

Dear Friends,

December is a time to review, reflect and reminisce. We hope to help you do just that as we review our fall 2010 program with this, our final issue of the year. Our winter calendar is attached to help you look forward to our exciting winter 2011 program, which will start on January 8 at Café Mozart with our *Prosit Neujahr* Lunch mit Dichtung, at 12:30 pm as always, followed by our annual meeting.

AGS Treasurer's Report

AGS ends calendar 2010 with a diminished net worth of \$5500. Your board of directors has worked on a tight budget all year. AGS was incorporated as a non-profit in Virginia so that members can claim as deductions contributions to an IRS code 501 (c) (3) organization (American Goethe Society of Washington D.C.). The one-time fees for incorporation were \$1400. Some expenses, especially postal fees and stamps, are increasing. In order to stay on budget we will reduce some of our past largesse that encouraged students to become proficient in German. Currently our only funding for the year's activities comes from first-quarter dues and contributions to AGS from members. We will hold 2011 dues at \$25.

- Pehr H. Pehrsson, Treasurer

Schumannfest

Schumannfest on Saturday, October 23, took the place of our traditional Classical Oktoberfest, which we hope to hold again next year. With coffee and cookies for early birds, the celebration of Schumann's 200th birth year was a big success thanks to the inspiring lecture and performances offered by Dr. Stan Engebretson, professor of music and director of choral studies at George Mason University, and his students. Dr. Engebretson led us through Schumann's life and work, marking the different phases with performances of lieder and vocal chamber music. Soloists Stephanie Edewaard (soprano) and Alice Mikolajewski (keyboard) presented haunting love songs from *Frauenliebe und -leben*. *Zigeunerleben* and selections from the *Spanisches Liederspiel* were performed with spirit by the George Mason Chamber Singers under Dr. Engebretson's direction.

The lunch break was an opportunity to explore the culinary paradise of 7th Street and Chinatown. Some of us even managed a quick visit to the new German American Heritage Museum around the corner – and came away with lots of ideas and some intriguing questions, such as “Where did the Amish come from?” The afternoon film by Sting and Trudy Styler proved a deeply moving experience. The two truly made Robert and Clara Schumann come alive in the words they'd written to each other, and in their compositions that framed the readings. I heard this reaction expressed by many in the audience – a fitting closure to a highly satisfying Saturday of Schumann.

- Irmgard Wagner

Cultural Transformations: Berlin in the 20th Century

Dr. Marion Desmukh, Professor of History and Art History at George Mason University, held an audience of 72 in rapt attention with her illustrated lecture at the Goethe-Institut on November 4. Dr. Desmukh's illustrated lecture encompassed the grand sweep of history from Berlin as military HQ in the 18th and 19th centuries, to its emergence as political and cultural capital after unification in 1871 and its reemergence today with the same status. After the lecture, Dr. Desmukh stated she always enjoys lecturing to the AGS audience, which posed questions and comments with great enthusiasm during the Q&A period.

Special thanks are due past president Irmgard Wagner for introducing the speaker, her longtime friend and former colleague at GMU. We would also like to thank Ingrid Gheen and Erika Joyce for being hostesses at the refreshment table, Louis Reith for acting as meeter-greeter, Sharon Higgins for providing a delicious cake, Joyce Constantine and John Loth for bringing cheese and crackers, and to Pehr Pehrsson for taking photographs.

- Erika Joyce et. al.

Lunch mit Dichtung (formerly *Lunch mit Lyrik*)

Members are cordially invited to get together several times a year, starting with Goethe's birthday, at a German restaurant downtown to socialize and share poetry or prose on various themes. The fun always starts at 12:30 pm, Saturdays.

This year Lunch mit Dichtung began on Goethe's birthday, August 28, with the theme of 'Goethe in Weimar,' which elicited discussion as well on Goethe's travels in Italy as participants exchanged happy vacation photos and summer memories. Then on September 25 we celebrated poems Schumann set to music at Old Europe Restaurant. Soprano Leslie Weisman delighted all with a fine rendition of Schumann's setting of the well-known Rückert poem "Du meine Seele, du mein Herz" in anticipation of the October Schumannfest. All this completely from memory - well done, Leslie! Finally, on November 20, a group of 19 gathered at Café Berlin to enjoy poetry and prose in dialect. Topics and dialects ranged from "Schlesischer Streuselkuchen" over plattdeutsch love songs to South German Schnadahüpferl. Inspired by Isabelle Daverne and Sherie Day the lunchers broke into song with "Mackie Messer" and the "Schwäbische Eisenbahn." Waitress Michaela contributed a stanza from her home region to the Schnadahüpferl. The fun continues at Café Mozart on Saturday, January 8, 12:30 pm, with the topic of beginnings, to toast the New Year (*mit Glühwein*), and conduct the annual business meeting. Please contact Joyce Constantine, 301-656-2704 or constantinejoyce@yahoo.com to reserve by Friday morning, January 7, so we can give the restaurant a firm number. *Bis dahin!*

- Joyce Constantine et. al.

AGS's Dramatic Reading 2010-2011

AGS's popular program completes its 2010 season (the 7th) and looks forward to 2011.

This fall, Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei* brought AGS members to Tysons-Pimmit Hill Regional Library for discussion, fellowship, dramatic reading plus AGS's own brand Stammtisch at Ledo Pizza. This Stammtisch is held religiously, or rather gastronomically, after each Dramatic Reading. By participating in AGS's only totally German language event, native and non-native speakers alike socialize, talk, laugh, and under Irmgard Wagner's leadership experience German Literature through direct participation. Attendees braved beltway construction and varied schedules to make their own theater. The emphasis is always on dialogue *zwischen Menschen*, for dialogue is the nature of drama. Speaking aloud Schnitzler's lines, they relived a bit of Fin-de-Siecle Vienna. Comedy and serious issues such as double standards for women are interwoven throughout. Irmgard kept things moving and informative with her questions and insights.

Next Drama Reading starts January 19, 2011 at 6:00pm,* again at Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library. This season attendees will for the first time, be reading drama by the society's namesake, namely Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The play is *Egmont*, the Dutch leader of the revolt against Spanish tyranny. Here is what the noted literary historian, J.G. Robertson wrote: "Goethe's *Egmont* is a masterpiece of dramatic characterization; he is another Weislingen, another Fernando, another Faust. He is again the "Stürmer and Dränger with two souls in his breast." Like these characters, *Egmont* is, to use Goethe's own expression "dämonisch." But as Irmgard will show, *Egmont* is much more. Not to be forgotten is "Clärchen," who like Gretchen, bears witness to Goethe's faculty of laying bear a woman's soul. The love scenes between *Egmont* and *Clärchen* are among the most fascinating Goethe ever wrote. Attendees will have the benefit of an annotated text for the Drama Readings plus, an informative essay (auf Deutsch) from Irmgard Wagner's book "Goethe", maps, historical chronologies, and a chance to enjoy Beethoven's Prelude to *Egmont*. Look for details in the mail, on email and on the web.

- John Loth

**AGS members advised Irmgard that they all preferred the earlier starting time of 6:00pm, because it allows them to get home earlier (or maybe get to Ledo Pizza earlier.) The 6:00pm time introduced originally with changing library hours for the reading of *Minna von Barnhelm*.*

Zionkirche

On Saturday, November 27, we traveled to Baltimore to check out the Christkindlesmarkt of the Zionkirche that takes place annually on the weekend after Thanksgiving. It was well worth the trip! Glühwein, Bratwurst, Gulaschsuppe, soft Pretzels, and a big choice of Kuchen kept us warm and well fed. We found exceptional gifts among the handcrafted, -sewn, -knitted, and -crocheted wares. Best of all was the tour of the church with an excellent guide who unfolded the history of Baltimore as the home of ambitious and educated German immigrants and the hub of transatlantic tobacco trade with Bremerhaven on the European end. The church's stained-glass windows received extra attention as did the end of the tour in the library with floor to ceiling German books printed in the USA - there really were that many! Not on view was the Zionkirche's copy of the Gutenberg Bible; it is at the Johns Hopkins University. Perhaps next year AGS could plan an excursion to this delightful Christmas Market.

- Irmgard Wagner and Erika Joyce