

On competition

By Alexandra Reinecke

The research I did at Columbia this summer was about Hinduism. There was a lot of talk about ego, and after four years spent presenting not Alexandra, the person, but Alexandra, the product, it hit a little too close to home. In J. D. Salinger's "Franny and Zooey," the protagonist comments that she's not afraid of not competing. She's afraid she will compete.

I was raised to believe in excellence. My mother, even as a lawyer out of practice, argues mostly with logic, and after truth. My father studied his way out of the kind of poverty that, the more I consider it, appears to me like a bonfire boyhood, one of those burning tepees not only liable, but engineered to fall in on itself.

But somewhere between now and learning from there, somewhere between wanting excellence and crying here, tucked beneath a heap of blankets and heaving like a patient on a perfectly beautiful night, I lost sight of what excellence meant, or what it was supposed to mean. I clung to the trophy. I kept my eyes on the prize. I ignored the strain the perpetual striving, like a sustained jog might wreak on the lungs, wreaked on my mind.

I don't know when doing my best turned into feeling entitled to a 4.0. I don't know when wanting an education turned into three black sweatshirts with the name of a college arched obnoxiously across the chest. All these things happened gradually, I guess. Fell away from me. Tennis lessons. Television. The curiosity which made me a child fascinated by sushi rice, by the mechanics of hinges in doors.

But I've become less these few years, inside, growing my resume and earning my report cards for the fridge. I've deteriorated from the inside. Become hollow.

Today my little cousin showed me his soccer participation trophy and I think I'm a little like that. That slim, gold little man, posed mid-kick. Gilded but empty. Admired

from afar, and treated fragilely by those who know well enough that granite pedestal, imprinted words, golden shell do not a hero make.

I miss looking up to my mother, instead of wanting her to look up to me. I miss my father, who is more of a person sitting in his plaid pajamas, meditating on the floor of his basement office than I am commanding a room with my wit and a microphone.

I miss myself before I began competing. I miss being who I was before I became terrified by the wrong thing. I'm tired, not just of the Hinduism books, or the endnotes, but of the chase.

I wanted to come home, not just to California, but to myself. I want to warn my little cousin against the dangers of exhaustion, against the dangers of setting his soccer trophy on the shelf, where it can become conceited, where it won't be content with excellence, but live in constant peril of a fall from great height.



Alexandra Reinecke is from Westchester, New York. She currently resides in Lafayette, where she is junior at Campolindo High School. She writes every morning at 5 o'clock opposite a print of "View of the World from 9th Avenue" and consumes copious amounts of coffee. Her likes include maple-flavored anything and snow. Her favorite animal is a tiger.

New concert, new season for the Pacific Chamber Orchestra

By Sophie Braccini



Pianist Natsuki Fukasawa Photo provided

The Pacific Chamber Orchestra will open its concert season in Lafayette Sept. 16 with its first concert, "Walk in Poetry," with works by Schubert, Beethoven and Mozart. Famed Bay Area pianist Natsuki Fukasawa will perform Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 with the chamber's musicians.

Maestro Lawrence Kohl, who leads the musicians as well as the nonprofit that organizes the concerts, constructs his programs with pleasure, but also with education in mind. He explains that this concert explores the more lyric sides of Mozart and Beethoven that inspired Schubert.

Kohl describes Schubert as a great admirer of the two musicians that preceded him, and found in their more lyric work the possibility to create and develop his own musical language. For Kohl, Schubert is the link between Beethoven and Brahms, and should he had lived longer – he died at 31 – he might have taken Brahms' place in the development of Romantic music.

The concert will start with Mozart's aperture of the opera Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio), followed by Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4, and finishing with Schubert's Symphony No. 1.

The Abduction tells an adventurous and exotic story about two men trying to rescue their beloveds from a Turkish harem. It was Mozart's first big success in Vienna, at age 25. The overture opens quietly amid a bustling undercurrent that is then interrupted by brash passages, which are quite similar to the music played by the janissaries (the Sultan's

personal guard) later in the opera. It includes instruments such as piccolo, triangle, big drum and cymbals.

Beethoven fourth concerto has been called the most gently spoken and poetic of all his concertos. It opens with the piano solo, something that was an absolute first when Beethoven wrote it in 1805. Kohl needed a remarkable pianist to render the touching voice of this piano concerto. He asked Fukasawa to join the orchestra for this concert; it will be her first time with these musicians.

Fukasawa lives in the Bay Area, but travels the world for performances. Though, Her website lists engagements such as an Italian tour, concerts in Japan, Hong Kong, Switzerland and many U.S. cities. Fukasawa studied in the Czech Republic as a Fulbright Scholarship recipient, and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from New York's Juilliard School and a doctorate from the University of Maryland. She is part of the prestigious International Steinway Artists roster and is currently on faculty at American River College, and has taught at California State University, Sacramento, Saint Mary's College of California, and the University of the Pacific.

The program will end with Schubert's first symphony, a piece he composed when he was only 16 years old. Kohl says that this symphony, composed at such a tender age, shows the influences of his predecessors, but also unveils Schubert's strong unique musical persona. Kohl adds that the piece is well suited for a chamber orchestra since it was composed for two clarinets, one flute, two oboes, two horns, two trumpets, two bassoons, kettledrums and strings.

This concert will be followed in February by "Golden Strings," involving a string arrangement of Strauss' Symphony No. 2, and Elgar's Serenade for Strings. Then in April the orchestra will offer "American Radio Hour," an all-American program including compositions by Aaron Copland and George Gershwin, featuring jazz violinist Mads Tolling.

The opening concert will be held at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 16 at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church in Lafayette. To purchase tickets, visit www.pacificchamber-orchestra.org.

'Black Odyssey' at CalShakes a formidable adventure

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Aldo Billingslea (Great Grand Paw Sidin), J. Alphonse Nicholson (Ulysses Lincoln), Safiya Fredericks (Benevolence Nausicca Sabine), Dawn S. Troupe (Alsendra Sabine) and Lamont Thompson (Great Grand Daddy Deus) in Marcus Gardley's "Black Odyssey," directed by Eric Ting at California Shakespeare Theater. Photo Kevin Berne

CalShakes artistic director Eric Ting took a risk for the third play of the season in the beautiful theater in the hills, the Bruns Amphitheater: producing a text that had been performed only once before, "Black Odyssey," by contemporary playwright Marcus Gardley.

The risk was well worth it. "Black Odyssey" is powerful and adventurous, like the Greek myth it is named after. Homer's "Odyssey" captured the spirit of the ancient Greeks; "Black Odyssey" synthesizes much of the essence of the contemporary black experience in America, and of veterans hurt by the tragedy of war. "Black Odyssey" will likely become a classic, and Ting's production will be a template to follow.

At a preview of the play, two days before opening night, everything was in place.

Ulysses Lincoln (J. Alphonse Nicholson) is a lost soldier from the war in Afghanistan trying to find his way home. He is a tortured man who killed another human being during the war and is haunted by that memory. He has a wife waiting for him at home and a baby, but can he go home with his hands covered in blood? He is also a man without a past, an orphan who knows nothing of his an-

cestors, of his place in history and he is also a pawn in the gods' rivalries.

Gardley's text brings spectators along Ulysses's long journey home. Nicholson, Omozé Idehenre as his wife Nella, and Lamont Thompson, Aldo Billingslea and Margo Hall as the gods, were all equally excellent.

While the play is long, there is no down time. Every encounter adds to the picture of an ordinary black man who discovers himself, his past and what his people have been through along the way. The music, and the songs accompanying him are beautiful, including some original vocal compositions by Linda Tillery and Molly Holm.

The epic and sometime violent nature of the play is a match for the vast topic Gardley sought to embrace. Ting did not downplay the text and was not afraid to display the cruelty of the world that entraps Ulysses.

"Black Odyssey" runs through Sept. 3 at the Bruns Amphitheater in Orinda. There are only 12 performances left to see this epic play, and tickets are selling fast (Sunday's matinee is sold out). More information, visit www.calshakes.org.

In Memory

Ron Olowin, Ph.D.



Longtime Saint Mary's College School of Science professor and astrophysicist Ron Olowin passed away Aug. 5 after a yearlong illness. He was 72. Olowin began teaching at SMC in 1987 and "devoted his life to understanding the cosmos, drawing star-strewn connections between scientific observations, religion and human culture, and sharing his wealth of knowledge with his students," Saint Mary's College President James Donahue wrote in a message to the SMC community.

Olowin, who lived in Lafayette, was not only popular with his students, but was a regular fixture at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, where he regularly spoke as part of the Science Café lecture series. During his career, Olowin published numerous articles in scientific and popular publications, served as a visiting professor and guest lecturer at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, and received several awards, including the St. John Baptist De La Salle Award, which honors a faculty member for their extraordinary commitment to students, and Professor of the Year in 2008. Donahue noted it was through Olowin's "determined efforts that the Geissberger Observatory was installed on the hill near the cross."

Professor Olowin's funeral will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 at St. Perpetua Church in Lafayette. A vigil service will be held at 7 p.m. Aug. 25 at the Saint Mary's College Chapel.

In Memory

Bee Laird Hylinski (Bee Kendall)



A memorial service will be held for Linda "Bee" Laird Hylinski at 10 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 at St. Stephens Church in Orinda. She was known to Moraga residents as Bee Kendall when she served on the town council alongside Margaret DePriester. She moved to Rossmoor with her husband Dr. Ralph Hylinski in 2015 where she joined the board of the Rossmoor Republican Club. She graduated from Vassar in 1963 and moved to the Bay Area in 1975. She obtained a law degree and an MBA in tax from Golden Gate University and practiced law for 17 years in Walnut Creek, specializing in tax, estate planning and probate law. After retiring

in 1997 Bee became an artist and author. In 2012, she published "Contract Year: a Baseball Novel." She was totally devoted to the Oakland A's.

– Sophie Braccini, prepared with the help of Dick Olsen.

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