



LIRA NEWSLETTER

LEARNING IN RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION
Office of Community Service – UMass Lowell
Member of Elderhostel Institute Network
Tel.: (978) 934-3135 Web: uml.edu/community/LIRA

May 2008

Vol. 15 No. 2

Wednesday, May 28, 2008
For LIRA's Annual Meeting
Fox Hall, Leo F. King Room
10:00 a.m. to noon



Summer Breeze by Edmund Tarbell 1904
Currier Museum, Manchester, NH

Join us for:

Election of Officers, Vote on Bylaw change
Information on the summer intersession
Refreshments

Jack Craig

Did you know that the beginning of Vaudeville included circus type entertainers before most of the shows became musicals? On April 2 members of LIRA enjoyed a fantastic program presented by Jack Craig, a graduate of UMass Lowell.



As we listened and sang along with Jack we learned about the history of “The Songs and Stars of Vaudeville”. We were reminded of familiar names such as Sophie Tucker, Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, and Eddie Cantor and we sang along many familiar tunes such as “The Good Old Summertime” and “When My Baby Smiles at Me”.

Jack is a graduate of Lowell State where he studied voice. I met him at another event and I happened to mention that I had joined LIRA at UMass Lowell. He then told me that he had graduated from Lowell State and that he would like to do a program for LIRA as a contribution to the group. And so we invited him for the April 2 program. Jack has created his ‘Music – with Class!’ programs to extend his passion for music, and to inspire ‘new generations’ of students. His repertoire contains more than 100 programs spread across American popular music, Broadway musicals, blues, jazz, and classical music. Jack resides in Marshfield, MA and he can be reached at 508-259-2117 Craigjac@aol.com

Jeanne Gunion

Russian Icon Museum

On March 26, 2008, some 30 members of LIRA traveled to Clinton for a visit to the Museum of Russian Icons. With over 120 icons on display, this is the only museum in the United States dedicated to Russian icons. The collection spans six centuries from the fifteenth century to the present and is housed in a technologically advanced building which was formerly a post office and library.

Mr. Gordon Lankton, who founded the museum in 2006, cordially greeted us and led us on an awe-inspiring tour of his outstanding collection. He ably answered any and all questions relative to the history of Russia and Icons and invited us to spend time examining the Icons with magnifying glasses and viewing the videos on modern day Russia. After a suppression of some 70 years during the Russian Regime, Icons continue to impress us with their contemplative nature and how they continue to “speak to us”. May the Museum serve as a quiet oasis in a busy world for many years to come.

Mary B. O’Connor

Those who met the owner and founder of the Museum, Gordon P. Lankton, might be interested in watching a half hour interview with him, recorded on a DVD now in our LIRA library. The emphasis is on his own personal story, rather than on the icons themselves.



One of the most popular themes in Russian iconography
Saint George Slaying the Dragon Circa 1500

Mannerist Artists

It is always with great pleasure that we welcome Dr. Liana Cheney, art history professor at UMass Lowell, to speak to us. On April 9, she came to discuss Mannerist artists of the 16th century.

Mannerism is a style of art that began in the later years of the Italian High Renaissance around 1520 and lasted until the arrival of Baroque art around 1600. Mannerist painting is characterized by a distortion of realistic proportions, an elastic and elongation of limbs and contorted figures, although figures can appear graceful when painted in a serpentine manner. The great masters of the Renaissance, such as Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo had solved all the representational problems by studying nature and it is thought that the exaggeration in the Mannerist paintings was a reaction to the classical style of painting. Their paintings are vertical, the portraits are $\frac{3}{4}$ size and the heads are typically small and oval. The compositions are brightly colored, very different from the balanced, natural and dramatic colors of the High Renaissance. They generally had no focal point and very little negative space. There is an instability and restlessness about their artwork.

There are four major Italian Mannerist artists. Dr. Cheney showed us many works by each of these artists to illustrate the characteristics of Mannerist painting. The first painter is Pontormo (1494 – 1557), usually known as Jacopo da Pontormo. He painted only in and around Florence and was supported by the Medici family. He had a neurotic temperament which was reflected in his paintings of

contorted poses, distorted perspective and unnatural colors. He was primarily a religious painter, but he also painted many portraits. He was a major influence on his pupil and adopted son, Bronzino.

The second major painter is Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola (1503 – 1540), commonly known as Parmigianino (a nickname meaning “the little one from Parma”), his native city. His work is characterized by elongated form and has a certain aloofness.

Giovanni Battista di Jacopo (1494 – 1540), known as Rosso Fiorentino was born in Florence with the red hair that gave him his nickname. He was a contemporary of Pontormo and trained with him in the same studio. His figures appear haggard and thin and poses are contorted. He brought Florentine mannerism to Fontainebleau in 1530.

The fourth major mannerist painter is Agnolo Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo) (1503-72). He was the pupil and adopted son of Pontormo. Bronzino lacked the emotional intensity that was a characteristic of Pontormo's work and excelled as a portraitist rather than a religious painter. He was court painter to Duke Cosimo I de Medici for most of his career. Famous mainly for his portraits, Bronzino also painted biblical and mythological scenes, designed tapestries and frescos, and composed poetry.

We thank Dr. Cheney for continuing to share her knowledge with us; it is always a pleasure to listen to her fascinating talks.

Jeri Durant



Portrait of Ahalberdier
by Pontormo



Madonna with the Long Neck
by Parmigianino



Eleanor of Toledo with her Son
by Bronzino

OPEN HOUSE IN BILLERICA

On Saturday, May 17 from 1:00 – 5:00 PM, there will be an Open House at the home of Dorothy Bromage. This is a reception for new members of LIRA. All members of LIRA are urged to come, as this is an opportunity to get better acquainted with people who are new this year.

Several times in the past, “learning in retirement” classes have been held at this house with its many collections. Those who have never been to 8 Skyline Drive will find it a step back in time, as you listen to piano rolls, wind up a music box or phonograph, pump a player piano or Victorian parlor reed organ, leaf through colorful old sheet music, open a book, try out optical toys, and explore eight rooms with various other objects acquired by Dorothy over the years.

If you have visited the home before, you will notice some additions, the most recent being a Mason and Hamlin Ampico A reproducing piano with an electronic system added called Virtual Roll. A living room with three grand pianos? Must be seen to be believed.

Bring a friend, if you like. Directions are as follows:

Get on Rte 3 South (Massachusetts).

Take Exit 29 (Rte 129). At the end of the ramp, turn east (right) toward Billerica. Drive to a stop sign. Turn right onto Rte 3A (Boston Rd).

Going south on 3A, pass Treble Cove Plaza, cross the Concord River. Your turn is Mulberry Ave. Mulberry is exactly 2 miles from the Concord River.

Watch for the Town Hall on the right. Be in the left lane and slow down greatly. The left turn onto Mulberry is immediately after the second driveway of the Town Hall and directly across from a yellow house.

On Mulberry, take the first left onto Skyline Dr. Follow the curve to 8 Skyline Dr which is on the right, a yellow two-story house with four white pillars.

Park in the driveway or on the street. Enter through the garage.

Note: If you miss the turn onto Mulberry, continue driving and (bearing left) go around the Common. You will end up on Boston Rd headed the other way. Take another try at Mulberry. This time you are driving north on Boston Rd, with Mulberry coming up on the right.

Dorothy Bromage - 8 Skyline Drive,
Billerica 978-670-1269

Urban Myths and Misinformation on the Internet

Perhaps it is spring fever or the silly season brought on by so much politicking in the air. Whatever the cause, there seem to be even more than the usual number of unsubstantiated articles being forwarded by just everybody that are swamping my email inbox. All of them seem to have bits and pieces of truth in them and, therefore, you tend to want to believe them. My advice usually is - **don't.**

Should you be one of the lucky recipients of one of these “chain letters”, there are ways to check their purported facts. The one I find easiest to use is www.snopes.com. But listed below are several others, including one from the US government that is particularly good on helping you to spot scams.

<http://onguardonline.gov/index.html>

<http://www.us-certgov/cas/tips/ST04-009.html>

<http://www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/>

general_1165337828628.shtm#0

<http://www.breakthechain.org/>

Toby Hodes

Member News

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Liz Marshall, who suffered a fall recently.

Kay Carroll

The following is a letter of thanks from Scholarship student Justin Chin.

To the Learning in Retirement Association,

Thank you for the generous scholarship. I want to let you know that I just finished my winter internship with Analog Devices. Now, I'm back in school and focusing on my studies. In addition, I have been preparing for upcoming club meetings. Today, the Wiseguys' Service Club has an officer meeting. Also on Thursdays, ballroom club meets for practice in the Campus Recreation Center. Well, I hope everything is going well, and I hope you continue to reward hardworking students. It may not have seemed like a big deal to you, but it was to me. Thank you.

Justin

Visit to the Currier Museum

The Currier Museum in Manchester, NH is a wonderful place to spend a few hours. Members of LIRA's Art and Music Program did just that on April 16. The museum has recently reopened after being closed for extensive renovation and expansion. The additional space allows for exhibiting 50% more of their magnificent collection which features European and American paintings, decorative arts, photographs and sculptures.

Though expanded, the Currier is still small and compact enough for the visitor to view a wide range of material in a short time. On our one-hour tours which were ably conducted by docents Pam and Ted Parrot, we were introduced to art works ranging from the 12th to the 20th centuries. Ted Parrot calls it the two-four-six-eight tour. Some of what we learned follows:



Woman Seated in a Chair
by Picasso



Madonna and Child
by Rossellini

Earlier works from the 12th and 14th centuries were typically created at the request of the Church, and thus depicted religious figures. An example is Antonio Rossellino's *Madonna and Child*, a stucco and paint sculpture dated 1475. This work was left in storage for years and thought not to be authentic. But after extensive research and testing, it was determined indeed an original. It is one of the oldest pieces in the collection and now commands a special place in the gallery.

In the 16th century works which were not commissioned by the Church began to emerge, many of which were allegorical.

The 18th and 19th centuries brought Impressionism into being as represented by Claude Monet's 1869 *The Seine at Bougival*. In it we see components of the style: the bold patches of color and the special use of light which gives the effect of fluttering leaves, flickering shadows, and the glistening surface of water.



Petit Disque Jaune
by Alexander Calder

The 20th century brought Cubism as seen in Picasso's 1941 *Woman Seated In A Chair*, which was painted in Paris during the Nazi occupation. The disjointed and contorted figure expresses the sense of anxiety and rage felt over the war.

Contemporary works include Alexander Calder's 1967 *Petit Disque Jaune*, a very interesting piece placed in the center of a gallery where it can be viewed from any direction. It looks like a mobile but is called a stabile because it has very minimal movement.

An example of 20th century Abstract Impressionism is Joan Mitchell's 1961 *Cous Cous*. The techniques used in this work, including drips, spattering, and seemingly random brush strokes, may give it an angry quality. But it is really left up to the viewer to decide whatever emotion is conveyed. (Sally Cady's impression: mixed emotion.)



Cous Cous
by Joan Mitchell

One of the galleries, "Celebrating New Hampshire Artists" is dedicated entirely to works in all media by the most accomplished artists of the state. An example of this is Edmund Tarbell's 1904 *Summer Breeze*, an oil on canvas, which was painted at his vacation home in New Castle, NH.

The Currier has a bright and airy area called the Winter Garden in which is located a comfortable Café where we enjoyed lunch prior to our tour. Overall response from LIRA members attending this trip was very positive, with many looking forward to return visits to this gem of a museum.

Simone Allard

BSO Rehearsal

On Thursday, March 13, nineteen LIRA members and friends departed by bus for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Open Rehearsal at Symphony Hall, in Boston.

Harlow Robinson's pre-rehearsal talk, accompanied by taped music excerpts, revealed the personal sides of both composers on the program: Robert Schumann, Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 54 and Dmitri Shostakovich, Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Opus 47.

Schumann's wife, Clara, a renowned musician and mother to their eight children, was his inspiration and support. Their collaboration is the subject of several novels and a diary.

Shostakovich feared for his safety under Joseph Stalin's regime when many prominent artists "disappeared". The success of Shostakovich's 5th Symphony saved his life and positioned him as the leading Soviet composer. Its rousing finale left us in high spirits as we boarded our bus for the trip home.

Thanks to Rose Rhoades and Jean Dettman for making the arrangements.



Carol McCarthy

Publicity Notes

To members of LIRA: The UMass Lowell Alumnae Magazine is planning an article on our organization, LIRA. They would like the names of former students and graduates. If you are a graduate or you attended any of the 3 schools that made up UMass Lowell please send your name, the school you attended, when you attended and/or graduated, - and your address, phone number, and email address to me. My email address is jgunion@comcast.net and my home address is Jeanne Gunion, 39 St. Andrews Way, N. Chelmsford, MA 01863, phone # (978) 251-7207.

I would also like to remind LIRA members to "Spread the Word" about how great LIRA is to your friends and acquaintances. You can remind them of the organization and offer to bring them to a class or special program, as it is impossible to park nearby unless one has access to university parking.

Slate of Officers for 2008-2009

The Nominating Committee would like to present the 2008-2009 nominations for officers of LIRA to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. All nominees have agreed to serve if elected.

President: Don Pattershall
Vice-President: Alan Kent
Secretary: Shirley Mitchell
Treasurer: Ann Dahlman

Although other positions on the Executive Board are not elected, anyone is welcome to be on the board by volunteering to be the chairman of a committee. Other positions on the board are Curriculum, Membership, Publicity, Hospitality, Newsletter and Scholarship. Remember that LIRA is run by the members only and we always need volunteers!

Nominating Committee

Dorothy Bromage

Frank Carroll

Ann Dahlman

NATURE WALK AND PICNIC

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

The locale for this year's walk is Sarah Doublet Forest — a property of the Littleton Conservation Trust. The forest contains a variety of natural and historical features including a vernal pool and an abandoned quarry. Portions of the walk traverse moderately up-down terrain.

Wear comfortable shoes; carry water and insect repellent. Bring food and a lawn chair or blanket for a picnic lunch.

Directions: From Route 495 take exit 31 and go east on Route 2A/119 for about 3 miles. Immediately beyond the Acton town line, go right along Nagog Pond. Proceed straight through a four-way stop at the apple orchard. One-tenth mile further at a bend in the road look for sign marking Sarah Doublet Forest. Go left on a narrow gravel road to parking area on the left at the top of the hill.

Car-poolers meet at the Hannaford parking lot at 9:30 AM. Others plan to arrive at Sarah Doublet Forest by 10:15 AM.

Coordinator: Steve Sussman, 978-486-9630,
sussman@alum.mit.edu



UNDERGRADUATE ART HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

Again this year Dr. Liana Cheney, Professor of Art History at the university, is moderating a symposium about artists and has invited us to attend.

Department of Cultural Studies
Thursday, May 8, 2008 - 2:00-5:00 P.M.

WHISTLER HOUSE MUSEUM OF ART
243 Worthen Street, Lowell, MA 01854



OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
THE EVENT IS SPONSORED BY THE ART HISTORY CLUB AND
THE WHISTLER HOUSE MUSEUM OF ART

Moses Greeley Parker Lectures

The following is a calendar of events for the Parker lecture series held on the day, time and place noted. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Sunday, May 4, 2 p.m. at the National Park Visitor Center

“Buffalo Bill Cody On Stage” by Sandra Sagala

Before he started his Wild West, Buffalo Bill traveled around the country acting in Frontier melodramas. Enthusiastic audiences, critical reviewers, professional actors and Indians mixed to create the humor and folly of these important Cody years.

Sunday, May 18, 2 p.m. at the National Park Visitor Center

“The Fusion of Textiles, Art and Technology”

by Dr. Patricia Wilson

Not everything interesting in textiles was invented in the past. In fact there is a revolution in textiles brewing which combines high tech materials and historical textile techniques to fabricate flexible electronic devices and unique active art forms. During this lecture, Dr. Patricia Wilson will explore how a loosely allied group of engineers and artists have transformed the traditional ideas of what a “textile” can do.

Thursday, May 22, 2008, 7 p.m. at the Pollard Library

“From Tribe to Nation” by Tom O’Carroll

Join Tom O’Carroll as he traces the history of the Irish People from the Stone Age to the present. Drawing on archaeological data, historical records, Tom explores the broad social and cultural themes of conflict and identity that occur through the island’s history. Tom will also perform various songs and tunes and share little known anecdotes.

Vote for Change in Bylaws

According to our bylaws, our fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. At the last Executive Board Meeting, a motion was made to change our fiscal year to be September 1st to August 31st. The motion was seconded and accepted and needs to be voted upon at the Annual Meeting. This change will better reflect our class schedules. A copy of the bylaws is available in the LIRA office.



The next newsletter will be out on September 1, 2008; the deadline for news items is August 15, 2008. Please remember that the coordinators are now responsible for getting someone to write an article

about their program, if you want something to appear in the newsletter. Articles may be given to me at any time before the deadline. If it is possible to email me the article, I would appreciate your sending it to jeri@netway.com.

Time for a Change



If you want to remain current with LIRA members, take pen or pencil in hand and make the following changes in your membership list.

New Members:

Myron Burtman
7 Montcastle Drive
Chelmsford MA 01824

Kathi Geisler
1 Dornoch Circle
N. Chelmsford, MA 01863
978-256-2673

Marilyn Carbone
7 Church Street, Apt 24
Westford, MA 01886

Nancy Maynard
4 Belmont Street
Lowell, AM 01851
978-452-1562

Newsletter Committee

Geraldine Durant, Editor jeri@netway.com
Suzanne Knapp, Layout knapp.sc@gmail.com
Shirley Mitchell and shirleytm2@aol.com
Sally Cady, Distribution
Jean Dettman, Calendar jldettman@msn.com
Kay Carroll, Member News Fckc12345@msn.com