My sister Henrietta has discovered that if she wants to visit me now that she is dead, she must enter my dreams. And so she does. And usually I am glad to see her.

Last night she came to see me. After greeting her warmly, I became nervous about being near to her again. There was something in her face that alerted me to danger. It was a familiar feeling I had always had around Henrietta. I had a fear that she might turn on me at any moment. One minute her beautiful face was smiling, as it was now in my dream, and then suddenly my sister could become vindictive and cruel. For years this was the way it was between Henrietta and me. She was a living, fire-breathing human being. There was nothing in the least bit “unhinged” about Henrietta, she was just unpredictable.

Living with Henrietta had been like experiencing fierce weather fluctuations. In one moment we were in a peaceful place, so much like a garden with the warm sun shining upon us on a spring day. Lilacs bloomed in their bushes and jonquils lined the garden path. She might have smiled her beautiful smile at me, and I might have felt hopeful. Then—from out of nowhere—the torrential rains would come. There had been no dark heavy clouds to warn of the swift change in weather. The deluge smashed the jonquil blooms to the ground and narrow garden trails turned into rushing creeks. It seemed to me that Henrietta saved all her rage for me, or most of it at least. She shouted my weaknesses and threw them at me like mucky mud pies. And she made sure that no one was near enough to hear. Time after time, I would run for shelter, feeling so stupid to have been seduced to enter the tranquility of the garden again.

I never mentioned any of these things to anyone. I loved her, and I hated her. So I learned to pay close attention to the emotional weather conditions...
around my sister. Even on our calmest days, I had an escape plan. I developed friendships that took me away from her. I had my own room and my books, my art, and my attempts at knitting. I noticed then that Henrietta had very few friends, and I began to understand the reason why. I was not the only one who knew her fickle moods. When she sought me out for companionship, I responded like a cat poised on an open window sill. Still, people must have noticed my little clenched jaw, my hands which often formed mitts, and my small thick brows that were frozen into serious furrows when Henrietta and I were together.

The years passed. Things changed. One day I let it all go. I let Henrietta go with her sense of superiority, her constant attempts to roil the waters surrounding my existence, her challenging postures, and her secret spitting remarks. I had had enough. I was ready to leave her behind.

It took time and distance, of course, friends and lovers, but over the years she seemed to grasp what had happened between us. She walked backwards away from me then, almost bowing in deference it seemed, saying stupid things that I did not bother to correct. I tried very hard to care little about Henrietta. Whenever we came together in those years, she smiled her most conciliatory of smiles. She said the most flattering things. Her personal troubles mounted, and she grew more and more transparent to everyone. And I was living well without her. So many of us were enjoying the 1960s then, dancing and shouting, and building a new world. I was hopeful and happy. I was alive and thriving. My brows had unfrowned, my hands opened, and my shoulders relaxed with the music of the times—Joan Baez, the Mamas and the Papas, Bob Dylan.

Yet deep in my heart it had been all I could bear to have left my older sister. Just two years my senior, she seemed stuck in a time warp, listening to the music of the 50s, polishing her silver in the suburbs, driving a station wagon. Beneath all the differences in our lives, I knew that she was mine, and I was hers. We were born to be together. Her arms were my arms; her blue eyes like mine. Her thick hair formed waves in just the same places that mine did, and our voices were indistinguishable.

As she lay dying, we talked at length. One day she said in a weakened voice, “It’s so good that we are close again.”

I answer, “Yes,” without disputing the truth of what she has said.

We had never been close. So she visits me now in my dreams. And truly I am glad to see her. “It’s so good to be close again the way it used to be,” she tells me.

“Yes,” I say again softly and wrap my arms around her.

Vibrations
by Phil Grimley

They say it is ‘the Winter of our lives’
Frosted brows and pallid faces
Shivered chill to bones and marrow
Streams of love bound in ice

But yet, we move, we aim, we strive
The shifts in time still flow
Buds lively sprout beneath the snow
And birds hold fast in hidden branches
As threads of life grow weaker
The cords that bind grow stronger
A wider net pulls towards us
All we ever knew or did

Now silent deeds begin to speak
Unbidden doubts and fears dissolve
The world peels open through fresh eyes
Unblinked in the shadows of experience

Once more we sense the breathing of our roots
Within the crumbled earth our toes can touch
Our arms reach out to shield the young
Vibrations of the years to come

February 2015

As Far From New York as You Can Get!
by Arthur K. Yellin
originally written 12/1/2009

In 1969, having graduated from Long Island University with a BS in Pharmacy from their Brooklyn College of Pharmacy, and having spent my first 22.5 years in New York—for a variety of reasons, I desperately needed to escape and get as far away as I could.

I had applied to graduate school at four universities: Columbia (in New York), the University of Colorado, the University of Florida, and the University of Iowa. While I was accepted to all four, Columbia was actually my “backup.” As noted above, I desperately needed to leave New York City.

I had never been to any of the other three states. I knew a bit about Florida, but nothing about Colorado or Iowa. Shamefully, I admit to being a typical New Yorker back then ... New Yorkers generally knew little or nothing about the rest of the continental US except for New Jersey, Florida, and California.

When I told my friends and coworkers (I was working at Beth Israel Hospital in lower Manhattan at the time) that I was going to Iowa, with only half tongue in cheek, I was asked:

“Does Iowa have electricity?”
“Does Iowa have indoor plumbing?”

With no real knowledge, I assured these people that I was not going to a third world country!

I pulled away from the curb in front of my home in East Flatbush, the Brooklyn neighborhood of about 350,000 people in which I had grown up, and headed toward the George Washington Bridge over the Hudson River, connecting New York with New Jersey. The GWB, as the bridge is known, is the eastern terminus of Interstate 80, “Mainstreet USA.” As I crossed the bridge, I never looked back.

Approximately 20 hours after crossing the GWB, I came to the fabled Mississippi River. I crossed the river and knew I was entering a different world. An hour or so later, I arrived in Iowa City. I discovered a truly wonderful state with people who had none of the hang-ups of New Yorkers; although, of course, Midwesterners have their own idiosyncrasies, as do we all. I discovered a state of which the second largest city, Cedar Rapids, had approximately $1/10^6$ the population of East Flatbush. I discovered a way of life without the cut-throat, frantic, competitive pace of large cities and especially New York. I discovered a state that was, in many ways, far more progressive than the “liberal East.”
Instead of wall-to-wall people, there was wall-to-wall planted earth. Instead of tall buildings or elevated subway lines permanently blocking the sun, there were occasional black walnut trees but mostly blue skies and sun ... lots of sun. Instead of industrial or vehicular pollution, there was clean air, sometimes flavored with the aroma of corn silage or natural fertilizer. I discovered that I COULD breathe through my nostrils! I grew to LOVE these aromas. Instead of concrete and blacktop, there was dark, fertile, soil. To this kid from East Flatbush, it was HEAVEN.

This story would not be complete without a brief description of the language problems I experienced when I first came “as far from New York as I could get.” Back then, almost everyone in the United States spoke English. Of course, I recognized that there were regional dialects. While I had never traveled outside the Northeast, I had been to Boston where the people talk funny and I had heard Southerners speak with a kind of drawl, but now I was in the Midwest. To my ears, it was a region without dialect, inflection, or twang. I was quite unaware of regional differences in usage within the United States although I spoke Spanish and did know that some words have different meanings in different Spanish-speaking countries.

The first time I went to a grocery in Iowa City, I was asked if I wanted a sack for my purchases. I wondered to myself, WHY would I want a huge burlap sack for a handful of groceries? The only sacks that I had ever seen bore 20 or 50 pounds of potatoes or onions. I said, “A paper bag will be fine, thank you.”

But the most trouble I had was when I requested an “egg cream” at an Iowa City soda fountain. “An egg cream?” said the clerk. “What is that?” I explained that it is chocolate syrup, milk and carbonated water (known to New Yorkers as “seltzer”) stirred together in a large glass producing a foamy head. “Yecchhh! Where is the egg? Where is the cream?” I said I didn’t know. Apparently, the concept of this simple concoction for which New York is famous and, apparently, with which ONLY New Yorkers are familiar, grossed out the soda jerk. I tried to explain that it was basically an ice cream soda without the ice cream, but I had to suffer without egg creams until I next returned to Brooklyn!

New Yorkers are used to what they BELIEVE is winter. On rare occasion, the temperature will drop to five degrees below zero or so. There can be lots of snow that turns into a sooty,SLUHY, mess usually within hours or days after falling. My first winter in Iowa, I LEARNED what winter really is. Winter is a temperature of 20 to 40 degrees below zero with a wind of 30 mph amplifying its effects. Winter is the moisture in your breath freezing into nasal icicles. Winter is a physical phenomenon known to science as the “triple point.” This is the point at which temperature and lack of humidity conspire to allow water to change from solid to gaseous state without melting. In nonscientific terms, ice and snow vanish without ever leaving a puddle.

When I left Iowa, I returned briefly to New York City while I pursued a position with the Federal government. I was the proverbial “stranger in a strange land.” Brooklyn was no longer home to me in ways far beyond those intended by Thomas Wolfe. My career was with the United States Food and Drug Administration in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, where I still live, in Olney, a very nice suburban community. However, while Maryland is my home, my heart will ALWAYS be in Iowa! I will always appreciate the people of the State of Iowa who made it possible for me to leave Brooklyn and in about 1,000 miles to be as far away as I could get from New York!

DAJABON ADVENTURE

by Ed Feroli

“The accommodations will be a little rustic,” said Beato, our kindly, avuncular team leader, as our bus approached Dajabon, a town in northwest Dominican Republic near the Haitian border.

Twenty years ago, while in private pediatric practice, I volunteered for a two-week stint with an Evangelical mission group of about 40 people including doctors, nurses, aides, missionaries, and administrators. The Evangelicals devoted themselves to the care of the sick, took their faith seriously, and
accepted others not of their persuasion, like myself. Unfortunately, they prohibited the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Soon, our well-traveled bus lumbered along a deeply rutted dirt road creaking from side to side. We entered a clearing midst tropical trees exposing three structures: two small windowless buildings which served as dormitories, and a large open air barn-shaped building containing the kitchen and dining area. Our sleeping accommodations, built by Christian teenagers, had the appearance of a prison blockhouse. They obviously missed the course in window construction. This cinder block structure provided air and insect circulation beneath the rafters.

Organized routines ruled our day-to-day activities. After breakfast we loaded drugs and medical supplies on two buses. The team traveled to different schools and set up clinics to serve the lines of patients that awaited us. We treated a variety of illnesses, especially diarrhea, intestinal parasites, malaria, and skin infections. After a full day’s work we returned to our campsite where we could anticipate a delectable native dinner. The savory aroma of cooking meat wafted into the dining area. The menu usually included choices such as chicken, pork, beans, rice, and a variety of tropical squashes. The cooks procured the foods daily from local markets. Native fruits such as succulent mangoes and pink, pulpy papayas usually concluded the meal.

On one evening while enjoying a pleasant repast with my colleagues a voice on the public address system intoned, “A pediatrician is urgently needed in the hospital.”

Uh oh, I thought. I’m the only pediatrician on the premises and the Dominican doctors are on strike leaving no one to care for their patients. I quickly departed for the hospital not anticipating the adventure that lay ahead.

When I arrived at the hospital nursery I found the infant lying in a bassinette with shallow respirations and an obvious skull depression. While I examined him his respirations ceased. Having no available equipment I performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until the anesthetist arrived. We decided that the infant should be transferred to the Santo Domingo Children’s hospital, a four-and-a-half-hour trip. Soon we cruised in a Mercedes van along the only superhighway in the country. Our group consisted of Beato, our team leader and driver, the baby and his father, a nurse anesthetist, and myself. I alternated with the anesthetist while bag resuscitating the infant.

When we arrived at the emergency room we found chaos, crowds, and confusion. The military attempted to maintain order with limited personnel. The ED also lacked sufficient oxygen. Beato and I lugged our own six-foot tank into the hospital to provide oxygen for our baby as we waited.

After 30 minutes we took him to the nursery where his heartbeat ceased and he promptly died. We all stared at his lifeless limp body in silent sadness. Unexpectedly the military doctor shook me by the shoulders and said, “Thank you, thank you, thank you.” She meant this for the whole mission team, since her medical countrymen were AWOL.

Beato informed us that we must return the infant to his home in Dajabon. Then he said, “Would you like to have dinner at my place?” This kind gesture seemed like comic relief in light of the lifeless infant, sobbing father, and long trip ahead. I responded, “Thanks, but I think we should head back.”
Our van sped through the darkness in a northwest direction; our team plus a wailing parent and a dead baby. We entered a barrio on the outskirts of Dajabon. In the absence of a moon or streetlights the darkness was pervasive. The van eased to a halt, the motor ceased. In the black of the night a surreal galaxy of disembodied white eyes surrounded us.

Beato and I gently carried our lifeless possession through an open doorway into a small clapboard house. A freshly hewn miniature wooden coffin awaited him. We laid the baby in the casket and nervously and hastily departed.

Exhausted, I arrived at my Christian-teenager-built cinder block sleep quarters. Mission failed! As I lay in my unsteady bed, my thoughts turned to the lyrics of “I never promised you a rose garden.”

Why Go to the Movies?
by Joan Roes

You see a man in construction boots get into a BMW. He drives to the exit of the parking lot. You see his signal light blink for a left turn, he hesitates, the car does not move, the guy behind him blows his horn. The BMW pulls out and turns right without hesitation. You soon know the name of the driver is Locke. In a few seconds you have been given all the background information you need to experience a crisis in moral decisions with one man in a car in England. Your eyes see but your life experience, education and curiosity are needed to make this an enriching encounter. John Locke—the philosopher of the age of reason—believed that man can solve his problems by calm thinking and discipline. The man driving the car has made a decision, maybe last minute, to take a turn not planned. We know he is a man who wears work boots and drives a pricey car. With this information you can crawl inside his life and feel it with him, you can compare yours, you can speculate. This is the magic of film—it can be a seductive, provocative, thoughtful experience. Stanley Kubrick felt that “A film is—or should be—more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what’s behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later.”

Where did your first visions of romance, ancient Rome, a perfect wedding, death, despair, sex come from? Most probably from a movie. The influence of the medium can never be underestimated. It plants pictures in our minds that may be hard or impossible to erase. It encourages thoughts that may help change the way we think about things. But why film? Why not books, school, meditation? They are traditional learning venues. Well, they do but film is instantaneous. In the film version of Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* we see Kip, a bomb demolitions expert, woo his new-found love, the nurse, Hanna, by having her hang onto swinging ropes and with only burning flares being lit in succeeding bursts of glorious light, observe the best that man can do: art. In this case, a fresco of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The music is quiet, the camera catches the swinging and the shared experience of rapture and joy at seeing this together. The room is bombed out, the future uncertain, but a man wants to share with a woman his love of life and what humans can achieve besides blowing each other up. Only a film can catch all this in a few seconds. This is what is so remarkable about the medium. The processing is done without help or conscious effort.
from us. Subliminal is the expression the advertising industry uses and cherishes. Plant an image and you can expect a sale. But you can and should also expect artistic exploration and understanding.

This concept might hopefully lead the film industry to consider these aspects of their influence with some gravity. But, as we all know, this is not necessarily the reality. The fare offered at multiplex theaters attests to this. But the genesis of film was in France where early on many film makers saw the medium as a possible art form that would use the eye only as a beginning. Of course, movies as entertainment and escape are a delightful way to spend a few hours. We all want and need to suspend disbelief for a few hours on occasion. Commercialism and the guaranteed return on the investment dollar is a seductive tool to those in the business of movie making. But what about the other possibilities?

Director Jason Reiter admits, “I don’t want to make films that give you the answer. If there is a message to my films—and I hope there isn’t—it’s to be open-minded.” Can films be made that cause average people to think? Will people go to see films that are uncomfortable, provocative, educational, enraging, and sad? The answer is yes—but in limited numbers. And don’t expect any help finding them. They are usually in small, independent theaters and advertising is limited at best. Americans mostly grew up with the idea that going to the movies meant letting the eye take in information, but the film should carefully explain, leave no questions and satisfy the viewer. But that is only one way of going to the movies. We can also go expecting to be disturbed, taught, and stimulated. The eyes are only the port of entry!

Lowered expectations for films is a loss. Movies can be life-changing, challenge your beliefs, and change your mind. I can remember seeing Sam Peckinpah’s Little Big Man and suddenly questioning all I knew about the settlers of our west and American government’s treatment and motives in dealing with the Native Americans who had lived for years on our continent with a culture very opposed to the one we were forcing on them. Jon Voight’s iconic antiwar speech to a gym of high school kids in Coming Home has been shown many times as an open and defiant challenge to the kind-looking, morally righteous Uncle Sam image of “I Want You” signs in the post office. The great and ground-breaking documentary Telling Stories, from Canadian actor and director Sarah Polley, asks the audience to pay attention, listen, think. Maybe all the stories we tell are not totally true—or, more to the point—maybe it depends on who is telling it and what their view of the “truth” is. Liv Ullmann, the great Norwegian actor/director, says: “We need movies. Like we need books, we need classical music, we need ballet, we need opera, to remind us really of who we are and why we are, and we need them in movie houses where you sit and see not only excitement and man-hero, woman-hero, you need to experience this quietly, to know how people overcome things. Or maybe don’t overcome them.” A movie does this.

Documentaries are not impartial. They contain the point of view of the film makers. A film like the recent Gasland (and Gasland 2) can initiate political action...
and change. Witness the recent New York state banning of fracking. Almost no one knew what fracking was until this “little” documentary made by a young man knowing almost nothing about film making, appeared on a couple of screens and ended up being seen by millions. How to Die in Oregon is not pleasant to watch but was the impetus for citizens organizing in several states to put the issue of medically assisted dying before their legislature. Client 9, by the reliable, polished, and highly regarded Alex Gibney, offers a more measured look to what was a slam-dunk snarl from the general public at yet another politician’s fall from grace. After viewing it we recalibrate his behavior perhaps. Documentary is a strong, growing, important aspect of the film business. A true cinema-vérité documentary is really a camera on the wall and will not hold an audience in a theater for an hour and a half. It needs a film-maker, a story-teller. Think of the films you saw in grade school showing you what a wonderful state you lived in with clean everything, happy birds, and bustling business or a sleep-inducing production on the proper way to do your homework. Your attention was lost very quickly. Showing real life in the documentaries of today demands artistry. We now expect depth, intelligence, integrity, and artistic superlatives in our documentaries. And we are getting just that.

And what about those seeds planted so early about sex, love, parenting, poverty, drugs, happy, unhappy? We look to films to be clear yet not pedantic. The expectation from films should be a challenge, a trip to a world that is broader than the world we live in. We should go to the movies to be entertained and escape sometimes, of course. But, films can offer education, therapy, change. “When characters change on screen,” says Jason Reitman, “it makes you feel better about yourself. You think, ‘Oh, I change too, I’m constantly becoming a better person.’”

Expose yourself! Movies are waiting for you.

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Script after studying diplomatic hot spots

by Judy Ashley

Chairperson:

“We gather today to discuss This,
And we will begin with That.
Let Leader One start and describe This
Because That is too broad.”

Leader One:

“I disagree…That must be clear,
We must talk and talk about That,
And eventually we will know what This
Means to you and me.”

Leader Two:

“Talk and talk and This…”
Becomes something else, words,
First make them listen,
So they change That to This.”

Chairperson:
“We gathered together today to discuss That,
And we began with This,
Leader One and Leader Two agreed,
Not to agree.”

Person on the street:
Leaders say … This and That…
But to reach the peace, it must be
He, she, you, me, I, we, or us.

Props
by Janet George

I wish I could go back and see my childhood home, but I can’t. It’s only 30 minutes away from where I am now, but the neighborhood is menaced daily by gangbangers with guns and drug pushers with guns.

It used to be a great place to live; large row houses with eat-in kitchens and walk-in pantries. We had three large bedrooms, bay windows in the front, and a spacious stone front porch with heavy green awnings. The back yard was fenced in and large enough for a garden and my mother’s clothes lines. I loved the ugly, rough clothes props she used to keep the clean clothes out of the mud and dirt on the ground. It took some muscle to hoist the clothes into the air and the sun, and I would hold my breath when she pushed up the clothes, which wobbled and threatened to topple over in the dirt. That never happened.

I think that Dorothy May Press did the very same thing when she moved into my old neighborhood. I saw her obit in the Sun last Friday. What drew me to it was the mention of the Rosemont section of west Baltimore. It got me to missing the old home place once again, but I felt a sense of relief knowing that this lady lived there all these years since I left. I think she took care of it for me.

She was 94 when she died, and was touted as an outstanding cook, “from scratch,” they said. I left there in 1950 and she moved in 1952. She was kind and loving and made warm bread and rolls for her family, and neighbors. That’s how the neighborhood was for me, warm. As a child I could go into any house on the block, get a drink, or a snack, or a Band-Aid for a boo boo. Everyone knew each other, and without television we sat outside in the summer and conversed with neighbors. I bet Dorothy did the same thing until all the technology and the druggies took over.

She kept going, serving in her local church and doing things for other people. She had six children, 12 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren. The obit went on to tell how well they were doing. The amoral muck and mud did not get them. She raised them high with her labor and love, and by dint of the simple things kept them in the air and the sun.

I shouldn’t compare this woman to an old wooden clothes prop. Yet that is what she did with her children and their children, held them above the muck. She was truly a great woman; the neighborhood has been safe in her hands since I left.
I Love Brass
by Jerry Mandelberg

In some mystical way I am drawn to the sharp, crisp sounds of a brass instrument. This has been true as far back as I can remember. I guess that is why the Pied Piper of New Orleans, a roaming street trumpet player, appealed to me.

I can remember my first encounter with brass. In my pre-teen years, my family lived near Druid Hill Park on Gwynn’s Falls Parkway. Within walking distance were the Tennis Courts, the City Zoo, a combination duck pond and boat lake used for ice skating during the winter, and a band shell visited every summer Sunday afternoon by the Baltimore City Municipal Band.

On any quiet and sunny Sunday, I found it very convenient to meander over to the band concert and listen. Not only did they play a few waltzes, a few classical or operatic overtures, a few popular numbers of the period, and a few sing-a-long, but they also played those bone-shaking foot-stomping oompah-pah cymbal-smashing Sousa Marching Band pieces the absolute best. These block-busters were usually saved for end of the concert, and their sounds still ringing in my ears, marched me all the way home. Between those concerts and my parents’ even then scratchy, old record collection of band music I learned to love brass instruments.

It wasn’t much later, by age 13, that I joined the Sons of the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps. This was an exciting time for me. I’m sure I don’t have to tell you what instrument I choose. I was able to march in parades, play my bugle, and best of all dress up in a great uniform guaranteed to attract all the girls. They were rapidly becoming my new hobby; much better than stamps.

Learning to play the bugle was a bit of a challenge. The bugle I played was a baritone horn and had one push-button valve. The flared bell was roughly the same as a trombone; this, plus its large size gave it the sound of trombone. The one valve extended the usual four-note bugle to a 12-note horn. Although not a broad-range instrument, it did provide us with a remarkable repertoire, probably because in learning how to play, some of us buglers were able to extend the normal range to 20 notes. Few of us read music; we learned most of our music by ear. The rest of our repertoire was ad-libbed harmony. I must admit we were pretty good, although we did drive our musical director up the wall when we started jazzing up some of his favorite marching numbers.

At this point girls became a major concern to me. Because of them I became interested in dancing and that lead to an interest in the Big Bands. My favorites were, as you would have suspected, the Brass people. Charlie Spivak (trumpet), Tommy Dorsey (trombone), and Harry James (trumpet).

Record-collecting was soon to follow, and continues to this day. Because of my interest in music, and brass music specifically, I was always on the lookout for better and better sound reproduction. I might add that my interest in music has always included classical since so much brass music resides there. I moved through the high fidelity stage, the Long-Play 33-1/3 record stage, the 45-RPM stage, the stereo stage, the Compact Disk stage, and I am now preparing myself for the Surround-Sound stage. Each step has been a decided improvement over its predecessors. And as the quality of the recorded sound I hear improves, so do my pleasure and enjoyment. I look for the day when recorded sound will sound exactly like the original, and I believe we have almost arrived at this point with the CD.

I sit here amazed that the Pied Piper of New Orleans has been such a meaningful thread in the fabric of my life. I certainly was not aware of it as I listened to
him. And yet, I think I knew, deep down, there must have been some reason he touched me in such a meaningful way.

It’s interesting, isn’t it, how some relatively unimportant event in your life, like listening to a street musician, can have such a significant connection to you and your past?

Jonathan Palevsky
by Linda Middlestadt

Jonathan Palevsky has been teaching a popular music class at Grace Church for about 20 years. He enjoys teaching for the Osher audience because it is an erudite crowd that challenges him. Those who attend his classes will gain remarkable insight into classical music, the lives of the composers, and the history of their time periods, and all with a most enjoyable smattering of wry humor. For instance, in a recent class, Mr. Palevsky said that Verdi was apt at mythologizing his life; “He could have been a news anchor today!” Also, Verdi commented about the difficulty of La Gioconda, that one would need the six greatest singers in the world. Mr. Palevsky quipped, “I saw it without, and he was right!”

Originally from Montreal, Mr. Palevsky comes from a musical family. His father, a professor of music, had a deep appreciation for classical music, as well as an extensive record collection. His mother is still an avid concert supporter, and several siblings are also in the field of music.

Jonathan attended Carleton University in Ottawa, focusing on musicology. He attributes his broad knowledge to attending university before going to a conservatory. In 1982 he came to Baltimore to study classical guitar at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

In 1986 he became a part-time announcer at WBJC, and since 1990 he has been the station’s Program Director. He has hosted various time slots at WBJC, including Operafest, Face the Music, and Past Masters. He is on the adjunct Elderhostel faculty at Baltimore Hebrew University and teaches evening classes at the Johns Hopkins University and Roland Park Country School, as well as his regular morning class at Grace Church for Osher.

Mr. Palevsky enjoys skiing, bike-riding, playing guitar, and hosting Cinema Sundays at the Charles Theater. He is an optimist about the future of classical music, which he believes has always attracted the older crowd. The opera and symphony may be smaller, but it will be better, he says, and new composers are doing notable work.

If you like classical music, if you like to listen and learn and laugh, try Thursday mornings with Jonathan Palevsky.
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Journal—Barbara Sutton and Tom Wing
Membership—Linda Middlestadt
Special Events—Bill Brustad and Alan Coxhead

Montgomery County
Curriculum—Cicily Iacangelo
Hospitality—Virginia Murphy and Carole McWilliams
Membership—Jane Jasper, Martin Stein, and Dolores Wallace
Special Events—Alan White
Update—Harriet Reiter and Lee Blue
Volunteer—Susan Fried and Peter Shaw