

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 18 Issue 16
April 23, 2010

Shakespeare

Jets and Sharks

Llamas and Pigs

Life on the funny farm

Fiction

Beggars would ride



*Plus: Maghreb Voices, From Where I Sit,
Around eCampus, and much more ...*

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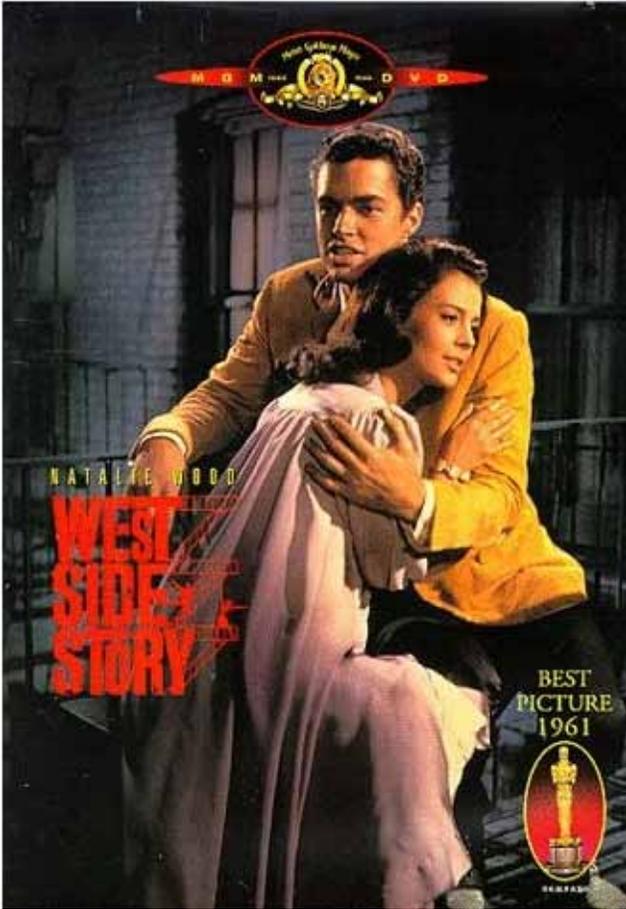
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE (OLD) MOVIES

Christina M. Frey



Shakespeare on Screen, Part II

Last week, we started our celebration of Shakespeare's birthday (April 23) a little early by reviewing several classic film renditions of his plays. For those who find the traditional language and theatrical style of the original plays difficult to watch however, there are still ways to enjoy the rich Shakespearean tradition on film. In fact, a surprising number of "regular" movies are based loosely on, or inspired by, the Bard's plays.

Although these films might keep essential elements of the stories, they are often more accessible to modern viewers. Better still, they cover a wide range of film genres for those less keen on the theatrical style: from musicals to drama to westerns to science fiction, and everything in between. In the world of film, Shakespeare truly is for everyone!

One of the most well-known Shakespearean film adaptations is the 1961 musical *West Side Story*. Based on the Broadway musical of the same name, the Academy Award-winning *West Side Story* takes the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* and moves it to 1950s New York City. The feuding families are now feuding teenaged gangs,

the Sharks and the Jets, and the main players' names have changed, but the forbidden love of Tony and Maria is still as romantic and tragic as was Romeo and Juliet's.

Trivia: Although several of the original Broadway cast members were cast in the film version of *West Side Story* (either in their original roles or in a different role), Tony and Maria were recast; producers felt that younger actors were needed to seem believable as teenagers. You might recognize Maria, who is played by a grown-up Natalie Wood; one of Wood's other most famous roles is little Susan in 1947's Christmas classic *Miracle on 34th Street*.

Another popular musical film is *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), but its tone is much more upbeat! The movie is structured as a play-within-a-play, weaving the real-life drama into the onstage performance. Fred and Lilli, divorced theatre actors, are co-starring in a stage production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the roles of Petruchio and Katharine, their bickering appears authentic, but the onstage animosity between the two is no act. The pretty actress who plays Bianca, her no-good boyfriend, and a pair of debt-collecting gangsters complicate matters, but help bring both the play and its players to a happy close.

Trivia: Did you notice several instances in which the characters seemed to be throwing items (or themselves) at viewers? *Kiss Me Kate* was originally filmed in 3D, and was screened as a 3D film in local theatres when it was first released.

Real-life identity and stage persona also get mixed in 1947's *A Double Life*, although the results are more tragic. In this clever *film noir*, an actor playing the title role in a production of *Othello* identifies too closely with his character's deadly jealousy. Eventually, his perception of reality begins to crumble, culminating in murder. The cinematography does an excellent job of underlining the blurring distinction between reality and fantasy.

Trivia: Ronald Colman, who played the unstable actor, won an Academy Award for his work (the film was also awarded the Oscar for Best Music).

Another rendition of *Othello*, *All Night Long* (1962) transfers the tale of ambition and jealousy to 1960s-era London. Here, jazz musicians become embroiled in a plot that largely follows the storyline of the original play. Good music and a more upbeat ending make this a more feel-good film than other adaptations of the play.

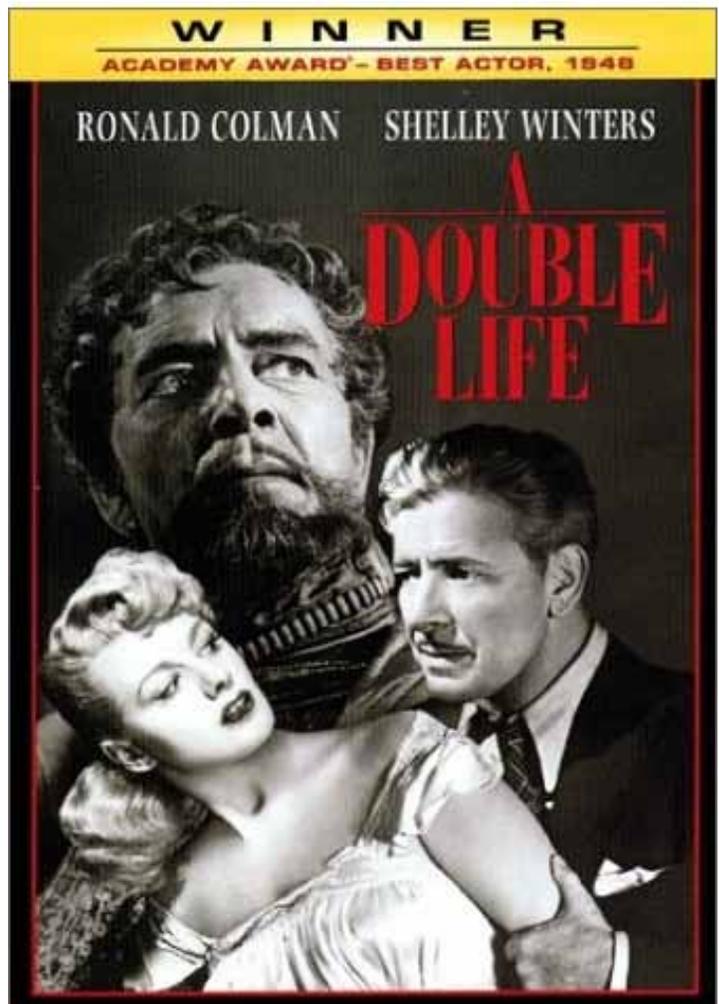
Trivia: *All Night Long* includes cameos by many jazz greats of the time, including Dave Brubeck, Keith Christie, John Dankworth, and Charles Mingus.

Musicals and plays-within-plays were not the only film genres that tackled Shakespearean adaptations: dramas, westerns, and science fiction films all have made their mark in the world of Shakespeare on film. One of the best adaptations of all is Orson Welles's historical drama *Chimes at Midnight* (also known as *Falstaff*) (1967).

It's based on several of Shakespeare's historical plays (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV part I*, *Henry IV part 2*, and *Henry V*), and the dialogue uses Shakespeare's original language. However, rather than focusing on the political drama involving the kings, as did Shakespeare, Welles's film is a character study of the rise and fall of Sir John Falstaff, companion to Henry V. Although difficult to locate, the film is a gem, and has been considered by some (including Welles himself) to be Welles's greatest work.

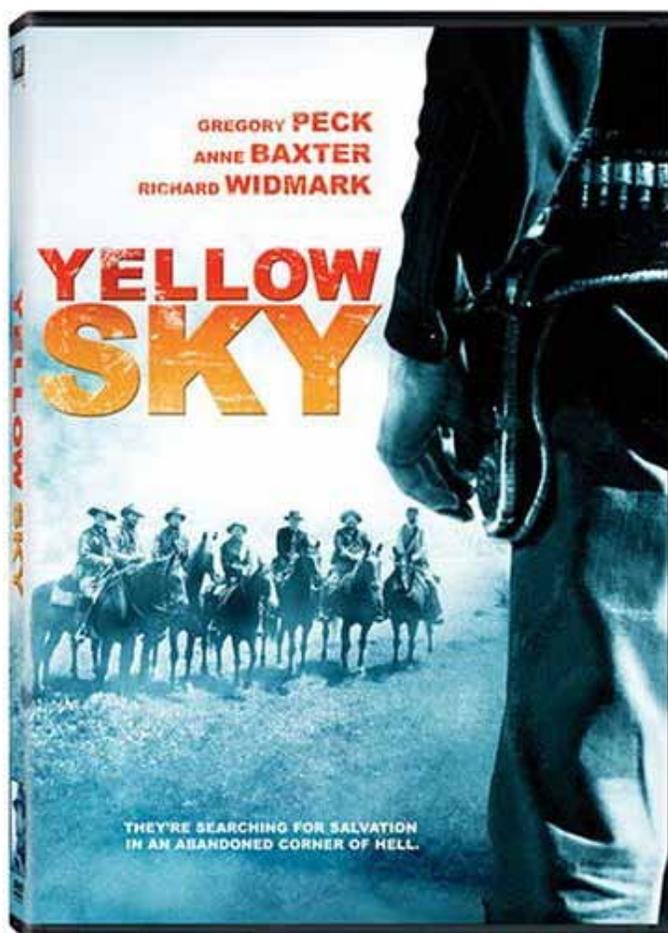
Trivia: The scene depicting the Battle of Shrewsbury is said to have inspired similar scenes in modern films like *Braveheart* and *Saving Private Ryan*.

Yellow Sky (1948) is a surprisingly good western based on *The Tempest*. A bank robber and his fellow gang members, fleeing the law, come upon a largely abandoned ghost town, Yellow Sky. Its lone inhabitants: an old man (the Prospero character) and his spunky granddaughter, Mike (the Miranda character). Greed, honour, and love all compete as the two worlds collide.



Trivia: You might recognize several screen legends among the cast: Gregory Peck (*Roman Holiday*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*) plays chief outlaw Stretch, and Anne Baxter (*All About Eve*, *The Ten Commandments*) is Mike.

Also based on *The Tempest*, futuristic sci-fi movie *Forbidden Planet* (1956) moves the setting to distant planet Altair IV, where an expedition is headed to determine the fate of a human colony that had disappeared 20 years earlier. They soon find the only survivors: Professor Morbius (the Prospero character), who has developed his intellect and skill on the planet and refuses to leave; and his daughter Altaira (the Miranda character), who has never seen another man and who begins to fall for the expedition's young commander. A murderous monster (the Caliban character) begins to slowly pick off the crew members, and the dramatic music raises the suspense as the monster is revealed in a final twist.



Trivia: *Forbidden Planet* was the first film to employ a completely electronic musical score, and it did so before the synthesizer era. The score was composed by Louis and Bebe Barron, musicians and pioneers in the very new field of electronic music. To produce *Forbidden Planet*'s innovative sound, the Barrons created electronic circuits to provide the array of base sounds, and used special audio effects to create countless variations on the theme.

British and North American filmmakers weren't the only ones inspired by Shakespearean literature. Japanese film *Throne of Blood* (1957) is a fascinating adaptation of the tragedy of *Macbeth*, set in the world of feudal Japan. In fact, many critics consider it to be one of the best adaptations of *Macbeth* ever made. The plot closely mirrors that of the original play, although the setting, characters, and costuming are so different that it seems its own creation.

Trivia: Talk about realistic acting! When the death scene of Washizu (the *Macbeth* character) was filmed, real arrows (shot by professional archers) were used in order to make the actor's expressions of fear more realistic. The film's director sought realism in other

details, too. For example, the castle was shot near Mt. Fuji, and since the castle's courtyard was filmed in a different location, the production crew brought dirt from Mt. Fuji to ensure that the landscapes matched.

Shakespearean literature is typically read, but it was originally intended to be dramatized and viewed. Attending a theatre performance isn't always practicable or possible. Fortunately, however, filmmakers over the past century have made so many widely varied adaptations that the Bard's work truly is accessible to everyone, both literally and figuratively. On April 23, make a bag of popcorn, fire up the DVD player, and immerse yourself in Shakespearean drama! Happy watching!

When she's not watching old movies, Christina M. Frey can be found blogging about kids and media at [Woozles and Heffalumps](#).

FICTION

Jennifer McNeil



Then Beggars Would Ride

"*Lilium* Enchantment," Val says as she puts a bulb into the hole she has made with her hands and covers it with soil. Val and her mother, Rhea, are planting lilies in the back garden on the Saturday after the long weekend in May. Rhea used to know the Latin names for almost every flower, but now Val has to remember most of them for her.

"Pat the soil, like this," Val says, showing Rhea how to flatten the soil covering the newly planted bulbs. Two years ago, Rhea planted the bulbs too deep and the flowers never grew. That was the first sign something

was wrong; Rhea always had a green thumb and her garden had always been beautiful.

Rhea gives Val a blank look and then stares at her daughter's hands as Val pats the soil. Today has been what Val calls a Pollock day, after the print by Jackson Pollock Rhea gave to Val on her thirty-sixth birthday. On Pollock days, Rhea exists in confusion; she remembers little or nothing and is baffled by even the most routine tasks. On this particular Pollock day, she had put her pants on inside out and her blouse on over her sweater. Val had to help her change, dressing her like a child.

This is the second year Val has been taking care of her mother. Two years of the Game Show Network and neurotic hosts shouting "Double Whammy!" or "C'mon down!" Two years of taking Rhea for short walks transformed into epic journeys by her need to wear, regardless of weather, scarf and toque, winter boots and gloves, and a winter coat with the collar turned up around the neck. Two years of questions: "Who are you? Where am I? What day is it? What month, what year?"

Once in a while, Rhea asks, "Where's my baby?" Val is an only child and knows the baby her mother is asking about is herself.

It was on the third night that Rhea noticed the pattern on the pillow sham. Despite having slept on the same sheets for as long as she could remember, perhaps all of her 15 years, she had never really looked at the pattern. The sham was mostly white with a sprawling design of pale green vines. As her father lay down beside her she saw that pale blue flowers dappled the curly green lines.

"This is your fault," her father said, whispering in her ear. He had said the same on the first two nights and, unable to account for her mistake, Rhea nevertheless felt shame burning in her cheeks. Her fault, this pain. Her fault, this degradation.

The pillow sham felt cool against the heat of her face and she found herself staring at the delicate blue flowers again, hidden from her all these years and finally revealed, on this night, amidst the confusion of green vines.

Sometimes Val's father had come into her bedroom at night. She will never forget the sound of his breathing. He made a sort of low grunt each time he exhaled, as if his throat were closing and he were about to choke. In the quiet, early morning hours, there was no escape from the sound.

"Mom, you okay in there?" Val asks, trying to ignore these unwelcome memories. Val and Rhea have been in the public washroom at Zellers for the length of time it has taken the in-store audio system to cycle through five instrumentals, all seeming to feature Kenny G. Shopping for comfortable shoes with Velcro instead of laces had taken twice as long; according to Rhea, all of the shoes were too tight.

"Are you sure you don't need any help?" Val knows her mother will not reply. They have replayed this scene many times before and the outcome is always the same: Rhea locks herself in the toilet and refuses to respond to Val's enquiries until Val finally has to climb under the door into the stall. As Val drops to her hands and knees, she is surprised to hear the lock disengage. Rhea pushes open the door and stands before her daughter, shoulders bent, watery eyes imploring. "My baby is dead," she says. "He killed my baby."

Val feels the sting of threatened tears. She has never shared anything with her mother, and these words confirm suspicions she has always harboured. "You knew," she says, feeling only sadness now. Sometimes there is anger, hot and uncontrollable, bubbling out of her like an overflowing pot left unattended on the stove. Other times there is bitterness and pleasure to be taken from her mother's fear. Now there is only emptiness, lingering hope torn from her, leaving her hollow.

On the night Val's father was taken to the hospital, there was an old man sitting in the waiting room holding a woman's purse on his lap. Val watched the man sleep with his head dropped onto his chest, repulsed by the trail of saliva glistening on his chin.

Val's father had been on dialysis for years and his kidneys had finally decided to quit. Not soon enough, as far as Val was concerned. The doctor told Val and Rhea that Bill had not suffered much and he was not suffering now that he was in a coma. Val had hoped there would be pain, and consciousness.

Bill's bed was at the end of the hospital room separated by a thin curtain from a woman who sometimes cried out in her sleep. The life support apparatus reminded Val of her father's breathing, the sucking inhale and laborious exhale.

When Rhea left the room for coffee, Val pulled her chair close to her father's bed and examined the face of the man who had destroyed her. Weak now, old and powerless. "I forgive you," she said, forcing the healing words. She waited for something to happen, a weight lifted off her shoulders. The breathing machine continued its work and Val felt nothing change.

On her wedding night, Rhea found herself remembering the pillow sham with the blue flowers and twisting vines. Bill held her close as she cried, seeming to understand the reason for her distance although she could not have explained it to him in words. She would never tell him about her father or the baby she had lost and she sensed that he would not resent her secrecy. On that night, she knew that she loved him and that he would be a good husband, a good father. It was what she had always wished for.

Val stirs custard on the stove while Rhea sits in the den watching another game of questions. She is making what Rhea used to call Banana Hide, custard filled with slices of banana that remain hidden under the skin.

When the custard is ready, Val pours some into a dessert bowl and lets it cool on the counter. As she washes the dinner dishes, she watches the skin form on the yellow custard and listens to a contestant tell the game show host that "If wishes were horses" is her final answer.

Rhea looks at her daughter, her brow drawn down slightly. Val feels as if they are on the edge of something, a revelation, an admission.

The custard has cooled by the time Val finishes tidying the kitchen and she takes the bowl with her into the den. Rhea is still sitting on a chair from the dining room with a TV table pulled up close to her waist. "Time for dessert," Val says as she sets the bowl on the table and hands Rhea the spoon. It has not been a Pollock day, so Val does not have to feed her.

As Rhea spoons the custard into her mouth, slurping it like soup, Val feels a heat rising within her. It is that anger, bubbling, making the blood rush to her face. "I can't forgive you," Val says and Rhea stops eating the custard, the hand holding her spoon poised midway between the bowl and her mouth. "I can't forgive you for not making him stop."

Rhea looks at her daughter, her brow drawn down slightly. Val feels as if they are on the edge of something, a revelation, an admission. If on good days Rhea could remember the names of flowers, perhaps she could remember her daughter's pain as well.

"He killed my baby," Rhea says finally. She turns back to the television and brings the spoon to her mouth, slurping the cooled custard.

Val watches her mother eat and, when Rhea has finished her dessert, gets up to close the curtains against the gathering darkness.

OF LLAMAS AND PIGS AND ANIMAL THINGS

Bethany Tynes



Life on the Funny Farm

Did you know that llamas are afraid of pigs? We didn't. Not until we brought the pig home, that is. And technically, the llamas aren't afraid of all pigs, just ours. You see, our next door neighbour also has a pig—a much, much larger pig than ours, in fact—and our neighbour's pig pasture shares a small stretch of fenceline with our llama pasture.

Last fall, we got our first pair of llamas. Both were big, round, fluffy females; one a chocolatey brown and the other pure white. The llamas soon discovered that if they stood by the stretch of fence they shared with Marigold, the neighbouring pig, and looked depressed, our neighbour would come over and give them treats. They like treats, and therefore also hanging out beside the pig pasture. Four more llamas later, our little herd still spent a fair amount of time back by "Marigold's corner" of the field.

The idea that llamas would be afraid of one pig but not another evidently didn't occur to us prior to bringing our pig home.

Abby is a friendly two-year-old pot-bellied pig. She is perhaps one quarter of Marigold's size, and does not seem to have a speed faster than waddle . . . waddle . . . waaaddle. But it turns out that no matter how slow-moving and harmless she may be, Abby is a holy terror to the llamas.

Have you ever heard a llama scream? I have. In fact, I was woken by one early in the morning, the very first morning we had Abby. And let me tell you, a llama scream is like the sound you would get if you crossed a horrified horse whinny with a disgusted duck quacking, only with a more nasal quality. And louder.

It's also accompanied by seizure-like twitching as the llama shakes like a leaf. Immediately, the remainder of the herd notices this spectacle (as does everyone else for half a mile), and gathers around the terrified llama. As they follow her gaze, and see the imminent threat of a little porker lumbering across the yard, the other llamas too succumb to madness. They scream. They shake. And finally, they turn tail and run, crashing into each other in their hasty retreat.

Dolly is always the first llama to sound the alarm. Perhaps it's because she's our youngest female that she's by far the most alarmist in the herd. She's always joined next by Jamika, our oldest female and one half of our original llama pair, whose scream seems little more than a panicked chortle after Dolly's piercing shriek. After Jamika, the boys pick up the cry, until the next thing you know, all six llamas are in an utter uproar, stampeding around the property.

We thought that once they'd been properly introduced and given time to adjust to one another, the shock of finding a new animal on the farm would wear off. Perhaps they'd get acquainted: after all, Abby was certainly willing to make friends, and the herd had been calm and social around Marigold for months.

After several months, however, we've been forced to conclude that the llamas do *not* adjust well to change. In fact, even after proper introductions, Dolly still sounds the alarm every time she sees Abby (which is surprisingly often, considering the amount of land they have available to roam).

Llamas stampede away, pig waddles off in a different direction, and after all of the ruckus settles down, we usually have almost an hour of quiet before the next time Dolly sees Abby. Unless Abby happens to accidentally wander into the horses' field, that is. Did you know pigs are afraid of horses? Well, maybe not all pigs, but ours . . .

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Muscle-bound

The rippling muscles of heroes, from sword-and-sandal epics to modern-day spy films, have inspired the sale of countless workout regimens and supplements. This week, we take a look at the enduring appeal of the muscle man (and woman).

Afghan Bodybuilders - Bodybuilding might not be the first thing that comes to mind when someone says "Afghanistan," but the sport is incredibly popular there—and was, surprisingly, even permitted during the 1996-2001 Taliban regime. Break out the fake tan.

Pumping Iron - There were plenty of muscles in those beach movies of the '50s, but the 1977 documentary *Pumping Iron* brought the world of bodybuilding into public consciousness like nothing before. It's considered a classic, *and* you get to see a very young Arnold Schwarzenegger before he became a governor.

2010 Ms. International - Forget the tiaras and evening gowns. The ladies in the Ms. International competition are all about muscles. This is a great shot of the 2010 winner, Iris Kyle of Cypress, Texas. Even if it's not your idea of beauty, you've got to admit it takes awe-inspiring dedication to get there.

First Bodybuilding Contest - The 1904 Physical Culture Show in Madison Square Garden is hardly the first time people have battled it out over who has the biggest muscles. But this clip probably *is* one of the first times a bodybuilding contest was recorded on film.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Dinuk Wijeratne, Part II

Dinuk Wijeratne is a prolific composer, a brilliant pianist, and a musical visionary with an aesthetic informed by the Buddhist principle of balance. With a sensibility honed by one of the best musical educations—both academic and autodidactic—imaginable, and, still in the midst of a continent-spanning performing career, Wijeratne welcomes the quiet of his newfound home in Nova Scotia for the opportunity it affords him to focus on composition and his duties as director of the Nova Scotia Youth

*Orchestra. Complex Stories, Simple Sounds, his CD collaboration with clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, is soon to be reviewed here in *The Voice*. He recently took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about Robert Altman, concept-driven composition, and the importance of music in education.*

Nova Scotia as Artist's Terroir

I really enjoy Nova Scotia for the easy access to tremendous natural beauty (the lake near my home is a daily visit spot in the summer and fall). There's a calm and solitude that is really conducive to creative work; you can work in relative isolation and get deeper into your work. Then there are the personal qualities of the people here—warmth, an easygoing nature, and a lack of pretension—that I hope will never change.

Lessons from a Renegade

My favourite film director is Robert Altman. His attitude was always that he would just do a project if it interested him even if he had to give studios the runaround (which he did with *M*A*S*H**). He was a real rebel who ultimately had a lot of compassion for actors and for his work, and he would use or avoid the studio system to suit his own interests. He suffered for it, yes, but he created great work.

I read a lot about his method of directing because directing films and conducting orchestras are very much analogous. Because I'm a performer and also a leader, i.e., a "director," I have to figure out the differences between all of those things. For instance, when you're creating you have to have something in mind regarding the practicalities of how it's going to be performed. But once a work is created you have to summon a kind of leadership and then work with your actors to bring it to life.

Kevin Spacey said the genius of Altman was that he allowed actors to think that they had more freedom than they actually had, which I think is fabulous. Altman probably got something even better than he wanted because he had the flexibility to listen to actors' suggestions.

That's the kind of leadership I aspire to. But it's actually much harder in the classical music industry than it is in film because we're working with a text with less of a margin for freedom. I have to say I find this a frustrating aspect of working in the classical genre as opposed to a genre that involves improvisation.

All of a Piece

The biggest cultural influence on my music has been Indian classical music, and it's not, to be honest, the melodic influence so much as the rhythmic influence. My melodic influence is a mainly modal language that

comes from modern Western classical music and from some world music. My rhythmic language comes from north Indian music, particularly the sounds of the tabla, which have hugely changed my language.

And then there's the whole Middle Eastern thing that I got into because of Kinan Azmeh. I'm not really much of an expert on any of that but aurally I know the style. But when we work together we're not trying to create something traditional at all, whereas my approach to the Indian influences are much more rigorous because I know a lot more about the actual workings of those genres.



I love combining musical influences. I'm basically an eclectic in every way. I was taught by eclectics and I only seem to work with eclectics. But I never do synthesis for its own sake. I never think consciously, "this needs to be mixed with that." Ultimately everything is concept-driven, so if I think something needs a certain element for the sake of the concept and just because I'm moved by it then I'll use it.

Working from a Concept

The fun part for me is the concept stage, when I get to plan what happens in the piece. My attitude toward what I create is that everything must have a unity about it. If you want to achieve something very Mozartian you have to trim the fat and you can only do that with a clear vision.

Educating the Whole Person

Daniel Barenboim is my favourite musical philosopher and his big credo is that music is a metaphor for life. I believe

absolutely in that; music is the perfect tool for understanding yourself and the world, not in terms of specific events but in terms of how human beings function in society and in themselves. It's escapism and also a window to understanding. People can reach this understanding even if they don't play an instrument.

Counterpoint, for example, is a means of presenting an opposing argument that can freely express itself and still be harmonious. If you listen to even a very simple Bach piece that has just two lines, the two lines are expressing themselves without compromise. That's just one of many examples in music.

There is no other discipline that so thoroughly combines every aspect of being human than that of physically playing an instrument. You're combining the physical, the emotional, the intellectual, and the spiritual. But educators need to understand that music is so much more than a fun, extracurricular thing. It *is* fun but they need to know what else music can offer, which is just as important as mathematics or any other subject.

Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .

#37

Shane broke your arm?

Here.

SLAP!!

*Bert, every time you
crave this phone,
think about the
last conversation
you had on it.*



AU's People and Places

Serena Koons

Serena Koons is the Senior Administrative Assistant in Learning Services Tutorial (LST), and has been with Athabasca University since the fall of 2003. She started out in the Office of the Registrar, “then went to the School of Business, where [she] worked as an Undergraduate Student Advisor. In the fall of 2007, [she] came to [her] current position with the Learning Services Tutorial.”

Koons currently works “in an office building just off the main campus” in Athabasca, and, like many AU employees, is “eagerly awaiting the opening of the new ARC building, which should provide enough space for all Athabasca-based staff to move back to the main campus. It will be wonderful ‘bumping’ into people in the hallways again,” she says. “This is valuable for sharing ideas, solving problems and keeping the AU community strong.”

“As a long-time resident of Athabasca, I have always known about the university and the wonderful contributions it makes to our community,” says Koons. “But more than anything else, I respect its dedication to flexible, open access learning that allows people of all ages and all walks of life to follow their educational dreams. There is no doubt, post-secondary education is not easy. But if you have the will, we have the way.”

“Our mission at LST is to provide exceptional administrative support to students and tutors. For students, this means informing them of changes to their tutor information and assisting them in resolving concerns that arise with their tutor,” she explains. “For tutors, this means monitoring and responding to course trends, connecting them to vital resources and helping to build a sense of community across a distance.”

According to Koons, “Learning Services is responsible for ensuring the continuity of tutorial support for students. This begins when we assign students a tutor and carries through until the student is finished . . . In a traditional institution, there are a certain number of spaces and students compete for a spot. At Athabasca University, our flexibility means there is always a spot for you. And instead of being restricted to starting courses in January and September, AU courses start on the first of every month so you can register for a course at any time. This means that our registrations fluctuate from month to month. Sometimes we have more students than spaces. Other times we have more spaces than students. Since tutors are often involved in multiple courses, determining how best to utilize each tutor and how to balance their courses can be like a big Sudoku puzzle. We [in the LST] monitor student numbers, watch course trends, recommend postings as needed, and generally work to ensure tutors can support the students they have.”

Koons also notes that though the LST is occasionally “involved in helping students resolve concerns that arise between them and their tutor,” she is “happy to say, that among the 4,000 - 6,000 student to tutor connections we make per month, we can count on one hand how many need assistance. This is a credit to both our students and our tutors.”

If students do have problems in their relationship with their tutor, however, “students are encouraged to contact Learning Services for support. First, we listen to what is happening for the student. Sometimes the problem comes from not understanding the services standards. For example, one tutor may work exclusively

for AU and able to respond to questions almost instantly, while another tutor may work as a full-time professor at another institution and can only respond to questions in the evening or every second day. Sometimes a technical issue interferes with the student's messages getting through. Sometimes a student just needs help understanding where to find the information they need. There is a great deal we can do to help, including offering little tips to help a student work more effectively with their current tutor."

In the event, however, that a problem needs "more formal attention," LST staff will "try to facilitate a solution using a respectful conflict resolution process. First, we ask the student to outline their concerns in an email to tutserv. We then forward the concern to the tutor so they can check their records and provide any additional information. This is the stage where we often discover the technical problems. Both the student's and tutor's emails are then considered by the course coordinator who looks for a resolution that will work for both parties. The goal is to get the student back on track with their studies as soon as possible."

"Through my work with AU, I have learned a lot about the university and the students we support," Koons says. "My degree is from a traditional bricks and mortar institution, so I find it interesting to hear the stories our students share. There are some elements of our experience that are similar and some that are quite different. For example, most of us end up with one or two 'instructors' we don't agree with and courses that we can't wait to finish. There are some tips that we can offer to help you communicate effectively, but sometimes it comes down to swallowing hard and getting it done."

"I also believe the skills that AU students develop as they balance work, home, community and education are invaluable. The experienced AU student has discipline and drive. Nothing shakes them from their goals. They are problem solvers, who have learned to communicate effectively with whatever tools are available to them. They are used to looking for their own answers, asking clear, concise questions and working on other things while they wait for a response."

"My life goals are simple," says Koons. "I resolve to find the beauty in each day; to learn from those around me; and to do my best to help others make their dreams come true. Athabasca University allows me to offer an understanding, patient voice for students as they work towards their educational goals and provide understanding and helpful information for our tutors as they manage the ever-changing workloads associated with teaching at AU."

DID YOU KNOW?

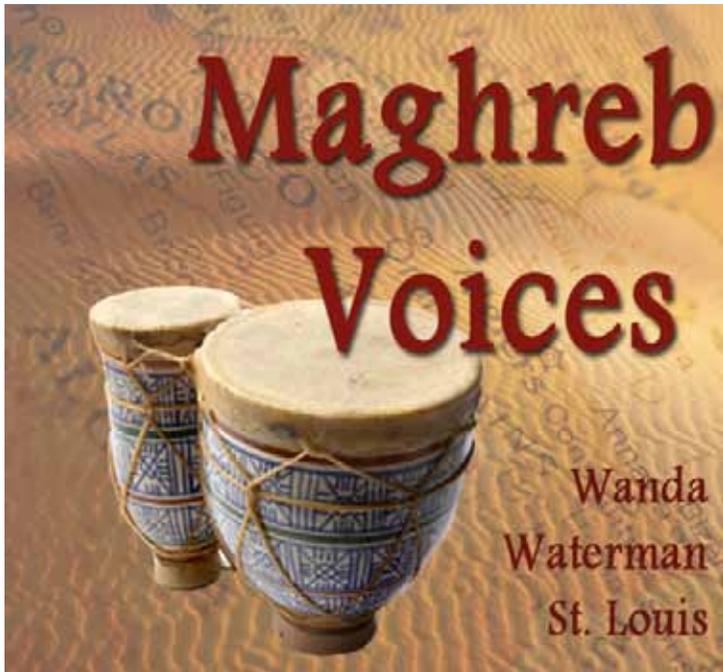


New Look for AU Library Site

The AU library is one of the most popular services with students, and it's about to get even better. On March 15 the library launched a new interface for their online catalogue, and the beta version has been available to users since February.

The fresh new homepage is easy to navigate with links to all the resources you need, including a list of new library materials.

And don't forget to check out the [Web 2.0 link](#), where you'll find things like AirPAC, which lets you search the AU library catalogue from a wireless device; the AU library Facebook group; Zotero, a Firefox extension to help you "collect, manage, and cite your research sources"; and much more.



Tunisian Jazz Pianist and Composer Wajdi Cherif, Part II

A Sweet Newness in the Exchange of Musical Traditions

Wajdi Cherif, *Fuzzy Colours*, 2009, *Jasmine*, 2006

Wech Records

"I have my own particular sorrows, loves, delights; and you have yours. But sorrow, gladness, yearning, hope, love, belong to all of us, in all times and in all places. Music is the only means whereby we feel these emotions in their universality."

H.A. Overstreet

(part 1 of this interview appeared last week)

Origins

Wajdi Cherif began playing Arabic and pop music by ear on the keyboard as a child in Tunisia, teaching himself music with the few books and recordings he was able to find.

Learning jazz on his own was a little harder, but in university he had the benefit of borrowed records and method books, which he studied while taking classical piano lessons and studying English literature.

"I feel that the new generation is lucky to have the Internet," he says, "because you can learn jazz and music anywhere on the planet if you have an Internet connection. There's a tremendous amount of good quality pedagogical material and also videos of great jazz musicians available to the public today."

Having begun his formal music studies relatively late (in his early twenties), Cherif had some catching up to do. "I was a professional musician and a language teacher in Tunisia when I started composing and playing my music with local musicians. The first time I went to a jazz workshop in Europe it was shocking for me to hear young musicians play at such a high level."

Wajdi ended up moving to France to study under pianist Bernard Maury, a friend of Bill Evans. In the next eight years he was to work with a host of notable French musicians and release three albums.

Feeding the Creative Self

In order to continue being productive as a composer and musician Cherif feels the need for an unusual amount of intellectual stimulation. "Generally," he says, "I feel inspired after a major event happens in my life. I also need constant change; I hate static things and I get bored easily, even in music. I need to explore, discover, and experiment with music. I also get inspiration from different musical styles, not just jazz. I can listen to country music, rock, blues, traditional music, classical, etc."

"The book *Effortless Mastery* by pianist Kenny Werner has had a big influence on my playing. He teaches an approach I tried to put into practice and that helped me a lot to improve my piano playing."

"I'm a big fan of science fiction movies and TV series that are based on real facts and scientific theories, the kinds of things that can really happen in the future. This inspires me a lot and was part of the inspiration for my latest album, *Fuzzy Colours*, which features compositions inspired by astronomical observations."

Some highly prized albums in Cherif's collection: Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, Keith Jarrett's *Standards Live* (1985), and the Bill Evans Trio's album *Portrait in Jazz*. Says Cherif: "I didn't transcribe much from these records as jazz musicians are supposed to do, but I listened a lot to them for many years."

Composing

"When I compose I sit at the piano and improvise. I come up with interesting ideas and then I work them out. I start with melodies and work out harmonies for them. I'm not very much into intellectual music; for me it has to be melodic—the melody has to sing, and the flow of the music should be natural. And it should express something. I love harmonies too, beautiful harmonies like those of Keith Jarrett or Bill Evans."

Spirit

"I'm not a very religious person, but I believe that man has to be in harmony with nature, the universe, and his own inner being. Modern life makes us depart from this principle. We live more and more in the virtual world, and people think they can get whatever they want without much effort. I think we're getting too far from nature and spirituality.

"I practice martial arts and this helps me stay balanced and connected with my inner being and with nature. It also helps me discipline my body, which is very important for a musician. There are many similarities between piano-playing and martial arts and a lot of similar principles which are also general principles in life."

Maghreb Voices celebrates the art, culture, and struggles of the peoples of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, in northern Africa.





From
Where
I Sit
Hazel Anaka

Beats Me

Have you ever been baffled by life? I don't mean the really *big* life questions; just the niggling little ones. Like why Roy and I can be in a car on our way to file income tax in a town 50 kilometres away, and be in that comfortable, relaxed silence (born of 37 years of wedded bliss) until I whip open the book I've brought along and suddenly he morphs into Chatty Cathy. Why is that? Where were the questions and observations before then? Is it some recessive gene in men that forces them to act in ways that irk a good woman? Or will his dying memory of me be me with my nose in a book and he just wants equal time?

Have you ever felt like a living, breathing, walking, talking personification of Murphy's Law? You could be the poster kid for the concept of anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. The waitress screws up your order. The lotto ticket checker says "Sorry, does not appear to be a winner" for the three thousandth consecutive time. Your dog has fleas. You can't bend your knees. Everything you touch crumbles. Your stomach rumbles. Everyone mumbles. And you're damn sick of it.

Or maybe the opposite is true. You can't believe that a scoundrel like you could possibly be living such a charmed life. Pay raises come unbidden and with clock-like regularity. You cashed in on one of those contests you never entered and you're just now waiting for the kazillion pounds sterling that are on the way to you.

Your cat had kittens and you want every last one of them because there's no such thing as too much of a good thing. Your favourite aunt (you know, the one who is loaded) is ailing and it won't be much longer now before you find out how much you're to inherit. You're hale and hearty and going to live long enough to spend your riches.

Have you ever wondered how saying yes to one small thing can snowball and take on a life of its own? You agree to sit on a board of directors that allegedly meets every second month. You've no sooner done your orientation and accepted a foot-high pile of acts, regulations, bylaws and policies, than you learn the meetings are now a week apart and involve time-sensitive, specific, individual projects in between. When you factor in time spent emailing and on the phone, you discover you've spent more time with your fellow directors than your own loved ones since you signed on in a moment of insanity. And there are only three years left in your first term!

I like to think I'm a pretty smart cookie who notices what's going on and learns from past experience, but I've gotta say this stuff has me baffled. Is it wishful thinking that this time will be different? That the person you've known for the majority of your life will somehow change. That bad stuff will stop happening in threes. That those irksome people in your life won't keep reappearing (in a new incarnation) just when you think you're done with them. Beats me, from where I sit.

AUSU UPDATE



AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

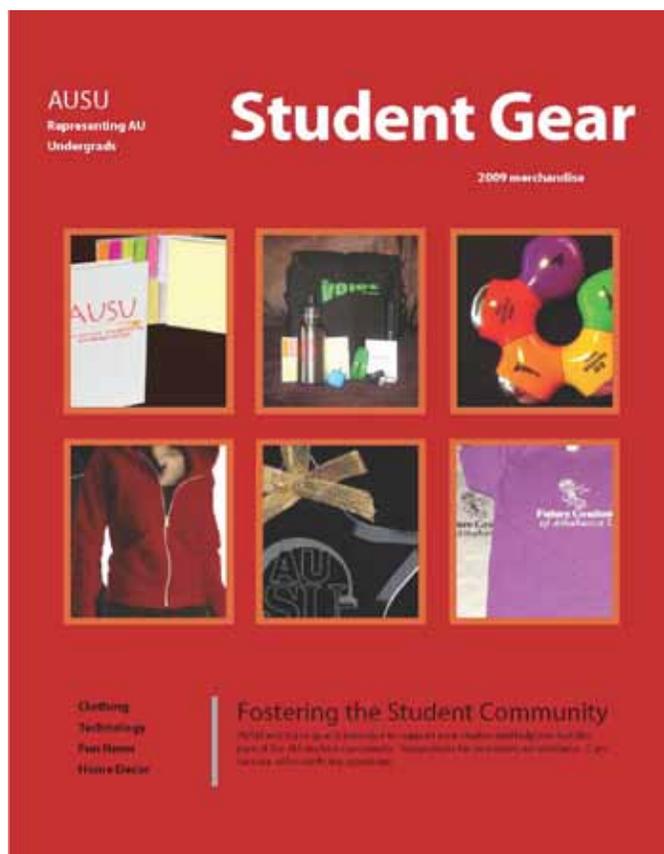
SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

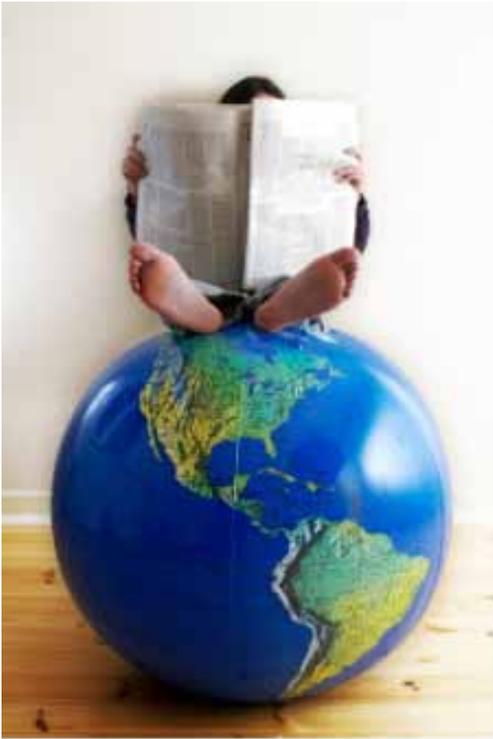
SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Wi-Fi comes to Saskatchewan buses

Planes, trains, and automobiles are popular ways to get around, but the Saskatchewan Transportation Company is hoping to lure more young riders to its buses with free Wi-Fi.

The STC already has on-board wireless Internet on some routes and, as the [CBC](#) reports, “plans to add Wi-Fi to more routes later this year.”

Ads for the new service are on MSN, YouTube, and other media sites. STC president Shawn Grice told reporters that free Wi-Fi is “currently running on the Saskatoon-Regina corridor and we’re looking to expand in 2010.”

One of the likely routes to launch the service next is the Regina-Moose Jaw corridor.

The move is intended to boost riders (and revenue) for the STC, which has seen both numbers declining in recent years. The company currently relies on government funding, receiving \$7.8

million as an operating subsidy in 2009. This year, that number will rise to \$9 million, in part to “cover rising fuel and salary costs.”

And while YouTube ads for free Wi-Fi may be aimed at the youth market, STC has plans to market to seniors as well. Jim Reiter, the minister responsible for STC, noted that although it may take some time for the company’s new measures to show results, the service is worth subsidizing until that happens.

In Foreign News: 3D TV comes with health warnings

As if mediocre sitcoms and all those reality shows weren’t bad enough, the latest television craze may be even worse for you: 3D TV. It’s supposed to be the next big thing in television, following hot on the success of films like *Avatar*, but experts warn the technology could bring real health risks.

As the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) reports, manufacturers are warning viewers that 3D TV may lead to “dizziness, convulsions and disorientation.” The problem comes in the way 3D television creates images, “by flashing up to 60 frames a second onto the screen.” Battery-powered glasses then convert those images into three dimensions.

Alan Brichta, an Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle who studies brain chemistry and balance, told reporters that “What we have to appreciate is that we’re really tricking the brain into conjuring up these 3D images and so when you start tricking the brain, unforeseen things happen or at least things . . . that we don’t like happening.”

The new sets hit the market recently, and one manufacturer’s website warns that “watching 3D TVs has the potential to create dizziness, muscle twitches, confusion and convulsions.” It might also pay viewers to be cautious with their wallets before rushing out to buy a 3D TV. Much like the 3D craze that swept the nation in the 1950s, it could just turn out to be the next passing fad.

CLASSIFIEDS

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THE VOICE

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