

Max Kade Center for European and German Studies

Fall 2010

Director:

Helmut Walser Smith

Martha Rivers Ingram Pro-
fessor of History

Harmonices Mundi, Harmonies of the World?

By Lidia B. Smentek, Professor of Chemistry and of Physics, Vanderbilt University

On the 18th and 19th of October 2008 a special mini-symposium was organized in Villa Lanna in Prague. This was the 80th birthday celebration for Rudolf Zahradník, a chemistry professor of the Czech (former Czechoslovak) Academy of Sciences and its President from 1993 to 2001. It was possible only after the Velvet Revolution that he could have held such an important post. The position of Professor Zahradník in the scientific world had been established many years ago. Already in the seventies his laboratory was a magnet for many young scientists from a number of countries, not only from the socialist block. The young people were going to Prague to study chemistry under the guidance of Professor Zahradník but also to learn from him a gentle tolerance of the political situa-

tion together with a strict but smooth judgment, which was a self-defense against the harsh reality of that time. The life and passions of Professor Zahradník are the first dimensions of the harmony presented in the title; the harmony between the devotion to high level science and the passion for art; the balance between self-discipline and determination on the one hand, and a soft and warm touch on the other. These are the elements of a personality



Villa Lanna, place where the celebration was held

that define the basic rules of ethics and harmony, which are understood as noticing all existing dissonances.

Two of those young scientists looking for science

and moral support in Prague were Joachim Sauer, a chemist from Berlin (who visited Prague for the first time around 1974), and his colleague from the same institute, Angela Merkel, a physicist by training, who initiated her contacts in Prague in the mid eighties. It would have been impossible for them to be absent during this

Continued on Page 2

A Welcome from the Director

As director of the Max Kade Center, I welcome you to peruse our newsletter. It tells of our activities and accomplishments. We have begun a new lecture series, "Approaches to Europe," and we welcome new faculty members to our center. Faster than we can count, our faculty members have been garnering accolades—Barbara Hahn re-

ceived the 2010 Margherita-von-Brentano Prize of the Free University of Berlin for her contributions to gender studies while William Caferro won a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work on the Renaissance. Even if it sounds like we're boasting, it is simply too difficult not to write about this wonderful news. There is in addition a feature on Professor John McCarthy, former director of the Max Kade Center, who will

deliver a lecture on "Ancient Greece as a Model of European Order in the Late Enlightenment," in the context of our "Approaches to Europe" series. Finally, there is a special feature, written by Lidia Smentek. It is entitled "Harmonices Mundi; Harmonies of the World?," and it is about a quintessentially Central-European meeting of scientists in Prague in October 2008. But there is a twist: among the scientists, and in their capacities as scientists, are Joachim Sauer, a Chemist from Berlin, and Angela Merkel, a physicist and Chancellor of Germany .

- Helmut Walser Smith

Angela Merkel

birthday celebration of their master and mentor. However nobody expected that the busy schedule of Chancellor Angela Merkel would allow her to come to Prague. Nobody believed Professor Sauer, the husband of the Chancellor, when during breaks of the scientific meeting (he delivered a very interesting lecture dedicated to the jubilee) made passing comments, that not the Chancellor Merkel but for sure Angela would take part in the celebration... for many of us it was just a joke.

The last time I had seen Angela was in 1989 in Bachotek, a vacation place of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń Poland, (Toruń is my hometown as well as that of Copernicus). Bachotek is a camp on a lake in the middle of the forest in a beautiful district of Poland, where the Physics Department organized international schools for the study of advanced methods of quantum chemistry. When digesting after almost twenty years a possibility of meeting with a person who is presently known from the first pages of

comments, when the scientific parts of the symposium was over, the atmosphere at Villa Lanna was becoming anxious...

Indeed, without any fanfare, no camera lights, no bodyguards, and no reporters—quietly and in an ordinary way, completely privately—Angela Merkel attended the banquet! Was she the same person I had kept in my memories from the past? She was still very humble, but not shy any more; she was still very nice, ordinary, straightforward, direct, accessible and smiling, but also determined and serious. It was possible to

sense that she keeps a healthy distance from her position and mission that she fulfills. During that evening she was indeed our old friend, who took pleasure in recalling treasured memories from the past when we were all starting our scientific careers.

After congratulations and best wishes for the jubilee, a small group of those who had attended the

newspapers around the world, obviously I was wondering whether it would not be easier to skip such a chance, and still treasure only the memories from the past. In such a way I could have avoided the overwhelming feeling of the presence of a great persona, and at the same time, to spare myself the frustration and disappointment caused by my own miserably small, in relation, achievements! Perhaps it would be easier for me to meet Her Majesty the Queen, since I would not have any comparison to the meetings in the past.

When I was asking Joachim Sauer for a quick tutorial on diplomatic protocol, in case his wife indeed arrived, I was simply instructed by him that not the Chancellor, not the politician is coming but Angela, the same person as in the past, since nothing in fact had changed in her relation to her colleagues over the years. After such

Bachotek Schools gathered separately from the rest of the guests present at the banquet (around 40). Did we try to discuss the problems of the

world or try to solve the political puzzles? Did we try to solve the scientific problems of physics or chemistry? No. After a short summary of her position in the world, which in fact met all our expectations, in a natural way, Chancellor Merkel broke the icy barrier of the diplomatic protocol (so unfamiliar to us ordinary scientists). She

mentioned with a charming smile and a twinkle in her eye that it is not true that she has some animosity towards Russians that grew out of her childhood experience when some Russians stole her bicycle (as some magazines in Central Europe were commenting). This anecdotal explanation brought back to us, especially to those from the former block of Soviet influence, the atmosphere of our



Angela Merkel with Professor Rudolf Zahradnik.



The Czech side is recalling the past: Petr Čársky from the Heyrovský Institute in Prague is talking; he was one of those who were attending the schools in Bachotek regularly (this time he was the host of the birthday celebration).

Esther Dischereit to Give Interactive Performance: Friday, October 22, 2010



Before the High Holy Days the House was Full of Whisperings and Rustlings

Eichengruen-Platz, Duermen/ Germany
Soundmarks from German-Jewish Histories

Interactive performance between a poet, a dancer and a violinist.

Introduction: Barbara Hahn

Text: Esther Dischereit

Conception: Esther Dischereit / Holly Handman

Choreography and Dance: Holly Handman

Violin: Alexander Geller

October 22, 2010 7:00 PM

Choral Rehearsal Hall

Martha Ingram Center for the Performing Arts

Sponsored by: The Max Kade Center, The Department of German, and the Program in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University.

The Max Kade Center is honored to sponsor Esther Dischereit's special interactive performance between a poet, a dancer, and a violinist. The performance is entitled "Before the High Holidays the House was Full of Whisperings and Rustlings," and draws from Dischereit's remarkable installation of sound marks from German-Jewish histories at Eichengruen-Platz in Duermen, Germany. There she constructed a sound installation that records in a park the names and a montage of documents of former Jewish citizens of the small city. In Dischereit's words: "You sit here or you sit there, and you don't know necessarily why. And you sit and talk with people and then you sit back like you always would, and if you lean far enough, you hear a recording for one, two or three minutes. If you like what you hear, you stay." A rhythmic poet, Dischereit is a pioneer in the relationship between soundscape and memory.

The installation in Duermen is remarkable for generating voices, either by the presence of individuals in the park or at random by a machine, so that one can choose to ignore them, or engage them. The words and names generated are not given a sense, a beginning or end, so that the sense must be made by the hearer, if indeed he or she chooses to hear, and reflect. Nor does the music,

the sound, direct the listener, but instead a tension is created.

Dischereit's installation is also available as a book, with an introduction by Barbara Hahn, and a remarkable layout by Verushka Goetz; the book, which comes with sound CDs, is bilingual, and Vanderbilt's James McFarland contributed to the translation.

It is one of the most thought-provoking attempts to create a memory space, where the dead are a presence, while respecting that such public spaces, as the Eichengruen-Platz, are also the places of everyday life.

Barbara Hahn Receives Prestigious Margherita von Brentano Prize

By Helmut Walser Smith, Director of European Studies

Barbara Hahn, Distinguished Professor of German, was this year's recipient of the Margherita von Brentano Prize, which is granted annually for outstanding achievement in "the advancement of women and gender studies." at Freie Universität Berlin. The prize, which has been given since 1995, is in honor of the late Margherita von Brentano, a philosopher, former vice-chancellor, and engaged political activist at the Free University. The Prize is one of the most prestigious academic/intellectual prizes in Germany. Professor Hahn, who just last year received a Guggenheim Fellowship, was selected for her work on female intellectuals and her pioneering work on women in the humanities. In particu-



lar, the jury cited Hahn's scholarly work on Hannah Arendt and Rahel Varnhagen as exemplary, describing Hahn's work on the letters of Rahel Varnhagen as "a milestone in the history of German literature." In 2011, Hahn's painstaking edition, *Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde. Nach dem Manuskript der Sammlung Varnhagen*, will appear in six volumes with Wallstein Verlag in Goettingen. A marvelous

work of literature compiled from Varnhagen's letters to friends, it will have a profound influence on our conception of German romanticism. At the ceremony, which took place in May, the *laudatio* for Professor Hahn was held by Prof. Dr. Irmela von der Lühe of the Institute of German and Dutch Language and Literature at Freie Universität. Lauded was also Professor Hahn's engagement for younger women scholars.

European Studies Scholar Wins Guggenheim

The past year has been a year of abundance for faculty associated with the Max Kade Center. One of the many remarkable achievements is that Bill Caferro, Professor of Medieval and Renaissance History at Vanderbilt, received a Guggenheim Fellowship. As many readers of this newsletter will know, the Guggenheim is among the greatest honors in the world of humanistic scholarship, and we are very proud to now count three such fellowships among our European Studies faculty (with Barbara Hahn, Distinguished Professor of German, and Michael D. Bess, Chancellor's Professor of History, also recent winners). Professor Caferro's has also completed a new book, *Contesting the Renaissance* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). For students of European history and culture, his book serves as a marvelous introduction to the scholarly debates



that have centered on the place of the Renaissance in western history. Like few other historians, Caferro has an exquisite sense of the longer tradition of Renaissance scholarship, and uses this "classical" tradition as a stage for more modern debates. The result is a clear-eyed, rounded discussion of the Renaissance, and its main contentious issues, starting with the question: Was there even a Renaissance? Caferro also delves into such questions as the novelty of Renaissance individualism, whether women also had a Renaissance, the relationship of the Renaissance to the medieval, and the relationship of the Renaissance's cultural flowering to economic expansion. He also discusses the relationship of the secular and the religious, and whether or not it was during the Renaissance that the modern state and modern democracy first emerged. Written with clarity and verve, the book is a wonderfully informative guide, and we can only recommend it to all serious students of Europe—a cultural and political concept, by the way, that first crystallized in the Renaissance.

Angela Merkel



Participants of the School of the Advanced Methods of the Quantum Chemistry, Bachotek, 1985; Angela Merkel in the red circle, and Joachim Sauer in the orange one.

meetings in Bachotek before the political changes of 1989! In a more serious tone she pointed out that in any case it is very important to live with one's neighbors trying to accept each other by negotiating and tolerating existing differences, since in any case it is impossible to change geography. Indeed, through negotiations and discussions she is trying to create a harmony, as she said, and not only in Germany or in the European Union, but also in the whole world.

I have to admit that there was also a harmony in the progress of the meeting. It was a smooth connection between Angela's present style of life dominated by her political duties of the head of a leading country, and its other part, which is characterized by privacy and the baggage of subtle memories; the memories which are still strongly vivid enough to be a reason to go back to an ordinary and non-diplomatic past.

We were all together recalling good old times and our historical meetings in Bachotek.

What was so special about the Bachotek Schools that even Chancellor Merkel remembered her time spent there? The answer is rather simple: science on a political background (since all these meetings were organized before the changes of 1989). During the day at the school, there were scientific lectures and discussions on the agenda. The evenings were spent at bonfires with guitar music, protest songs, political jokes, and serious matters analyzed in the hot atmosphere of the achievements of the Solidarity movement. Indeed at that time, Poland was the hottest place among all other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

There were three schools organized in 1985, 1987, and 1989 (before the political changes) for which I was responsible for the well-being and comfort of the foreign participants (whatever com-

fort meant during that difficult time). In addition to the scientific lectures presenting the newest achievements of the research on many-electron systems, supported by the most distinguished scientists from around the world, the center of activities focused on recent developments in various countries of the block under the Soviet influence. The political situation at that time in Poland was different from that of the neighboring countries, making it possible to have such a gathering of scientists from the West and the East in an atmosphere of academic freedom. For our colleagues from the GDR it was a unique opportunity to meet colleagues from the other side of the Berlin Wall and to discuss at least science (and obviously other subjects). In order to obtain permission to attend our school, all the colleagues from the GDR, had to apply two years in advance, when the school was being planned. It was also a special success for us, the organizers, to finally welcome in Bachotek a colleague from Vilnius! Unfortunately we never succeeded in inviting an outstanding physicist from Moscow, even when the invitation letter written in



From the left: Bogumił Jeziorski (Warsaw University), Angela Merkel, LS (Copernicus and Vanderbilt), Josef Michl (Colorado), Petr Čársky (Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague) and Andy Hess (Vanderbilt); photograph by Zdenek Havlas.

Continued on Page 6

Angela Merkel

Cyrillic was issued well in advance.

One faithful participant from among some hundreds attending was Angela Merkel, very quiet, shy, girlish and nice, usually standing aside. When we, the fellow physicists and chemists, learned that she is the one who had entered the serious political scene, we tried, simply out of astonishment to imagine how she had become a politician. As she climbed the positions of the political hierarchy our joy and satisfaction grew rapidly. At the same time however it appeared more and more amazing that in the 1980s nobody was able to recognize her diplomatic abilities. Because of this lack of recognition of her talents and her possible future role in the scale of the whole world, the meeting during that evening in Prague was even more intriguing and special.

With pleasure and joy, my spirit elevated by the harmony observed during the birthday celebration for Rudolph Zahradník, I returned from Prague by air to my teaching obligations at Copernicus University in Torún, Poland. On the way to the airport (it was Monday) there was a cavalcade of black limousines escorted by the motorcycles going in the

opposite direction from the airport to the center of Prague. After the diplomatic welcome ceremony by President Vaclav Klaus at the airport, an official visit of the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, to the Czech Republic started; for that evening a banquet was scheduled in Villa Lanna...

Do these two different worlds exist in agreement with each other as a result of an inner harmony of my friend from years ago? How is it possible that she knows how to live in both and how to switch from one to another in such a smooth and natural way?

During my flight back, due to a simple article in a newsletter *The Prague Post*, October 15-21, 2008, I was brought back to a gray and rather prosaic reality; in a flash everything what has happened in Villa Lanna was very distant and almost imaginary. The article said, "The Czech Republic is being infested by an Asian ladybug. The ladybug, called *Harmonia*, is larger than the usual European breed and its bites can cause an allergic reaction..."

Former Director to Give "Approaches to Europe" Lecture

By Helmut Walser Smith, Director of European Studies

John McCarthy, Professor of German and Comparative Literature, is also known here at Vanderbilt as the former director of the Max Kade Center. Professor McCarthy was central to the efforts in 2001-2004 to secure the initial grant that helped establish the Max Kade Center at Vanderbilt and has over the years spearheaded its expansion. As director, he also put together an enormously successful international conference on "Turning Points in the Evolution of a Continent," and wrote the proposal that brought an "EU Getting to Know Europe" grant to the center. As part of that grant, he, along with the help of Kurt Johnson from the Department of History, organized an EU study visit in Brussels



for educational policy experts from the Mid-South. Active in many areas, ranging from curricular reform to advising, McCarthy made the Max Kade Center at Vanderbilt into a busy, thriving hub of thinking and discussing European concerns.

His other guise is of course as a scholar, where he ranges widely but his center of gravity has been the German and European Enlightenment. The author of a number of works, including books on Christoph Martin Wieland and a prize-winning monograph *Crossing Boundaries:*

A Theory and History of Essay Writing in German, 1680-1815 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), Professor McCarthy will bring his two interests together in a lecture entitled: "Ancient Greece as a Model of European Order in the Late Eighteenth Century."

Spotlight on Professor Thomas Wild

By Amanda Steele

The Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation research scholar in residence for 2010-2011 is Professor Thomas Wild, the newest faculty addition in the Max Kade Center for European and German Studies. He has taught at the Universities of Munich and Berlin, at the Berlin Center of IES Abroad, and he was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Oberlin College in Ohio. Dr. Wild began correspondence with Barbara Hahn, Professor of German at Vanderbilt University, on the subject of Hannah Arendt in 2005 and the two have been in contact ever since. He says that their mutual scholarly interests are what compelled him to pursue research at Vanderbilt. Last year, Professor Wild received a two-year Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation research grant, which stipulated that one year will be spent at Vanderbilt, and one year will be spent at the University of Chicago.



Professor Wild's current research is occupied with the German term, "Haltung," which roughly translates in English as "bearing," or how one carries oneself vis-à-vis the sociological, ethical and political questions of the time. He is "scrutinizing the tradition of this word and its movement through the fields of knowledge," with a main focus on literature. His book research is not a history of the term, but rather an examination of, and a focus on, the pivotal points when the concept was at stake, "strikingly around historical thresholds like the years around 1800, or after 1989." Professor

Wild begins his research with writers and philosophers of the Enlightenment and carries it through the modern era.

This semester Professor Wild is teaching EUS 260: "Writing on the Wall: Contemporary Berlin Literature and Film," a class about European cities with a focus on Berlin and its culture in literature and film. This class focuses on media as a vehicle for assessing the times, with many Tuesday evening film showings. One of Professor Wild's favorite things about instruction is that he is able to learn about the academic culture of Vanderbilt. He enjoys "leaving [his] natural habitat and asking questions and approaching topics" from a different perspective. He finds it fascinating to learn about a new, foreign academic culture. Although he previously taught at Oberlin, Professor Wild explained that it is always a new experience to teach students in different countries because they all have different goals and a different commitment to their studies.

European Lecturer Nominated for Emmy

By Helmut Walser Smith, Director of European Studies

On September 13, the Max Kade Center was host to a remarkable event, a screening of "The Heart of Jenin," with its co-producer Ulli Pfau of Eikon Films in Berlin. The movie, which has since garnered the *Deutscher Filmpreis* and has been nominated for an Emmy award, is a moving story of a twelve-year old Palestinian boy who was mistakenly and fatally shot by Israeli soldiers. The father, once a resistance fighter, decides to donate the organs of his son, and they go to Druze, Beduin and orthodox Jewish children in Israel. Directed by Leon Geller and Marcus Vetter, the movie follows the attempts of the boy's father, Ismael Khatib, to make contact with the Israeli children who carry,



so-to-speak, his boy's living organs. It is a wrenching quest that brings viewers to the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and shows how difficult understanding across the lines can sometimes be. The cinematography is done in a realistic, documentary mode, which gives the film irrepressible immediacy. At the same time, the film makers resist the urge to sentimentalize one or the other side, and we are offered a document of culture that is at the same time a document of hope.

For European Studies students, the chance to speak with the producer of the film, and to discuss its implications, was one of the high points of this year's program.

THE MAX KADE CENTER FOR
EUROPEAN AND GERMAN STUDIES

Fall 2010 Lecture Series
"Approaches to Europe"

Thursday, September 9, 2010

Ulrich Schneider

Head Librarian, University Library,
University Leipzig

"Encyclopedia as Knowledge Machines:
How did Books Organize Traditional and
Newly Acquired Knowledge
(1500-1800)?"

BUTTRICK 205, 4:10 p.m.

Monday, September 13, 2010

Ulli Pfau

Emmy Nominated Producer
"The Heart of Jenin"

Film Screening and Discussion
STEVENSON CENTER 1206, 4:10 p.m.

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Blair Ruble

Director,

Kennan Institute, Washington, D.C.

"Diversity in the Russian City"

BUTTRICK 301, 4:10 p.m.

Friday, October 22, 2010

Esther Dischereit

Author, Poet, Playwright, Artist,

"Before the High Holidays"

Performance/Presentation

Blair Choral Hall

7:00-9:00pm

Thursday, October 28, 2010

Andrew Zimmerman

Associate Professor of History,
George Washington University

"Alabama in Africa: Booker T.
Washington, the German Empire, and the
Globalization of the New South"

BUTTRICK 123, 4:10 p.m.

Thursday, November 4, 2010

Yair Mintzker

Assistant Professor of History,
Princeton University

"The Defortification of the
German City, 1689-1866"

BUTTRICK 205, 4:10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

John McCarthy

Professor of German & Comparative Litera-
ture, and Professor of European Studies,
Vanderbilt University

"Ancient Greece as a Model of
European Order in the Late Eighteenth Cen-
tury"

BUTTRICK 301, 4:10 p.m.

Thursday, December 2, 2010

Jonathan Sperber

Curator's Professor and Department Chair,
University of Missouri

"Karl Marx the Revolutionary?"

BUTTRICK 306, 4:10 p.m.