how could he produce variations and unique artworks?

Just prior to the visit, Henri gave me two of his typewriter poems to publish as postcards, for this I received funding from Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts.

The final performance in London showed there were still enough people around interested in Henri to sell out the venue. I remember seeing Bob Cobbing turn up and shake hands with Henri (which was good since they had different approaches to sound poetry, and had their disagreements).

From then on, I kept in touch with Henri, and once met up with him in Paris. When he moved to Norfolk to live in a grandad flat at the house of his daughter and son-in-law, I visited him a few times there, once staying a weekend. He was still active producing sound poems and artworks.

From the mid-90s onwards I worked at De Montfort University in Leicester with Nicholas Zurbrugg, who became a close friend. Nicholas knew Henri better than me and had organised Henri's visit to Australia. In late 2000, Nicholas organised a weekend at De Montfort which brought together Language Poets (the "star" being Charles Bernstein (who came over from America), and Concrete Poets, including Emmett Williams, Bob Cobbing and Henri. I drove to Norfolk to bring Henri to Leicester and took him back. Unfortunately, Nicholas died the following year.

So, those are a few notes...but of course I have other memories of this incredible person and artist.

Bob

The 'Crown'

By Karl-Heinz Westarp

Haughty, highbrow human pride
desperate seeks a place to hide.
Inimical is the invisual fiend,
Hysterically hands and all is cleaned.
Millions undergo the glottal test
Hoping to quench the viral pest.

World-top wisecracks thought
Doubtful vaccines bought
Could enlarge their rich domain -
Let the poorer die in pain.
Alas, grandiloquence is vane,
Humble acceptance will remain.

Why, what with lots of megabit?
Can they not cope with the 'covit'?
Cope not, but beat with wit:
Meet virally, that's it!
Scholars from around the globe
Zoom in on this new means of hope.

Audiovisual reunions smart
Miss physical closeness, for a start,
No smells, no gustatory fun
When there's a 'Final Banquet' on.
Well, friends, don't feel let down:
Endurance yet will win the 'Crown'!

(K.-H. W. 25-8-20)

PART IV
THIS IS ISCLT
PHOTO ALBUM
45 years



Once upon a time...





ISCLT activities

Our Morning Lectures



Belma



Jenny



Agnieszka



Gözde



Bodil



Bob

All sorts of conversations



Creative work: prose and poetry reading



Marina, Jennifer, John



Alison, Jennifer, Nancy



Vjera

Workshops – Performing plays



Veronika, Edward, Eric



Bodil, Bob



Jennifer, Jeff



Truus, Nur, Bodil, Sharyn



Eric, Marko



Michael

Excursions and Sightseeing



Partying, Celebrations and Dancing





Lanterns to transmit my best wishes.

May love and laughter light your days,
and warm your heart and home.
May good and faithful friends be yours,
wherever you may roam.
May peace and plenty bless your world
with joy that long endures.
May all life's passing seasons
bring the best to you and yours!

(Irish Blessing)