



The American Goethe Society's e-Newsletter
Dr. Simone Seym, Editor

Das Blatt

January 2006

Welcome to the first issue of *Das Blatt* in 2006.
We wish you a happy and peaceful new year!

AGS President's Gist of the Schillerjahr 2005

Our celebration of the Schillerjahr started with the June LyrikLunch, which was devoted to Schiller's poetry. Professor Donald Crosby regaled us with a dramatic rendition - by heart! - of "Der Taucher". Also in June the drama group took up Schiller's Sturm-und-Drang drama *Kabale und Liebe*. Our readings were greatly enhanced by listening to the most exciting scenes in "Hörbuch" format, where outstanding actors demonstrated the passion, satire, and heartbreak that Schiller put in this text.

The book conversation in September explored Schiller's last drama, *Wilhelm Tell*. Guest panelist Dr. Ralf Heckner from the Swiss Embassy explained the role of Tell in Swiss culture. And then, of course, there was the Schillerfest, our Classical Oktoberfest this year, on the last weekend in October. For details on the high time we had on that occasion, see Emily Grosvenor's article below.

Schiller shines at annual Goethe Society bash

"Great souls suffer in silence," German poet and dramatist Friedrich Schiller once said. But the works that emerged from one of Germany's most long-suffering and workaholic writers were honored anew last weekend as the only remaining American Goethe Society kicked off a unique literary extravaganza — the "Schiller Fest."

Perhaps less known than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Schiller was younger, poorer, and often sicker than his older friend and mentor. Though their names often go hand in hand, harkening back to the classical Weimar culture of the late 18th century that they made famous, Schiller remains the less celebrated of Germany's fathers of literature.

That fact wasn't lost on the American Goethe Society, who chose to honor Schiller this year in celebration of the year's worth of festivities taking place in Germany's "Schiller Year 2005." The society's President, Dr. Irmgard Wagner, Professor emerita of German, George Mason University, in thanking the

German Embassy for its support, also noted that this year's LiteraturFest not only exceeded last year's attendance but also had a waiting list. The growth of the Society in the last year and a half attests to the increased interest in German language and culture in the metropolitan area. "In Germany, as you know, we also celebrate people's deaths!" Wagner said at the festival's opening. Society members joined her in a boisterous performance of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," whose lyrics Schiller penned. Each year, the society gathers for one day to explore works of German literature within the context of other arts such as visual art, music, and film.

Schiller is a figure whose works are still timely and relevant for societies around the world, according to many AGS members. He still connects German-speaking countries through their cultural heritage, says member Dan Voglesong, referring to "Wilhelm Tell." Indeed, it wasn't until Schiller's version of Tell's adventures was staged that the Swiss appropriated Tell as their national hero.

This aspect of Schiller's legacy for the world was brought out in a film on Schiller's life and featured in a lecture by Prof. Gail Hart of the University of California Irvine, whose latest book is *Crime, Aesthetics, and the Poetics of Punishment*. Her lecture on "Schiller, Poet of Freedom" was held at the Goethe-Institut during the Saturday part of the festival.

AGS Vice President, Dr. Simone Seym, who led the reading of Schiller's dramas, said it was Schiller's clear understanding of the conflicts in modern life that makes him so relevant today. Speaking on the recently discovered dramatic fragment by Schiller *The Police* for the stage, Seym, a professor of German at American University, said: "The work, based on Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Le Tableau de Paris*, meticulously portrays the pre-revolutionary Paris, its people and the police apparatus. It discusses and reflects on the questions of how society is constituted, how order is kept and how people should best live together."

The Goethe Society of New York City was founded in 1927 as a chapter of the original Goethe Society in Weimar with the intention of spreading to other parts of the United States. The society of Maryland and the

District of Columbia, founded in 1931 by two John Hopkins professors, has been the only surviving Goethe Society in the United States since 1938.

The AGS supports an impressive array of lectures, book discussions, dramatic readings, and activities celebrating German culture in Washington, DC. The society welcomes non-German speakers.

(cf. The Week in Germany: Culture, Nov 4, 2005, <http://www.germany.info/relaunch/info/publications/week/2005/051104/misc3.html>)

**HERZLICHEN GLÜCKWUNSCH!
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 85TH BIRTHDAY,
PROFESSOR TERRAS!**



Dr. Victor Terras is Henry Ledyard Goddard University Professor Emeritus and professor emeritus of Slavic languages and comparative literature at Brown University. He is one of the world's foremost Slavic scholars, the author of the profound study *A History of Russian Literature* and editor of the *Handbook of Russian Literature*, both at Yale University Press.

The American Goethe Society, asked members Professores Victor and Rita Terras to share insights in their personal story, how they came to the United States, and ultimately became scholars in Slavic and German literature.

The interview with Victor and Rita Terras was conducted on December 6, 2005 in Washington, DC. by Simone Seym. Professor Terras celebrates his 85th birthday on January 21, 2006.

Victor Terras: ... I am not really German. I am Estonian. My father was Estonian. My mother was Russian-German, German-Russian from Petersburg.

Rita Terras: But for several generations, they were Russians.

Victor Terras: Ja. My grandfather was a Government employee, high ranked under the Czar. So, I was a mixture of several cultures and was tri-lingual growing up. I later added several more languages.

Simone Seym: Which other languages, Professor Terras?

Victor Terras: English, Polish, Czech, French, and as a Classical scholar, I learned Latin and Greek, and also Sanskrit. I was an Indo-Europeanist. So, I had to study all the Indo-European Languages, and have forgotten most of them entirely. I used to be able to read Armenian and Persian. I was pretty good at reading Persian but I no longer can remember it.

Rita Terras: But you did teach Greek and Latin at the University of Estonia!

Victor Terras: Ja. Yes, I was lecturer of Greek and Latin at the University of Estonia.

Simone Seym: Professor Terras, what were the milestones in your life? Where were you, when? Please tell us about the turning points!

Victor Terras: I was born in a place called Oberpahlen in German, and Põltsamaa in Estonian, a small town in the Southern part of Estonia. I lived there until I was four, when my parents moved to Tallinn, the Capital of Estonia. We lived in a suburb of Tallinn, called Nõmme (Auf der Heide), and I then attended school there. First the German Language school. I simultaneously attended the Russian Sunday school. And eventually transferred to an Estonian school, which was the Gymnasium Gustavo Adolphi in Tallinn, from which I graduated in 1938. Then I immediately went to the University in Tartu, where I had a multiple-major in Slavics, Germanics, Indo-European Linguistics, and Classics. I was a very diligent student, and got my degree in five semesters.

Rita: ... and you went to Poland!

Victor: Ja. In '39, I got a stipend to spend the summer-semester in Poland as a Slavist. And I speak Polish fluently. I couldn't finish my semester because the war broke out. So I got out of there, and went back to Estonia, finished my studies, and was immediately employed as a lecturer of Russian in '41, because they needed lecturers in Russian in Estonia. Then the war reached Estonia in '41. Under the Germans, I had to work, I had no job; they didn't need any Russian teachers. I worked as an interpreter for the German Feldkommandantur. Then I also painted some crosses for German soldiers.

But then I was drafted into the labor service where I was until '43, when they needed a lecturer at the University in Greek and Latin. I was the only person who was qualified to teach those languages. I was very young and very inexperienced, and I taught two semesters till '44, when I was drafted into the German

army. Actually, the Estonian army, the Estonian division of the “Waffen-SS”. We had a chance to register for a driving school in Germany. So I got out in time, before the Russians came. The driving school was at a place called Dietz an der Lahn, near Bad Ems. I failed my driving test there, but anyway, I went to the Kraftfahrkompanie, which was located in Schlesien/Silesia, where I was an office clerk because I could type more or less. I was lucky, when the division was ordered to battle, I was sick with pneumonia. I stayed there, and was wounded. Still sick, but in uniform, I had to fight. I was lucky. I got the last train to Görlitz, where I got examined. The doctor said: “Zurück, sitzend”. So I got into a hospital train to Dresden.

We hit Dresden the night it was bombed, in February 1945. We couldn't get in. The hospital train left, and took us via Czechoslovakia to Prague to the Czech border to a place named Česká Kubice, where I was in the hospital for about two months, until I was operated on, and they cut out the shell splinters from my leg. Then I spent two weeks of *Urlaub* with a local peasant, and went back to my unit, which happened to be in Saxony. But on the way there, it was already April, I was told, that I couldn't get there. Instead, I was sent to Regensburg. In Regensburg I was with the 20th panzer division. Well, then the Americans came, and I was asked, whether I wanted to battle. But I was still too sick. So they gave me *Marschbefehl* to Landshut.

“What shall we do with this guy?” And he said: “Hire him!” And so, they hired me.

On the way to Landshut, I managed to surrender, and was taken as a prisoner of war by the Americans. I joined the Estonian unit. They elected me, a private, Commander of Estonians, even though there was a Colonel among them. I was the only one who spoke English and German. So I had a pretty good time. While everybody else went hungry, I didn't. Finally, it was some time in June, I was released from the camp and I went back to the Bavarian farmer who had offered me the vacation when I was out of the hospital. He was ready to employ me as a farm hand. I knew that kind of work. I worked for him for about two weeks, and finally I had to go to register, to get an *Ausweis*, a passport. I went there, and there I was with the American CIC. I was interviewed, and after the interview was over the officer in charge asked the interviewer: “What shall we do with this guy?” And he said: “Hire him!” And so, they hired me.

I was with the CIC as an interpreter, because I spoke multiple languages. My English was as good as it is now. I worked for the CIC there, and later at some other locations, for several years until I became a “Displaced

Person”, which was when I lost my CIC job, and got a job with the International Refugee Organization, in Amberg, Germany.

Rita: A Displaced Person is a special category for people who were in Germany, but not German, who were not able to go back to their country, because the Soviet Union was there. People who were displaced from Estonia, Latvia, from the Balkan. They were put up in camps, and then they could apply for four countries to go to: USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Victor: I was a Displaced Person, and with the International Refugee Organization I was employed first as a job sheet writer, and then I was appointed chief of Language Training.

But then I met a friend who was employed with the National Catholic Welfare Conference, NCWC. There were three organizations that came from the United States and helped Displaced Persons to move to the United States: the National Catholic Welfare Conference, NCWC, the Church World Service for Protestants, and HIAS/AJDC, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

I was with the Catholic Welfare Conference, although not Catholic. I was a class two officer, which meant that I was paid part in dollars, and part in Deutsche Marks.

Rita: They had three categories. You could be an American, class one, and you were paid in Dollars, and you could be a displaced person, and you were class two, and you were paid half dollar, half Deutsche Mark, and then class three for indigenous persons. I was an indigenous person, who got only paid in Deutsch Mark, which wasn't worth much.

Victor: And at the Catholic Welfare Conference in Ludwigsburg, Germany, I met Rita!

Rita: I worked there as an indigenous person.

Victor: ... and well, we engaged in courtship, and we got married in Munich. We then both worked for the Catholic Welfare Conference in Munich.

Rita: The Program for Immigration of Displaced Persons ended at the end of 1951, and we immigrated to the United States in February 1952. We left Munich on February 2, and arrived, after a couple of major technical and natural difficulties, on February 4, 1952 in New York. For me, indeed for both of us, started a totally new life ...

... to be continued in our next Newsletter, March 2006!

AGS Coming Events

January 18: Dramatic Reading

and Discussion of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* (1).
Dolley Madison Library, McLean, VA. 7:00 – 8:45pm
with social hour to follow. Discussion of this and other
German dramas will continue on third Wednesdays
every month throughout 2006. In German.

January 21: Lunch mit Lyrik

Bistro Europa, Old Town Alexandria, VA., 12:30pm
Bring a poem by Heinrich Heine to read aloud.

February 11: Lunch mit Lyrik

Restaurant Old Europe, Washington, D.C. 12:30pm
Bring a poem by Bertolt Brecht to read aloud.

February 15: Dramatic Reading

and Discussion of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* (2).
Dolley Madison Library, McLean, VA. 7:00 – 8:45pm
with social hour to follow.

February 23: Book Conversation

and panel discussion on Monika Maron, *Animal Triste*.
Goethe-Institut, Washington D.C., 6:45 - 8:45 pm
- Refreshments to follow the conversation -

March 15: Dramatic Reading

and Discussion of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* (3).
Dolley Madison Library, McLean, VA, 7:00 – 8:45pm
with social hour to follow.

March 18: Lunch mit Lyrik

Cafe Berlin on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, 12:30 pm
Bring a poem by *iba* to read aloud.

March 30: Illustrated Lecture

Dirk Holger: "Woven Marvels: Tapestries in German
Collections", Goethe-Institut, Washington DC, 6:45 pm
- Refreshments to follow the lecture -

April 8: Lunch and Art

with Professor Rita Terras – C.D. Friedrich, G. Richter,
A. Kiefer, S. Polke, National Gallery of Art
(details to be announced).

April 19: Dramatic Reading

Dolley Madison Library, McLean, VA, 7:00-8:45 pm
with social hour to follow.
Drama to be announced.

April 27: Book Conversation

and panel discussion on Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.
Goethe-Institut, Washington D.C., 6:45 - 8:45 pm
- Refreshments to follow the conversation -

For details on AGS Events, and to RSVP for luncheons,
please contact John Loth. AGS treasurer, at
jloth@cox.net or 703-242-8840.

Cultural Events in and around D.C.

ART



At the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Dada, one of the crucially significant movements of the
historical avant-garde, was born in the heart of Europe
in the midst of World War I. In the wake of that brutal
conflict, Dadaists raucously challenged tradition, and
art-making was changed forever. The most
comprehensive museum exhibition of Dada art ever
mounted in the United States, Dada features painting,
sculpture, photography, film, collage, and readymades
emerging in six cities: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover,
Cologne, New York, and Paris.

Max Liebermann: Works on Paper

Goethe-Institut, Washington, DC, March 15 - April 28.
Curator: Professor Marion Deshmukh, George Mason
University. German impressionist artist Max Lieber-
mann's graphics displayed, include Liebermann's work
as an etcher, printmaker, lithographer, creator of
pastels, and first edition book-illustrator.

Max Liebermann Symposium:

An Artist's Career from Empire to the Third Reich.
German Historical Institute, March 24, 2006, 9a-5:30p

iNSiGHTS talk. Think.Talk.Influence...

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.
From Jan 2-22, 2006, Dan Napolitano, Director of
Education at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, will
moderate a discussion with Father John Pawlikowski,
President of the International Council of Christians and
Jews, and Victoria Barnett, Staff Director, Committee
on Church Relations and the Holocaust

Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jan 1- Feb 28, Adolf
Hitler's eugenics – NS-scientists dreamed of perfecting
human beings by changing the genetic makeup of the
population. This exhibition does offer a cautionary note
in that regard and it certainly also speaks to the impor-
tance of always respecting the dignity of the individual.

MUSIC

Hildegard & Jaufré

Folger Shakespeare Library, Elizabethan Theatre
The Folger Consort, March 3-5
The Consort contrasts the soaring mystical sacred
song/poems of Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179),
visionary abbess, poet, composer and advisor to popes
and emperors, gifted with an irresistible spirit and
vibrant intellect overcoming social, physical, cultural,
gender barriers to achieve timeless transcendence, with
the achingly beautiful songs of unrequited love from
southern France by one of the greatest of the
troubadours, Jaufré Rudel (1125-1147).

Happy Birthday Mozart



250th Birthday Concerts

Jan 26, 8 pm, Embassy of Austria
Elisabeth von Magnus, mezzo-soprano, and Markus Vorzellner, Piano begin the 250th birthday concert series with a glorious Lieder evening. The program features the most beautiful songs of Mozart and Salieri and compares them.

Das Rheingold. Opera by Richard Wagner

Washington National Opera. German Music Director Heinz Fricke. In German with English supertitles.
Mar 25, 30, Apr 2m, 5, 8, 10, 14, 2006.



14th Annual Film Festival, Jan 20-26

New Films from Germany, Switzerland and Austria
Landmark's E Street Cinema E, 555 11th Street NW

- One Day in Europe (2005, D: Hannes Stoehr)
- KussKuss ((2005, D: Soeren Senn)
- Barefoot (2005, D: Til Schweiger)
- Willenbrock (2005, D: Andreas Dresen,
from the novel by Christoph Hein)
- Oktoberfest (2005, D: Johannes Brunner)
- Let the Cat Out of the Bag (2004, D: Florian Schwarz)
- Ghosts (2005, D: Christian Petzold)
- Welcome Home (2004, D: Andreas Gruber)
- Kebab Connection (2004, D: Anno Saul)

Film Series: Ring of the Nibelungs, March 3-27

Goethe-Institut, Washington, DC

2006 Environmental Film Festival, March 16-26

Goethe-Institut, Washington, DC

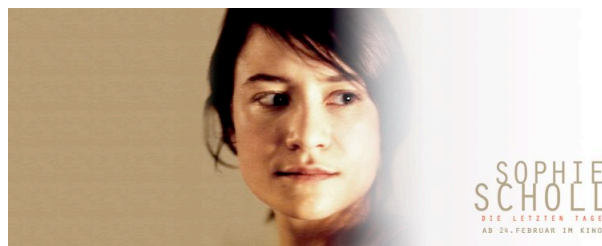
- All Environmental Film Festival Screenings are FREE -

Munich

Steven Spielberg directs a gripping suspense thriller set in the aftermath of the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Screenplay by Pulitzer Prize winner Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*), based on the book by George Jonas. (Bethesda Row)

Goodbye GERMAN TV, Hello DW-TV

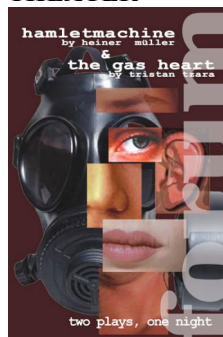
From January 1, 2006 DW-TV will replace GERMAN TV. If you are interested in News from Germany and Europe, discover Deutsche Welle's international television service DW-TV, launched on January 1, 2006.



Sophie Scholl – The Last Days

will reach the United States on February 24, 2006. Marc Rothmund, the director of the German Foreign Language Oscar nominee 2006, got the transcripts after a simple phone call. He recalls: "After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Gestapo transcripts were sent from Berlin to Koblenz, to the archives. But at that time everyone was worried about the end of the Cold War. No one thought about the older transcripts. When I read that the Gestapo interrogated Sophie Scholl, I called the archives... and asked them whether they had the transcripts. I got everything—the interrogation transcripts, the court transcripts, the execution transcripts. " *Sophie Scholl* received three Lolas (German Oscars) including the Audience Award and Best Actress Award to Julia Jentsch for her brilliant characterization of the title role. The film also won two Silver Bears for best director, and best actress at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival. (Related movies: *Die Weisse Rose/The White Rose*, 1982, Michael Verhoeven, and *Fünf letzte Tage/Five last Days*, 1982, Percy Adlon)

THEATER



hamletmachine by heiner müller & **the gas heart** by tristan tzara, known mainly as a founder of Dada.

"I was Hamlet. I stood on the coast and spoke with the surf BLABLA at my back the ruins of Europe". (Hamletmachine)

warehousetheater, Jan 12 –Feb 5

Heiner Müller's single most famous work, power-packed, every single word, sentence and turn of phrase is loaded with explosive connotations, references, double and triple entendres, crisscrossings like the lines on a city map or the circuits of a chip. Müller himself used music, sound, images, projections, and anything else handy to fill in the spaces created by the text. Heiner Müller emerged in the 1950s as one of the remarkable disciples of Bertolt Brecht, completing his artistic apprenticeship at Brecht's Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin where many years later he would be appointed Artistic Director until his death in 1996.



With films by directors such as Neil Jordan, Andres Veiel, Daniel Burman, Michel Gondry, Udi Aloni, Sabu, Barbara Hammer, Marc Forster, Mary Harron, John Hillcoat and Buddhadev Dasgupta, the 21st *Panorama* reflects the full spectrum of international art house cinema. For the *European Film Market (EFM)* 2006 will be a special year. The Market is moving into its new home in the Martin-Gropius-Bau, one of the most famous and beautiful exhibition locations in Berlin.

Joyeux Noël / Merry Christmas



This film is referred to as a symbol of the development of European co-productions between France, Germany, Belgium, and Romania. Frenchman Christian Carion's *Merry Christmas* is the French candidate for the Oscar nominations for best foreign language film of 2006. Based on a true story, the film recreates one

Christmas night during WWI when enemies were able to lay aside their differences, visit each others trenches and celebrate the joy of Christmas together. Christians who had slaughtered each other made peace for a brief moment. Ulrich Greiner acclaimed this film and wrote recently in an article in *Die Zeit* that the symbols of Christmas are more than mere scenery. They represent a lived utopia: "Whether God is dead depends on us." (*Die Zeit*, 52/05). The Movie Tie-in, Michael Jürgs', *Der Kleine Frieden im Großen Krieg (A Small Truce in the Great War)* was the subject of the American Goethe Society's book conversation in December 2004.

150th Anniversary of Heinrich Heine's and Robert Schumann's Death

Has any one ever written better piano parts than Robert Schumann? Any lieder pianist takes special pleasure in a set of Schumann songs with lyrics by Heine, and finds her/himself in a special form of musical paradise. In *Dichterliebe* Schumann provides his most unforgettable piano parts: impetuous introductions, creative, ever-changing accompaniments, and, above all, wondrous epilogues. In the eighth song, *Und wussten's die Blumen*, the poet uses delicate images to paint a picture of despair and Schumann underlays this with a diaphanous accompaniment; at the words "she has torn apart my heart," however, the piano suddenly erupts in a desperate, jagged coda. And then there is the astonishing epilogue to the whole cycle, in which the pianist sums up, as if in a dream, without apparent bar lines or obvious destination, the sorrow, anger, elation, and ultimate resignation of *A Poet's Love*.

Theater: A compelling first-ever staging of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* by director Stephan Kimmig at the Thalia Theater Hamburg.

The Book Corner

Arno Geiger, Es geht uns gut/ We Are Doing Well. Winner of the German Book Prize 2005. Three generations of a family make seventy years of history. Love and death, war and peace. In a moving portrayal of twentieth-century life, Arno Geiger's superb narration tells the story as if every day of the past was our present. Three couples from one family, whose private chaos mirrors the larger political one during the Third Reich, inhabit this book.

Manfred Flügge, Rettung ohne Retter oder Ein Zug aus Theresienstadt/ Rescue without a Savior or A Train from Theresienstadt.

A little known rescue mission from the Third Reich. The rescue of 1,200 people from the Theresienstadt concentration camp in February 1945 is an episode in the history of the Third Reich that has hitherto remained buried in Germany's past. A historical narrative; to reflect the unbelievable nature of the events he relates, Flügge adopts the form of a documentary novel.

Wort des Jahres	2005	Unwort des Jahres
Bundeskanzlerin	(D)	Humankapital
Schweige-Kanzler	(A)	Negativzuwanderung
Koalitionsharakiri	(CH)	Auberginenfürze

About our Members

Farewell to the Siegs

We have to take leave of Gabriele and Helmut Sieg, who in October moved across the continent to be near their daughter in Santa Barbara, California. Gabriele Sieg, AGS President for many years, lent her strong and proactive support to the rebirth of the Society in its new Gestalt. During her tenure as President, she enriched lectures at the German Embassy with exhibits of books and pictures from the Siegs' extensive collection. - They are taking the collection along into their spacious new apartment. - We shall remember Gabriele and Helmut with grateful appreciation.

In Memoriam Christa Lazell

Long-time member Christa Lazell passed away last May. She attended many Saturday lunches and always brought along her frail friend, Ruth Hayden. We will miss her.

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