

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



Gifts with a difference

From head to toe, we've got you covered for the holidays



A world of wines | The money behind 'Che'

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Gifts with a difference

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EUROPE

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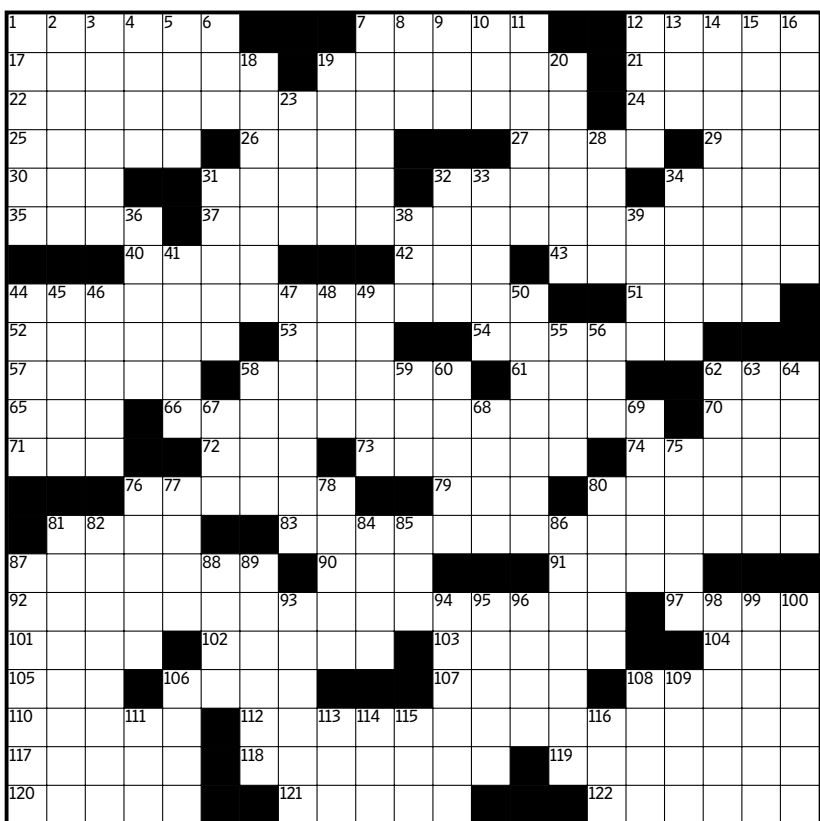
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SWAMI STEVE LAMA DUH
TEXAN EMOTER EMUS ABE
DELIGHTED ARSONIST ROI
DEMEANED STATISTICIAN
ALA TONS ANTZ
ATTIRES FIZZ JAL
BIAS BARE MCCORMICK
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DEGRADED TEACHER
TRAIL CONES PHANTASM
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USE DEVOTED POLITICIAN
SECRETARY RAZE OSLO
ELS VERY NAPSTER
AVON CUJO EAR
DECOMPOSED SONGWRITER
MRE DEBUNKED CAMPOWNER
ADA CARR AVIATE RIYAL
NIN CLAP SEERS STARS
    
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Down

- 1 Coffee bar orders

Beards suddenly a growth area



CALL IT THE FACE of freedom. After Jorge Hendrickson lost his job at a Manhattan hedge fund three weeks ago, he stopped shaving. "I've shaved for so long, and it's nice to be able to look at the positive side" of losing a job, says Mr. Hendrickson, 24. "I'm changing my lifestyle while I can."

Facial hair is showing up on more former corporate types. It's one of those tiny luxuries unleashed by unemployment, a time when peo-

On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

ple are briefly released from workday habits and may wish to take stock of their lives before setting out anew. Al Gore grew a beard after losing the tumultuous U.S. presidential election of 2000. Neatly trimmed, it looked cozy and anti-establishment as he pursued creative projects on his way to the Nobel Peace Prize.

Scott Berger, a 35-year-old investment analyst, stopped shaving in October after being laid off from hedge fund Laurus Capital Management. "It's something you can't do in the corporate world," he says. He does, however, cut his facial hair closely with a beard trimmer, pledging, "I'm not ever going to look like a lumberjack."

The trend may be driven in part by the music industry, where beards have become fashionable. Carrissa Turley, a hair stylist at Rudy's Barbershop in trendy West Hollywood, Calif., says she began to see an uptick in beard requests in mid-October. Men up to age 40 began coming in with photos of bearded musicians from bands, including the Foo Fighters and Kings of Leon. "It's kind of the hipster thing now," Ms. Turley says.

For most office workers, the look remained too daring—until they had nothing left to lose. At the Don-suki salon on Manhattan's East Side, owner Suki Duggin says she's been helping an increasing number of male clients groom newly liberated facial hair. One recent customer came in with a month's growth on his chin, saying he'd lost his job and wanted "to totally change" his look, she says.

Ms. Duggin, who charges \$30 to trim a beard, is spending more time teaching these clients to style their stubble. Beards must be trimmed closely around the mouth, for instance, to avoid embarrassing episodes when eating. One longtime customer discovered last week that his beard would need to be colored if he wanted it to match his dyed hair.

Ms. Duggin says her bewhiskered clients often associate facial hair with power and rugged masculinity. "They joke with me about it—I feel like a real man," she says with a chuckle.

Sure, Ernest Hemingway had whiskers. But like bow ties and white loafers, facial hair is fraught with negative connotations. An alternative meaning of "beard" is someone who diverts suspicion from the guilty. To avoid sending unintended messages, stylists say, guys should think carefully about what their beards signal.

ZZ Top is the least of it. A thickly bearded man can seem to be hiding something. Within the Amish sect, a long, full beard may denote mature



Scott Berger (above) and Jorge Hendrickson (top right) grew facial hair after job losses. Al Gore (right), Lawrence Fishburne (far right) and Bill Richardson (middle right) have also had beards.

stability, but on an unemployed financial planner, it suggests rather the opposite. Grooming the beard doesn't remove all problems. A man with stubble that's cut close—a la Tom Ford—can seem narcissistic.

Kelly Lynn Anders, associate dean at the Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kan., and author of a new advice book called "The Organized Lawyer," tells students to avoid facial hair entirely. As the term "clean-shaven" implies, "people find it cleaner," she says.

Still, professorial beards on older men can imply depth of intellect. Indeed, Ms. Anders says, fully one-third of the law school's male faculty members have facial hair. Among them, she says, "we have two goatees, a mustache and two full beards."

Brad Pitt has a goatee on the cover of Architectural Digest this month, and the look implies intelligence and style as he promotes an innovative housing project in New Orleans. John Lennon's beard connoted "thinker" and "poet."

Ben Bernanke's furry jawline gives the Fed chairman the look of a trustworthy intellectual. But Brad Warthen, editorial page editor for the State, a Columbia, S.C., newspaper, recently pondered what would happen if Mr. Bernanke were to shave. "Could this be the bold stroke that is needed to jolt the economy back to where it should be?" Mr. Warthen posited in his blog.

Intellectuals, musicians, artists, and tycoons like investor Sam Zell, who just took Tribune Co. into bankruptcy proceedings, have free rein with facial hair. Not so, workaday businessmen. Beards are virtually verboten in corporate circles. Bill Richardson shaved his beard last week, just before the announcement that he would be the next U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

For many men, growing that unemployment beard is akin to a tame dance at a bachelor party—a momentary freedom enjoyed while the rules are suspended. Many of to-

day's beards may be as short-lived as the holidays. Mr. Berger shaves for job interviews, then re-grows his beard, which takes about two weeks. "I can't go on an interview with a beard," he says.

Mr. Hendrickson isn't in favor of mixing beards and business suits either. "Everyone who's lost their job may be changing it up," he says, "but I think we'll all be very happy to go back to a more regular life."



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By a whisker

Hear Christina Binkley discuss the new growth in facial hair, and see some celebrity beards, at

WSJ.com/Fashion

Giving the wonderful world of wine

IT'S TIME FOR THE World-Wide Sampler.

We introduced the World-Wide Sampler as a holiday present back in 2000. The idea is simply this: a case of inexpensive wines from around the globe to showcase what a wonderful world of wine we now live in.

We have focused on types of wine that are at least somewhat widely available, but you will have

Tastings

DOROTHY J. GAITER
AND JOHN BRECHER

to be flexible on this because it's impossible to know what you might find at any one store. It will almost certainly be better to work with a good wine merchant on this than to try to do it yourself at the local supermarket or warehouse store, which might not have the breadth of wines that is necessary to make the World-Wide Sampler truly world-wide.

The idea is for these wines to average about \$10 each, so that, with a case discount, the entire gift will cost somewhere around \$100. That's why we haven't included some wines such as New Zealand Pinot Noir or a red from Austria, either of which would be a nice addition but will often cost more than \$20. If you can find one within your price range, that's great.

We have emphasized wines that might be a little surprising and, in some cases, might be more widely available today than just a little while ago.

1) and 2) Two bottles from Chile, one Sauvignon Blanc (ideally from the 2008 vintage) and one Cabernet Sauvignon. The first will pair well with any type of seafood and the latter with beef or vegetarian casseroles. This will showcase the emergence of Chile as the preeminent source of good bargains these days. It will also hold down the cost because the wines are so affordable. (If you happen to see a Carmenère from Chile that fits into the price range, that's a specialty of Chile and could replace the Cabernet. Carmenère is great with savory foods from rich meat dishes to ratatouille.)

3) Inexpensive 2005 Bordeaux, from France. Yes, the well-known Bordeaux from the fine 2005 vin-



Shira Kronzon for The Wall Street Journal

tage are ridiculously expensive. But Bordeaux is a huge place with thousands of obscure wineries. In a broad tasting of them this year, we found that they offer consistent quality for the price. Bordeaux is the king of wines and will do your prime rib or brisket proud.

4) Torrontés, from Argentina. By now, everybody is familiar with Malbec, Argentina's signature red grape. But Torrontés is coming on strong as Argentina's signature white grape. These are pure, happy wines—fruity, with great acidity—and will sing with grilled or broiled seafood. Get the 2008 if you can, but nothing older than 2007. (If you simply can't find a Torrontés, get a Chardonnay from

Argentina, which is an easy-drinking bargain and good with fried seafood and chicken.)

5) South African Chenin Blanc (sometimes called Steen). South Africa is providing some of the best-made value-priced wines on the market. These will go well with light pasta dishes, seafood and salads. (If you can find a South African Pinotage in your price range, that would be a good substitute. It's a unique South African red, a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, and perfect with lamb or grilled eggplant dishes.)

6) A wine from Sicily. Sicily is a large wine region, but the wines weren't very good for a long time. That has changed. The wines are better and they are more widely available than ever. The best-known wine from Sicily is Nero d'Avola, a hearty red, and that's a good bet. We can't think of much that this wine won't enliven. Think comfort foods like meatloaf, sausage or veal and peppers, spaghetti and spicy tomato sauces.

7) Gigondas, from France. The earthy, winter-weather reds from the Rhône Valley of France are generally a great buy, but many people haven't yet discovered some of the wines, such as Gigondas, St. Joseph or Vacqueyras. Earthy foods will work here, too, like meatloaf with sautéed mushrooms, a simple hamburger or pasta marinara.

8) Portuguese red or Vinho Verde. Portuguese reds are ridiculously inexpensive and quite soul-satisfying, but they tend to be hidden on a bottom shelf somewhere in the store, probably because they're inexpensive. Try this with

simple fare, from hamburgers to pastas to grilled cheese sandwiches. If you can't find one, a crisp, light, fun white called Vinho Verde would be a good alternative. This is great with salads and light fish dishes. It probably won't be vintage-dated the classic way, but look closely at the back for "2008" printed in small letters, to make sure you're getting a young, fresh one.

9) Primitivo, from Italy. Yes, it's true that in a tasting of Primitivo this year, we didn't much like them. On the other hand, Primitivo really is a great example of wine's world-wide reach. It turns out, after years of research, that Primitivo is the same grape as America's Zinfandel and that both of them are related to a little-known grape from Croatia. The Zinfandel connection has given new life to Primitivo and encouraged some Italian producers to call it Zinfandel; led to proposed regulations allowing American Zinfandel to be called Primitivo; and sparked a small resurgence in the Croatian grape. That's what the world-wide in World-Wide Sampler is all about, experiencing exciting connections and marveling at the difference terroir can make. Try these with red meat, from hamburgers to lamb. A pasta with chunky tomato sauce with capers and peppers would be yummy, too.

10) Rosé, from Spain or anywhere else. Spain is producing all sorts of outstanding rosé these days at good prices, but, overall, there have never been so many good rosés on shelves. Rosé used to be shunned by many wine lovers be-

cause it was sweet and simple, but no more. From Spain to South Africa, rosés today are food-friendly and exciting. Be sure to get a young one. These are good with a wide range of foods, from cheese platters to roast chicken.

11) Cava, from Spain. It's important that this case include a bubbly to make the point that good bubbly is being made just about everywhere these days. (In fact, our World-Wide Sampler last year was composed entirely of sparklers. For a copy of that column, drop us a note at wine@wsj.com.) Spain's sparkling wine, which is called Cava, is consistently pleasant and often priced at around \$8, a great buy. Try this with everything from sushi to fried chicken. Bubbly is great with a wide variety of foods.

12) Other. This is the most important wine of the case, the one (or two or three) that you will find from places you didn't expect. Depending on where you live, you might well find a wine from Mexico, Canada, Peru or Switzerland. We are also seeing more wines these days from Eastern Europe. There are some stores—not many, but some—where you could buy 12 wines from 12 different countries and if you can do that, go for it. The idea is for you to have fun with this. We assure you that the lucky recipient will.

Arbitrage

Davidoff cigar cutter

City	Local currency	€
Rome	€200	€200
London	£185	€214
Brussels	€230	€230
Paris	€240	€240
New York	\$322	€253
Hong Kong	HK\$2,820	€289
Tokyo	¥42,000	€356



Note: Diamond cut lines and chrome-plated. Prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

WSJ.com

Global glasses
Watch John and Dottie taste
and talk about wines from the
World-Wide Sampler, at
WSJ.com/Lifestyle

Grand old hotels take the bar exam

Ordering classic cocktails doesn't always get properly mixed results

IT'S FUNNY WHAT a wonderful gentility you get in the bar of a big hotel," Ernest Hemingway has Jake Barnes say to Brett Ashley in "The Sun Also Rises." They are sipping nice icy Martinis at the bar of the Palace Hotel in Madrid and marveling at the elegant professionalism of bartenders. "Barmen and jockeys are the only people who are polite any more," Brett says, and Jake agrees: "No matter how vulgar a hotel is, the bar is always nice."

How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

If only that were still true. Once upon a time, hotel bars set the standard for sophisticated drinking, with barmen who were the best in the business. Jack Williams, who was the head bartender at Chicago's Palmer House before Prohibition and then at Washington's Mayflower Hotel after repeal, claimed a repertoire of over 3,000 drinks. Nowadays you're lucky to find a hotel bartender whose vocabulary extends very far beyond Vodka-Tonic. Over the past year and a half, as I traveled around the U.S., I stopped in at dozens of grand old hotels, incognito, to see if their bars lived up to the tradition. I found a few gems in a sea of expensive mediocrity (punctuated with the occasional fiasco).

To test the quality of the bars I visited, I settled on two drinks to ask for at each. The first was a Sidecar, a standard in the classic cocktail canon. Made of brandy, Cointreau and lemon (or lime) juice, it is a drink known to any bartender worthy of the title. Yet very few mixers make it well, getting the right balance of citrus tang and liqueur sweetness while keeping the brandy front and center. And any time a bar uses the pre-sweetened lemon-lime shortcut called "sour mix," the drink is ruined.

The other drink I asked for was an Americano Highball—Campari, sweet vermouth and soda water on the rocks. The Americano is one of those semiobscure classics that all serious bartenders know, and that amateurs have never heard of.

By and large, the classic old hotels of New York City delivered. I enjoyed excellent Sidecars—and received Americanos without hesitation—at the St. Regis, the Waldorf-Astoria and the Peninsula. The drinks at the Pierre Hotel were particularly good, accentuated by lovely crystal glasses and gracious service. (Alas, the Pierre is now closed for renovations, so you'll have to wait to enjoy its intimate bar.)

San Francisco rivals New York these days as a hotbed of serious cocktail culture, but its great old hotels haven't kept up with the best of the local bar scene. There were no Americanos to be had at the St. Francis, the Sir Francis Drake "Starlight Room," or the Mark Hopkins "Top of the Mark," where a waitress came back to me with the definitive, "That's not in our computer."



Gus Tassopulos, dean of the barmen at L.A.'s Hotel Bel-Air.

Ethan Pines for The Wall Street Journal

Washington was a mixed bag. The Mayflower bartenders may not have old Jack Williams's encyclopedic knowledge, but after a huddle they were able to come up with an Americano. Alas, the hotel's Sidecar was made with sour mix—and they used a lousy brand the color of antifreeze. Sour mix also marred the Sidecar at the Drake Hotel in Chicago. I was spared the sour mix at Chicago's Pump Room—the Ambassador East Hotel bar that Frank Sinatra used to sing about—because the cheerful young woman behind the bar had no idea what a Sidecar was.

The Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach, Fla., is a spectacular pseudo-Mediterranean palace. But the bar, it seems, mostly serves up beach drinks. The Sidecar I got there—gin, sour mix, simple (sugar) syrup, and a squeeze of lemon juice—was wrong in just about every way. The Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, designed in the '20s by the same architects who built the Breakers, has what may be the most beautiful hotel bar in America. Sadly, the drinks did the space no justice (which may have been one reason the room was nearly empty the night I was there). The bartender could not have made it any more clear how uninterested he was when I asked for an Americano. And his Sidecar was a travesty, sugared up not only with sour mix, but by Rose's sweetened lime juice.

I also ran into the awful sour-mix-and-Rose's Sidecar combo in Dallas at the Stoneleigh and the Melrose Warwick hotels. I didn't get any sort of Sidecar at the grand, downtown Adolphus Hotel. The young woman behind the bar was too bored to be nonplussed: "We don't do much of that kind of drink," she said, unapologetically.

I had high hopes for the Arizona Biltmore (which is unrelated to the L.A. hotel), for sentimental reasons. When I was growing up in Phoenix, my trumpet-playing father gigged often at the Biltmore, and I was always enchanted by its

architecture, inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. Alas, my experience at the hotel's bar was enough to dispel any enchantment that might have lingered. The bartender didn't know the Americano, and made no effort to figure it out. The lemon juice he used for the Sidecar came from a big half-gallon plastic milk jug that he plunked down on the bar in front of me—a clear deduction on style points.

My tutorial in the slapdash and slapstick at the Arizona Biltmore was just starting. A waitress, racing to load her tray at the end of the bar, managed to upend half a dozen drinks and punctuated the accident by shouting that most durable of four-letter Anglo-Saxonisms. For his part, the bartender was jumping up and down in distress, having been splashed in the face with a crashing Cosmo. As he ran off to irrigate his stinging eye, the waitress looked down the bar sheepishly and said: "Sorry. I guess that wasn't very classy." I guess not.

A few hotel chains have been making an effort to improve the quality of their bars of late, with much-publicized bar programs at companies such as Marriott. And I did find some evidence that those efforts are paying off. The Copley Plaza in Boston is a Fairmont property, and that company has adopted a policy of making all citrus drinks with fresh juice. Thus, the Sidecar there was excellent, though the bartender drew a blank when I asked for an Americano.

The best hotel bartender I encountered in my travels didn't need any new training program to teach him how to make great cocktails. Gus Tassopulos, dean of the barmen at L.A.'s Hotel Bel-Air, has been mixing drinks for five decades. He started at the Beverly Hills Hotel in 1959 and came to the Bel-Air in 1990. Mine wasn't the first request for an Americano, which he mixed right up. His Sidecar was a thing of beauty, made with fresh lime juice, and every ingredient carefully measured to make sure the drink would

have the correct balance. Mr. Tassopulos was also a paradigm of dignified, old-school service—friendly but formal, attentive without being intrusive.

Mr. Tassopulos laments that there aren't many good bartend-

ers these days. Yes, there are men and women serious about the craft. But they are generally focused on becoming celebrity mixologists, cocktail consultants—or, at the very least, they want to own their own high-end bars one day. More power to them. But otherwise, barmen tend to be waiters or waitresses who graduate to the better-paying spot behind the bar and stick it out long enough to finish school or get the acting job they've been chasing. "Bartending isn't what people want as a career now," Mr. Tassopulos says, which explains why I ran into so many people who didn't seem to care what they pushed across the mahogany.

Take the young man I found tending bar at Hollywood's brilliantly restored Roosevelt Hotel. He happily told me that he didn't know how to make many drinks at all. When needed, he could always just look something up in the bar book behind the counter. But most of the time he didn't bother to use the book: "If people ask for a drink I don't know," he explained, "I can always kind of make something with sour mix and vodka and they'll be happy."

A more eloquent and concise expression of the state of bartending in America you couldn't hope to find.



Michael Sheen (left) and Frank Langella in 'Frost/Nixon'; below, Beyoncé Knowles in 'Cadillac Records.'

Universal Studios

A chillingly real 'Frost/Nixon'

MIMICRY GIVES WAY to dark majesty in "Frost/Nixon," a spellbinding film version of Peter Morgan's play about the 1977 televised confrontation between an English talk-show host, David Frost, and the former president who had resigned in disgrace three years before. The majesty flows not from Nixon himself, though he's played phenomenally



Sony BMG

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

well by Frank Langella, but from the spectacle of that tortured man summoning up, yet again, the tumultuous epoch he embodied.

What a spectacle it is. Mr. Langella has most of the pieces of his performance in place from the start—the seizing intelligence, the ponderous physicality, the cold cunning, the alternate layers of stiffness and charm. Still, it's a performance, and for a while a fairly circumspect one that declines to dwell on Nixon's asperity, his basso-profundo petulance and volcanic anger. But then, toward the end of the extended interviews, something remarkable happens as Michael Sheen's Frost closes in, and the camera with him, on what he hopes will be the fallen president's first mea culpa following the nightmarish sequence of events that came to be known as Watergate. Langella the actor starts to vanish, and he's replaced by the spectral presence of a once-omnipotent chief of state contemplating, in pitiless close-ups, the nature of his deeds and the depth of his fall.

Close-ups are indispensable here—not only to the film, which was directed by Ron Howard, but to the original TV interviews, which are available on DVD. "The reductive power of the close-up" is how it's put by Sam Rockwell in the role of James Reston Jr., one of the writers and journalists Frost hired to shore up his production team. That power can cut every which way. TV's greatest sin is that it simplifies and diminishes, Reston notes, but he also says, rightly, that Frost succeeded in getting, "for a fleeting moment, what no investigative journalist, no state prosecutor, no judiciary committee or political enemy had managed to get—Richard Nixon's face, swollen and ravaged by loneliness, self-loathing and defeat."

What Ron Howard gets, to a degree that's astonishing in a two-hour film, is the density and complexity, as well as the generous entertainment quotient, of Peter Morgan's screenplay.

(Mr. Morgan previously wrote "The Queen," in which Michael Sheen played Tony Blair, and "The Last King of Scotland.") "Frost/Nixon" does more than dramatize the high points of the TV interviews. In the frantic run-up to the recorded interviews, and during the early videotape sessions, the film gives us the collateral drama of a talk-show host, accustomed to celebrity chatter, trying desperately to play the role of a serious journalist.

"Don't forget," warns his producer, who's played by Matthew Macfadyen, "you're in there with a major operator." That's an understatement; he's also in there with a master obfuscator. In the preliminary exchanges, Nixon outmaneuvers his adversary at every turn. Frost may have been fed the right questions by his handlers, but he can't assert himself long enough to pose them in the face of Nixon's self-serving evasions and crafty ramblings to run out the clock. Yet "Frost/Nixon" operates on still another dramatic plane—a battle of wits between two adversaries who turn out to be fully worthy of one another. Both men are desperate to succeed. Frost needs to revive a sagging career by selling an expensive, problematic production

that he's been forced to finance in large part out of his own pocket. Nixon needs to start the long process of rehabilitating himself, and has been assured by his handlers that Frost, an amiable lightweight, will be a push-over.

Untruer words have seldom been spoken, unless to Sarah Palin. Michael Sheen, a brilliant actor in his own right, grows his character from a bright-eyed social butterfly to a gimlet-eyed interrogator who, altogether plausibly, finds his focus and the courage to go with it. From time to time the movie itself stands on shaky ground between show business and history—Mr. Morgan has invented freely, though not, of course, in the TV interviews. But it's a movie in the fullest sense, entertaining and instructive in equal measure.

'Cadillac Records'

"Cadillac Records" may be a mess dramatically, but it's a wonderful mess, and not just because of the great music. The people who made it must have harbored the notion, almost subversive in a season of so many depressing films, that going out to the movies should be fun.

This particular movie, which was written and directed by Darnell Martin, could have been called "Chess Records," since that's the center of the story—the rise and fall of the Chicago label that provided a home and surrogate family for blues legends-in-the-making. But the label's founder, a young Polish émigré named Leonard Chess (Adrien Brody), bought Cadillacs for his musicians when they made their first hits, so the title has logic along with marketing allure.

The allure of the cast can't be overstated, even though Ms. Martin's script seems determined to march the cast through every step of the decades-long way as the blues evolved into rock and roll. Jeffrey Wright is superb as Muddy Waters. Columbus Short is scarily mercurial as Little Walter. I've never seen a performance quite so eerie—effectively so—as Eamonn Walker's Howlin' Wolf, whose speaking voice emanates from some mysterious cave of the winds. Mos Def, whose acting grows more distinctive with each role, plays the bumptious crossover prodigy Chuck Berry, and Beyoncé Knowles is the singular, and self-destructive, singer Etta James. Ms. Knowles sometimes shatters the sense of period with the sheer force of her musical personality, but there's a lot to be said, as "Frost/Nixon" demonstrates, for displays of unrestrained power.

Langella on characters from Dracula to Nixon

BY MICHELLE KUNG

FRANK LANGELLA HAS an affinity for playing outsiders and flawed individuals, he says. On Broadway, he's getting into trouble with King Henry VIII every night as Sir Thomas More in "A Man for All Seasons"; on-screen, he played a sexy, memorable "Dracula" in 1979, and his latest cinematic outlier is President Richard Nixon in "Frost/Nixon." This adaptation of Peter Morgan's play revolves around the 1977 interviews between the disgraced former president and British talk-show host David Frost (Michael Sheen). Directed by Ron Howard ("The Da Vinci Code"), the film opened in limited release Dec. 5 and hits theaters in Europe in January. Oscar talk for Mr. Langella, 70 years old, has begun.

Q: You first played Nixon when "Frost/Nixon" opened in London in August 2006 and reprised the role on Broadway and for the film in 2007. Was it hard letting go of the character?

No—I liked Richard Nixon and I liked playing him. I don't think he'll ever be gone from me, because something about the man is just very powerful. His pain, and the obviousness of his pain, stays with you. It's not a sentiment that's new to any of us—you could see it on him at all times, his discomfort in public—but I discovered he could be equally funny and charming. He just wasn't a relaxed man, and was forever churning away, trying to achieve greatness. But I'm deeply involved with playing Sir Thomas More now. Once something's over, you hang up the suit and move on.

Q: Given his discomfort, he would not have done well in today's 24/7 news cycle.

Yes, there was at that point a certain amount of distance between the public and press but now, the ubiquitousness of the president, of all politicians, is remarkable to me—they turn up on every show; I don't know how they have lives of any kind. The business of getting work done must be very difficult. Nixon wasn't required to appear that often.

Q: Where were you when Nixon resigned in 1974?

I was in a theater rehearsal in Williamstown,

Mass., working on a play. I was sitting on the floor of a little rented house with a script in my lap and I stopped and watched the resignation and then went back to work.

Q: In plays, actors seem to derive their emotions from the momentum of an extended live performance. How do you recapture that for film?

You do what's required. If you're doing a play, you're not really doing a man's life, you're doing a microcosm of it. It's live and over in an hour and half. If you're doing a movie, and you're on a set for 18 hours a day for 35 days, and a makeup chair for two hours every day before you even walk on set, there's some little heartbeat that's going on all the time, that then has to really pump when you hear the word action. Between scenes, you just have to be a professional and maintain it—but not to the point of any self-flagellation.

Q: Much of the film was shot on location, including Nixon's beachfront property at Casa Pacifica in San Clemente and the home in Monarch Bay where the interviews were shot, which must have been energizing as an actor.

Absolutely, everything helps. Plus, all the interviews were shot chronologically, which was a smart idea on Ron's part, so the David-and-Goliath trajectory [Frost seen as a lightweight, Nixon the senior statesman] for Michael and I kept growing until we shot the final scene.

Q: At various points in the film's development, it was rumored that Warren Beatty and Jack Nicholson would get the role of Nixon. How confident were you about eventually reprising your role for film?

I never thought about it specifically one way or another. Once the role was offered to me, after we opened on Broadway, I knew the role was mine. But until that point, I knew it was up for grabs. When I was in London, I had one phone conversation with Ron where I told him it was probably pretty obvious to him that I'd love to do the movie, and he said, just keep doing what you're doing, and I did. Worked out pretty well.



Newscom

WSJ.com

Screening room
Watch a clip from the movie
'Frost/Nixon,' at
WSJ.com/Lifestyle

A director tries 'Guerrilla' financing

BY LAUREN A.E. SCHUKER

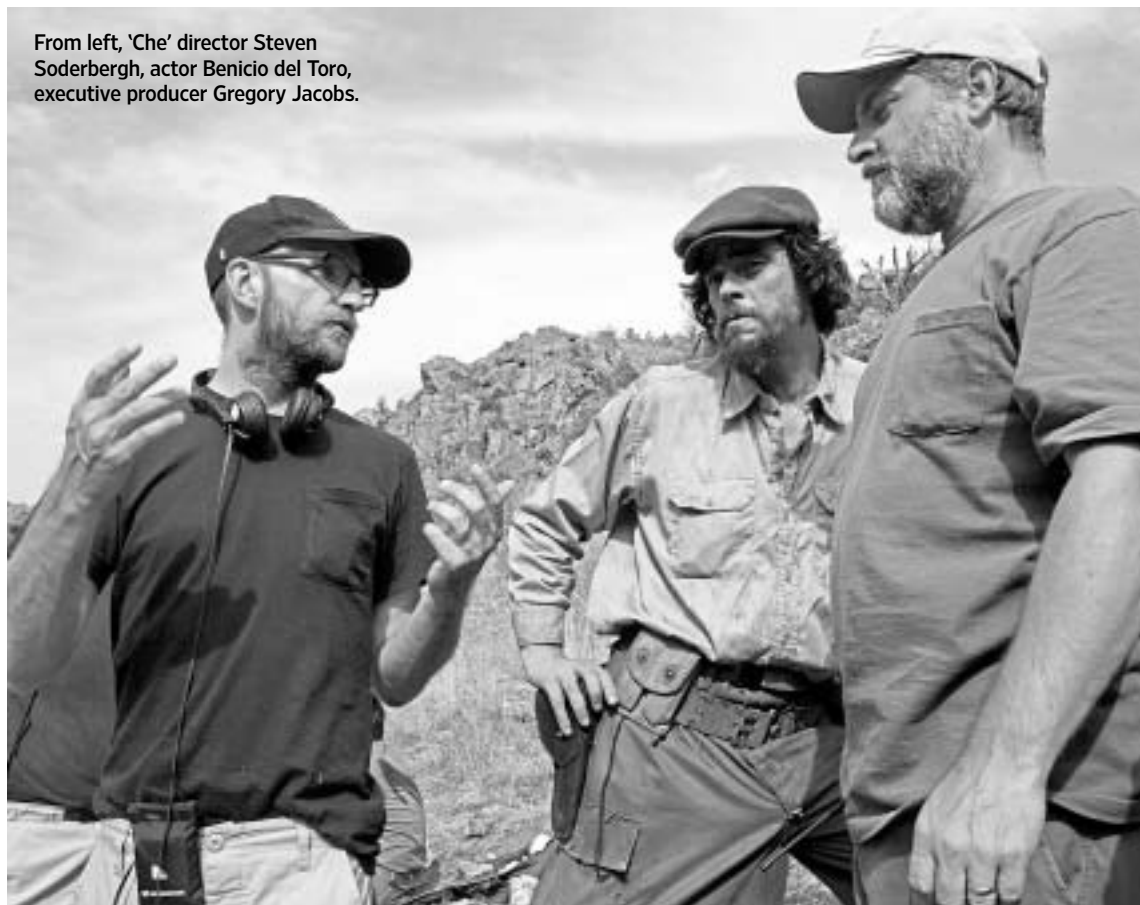
IT WAS NEARLY A DECADE ago that Steven Soderbergh and two partners, actor Benicio Del Toro and producer Laura Bickford, first discussed making a long, ambitious film about revolutionary Che Guevara. It soon became apparent, however, that they were perhaps the only people in Hollywood willing to gamble on a four-hour epic made largely in Spanish.

This weekend, Mr. Soderbergh's movie will begin an unusual theatrical run with IFC Films. Funded largely by foreign backers after the Hollywood studios passed, "Che" will open as a 257-minute film on Friday and play for a single week in New York and Los Angeles; then, in January, IFC will reissue the epic as two separate two-hour films at theaters across the U.S. and Europe before also releasing it on video on demand. Mr. Soderbergh's struggles to get the film funded and released are signs of the mounting financing challenges facing filmmakers in today's Hollywood. "For a while, we were financing the script and development ourselves, waiting to see what the best circumstances for the film would be," he says.

Scrambling for production funds is nothing new for Mr. Soderbergh, a veteran director who works both inside and outside the studio system. The 45-year-old's résumé includes franchises like "Ocean's Eleven," serious, critically acclaimed films like "Traffic" and tiny independent fare like his 2006 film "Bubble."

Snubbed by the major U.S. studios on "Che," Mr. Soderbergh and his partners turned to Europe. The French film company Wild Bunch supplied about 75% of the financing for the \$58 million movie and pre-sold a number of territories to the international arms of companies like Warner Bros. to recoup the sum. Spain's Telecinco came in later and provided additional financing.

The film follows the life of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentine doctor who rose up as an idealistic insurgent and became an international symbol of rebellion. Mr. Soderbergh shot the two parts in distinct styles. For the first part, which follows Che, played by Mr. Del Toro, as he meets Fidel Castro and rises to power during the Cuban Revolution



From left, 'Che' director Steven Soderbergh, actor Benicio del Toro, executive producer Gregory Jacobs.

to overthrow Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship, he used a wider frame evocative of a classic Hollywood style to highlight the triumphant nature of that revolt. The second film traces Che's failed attempt to revolutionize Bolivia which ended with his capture and subsequent execution in 1967; Mr. Soderbergh shot the second chapter with a handheld camera to get across the uncertainty of Che's mission.

In a typical career sequence for Mr. Soderbergh, he followed his work on "Che" by shooting a \$22.5 million Matt Damon movie for Warner Bros. about a price-fixing scandal in the world of agriculture, called "The Informant," which comes out next fall; from there, he quickly moved on to production on "The Girlfriend Experience," starring mostly nonprofessional actors and made on a shoestring budget of about \$1.8 million.

Maneuvering between different types of projects demands flexibility. These days, movie theaters are

awash in a glut of small, independent movies that were funded by the billions of dollars that outside investors, such as hedge funds, poured into Hollywood in recent years. The oversupply has made it difficult for small movies to compete. And now, new financing for such films has become scarce amid Wall Street's meltdown.

Such issues are, in part, what made financing "Che" so difficult. "Two decades ago, it was easy to finance a film from a single source," says Mr. Soderbergh. "Hollywood wasn't laying so much off film budgets to equity partners or other studios. But these days, every film has a handful of partners."

Indeed, Mr. Soderbergh says Warner Bros. outsourced part of the financing for "The Informant," to not one but two additional equity partners. "Twenty years ago," says Mr. Soderbergh, "nobody—studios or independent producers—was doing that on a budget that size. Participant and Groundswell are both great partners to have for Warner

Bros., but at a certain point, if you can't write a check for this movie, then I guess you can't write a check for anything." Warner Bros. confirmed that it has two partners on the movie but says that it wasn't an unusual arrangement.

The harsh economic realities of today's film industry have also forced prominent directors like Mr. Soderbergh to seek financing abroad. Spike Lee financed his most recent film with money from Italian investors; Oliver Stone's "W." was financed by a crew of equity partners from Asia and Europe.

Mr. Soderbergh has long turned to foreign investors to back his movies, such as his 1991 mystery thriller, "Kafka." "For certain kinds of movies, you are going to have an easier time finding money overseas," he says, adding that winning Cannes' top film prize in 1989 with "Sex, Lies, and Videotape" helped establish his name abroad.

Landing a U.S. distributor for "Che" proved not only to be challenging but "downright depressing," says

Mr. Soderbergh, who has long nurtured cozy relationships with distributors and studios, especially Warner Bros., where his now-defunct production company with George Clooney, Section Eight, once enjoyed a production deal. The foreign-language component of "Che" posed a major problem for U.S. distributors, says Mr. Soderbergh. "I knew that a foreign language film would be a problem, but I felt that a movie about a guy who holds such staunch anti-imperialist views with him speaking the language of the imperialists would look ridiculous," he says.

Despite the language issue, "Che" eventually attracted U.S. bidders: In September, IFC Films announced it would distribute the movie. The company will offer the film on a variety of formats in rapid succession, releasing the full-length version on Dec. 12 in New York and Los Angeles for one week and then again in January as two admissions, the first titled "The Argentine" and the second, "Guerrilla." About two weeks after that, it will be available through IFC's video-on-demand platform.

While many filmmakers bristle at the idea of releasing a movie so quickly through video on demand, the notion is hardly revolutionary to Mr. Soderbergh, who helped pioneer the concept of simultaneous releases with his 2006 film, "Bubble," about a murder in a small Midwestern town. That film, along with "The Girlfriend Experience," is part of a six-picture deal he struck with Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban and Todd Wagner's 2929 Entertainment to fund smaller films that get distributed simultaneously on DVD, cable TV, and in theaters.

That pact was part of an effort by Mr. Soderbergh to navigate the digital revolution. Within five years, Mr. Soderbergh predicts, the film industry will see a major Hollywood studio release one of its biggest films simultaneously in theaters, on cable, and on a DVD or Blu-ray disc. At that point, Mr. Soderbergh adds, "Only the fittest will survive."

WSJ.com

Revolutionary film
Watch a clip from 'Che' and
read a Q&A with director
Steven Soderbergh, at
WSJ.com/Lifestyle

Sex, lies and oscars

A selective look at the films of Steven Soderbergh

'Sex, Lies, and Videotape' (1989)

Budget: \$1.2 million

U.S. box office: \$24.7 million

Backstory: This Miramax film co-starring James Spader (below) catapulted Steven Soderbergh—then unknown—to international fame and won him the coveted Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.



'Erin Brockovich' (2000)

Budget: \$46 million

U.S. box office: \$125.5 million

Backstory: Based on a true story, this film centers on a single mother (Julia Roberts, above) who finds work as a legal assistant—and becomes embroiled in one of the biggest class-action lawsuits in history.

'Traffic' (2000)

Budget: \$46 million

U.S. box office: \$124.1 million

Backstory: This drama, which chronicled America's war on drugs by weaving together several disparate stories, swept the Academy Awards in 2001—including winning a best-director Oscar for Mr. Soderbergh.

'Bubble' (2006)

Budget: \$1.6 million

U.S. box office: \$145,626

Backstory: This drama about a murder in a small town was released simultaneously on DVD and in theaters as part of a six-picture deal that Mr. Soderbergh struck with 2929 Entertainment.

'Ocean's Thirteen' (2007)

Budget: \$121 million

U.S. box office: \$117.1 million

Backstory: The third installment of the Warner Bros. heist franchise didn't perform as well as its two predecessors, which Mr. Soderbergh also directed.



From left to right: Miramax/ Everett Collection; Universal/ Everett Collection; AFP

Holiday gifts w

From total relaxation to extreme adventure, and from
By Cris Prystay, Emma-Kate Symons, S



Ruth Phipers

Serene makeover ▲

Just because property prices are falling doesn't mean you can't feel good about your home. Feng Shui experts say they can find imbalances in your living space and then target specific areas supporting professional success, sound sleep and personal relationships—or simply help you to get rid of clutter that has accumulated over the years.

"It's almost like acupuncture for buildings," says Ruth Phipers, a 40-year-old Feng Shui consultant based in London (one of her redesigns appears above).

Feng Shui, literally "wind" and "water," is a Chinese medicinal practice dating back at least 3,000 years. Contrary to popular belief, it can work with any style and taste. Often just repainting a wall or putting up a mirror can do the trick, says Ms. Phipers. "I never tell people what furniture or fabrics to choose."

Steve Sleeve, a 46-year-old visual artist, had a Feng Shui consultation in March last year. After 20 years of "collecting things," as he puts it, his small apartment in London was full of stuff he didn't really need.

The clutter, says Mr. Sleeve, also seemed to block his career. "Something just wasn't flowing for me." After throwing away many useless items and placing the remaining ones in more meaningful places, "something just shifted," he remembers. "It made me attack the rest of my life."

Since then, "work has just been flowing in," says Mr. Sleeve, and his apartment has been tidier and more comfortable.

Feng Shui consults usually start at around £250, depending on the size of the home. National Feng Shui societies usually have a directory of accredited consultants.

www.fengshuisociety.org.uk
www.fengshui-verband.eu



System reboot ▲

For the stressed executive in your life, the gift of a stay at The Farm may be just what the doctor should have ordered. A former coconut and coffee plantation about a two-hour drive south of Manila, it's an oasis of rock pools, lakes and low-key tropical chic. "Nobody bothers you. Nobody asks for anything, unless you ask first," says Il-aria Caetani, a 36-year-old economist from Italy who spent a few days there in October. "It gives you time to think. I did yoga, I slept, I read and I walked a lot. And I still had time to think over the issues I felt I needed to solve."

The Farm offers a basic three-day "wellness" program that includes vegan meals (think organic risotto and salads of tomato and watermelon with kaffir lime leaf vinaigrette and spiced pistachios), which starts at \$835 plus taxes per person. There's also a doctor-supervised detox and purification program (minimum of five days; prices start at \$2,070), and one-to-two-week "recovery" programs for alternative approaches to dealing with such problems as excess weight and hypertension, with prices from \$3,030.

Gift vouchers and airport transfers can be arranged via email or phone through The Farm's Manila office.

www.thefarm.com.ph



Roll out the barrel

For the person who has everything, how about a barrel of fine wine? Each November Christie's holds a charity auction on behalf of Hospices de Beaune, one of France's oldest hospitals.

Through the centuries, the Burgundy region's elite have willed vineyards to the hospital, which is now a major wine producer. It's been selling wine to raise money for charity since 1459 and hired Christie's to manage its by-the-barrel sales in 2005. At this year's Nov. 16 auction, 544 barrels were sold at between €1,600 and €50,000 each.

Once a barrel has been purchased at auction, it is left to age in France, usually for 18 to 24 months, and then bottled and labeled with the owner's name. Fees for tending the wine over this period are negotiated separately. Each barrel typically produces 288 bottles of wine, Christie's says.

So a barrel that costs €4,000, for instance, works out to about €22 a bottle, once other costs, such as the fees for tending the wine, are factored in, according to the auction house. Shipping is extra.

If you can't make it to the city of Beaune next November, you can always bid online at Christie's LIVE, its virtual auction room.

www.christies.com



Christie's

Cool accommodations

Here's a really cool gift. Re-created each year and open from December to April, the Icehotel is a fantastic structure carved entirely of ice in Jukkasjärvi, a Swedish village 200 kilometers inside the Arctic Circle.

Construction begins in November, when a mixture of snow and ice is sprayed on huge steel forms and left to freeze solid. The frames are later removed, leaving a maze of freestanding corridors; suites and rooms are built from ice blocks harvested from a nearby river. Artists from all over the world carve decorative features, ornate artworks and furniture—including beds—from ice. Next to the ice hotel is a set of chalets with cozy "warm" rooms as well as a common area with bathrooms, showers, sauna and changing area.

From Stockholm, take a train or fly to the town of Kiruna. Hotel staff will pick you up and take you the 17 kilometers to the Icehotel. Warm double rooms at Northern Lights hotel chalet are 1,695 kronor (around €160) a night; cold rooms range from 1,900 kronor to 3,500 kronor.

www.icehotel.com



Hakan Hjort

ith a difference

head to toe, we've got something special for your list.

Steve Mollman and Gabriele Steinhauser

Master and commander ▶

How's this for an adrenaline rush? A crew job on an entry in the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, a 628-nautical-mile run down the east coast of Australia. For £4,445, Global Yacht Racing, a U.K. company that enters several big-ticket races world-wide, will sell up to 12 spots on its yacht for the annual competition, which starts every year on Dec. 26. (The record time, set in 2005, is less than two days.)

Seasoned and novice sailors are welcome, but the race can be challenging as well as dangerous in rough seas.

"This is the Everest of sailing," says Tibor Piroth, 38, chief executive of Siemens IT Solutions & Services in Bangkok and an avid sailor, who bought a spot in 2005.

Crew positions for this year's race are filled up, but Global Yacht is already signing up takers for next year. The price includes a week's training, insurance and meals.

The company also sells crew spots for other races throughout the year, including the ARC Transatlantic Race, which departs from Las Palmas, and the Rolex Middle Sea Race, out of Malta.

www.GlobalYachtRacing.com



Saving your sole ▲

Help someone follow in the footsteps of Winston Churchill, Humphrey Bogart and David Beckham by giving him a pair of custom-made shoes from London's G.J. Cleverley & Co. Ltd. Behind the old-fashioned storefront in the Royal Arcade, George Glasgow and his team make shoes the same way they were made 50 years ago, when George Cleverley founded the business.

"Very few people in this world have a pair of feet," says Mr. Glasgow, who this year celebrated his 40th anniversary as a bespoke shoemaker. Cleverley-made shoes are fitted exactly to the unique size of each of your feet.

The process takes time. The last-maker takes a three-dimensional measurement of your feet and then carves a direct replica from a piece of beechwood. This wooden model, the last, takes account of "each little nook and cranny" on toes, heels and balls; it's kept at the shop for at least ten years after your first visit.

Next, the clicker and closer craft the top of your shoes in your chosen style and color (Cleverley's selection includes 40 to 50 different shades of brown alone, says Mr. Glasgow). After three or four months, you return to the store for a final fitting before the maker sews the top of your shoe to the sole.

A pair of bespoke shoes starts at around £2,000 and goes up to around £3,500 for alligator leather.

www.gjcleverley.co.uk

Picnic deluxe

If you're going to splash out, make it count: Throw a party under the stars at Borobudur, a 1,200-year-old Buddhist temple in Central Java.

First, check into Amanresort's Amanjiwo hotel, which overlooks the massive complex—eight stone terraces stacked on one another and topped by a monumental stupa. The best time for this Indonesian outdoor soiree is between June and September, when it's least likely to rain. On a 300-square-meter elevated area that's 200 meters away from Borobudur's east side—the closest you can get to this Unesco World Heritage site with musicians

and caterer in tow—the Amanjiwo will take care of every detail from the tables, coconut-oil torches and candles to the band. Dinner will feature a range of local fare cooked on-site. The hotel also can arrange for a local performance such as the traditional Ramayana, a Hindu epic tale, or a Jatilan, a "trance dance" of Central Java.

A party for 20 people, including food, music, performances, temple lights, service staff and decorations, will cost \$7,000. The bar is extra; so are the hotel rooms.

www.amanresorts.com



Gifts that keep giving ▲

Even in these uncertain times, one thing is certain: There's always somebody worse off. Here, some easy-to-manage ideas for lending a hand:

You can give people certificates from Kiva (www.kiva.org), an organization that makes interest-free loans to entrepreneurs in the developing world, where even \$25 or \$50—typical certificate values—can go a long way.

Brooke Estin, a 24-year-old coordinator at a nonprofit organization in Bangkok, has made nearly two dozen small loans through Kiva and given several certificates as presents. She gave one to a friend who is a chef, and he joined about 10 other people to lend \$425 to a Peruvian woman to expand the kitchen of her home restaurant.

In each country that Kiva lends in—there are several in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Americas—it works with microlending institutions that vet and monitor the loan applicants. About 98% of the loans are repaid in full.

GlobalGiving (www.globalgiving.com) has gift cards similar to the Kiva certificates, except the recipient chooses among charities to donate to instead of entrepreneurs to lend to. Follow-up progress reports show how the money is being spent.

Projects can be searched based on region, country and categories such as health, education, human rights and climate change. Example: The Half Day School in Thailand, which helps educate Thai hill-tribe children and Burmese migrant children, has received about \$8,000 so far from GlobalGiving donors.

With Oxfam Unwrapped (www.oxfamunwrapped.com), your recipient gets a gift card for the project you picked explaining what it is and how it helps. The money goes toward projects that are crucial in developing countries, like an easy-to-maintain, hygienic toilet, or a section of road.



Lost, but in a good way ▲

For some, the best gift would be time away from it all—and we mean really away from it all.

To reach Taprobane Island in Sri Lanka, guests have to wade, or go by elephant: This one-hectare islet lies 180 meters off the country's southern coast in Weligama Bay, about a 4 1/2 hour drive from Colombo. A bungalow built in 1922 by a Frenchman who called himself Count de Mauny-Talvande has been turned into a five-bedroom luxury villa that caters to one set of guests at a time.

Private chefs cook any style of food, and there's an infinity pool as well as shaded verandahs and tropical gardens. Rates for a two-night minimum stay range from \$1,000 a day in low season to \$2,200 a day during peak season, December and January. Food and drink are extra.

November to April is the drier season; May to October is the rainy season.

www.taprobaneisland.com
www.privateislandsonline.com

Turning a family's past into a

BY NELLIE S. HUANG

AS HIS MOTHER'S 80th birthday approached, Loke-Khoo Tan pondered what present would be fitting to mark such a milestone.

He settled on a gift of memories: a 3½-minute film dotted with old black-and-white photos of his parents' younger years and snapshots of him and his two sisters as children, awkward teenagers, then proud university graduates. It's a family love letter of sorts to their mother, Chin Mooi.

Looking into the camera as the film rolls, Mr. Tan says, "I know I've neglected her for a very long time." While the jazz tune "Someone to Watch Over Me" plays softly in the background, the lawyer, now 46 years old, adds: "It gives me a lot of guilt." Shown as a surprise at a birthday dinner party in July 2007 for about 70 guests at Singapore's Shangri-La Hotel, it moved Mr. Tan's usually reserved mother to tears.

More families these days are interested in bringing their histories to life. A handful of companies are coming up with creative ways to capture family stories that make great gifts for any occasion. Documentary filmmakers are shooting live interviews, then splicing in archival photos and video footage to make short movies about ordinary people. Photographers are taking family photos and creating displays of glass etchings, architectural sculptures and bespoke objects. And there's lots of advice out there for people who prefer to do it themselves.

"Everyone has good stories that need telling," says Gabriela Domicelj of Hong Kong-based The Media Village, which makes short films—from a few minutes long to an hour or more—for families. "Kids grow up with blistering speed. Memories of events, celebrations and special moments fade," adds Charles Edwards, who has a background in advertising, music and film production, and is Ms. Domicelj's business partner. "The films we make are a way to hold those stories and keep them fresh in a way that makes them easy and enjoyable to watch."

In the 18 months since Mr. Edwards and Ms. Domicelj, both 42, started the family-films division of their company, it has produced more than a dozen documentaries. Films of less than five minutes cost \$4,000 to \$12,000; a 30-minute film starts at \$20,000, excluding expenses such as airfare. The Media Village also makes corporate films and TV commercials in various languages.

Family films can take a variety of angles—some are aimed at recapturing the past while others target preserving current events. When a film is finished, says Fiona Murphy, a 50-year-old family-documentary maker based in London, "it can be a bridge over time and distance. Grandparents see the domestic life they may be excluded from by thousands of miles, and children who see only gray heads and slow movements



Munshi Ahmed

Video companies make personal documentaries

realize their grandparents were once gorgeous and sexy."

Sometimes, the stories that families want to tell are straightforward: Julia and Harold Kim, a Hong Kong couple with five sons, just wanted to capture the fun and craziness of their everyday lives. In other cases, the movies are more like feature films: A documentary about David and Rachel Lang, a U.K. couple who met in 1943 but didn't marry for a dozen years, became a romantic comedy about their courtship that spanned several continents. And other times, there's no real plot: Mr. Tan, the attorney, was simply looking for a heartfelt way to tell his mother he loved her.

Putting together a film like this requires a bit of labor: During the planning stage, the filmmakers typically work closely with the client to determine the objectives of the film, the audience for it, and to define what key messages should be relayed as well as who the key storytellers will be. The filmmakers write a script, which the client must approve—and this collaboration continues through the process with clients confirming accuracy and vetting the placement of photos and the selection of soundbites.

No matter whether the film is 3½-minutes long or much longer, clients have to be prepared to invest a few hours to 20 hours of their time and provide photo-



Samantha Sin

graphs—a maximum of 200—for use in the film. "This way we ensure that the photos we select are meaningful to the client," says Ms. Domicelj, whose team includes three experienced film editors. The final movie is delivered in DVD format.

Squabbles during filming can crop up, says Ms. Murphy. Kids tend to get grumpy, adults lose their temper. "You can generally sense things on the wind, but sometimes it blows up out of nowhere," she says, adding that she usually makes a hasty exit to let the situation cool.

What inspired Mr. Tan, who grew up in Singapore but has lived in Hong Kong for many years, to have a movie made was "A Time and a Place: the Phillips Story," another production by The Media Village. The 90-minute documentary tells the story of Sir John and Lady Phillips, Ms. Domicelj's grandparents, prominent Australians (he was Australia's central bank governor from 1968 to 1975) who at the ages of 75, healthy and having lived happy



lives, together ended them in 1986. "I was so moved by it," says Mr. Tan, who met Ms. Domicelj because their sons are schoolmates, plus they're both cinema fans. "There was so much love in the family, despite the tragedy and huge loss," he adds.

For the Tans, their family film, "Chin Mooi: Heart of the Family" wasn't the easiest project to pull off. Mr. Tan's sisters, Francine, 41, and Siew Pin, 47, had to help gather photos for the filmmakers without tipping off their parents, since the film was supposed to be a surprise.

And then there were the interviews. For Francine Tan, the film dredged up painful memories. "I thought at first, 'Great. This is a fabulous idea,'" says the intellectual-property lawyer. "But soon after that it hit me...you're going to have to confront some issues from your childhood and think about your mum. There were some regrets and pain there."

Even so, it was worth the trouble, says Ms. Tan, who lives in Singapore. "We had a chance to express in a very tangible way how we felt about [our mother], because being Chinese...we're never very expressive about things. It was a great opportunity to do it without being awkward."

The film helped the already-close family "jell," says Mr. Tan, who recounts in the film how his mother with "movie star" looks nursed him back to health about 20 years ago when he fell ill in his final year of law school. Adds Francine Tan: "We should do all these things and express all these things before it's too late."

London filmmaker Ms. Murphy has been making short family films—she calls them documentary portraits—for four years. "I shoot it myself," says Ms. Murphy, who calls her company Echo Documentary Films and says this approach is less intrusive than bringing along an entire film crew. Her films range from 10 to 55 minutes, for which she charges \$3,500 to \$37,000.

The key for Ms. Murphy is to find out what people who will be in the film care about most. She usually interviews them once or twice before shooting—for half an

Clockwise from above: A film about David Lang and his wife, Rachel, recalls his days in the Indian Army; Rebecca Letchford's display of family photos; Loke-Khoo Tan's birthday gift to his mother was a 3 1/2-minute film tribute; Chin Mooi Tan with her daughter Francine Tan.

hour or so at their homes—to home in on the best topic. "Unless they're animated, the whole thing gets a bit dreary," says Ms. Murphy, a former journalist. A stay-at-home mother, for instance, may talk about most of her day like it's a chore, but "her eyes sparkle" when she talks about walking the kids to school, says Ms. Murphy. Similarly, when doing a portrait of older people, she says, it's a big mistake to try to do their whole life, "so you find one period they want to talk about."

For one such film, made last year about David and Rachel Lang, both now 83, Ms. Murphy focused on the period before their marriage from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. "They met, they didn't marry, they didn't marry, they didn't marry and then they did. It's a romantic comedy," she says.

The movie, "A Good Match," uses the Battle of Britain, the Malaya Emergency, the Korean War and the Suez Crisis as backdrops. Mr. Lang served in the Indian Army and Mrs. Lang worked in the office of Britain's MI5. "We weren't ever allowed to talk" about the work, Mrs. Lang says in a telephone interview from London about her stint with the national Security Service.

Sprinkled between their filmed interviews, which took place in the Langs' living room, Ms. Murphy inserted archival footage of Britain, India, Malaysia, Egypt and Hong Kong—gathered from Movietone, Pathe News and the Imperial War Museum—to give the film a sense of time and place.

It was produced at the behest of the Langs' son-in-law, as a surprise for his wife, Sarah, on her 50th birthday. But the best thing about it, Mrs. Lang says now, was showing it to their six grandkids. "Times have changed so much in

lasting present



Geoff Letchford

the last 50 years and the young just don't know what it was like."

Keeping a memory alive is how Ms. Domicelj got into family films. Six years ago, when she was living in Sydney, she got behind the camera to make a movie about her father, who was dying of cancer. "I had three young children and realized they would never know him well," says Ms. Domicelj, a former partner at global consulting firm Accenture who now lives in Hong Kong.

With directing help from a freelance professional filmmaker, Ms. Domicelj wrote a script, researched the project and produced the final cut. Seamlessly woven in were interviews with her father, Serge, key family members, friends and work colleagues, as well as old photographs and video footage taken of her father throughout his life. The 52-minute film took a year to complete.

Serge Domicelj lived to see the movie—it was screened for 40 family members and friends at a party for his 70th birthday in January 2003. "The event was powerful. It was so meaningful to our family," Ms. Domicelj recalls. After moving to Hong Kong, she quit her management consulting job and joined forces with Mr. Edwards.

For Julia and Harold Kim, it was all about wanting to show the business of life. They won a Media Village 30-minute movie at a school charity auction. "I didn't even know my husband was bidding for it. I thought he was kidding around," about vying for the film, says Mrs. Kim. "Then he decided it was a cool idea." She was pregnant with her fifth son at the time, in mid-2006 (friends joked that night about using the film to record the baby's birth), and the Kims decided to wait until after

the baby was born and show a typical day in their life. "Because you forget the little things," says Mrs. Kim, 35.

So one morning, the Kims rushed their kids downstairs in a hectic scramble for the school bus, and The Media Village crew was already there. "There were lights shining and the mike was right here," she says. "The kids felt like they were movie stars."

As part of the production process, the Kims went through 7,000 digital photos and handed over 300, which Mr. Edwards then culled to 100 to include in the movie. Scenes are punctuated by clips of songs—including some of the boys' favorites—and some family friends and nannies were interviewed for the film, which is titled "Life's a Balance: the Kims, 2007." The final product "is a personal video" on DVD, says Mr. Kim, a 44-year-old banker who is Korean-American.

The ultimate payback, however, was the process itself: "It makes you think about what's important in your life and what you want to remember," says Mrs. Kim. Children, she adds, "grow so fast."

There are, of course, other ways to record family histories. On a sunny afternoon in mid-October, Geoff and Rebecca Letchford, a married couple from Australia, arrive at a house in Hong Kong's Pok Fu Lam district with three camera bags in tow. They are there to take photographs of four sisters—ages 1 to 7. While Geoff snaps away, Rebecca cajoles the sisters, who

are playing with a toy tea set on a small terrace, into smiling.

The end product can be unique. From three-meter-square canvases to wall-size glass murals, desktop six-sided cubes and chair upholstery, the Letchfords can customize photos to almost any medium—even the drapery of a window curtain. They also do books—coffee-table style, bound in brightly colored cloth, which the couple says have proved to be popular presents.

The Letchfords had a wedding-photography business in Australia when an old client who had moved to Hong Kong called and asked: "What would it take for you to get you here and take photographs of my kids?" As a lark, they told her to find a couple of other clients. She found 15.

That was eight years ago. Now the Letchfords hopscotch around the globe taking pictures of clients—most of whom spend upward of \$6,500. Most are families with young children. One Australian family in Hong Kong has asked the Letchfords to shoot their three boys every year—and produce a book for each boy, annually—until they reach the age of 21. Locations are rarely repeated: So far, the Letchfords have photographed the family at home in Hong Kong and on vacations in Italy, Africa and Australia.

Christina Gaw, a former bank executive who now works for her family business in Hong Kong, has had her four children (ages 8, 6, 4 and 2) photographed on four occasions.

She's made good use of the Letchfords' varied mediums including a large glass wall in the entryway of her home that's actually a family beach photo. Ms. Gaw vows to have her kids photographed by the Letchfords "until they stop changing."

WSJ.com

Thanks for the memories
Watch sample clips from
two family documentary films
made as gifts, at
WSJ.com/Lifestyle



'The Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case' (1889), by Lewis Carroll; estimate: £400-£600.

London auctions feature classic children's books

ONCE UPON A TIME, a very long time ago now, about last Friday, Winnie-the-Pooh lived in a forest all by himself—thus does English writer A.A. Milne (1882-1956) introduce one of the most beloved figures in children's literature.

Collecting MARGARET STUDER

On Wednesday, Sotheby's London will hold a special sale devoted to the little bear "of very little brain" who keeps on getting into a fix, and his friends Christopher Robin, Piglet, Eeyore, Rabbit and Owl.

In creating Pooh, Milne drew on the world around him. Christopher Robin, who the human-like animals look up to for advice, is based on Milne's son of the same name. Winnie-the-Pooh was inspired by his son's teddy bear—named Winnie after Winnipeg, a bear that father and son often saw at London Zoo, and Pooh after a swan.

The sale features a number of original illustrations by E.H. Shepard from the Pooh first editions published in the 1920s. The illustrations come from well-known American art collector Stanley J. Seeger and his friend Christopher Cone.

Two iconic illustrations to be sold together show Pooh squeezing his way through Rabbit's front door and getting stuck on the way out after eating too much honey (estimate: £50,000-£70,000). Other illustrations show Christopher Robin nailing Eeyore's lost tail back on (estimate: £30,000-£50,000); and Pooh and Piglet pursuing tracks in the snow that turn out to be their own (estimate: £40,000-£60,000).

Also Wednesday, Sotheby's will offer a range of children's books and illustrations in its general English literature auction. A highlight is "Peter Rabbit's Dream" (1899), an ink drawing by children's book writer and illustrator Beatrix Potter showing her famous bunny sleeping in a big bed enjoying rabbit dreams (estimate: £30,000-£50,000). Potter holds the record for any book illustration sold at auction with the depiction of a scene from "The Rabbits' Christmas Party," which sold at Sotheby's

in July for £289,250.

On Thursday, Christie's London will hold an auction of children's books and illustrations. Crispin Jackson, head of Christie's South Kensington book department, says an advantage of children's books is that they are often household names: "Everyone knows 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'The Wind in the Willows' or 'Winnie-the-Pooh'."

Among the highlights at the Christie's sale will be a series of humorous, tongue-in-cheek illustrations by British cartoonist Ronald Searle. A drawing from his notorious St. Trinian's School, which is peopled with wicked girls making mayhem, is titled "Unarmed (and wickedly unequal) combat" and is estimated at £1,000-£1,500. An illustration by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) from Aesop's Fables' "Venus and the Cat" is expected to fetch £12,000-£18,000. In the tale, a cat falls in love with a young man and begs Venus to turn her into a woman. Venus complies, but it doesn't quite work out. The illustration shows the transformed woman jumping out of bed in pursuit of a mouse.

A first edition with colored plates of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" (1937) at Christie's is estimated at £2,000-£3,000 despite a somewhat tatty dust-jacket. A "Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case" (1889) with pockets for 12 postage stamps by Lewis Carroll, the author of "Alice in Wonderland," is decorated with Alice holding a screaming baby and a peaceful pig (estimate: £400-£600).

There will be toys galore at Bonhams' sale of toys, dolls and teddy bears at Knowle in the West Midlands on Tuesday. More than 1,000 lots are up for sale. Some examples of interesting pieces: a rare bear from 1904-1905, with a questioning but friendly stare, manufactured by Steiff (estimate: £800-£1,200); a German doll of a boy in Bavarian costume from circa 1910 (estimate: £700-£900); a metal double-decker red London bus produced by the U.K.'s Matchbox company during the 1960s and 1970s (estimate: £100-£150); and a box containing lead soldiers dressed as guards at Buckingham Palace from circa 1955 with an estimate of £600-£800.

How to paint a course in light

THREE OR FOUR DAYS a week, preferably in foul weather when sensible people are headed indoors, Joann Dost dons a Gore-Tex rain suit and a waterproof hat and heads out to photograph the Pebble Beach Golf Links on California's Monterey Peninsula. She covers her lenses and camera bodies with shower caps purloined from other courses and clubs she has photographed around the world. "Many

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

of my prize images are made on the edge of changing weather, usually at the end of severe storms but before the skies have cleared and the rain has ended," she said.

By now Ms. Dost, an indefatigable and enthusiastic former LPGA competitor, has accumulated something like 50,000 images of Pebble Beach. "Every day I go out to photograph, the course is entirely different," she said, ticking off the reasons why: the angle of the light, the clouds, the mist, the fog, the wind, the surf, the season.

She will try practically anything to get a shot. Three years ago, when storms off Alaska's Aleutian Islands lifted 18-meter waves near Pebble Beach, she hired a pilot and went helicopter surfing. Spotting monster swells hundreds of meters from shore, they followed them in, flying low, so that Ms. Dost could document the waves crashing into the sea wall on the 18th hole. The resulting photographs were only so-so, but the spectacle of Ms. Dost's efforts brought forth crowds from the clubhouse.

"Ansel Adams told me you're lucky if you get 10 good shots in a year of shooting," she told me by phone last week, referring to the famous landscape photographer, who also lived on the Monterey Peninsula. Mr. Adams, late in life, was instrumental in getting Ms. Dost one of her first paying gigs as a photographer, shooting Pebble Beach for the U.S. Golf Association before the 1982 U.S. Open there.

In talking with Ms. Dost last week, and the week before with Larry Lambrecht, another of the



Joann Dost



Larry Lambrecht

Above, Joann Dost's photo of the seventh hole at Pebble Beach; left, Larry Lambrecht's photo of the ninth hole at Royal County Down.

Then, at the appointed hour, all he can do is wait. "You know where the prey is going to be, but you don't know if the conditions will be right. When they are, you have to act fast, and try to get to your next location if there's time. But if heavy clouds or a fog bank move in at the wrong moment, you're done. There's a huge element of luck involved," he said.

My favorite image of Mr. Lambrecht's catches a fleeting moment of sunlight on the ninth green at Royal County Down in Northern Ireland, as a wild storm brews in the distance. The foreground is also in shadow, but the sun illuminates a white building to the right of the green and dapples the surf to the left. The image evokes not just the whimsy of nature but also the elemental thrill of playing golf on the Irish links.

My favorite image of Ms. Dost's, for similar reasons, is one she calls Crescendo. It depicts the seaside seventh hole at Pebble Beach in a passing storm, with the surf pounding the boulders and matching the white of the bunkers, and remnants

of sunlight suffusing the sky with a reddish hue.

It's possible these days to achieve some of these effects through software gimmickry, but both Mr. Lambrecht and Ms. Dost keep postshot tweaking to a minimum. "When someone changes out a sky, you can tell in an instant," Mr. Lambrecht said. "It looks fake because it's not what the eye would ever see." Both will, however, tweak shadows and contrasts, as dark-room artists have always done, and they are not above using PhotoShop occasionally to remove a discordant rake from a bunker or burnish a brown spot in the fairway.

Ms. Dost, who sells framed photographs as large as one meter by two meters in her gallery in Monterey, still shoots her most ambitious work on film. "Digital is great. For books, for magazines, for smaller prints, it's perfect. But when you get up into the really big prints, the depth and tonality is just not quite there for me yet," she said. Mr. Lambrecht, by contrast, has gone almost exclusively digital, thanks to an expensive new digital back for his trusty old medium-format film camera. It can record images of 39 megapixels, compared with 10 to 12 megapixels for today's top-line consumer digital cameras. "I think we've finally bridged the gap," he said.

As for most of us, however, improved technology is as much a nuisance as a boon for photographers. The bottom line remains composing images with drama and emotional impact. Both of the photographers I spoke with explained what they were after in almost identical language: to transport viewers to that place and that hole and make them want to play it. Mr. Lambrecht is fond of quoting Pat Ruddy, an Irish architect friend of his: "Larry, if I can build a hole that makes good pictures, I've made a good golf hole."

Email me at golfjournal@wsj.com.

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Impressive shots
See more golf photos
by Larry Lambrecht and
Joann Dost, at
WSJ.com/Sports

L.A. confidential: Dido's favorite hangouts

When Britain's Dido decided to fly to Los Angeles to write songs with Aimee Mann and Fiona Apple's producer Jon Brion, the singer planned to stay for three weeks. But the city inspired her more than she'd planned for, and two years on she now splits her time between her native London and Los Angeles. "L.A.'s a brilliant place to do your own thing," she says. Dido, 36 years old, whose new album "Safe Trip Home" came out last month, spoke with the Journal from Los Angeles about her favorite Southern California haunts.

—Lauren Mechling



Joshua Tree National Park Twentynine Palms, Calif.

I went there with a friend in the middle of the night and you could hear things but you couldn't see them. It was just the most amazing feeling—it feels like your imagination is going crazy.

Listen to clips from 'Safe Trip Home,' at WSJ.com/Lifestyle

Le Serenata de Garibaldi

Boyle Heights, Los Angeles

This is my favorite restaurant. When I get off the plane I come straight here for beans and fish tacos. You just cannot get good Mexican food in England.



The Pacific Coast Highway

I first came to L.A. when I was 19. I took one of those Super 8 cameras and drove up the road and filmed everything. It's the most stunning road—it just does not get boring to me... I would drive up and down it and listen to the [new] album's mixes.

From left to right: Kayt Jones; Corbis; La Serenata de Garibaldi; Alamy

Making up the classics

BY ALEXANDRA ALTER

AT A RECITAL last month in Seoul, the pianist and musicologist Robert Levin began the program's second half by pulling four slips of paper out of a basket. Then he launched into a musical fantasy that, to a layman's ear, sounded just like Mozart. It was Mr. Levin's own spontaneous composition, invented on the spot using suggestions gathered from the audience.

The art of improvisation, long dormant in classical music, is undergoing a revival in concert halls, conservatories and recording studios. A handful of performers say they're restoring a lost tradition that stretches back to Bach, Mozart and Beethoven—composer-performers and improvisers whose impromptu creations were almost as celebrated as their written masterpieces.

"We're seen as revolutionaries, but we're bringing back something that's very old, actually," says Gabriela Montero, a Venezuelan pianist known for ending programs of Rachmaninoff, Bach, Chopin and Liszt with improvisations based on audience requests, ranging from ring-tones to nursery rhymes to "La Cucaracha." During a concert tour of the Northwest U.S. last month, Ms. Montero gave several fully improvised performances, each lasting more than an hour.

This season, at least half a dozen classical concerts have incorporated improvisation, and more are cropping up, often in unconventional venues. At a packed downtown Manhattan nightclub last month, the cellist Matt Haimovitz teamed up with DJ Olive in an eclectic mash-up that veered from a Beethoven cello sonata to a strange duet that set Mr. Haimovitz's frenetic bowing against the turntable's hallucinatory electronic sounds. A crowd sipped beers and looked spellbound as Mr. Haimovitz improvised seamless transitions between movements, building up to a fully improvised cadenza. "There are certain movements where, as it would happen in the 18th century, we make it up on the spot," Mr. Haimovitz says.

Last month at the Boston Philharmonic, Algerian-born violinist Gilles Apap dazzled the audience with an improvisation on Bach's fourth cello suite, segueing from Baroque to Celtic melodies to Appalachian fiddle tunes.

A new generation of performers has embraced improvisation in ways Bach and Mozart couldn't have imagined, videotaping themselves and posting the results on YouTube. Eric Barnhill, a Juilliard-trained pianist in New York, records a daily improvisation in the style of Brahms or Schubert and posts audio files on his blog. Graduates of top conservatories have formed classical garage bands that leapfrog across genres and use improvisation to blend classical motifs with jazz, folk and hip-hop.

Throughout the 1700s and 1800s, improvisation was a vital aspect of musical performances. Bach's spontaneous melodies often lasted half an hour and ended with complex, three-part fugues. Beethoven famously battled German pianist Daniel Steibelt in heated improvisation duels. When Franz Liszt performed, the audience suggested melodies and themes for him to riff on—at an 1838 concert in Milan, he improvised based on such wide-ranging



themes as marriage and railroads, according to Kenneth Hamilton's 2007 book "After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance."

Concerts began to change in the 1850s. Audiences came to prefer composers' iconic masterpieces. The growth of the music publishing business gave musicians identical, mass-produced scores. Later, the recording industry enabled listeners to memorize the nuances of famous performances. By the mid-20th century, improvisation had all but vanished among classical performers. Classical music ceded spontaneity to jazz.

Improvisation's unlikely rebirth comes at a pivotal moment. Symphony orchestras are struggling to attract the next-generation audience, but the genre is flourishing in unexpected places. Nightclubs and other pop music venues are booking new, cross-pollinating ensembles that attract young crowds. The Metropolitan Opera is reaching fans in movie theaters with screenings of live, high-definition broadcasts. InstantEncore.com, a year-old Web site, has free video of more than 1,000 classical concerts; visitors have watched nearly 60,000 streaming videos since February. In this unruly landscape, improvisation has double appeal: It offers something that's fresh and unique to each performance while steering the classical repertoire back to its roots.

"It's not like these are museum pieces under glass," says Benjamin Zander, conductor of the 29-year-old Boston Philharmonic and an advocate of reviving improvisation. "These are living, breathing pieces, and our job is to bring them to life."

Efforts to restore improvisation have stirred controversy. Ms. Montero, the Venezuelan pianist, says people occasionally walk out when she starts to improvise. Mr.

Haimovitz says he was booed by an audience in Paris in the early 1990s when he improvised with an electric guitarist. Some scholars and musicians say it's counterproductive, and slightly impious, to tinker with masterpieces. "The idea that when you improvise a cadenza you are doing what they did in the 18th century is a delusion," says pianist and author Charles Rosen. "There's no reason to think that if you improvise one, it's going to be better than the one Mozart wrote."

An improvisation revival could profoundly influence how classical music is taught and performed. Learning how to jam in the style of Beethoven may sound impossible, but musicians who dare to try say it enriches their understanding of rhythmic and harmonic structures and leads to livelier and more-nuanced interpretations. Improvisation could even help draw new audiences to the concert-hall format, by offering something that has never been played before.

Bringing it back won't be easy, though. There's no Suzuki method for improvisation. Few contempo-

Clockwise from above: students (from left) John Craft, Bradley King and Carolyn-Anne Templeton; Mark O'Connor; Matt Haimovitz; students Rebecca Janvrin and Phillip Blaine.

rary classical performers master the art, let alone try to teach it. Violinist and composer Mark O'Connor, who improvised a two-minute solo passage while performing one of his own compositions at Carnegie Hall in October, says performers have to relearn how to be creative, in part because their training places so much emphasis on the flawless execution of another person's creation.

"One of the reasons we don't see more improvisation in the academic setting is because at some point in our education system, the creative composers were separated from the virtuosic performers. Some of that is starting to be broken down now," says Mr. O'Connor, who learned to improvise by studying jazz and folk music and now coaches young musicians in improvisation at UCLA, Harvard and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Once rare outside jazz departments, such workshops have become more common in recent years. In October, a group of piano majors at Juilliard gathered in a classroom with two grand pianos and took turns improvising in the style of Bach, Chopin and Beethoven. None had studied improvisation before, and most were hesitant. The teacher, visiting pianist David Dolan, chided them for playing too carefully and challenged the idea that the performer's job is merely to execute a composer's intentions perfectly. "Do you think Chopin would authorize you to change his text?" he asked the 10 students, who seemed stunned into silence. "Chopin wouldn't only authorize you, he would push you to do that."

Few teachers take improvisation further than Eric Edberg, a professor of music at DePauw University, in Greencastle, Ind. Prof. Edberg, a cellist, began improvising 15 years ago. He started by playing spontaneous, dissonant cello harmonies, then taught himself to improvise simple melodies. Now he teaches his cello students to improvise and coaches chamber music groups that play nothing but improvisations.

Prof. Edberg's unorthodox coaching sessions begin with freestyle humming, sighing, babbling and finger-wiggling. Sometimes he turns off the lights and instructs students



Jim McGuire

to play in the dark to hone their instincts. His students say it helps them develop their own musical voice. "We're kind of like composers when we improvise," says Rebecca Janvrin, a junior majoring in vocal performance and history, who improvises with a chamber music group. "We have the whole gamut of techniques and styles from all of music history to draw from."

On a recent rainy afternoon, members of a string quartet rehearsed a loosely structured improvisation. They began plucking their strings in ascending notes that grew louder and faster. Then the cellist and viola player held down a rhythm, plucking and tapping their instruments, while the violinists took turns improvising solos. Jenna Bauer, a 19-year-old violin major, played smooth, drawn-out notes that sounded like Irish folk tunes. The other violinist, Jeremy Eberhard, a junior, played furious, dissonant chords that evoked the 20th-century Russian composer Shostakovich.

The players locked eyes, looking for cues about when to switch tempos and when to end. Sometimes, they ended with a decisive swipe of their bows. Other times, they ground unexpectedly to a halt, seemingly out of ideas. Prof. Edberg told them to make more eye contact and have more confidence. "Repeat after me," he said. "There are no wrong notes. I embrace the surprises."

"They say that in jazz all the time," he continued. "If you play a wrong note, play it again, then it's not a wrong note anymore."

During a concert last month at DePauw, Prof. Edberg's chamber music students gave an hour-long performance without music stands or notes. At one point, the string quartet sat in a tight circle on stage, the lights went down and they played in complete darkness for two minutes, listening to each other's breathing to time their bowing and to match volume and rhythm. They ended with a quick, two-chord flourish, drawing applause and astonished laughter.

If improvisation were to make a widespread comeback, it could change the way contemporary audiences hear masterpieces like Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata or Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. Rather than regarding them as static and timeless achievements, audiences would come to hear them as evolving works. Not every adaptation would be a success, but some say it's worth sacrificing consistency to give audiences something never heard before. Improvisers say that all it takes, apart from serious musical chops, is a willingness to fail.

"The immediacy and the intensity is vivid and dangerous," says Mr. Levin, the pianist. "Everybody in the audience is going to know if you fail, because they have 200 years of hindsight, and they love Beethoven."

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Jam session

Watch a video about classical-music students learning improvisation, and get links to performances, at WSJ.com/Lifestyle

Selling the Myriad Products of Churchill's Toil and Sweat

By Joanne Kaufman

NEW YORK—There is an enthusiastic bite—nipper unknown—taken from the blue front cover of a first-edition copy of “The Unrelenting Struggle,” a collection of Winston Churchill speeches published in 1942. It’s yours to chew over for \$60 at Chartwell Booksellers, a store that caters to Winnie’s most loyal—ravenous—fans. According to proprietor Barry Singer, Chartwell, which is now in its 25th-anniversary year, is the world’s largest dealer in Churchill materials—books, photographs, signed documents and ephemera. There’s even a Toby jug or two.

Out-of-print collectible copies of Sir Winston’s 34-book oeuvre, many of them first editions, line the back shelves of the store, which is tucked into the arcade of Park Avenue Plaza, an office building on East 52nd Street.

“My Early Life,” a memoir; the multivolume “Marlborough: His Life & Times,” a magisterial biography of Churchill’s ancestor; “The World Crisis,” a history of World War I; “Savrola,” a novel; “The Second World War,” the history that helped him capture the Nobel Prize for literature—they’re all here at prices as high as \$150,000, though the collected World War II speeches can be had for just \$50.

“Churchill wrote to pay the bills,” said Mr. Singer who keeps the most prized volumes behind glass or in a safe. “He lived the life of a very wealthy man and never had much money. When bills came due, he would write a book—which

is why there are so many of them.”

Chartwell owes its existence—and its name, a reference to the Churchill family manse in Kent, England—to the late Richard Fisher, a huge Churchill fan and a member of the prominent New York real-estate family that built Park Avenue Plaza. “Richard and I had met socially, and he asked if I were putting a bookstore in the lobby what it would look like,” recalled Mr. Singer, the author of books on musical theater and jazz.

“And I described what anyone would: sort of an English library feeling. And he said if I gave him a business plan and budget he’d back me, and that’s what happened.”

The space was conceived as a general-interest bookstore. “But in the first few months of operation it became clear to me that we should have some Churchill books in here because of the name. So I bought a few here and there, used,” said Mr. Singer, who periodically cobbled together a newsletter announcing acquisitions and sent it to building tenants, among them First Boston, McKinsey & Co. and the now defunct Reliance Holdings led by famed corporate raider Saul Steinberg.

“His secretary called one day and said Mr. Steinberg would like the books I’d listed in the newsletter and ‘would you please get him everything Churchill wrote in a first edition and have it bound in leather,’” recalled Mr. Singer.

“I decided Chartwell should become the Churchill bookstore,” he said. “And 25 years later that’s what we are.”

That decision has paid handsome dividends. “I’ve become friendly with all the surviving members of Churchill’s family,” said Mr. Singer. “They come here and shop here and we do parties for them if they write books.” The emphasis on Churchill—the store has some 1,000 volumes by and about him, along with books on military history, photography, cars and jazz—has also helped Chartwell hold its ground against larger booksellers.

“Our Web site has been explosive. I have clients all over the Far East and Europe,” said Mr. Singer, who has also had visits from Henry Kissinger, Caspar Weinberger “when he was secretary of defense, a real Churchill

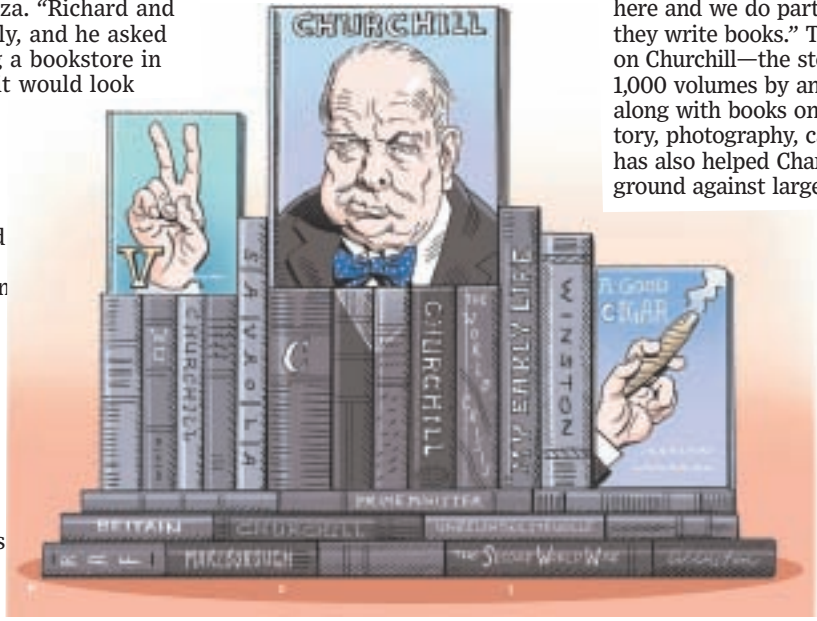
“this is what I’m reading to get through the crisis. At the time we sold that book hugely.”

The market for all things Churchill continues to grow. Mr. Singer credits assorted World War II anniversary observances and “the leadership vacuum we’ve had. More and more people are thinking ‘we need a Churchill,’” he observed. “But I’ve always said that the most successful people fancy themselves as Winston Churchill on some level because you can project anything on to him.

“He was a great leader, but he was also a great military figure and he was also a painter. There was a humanities streak in him that all these corporate highfliers seem to respond to.” For their delectation, Mr. Singer has located a copy of what he calls the rarest Churchill book in the world: “For Free Trade,” a small red paperback assemblage of speeches delivered to Parliament and published in 1906 by Hatchards, the still extant Piccadilly bookshop. “I’ve seen it maybe twice in 25 years, the last time in 1998,” he said. “And I sold it then for \$65,000.”

This newly acquired treasure runs close to \$200,000. Lately, Wall Street has had its share of blood, toil, tears and sweat. But Mr. Singer seems confident that he’ll find a buyer. As Winston Churchill once noted, “nothing makes a man more reverent than a library.”

Ms. Kaufman writes about culture, the arts and creative personalities for the Journal.



Martin Kozlowski

“Saul didn’t want an estimate of how much it would run. He just wanted it as soon as possible. So that gave me the dispensation to start traveling to England to try to find him what he wanted.”

In the course of the search, Mr. Singer discovered that while every bookstore in Britain had a shelf of Churchill books, none specialized in the statesman/orator. “So as a result of that push from Saul I de-

scholar,” and Rudolph Giuliani.

“In the first few days after 9/11,” continued Mr. Singer, “Rudy kept holding up this book ‘Five Days in London,’ which was written by John Lukacs about Churchill just after he became prime minister and the Nazis were bombing the hell out of London and his own people were pressing him to make peace with Germany and get out of the war. Rudy said

Masterpiece / By Benjamin Ivry

A ‘Testament to Bach’

Biographical details, few and far between, do little to clear up the ambient mystery of what makes Bach’s works enduringly great. A case in point: his six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello (*Suiten für Violoncello solo*).

We don’t know exactly when, why, or for which soloist Bach composed them, though they were likely written around or before 1720, when he was employed by the Saxon patron Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen. Each of the Cello Suites contains six movements, starting with a Prelude, followed by a series of alternating movements adopting the titles of slow or brisker courtly dances, such as Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Minuet, Bourrée, Gavotte or Gigue. Since no autograph score in Bach’s own hand survives, the Suites were preserved in copies by others. They were long seen as dry exercises, until around 1890, when Pablo Casals (1876-1973), a young Catalan musician, happened upon them in a Barcelona music shop and took them to heart.

Casals practiced the Suites for a dozen years before playing them in public, and he waited until he was 60 before he began to record them, with granitic, Old Testament-style sternness, veracity and authority; transfers of his late 1930s recordings are still avail-

able from diverse CD labels like EMI, Naxos, Opus Kura and Pearl.

After Casals, well over 100 cellists recorded their own versions, motivated not just by the majesty of these works, but also by the relative rarity of great music composed for their instrument. For the Cello Suites, there was silence before Casals, but now their very identity seems threatened by the sheer decibel level of competing performances on CD, as well as by sometimes ill-advised transcriptions for double bass, marimba, classical guitar, saxophone and even tuba.

Fortunately, a newly available historical document neatly sweeps away all the other pretenders to the throne of Casals. “Paul Tortelier: Testament to Bach—The Complete Cello Suites,” a new DVD from VAI (vaimusic.com), features performances by the French cellist Paul Tortelier (1914-1990). A longtime colleague and worshiper of Casals, Tortelier was filmed in July 1990, playing the Suites in the 10th-century Catalan Benedictine abbey of St. Michel de Cuxa, Prades, the site of a Casals music festival. When Tortelier was preparing for those concerts, he found time to grant me a phone interview from his home in Nice.

I recall his vibrantly excitable high-tenor voice (at first I thought

I was speaking to his wife) expressing the kind of exuberance that made Tortelier rightly beloved as an endearingly eccentric personality as well as a superb musician. When I praised his 1961 and 1983 recordings of the Bach Suites (the 1961 version from EMI, still unsurpassed, is sadly unavailable on CD), he replied: “I am modest, basically. I have too much consideration, admiration, veneration for the divinity of Johann Sebastian Bach to consider myself as anything but an ant next to a god.”

On the DVD from VAI, filmed in the stark, severe abbey chapel, Tortelier plays the Suites with decisive fervor, while incorporating the grace and elegance of the French school of cellists. On an equally fascinating 2006 DVD from EMI’s Classic Archive series, Tortelier leads a 1960s master class in Bach’s First Suite. He informs them: “Bach in German means brook—this brook runs to the river and that river runs to the sea. It’s a progression which begins delicately and poetically. If you add too much expression with excessive Romanticism, the water stops flowing. . . . If you want to do an abstract Bach . . . then the water turns cold. That’s no longer a Bach who glorifies God and nature, but one who glorifies the metronome.”

Tortelier’s maritime journey with these works, whether on CD or DVD, is to be treasured as a viable alternative to, and organic development from, the bedrock of Casals.



Ryan Izazana

duced notable recordings of the Bach Cello Suites. Yet no musician in our time has surpassed the voice of nature, the play of waves, light and shadow, that Tortelier incarnated.

Yan-Pascal Tortelier, the cellist’s son and a gifted conductor in his own right, recounts in the VAI booklet notes that his father postponed a heart operation in 1990 so that he could perform at Prades that year. After the filmed performances, his health declined and he died suddenly that December. Perhaps this context of precarious health enhanced his already uncanny ability to focus wholly on the music and offer a totally unadorned, metaphysically rich reading of these works, which are resistant both to heart-on-sleeve and mechanical approaches.

Performances of this quality are the best response to the 2006 theory advanced by Martin Jarvis, a Welsh-born conductor currently based in Australia, that Bach did not in fact compose the Cello Suites. They were written instead, Mr. Jarvis claimed, by the composer’s second wife, Anna Magdalena Bach. The Suites “don’t sound musically mature,” he announced on Australia’s ABC radio, because performers “have to work incredibly hard to make it [sic] sound like a piece of music.” Fortunately, many great cellists, led by Casals and Tortelier, have been willing to work that hard, and their renditions exemplify the Cello Suites’ lofty message and authenticity.

Mr. Ivry is an author and arts writer living in New York.

❖ Top Picks

Bill Viola's unusual visions of the routine

Rome ■ art

"Bill Viola: Internal Visions," at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, showcases 16 works by one of the most prominent contemporary video artists. Mr. Viola's simple, powerful videos play in slow motion on screens of varied size and type: the largest is more than five meters tall, the smallest is the size of a typical computer screen.

With every single work featuring human figures (or details from human figures, such as hands), the exhibit explores the complex world of human emotion, evident in people's daily routines as well as in the most extreme moments of grief.

The exhibit begins with the largest and most imposing work, "The Crossing," a set of two videos in which a man's walk through an empty space ends once in a ball of fire and once in a deluge, each of which obliterates him.

Perhaps the exhibit's most interesting pieces are Mr. Viola's video re-interpretations of obscure Italian Renaissance paintings. "Emergence" depicts two grieving women waiting by a pedestal until a young man's pale, naked corpse emerges from it—a work inspired by a 15th-century "Pieta" by Umbrian painter Masolino da Panicale.

Later in the exhibit, five small screens capture different moments of a woman's day in "Catherine's Room," recalling a 14th-century predella by Andrea di Bartolo. "The Greeting"—a dreamlike, mysterious video narrating the meeting of three women—is inspired by a 16th-century fresco that Jacopo da Pontormo drew in the Florentine church of Santissima Annunziata.

—Davide Berretta

Until Jan. 6th
☎ 39-06-39-96-75-00
www.palazzo.esposizioni.it

Berlin ■ art

In 1930, a Paris-based Polish illustrator and graphic artist named Arthur Szyk (1894-1951) embarked on a series of paintings commemorating the life and times of George Washington.

Unlike American illustrators of the period, whose lush realism still owed much to pre-World War I art nouveau, or French art-deco illustrators, Szyk looked all the way back to the Middle Ages. His vision of Colonial America—by turns grotesque, comedic and heroic—recalled the late-Gothic woodcuts of Cranach and the vivid colors of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

After World War II broke out, Szyk and his wife, then living in London, made their way to the U.S., and within a few years Szyk had become one of America's best-known commercial illustrators and cartoonists, regularly contributing covers to magazines like Time and Collier's, and to a range of Jewish-themed publications.

All but forgotten for decades, Szyk has been rediscovered in a number of recent exhibitions in the U.S., and now the German Historical Museum has mounted a retrospective of his work, "Arthur Szyk: Drawing Against National Socialism and Terror."

It was as a Zionist and an anti-Fascist that Szyk left his mark as an artist. A 1946 drawing comparing the Mayflower with an illegal ship smuggling Jewish refugees into British-occupied Palestine is a virtuoso piece, combining realistic depictions of ships with Jewish liturgical decoration. Several of his wartime illustrations transcend their era, most notably his 1942 depiction of Adolf Hitler as the anti-Christ, featuring an eerie, monumental bust of Hitler, with glass eyes and pasted-on hair.

Used a few years later as a magazine cover, the image lives on as a potent re-

minder of Nazi crimes, with Hitler as the ghost that will never go away.

—J.S. Marcus

Until Jan. 4
☎ 49-30-20304-0
www.dhm.de

Berlin ■ art

In a series of voyages through the jungles of Central and South America, the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) rediscovered the New World. Humboldt—one of the most famous Europeans of his day, now remembered as the father of ecology—was a kind of rapturous categorizer, a figure of both the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement.

Recently, Berlin has embarked on a pharaonic endeavor to rehouse its massive collections of non-European art in Humboldt's name, in a complex in the center of the city to be called the Humboldt Forum. Still in the early planning stages, the new complex is staging a pilot project at Berlin's Martin-Gropius-Bau. "The Tropics: Views from the Middle of the Globe" combines contemporary art from European and non-European countries, along with a superb range of ritual artifacts and handicrafts from tropical cultures.

The exhibition begins with a towering installation called "Terminal Tropical" (2008) by the Berlin-based German artist Franz Ackermann. Mr. Ackermann is known for his mixed-media investigations into modern tourism, and his new work—which combines painting, a palm tree, piles of clothes and a television screen showing a plane in a precarious state of take-off—has a rousing, equivocal quality. The abstractness of the paintings, which seem to portray a city at night, suggests both the fascination and repulsion that a foreigner might feel in a 21st-century tropical setting. When we turn around, we are shocked to find early-20th-century animal masks from southern India and Africa whose primal allure is in beguiling contrast to the curated chaos of the Ackermann work.

As we move through the exhibition, the jarring juxtapositions of the earlier galleries give way to something almost calming, as each piece of art, regardless of its origins, takes on an individuality. As is fitting for an exhibition that recalls Humboldt, who discovered universal truths in the American tropics, the exhibition manages to break down categories of all kinds and turns into a celebration of the imagination.

—J.S. Marcus

Until Jan. 5
☎ 49-30-254-86-0
www.berlinerfestspiele.de

London ■ theater

The face of Ralph Guinness's limp, mellifluous new version of Sophocles's "Oedipus," and Mr. Fiennes heads the cast of the tragedy at the National Theatre. The Lyttelton auditorium's thrust



'Anti-Christ' (1942), by Arthur Szyk, on show in Berlin.



'Emergence' (2002), by Bill Viola, in Rome.

stage is bare, except for designer Paul Brown's trestle table and huge metal doors that implant us firmly in the Bronze Age. But the business suits in which he's costumed the actors and chorus like so many contemporary bankers make effortless parallels between ancient Thebes and today's Wall Street.

Perhaps the best thing about director Jonathan Kent's striking production is the 15-strong chorus of mostly middle-aged men, who confidently sing (rather than speak) most of their lines a cappella to Jonathan Dove's impressive music.

Mr. Fiennes, of course, gives a grand performance, starting as a slightly cocky, besuited businessman, exuding confidence and well-being, then showing himself a competent executive as he sets about to discover why his city is suffering. He eventually sheds bits of clothing as he discovers more of the awful truth about himself, until the chief feature of his costume is his untucked, bloody shirt. He does the scream of the blind Oedipus in two parts: the first like a howling dog, the second half more like a whimpering infant. It's more imposing than moving, though.

Aristotle (in his Poetics) chose this particular play as his prime example of tragedy, because Oedipus, though a king whose fate educates our awe, is enough like us, the audience, to evoke our pity as well. Mr. Fiennes certainly excites awe, but his commanding performance, in the end distancing himself from us and from the events on stage, is a touch pitiless. It's a performance that will be remembered, and talked about, as is Lawrence Olivier's in the same role. But fine as it is, it lacks that element of real tragedy.

Perhaps it's the fault of the production, for pushing the contemporary-parallel button a bit too hard: It's difficult to feel pity for reversals of fortune happening to characters whose annual bonuses exceed most people's estates at death. Maybe this is a small quibble, but it can't be beyond Mr. Fiennes' skill to make us feel just a little sorry for him.

—Paul Levy

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www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

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art
"Nathan Lerner: The Heritage of the Bauhaus in Chicago" is a retrospective of the work of American photographer and designer Nathan Lerner (1913-1997), one of the first students at the Chicago New Bauhaus school.
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme
Until Jan. 11
☎ 33-1-5301-8660
www.mahj.org

art
"Treasures of Dunhuang, 1000 Years of Buddhist Art, From the 5th to the 15th Century" exhibits Chinese Buddhist sculptures, liturgical and votive paintings as well as statuary brought from the Mogao caves, a system of 492 cave-chapels near Dunhuang, in the western Chinese province of Gansu.
Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet
Until Feb. 28
☎ 33-1-5652-5300
www.guimet.fr

Venice
art
"Kuniaki Kuroki: The Rimpa and Hiroshige—Expression of Japanese Aesthetics through Glass" exhibits 80 works of glass by the Japanese artist Kuniaki Kuroki (born 1945), drawing upon the classical Japanese art of Ogata Korin (1658-1716) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858).
Ca' Pesaro, Galleria d'Arte Moderna
Until Jan. 25
☎ 39-041-7211-27
www.museiciviviceneziani.it

Vienna
art
"Recollecting: Looted Art and Restitution" presents 100 restituted art and everyday objects from Jewish families, alongside pieces whose rightful owners are still being sought. Fourteen new artworks were created for the show, examining family histories, the act of collecting and the Nazi bureaucracy of robbery.
MAK
Until Feb. 15
☎ 43-1711-3629-8
www.MAK.at

jewelry
"Sparklers: Emilie Flöge and the Jewelry of the Wiener Werkstätte" showcases 40 pieces of jewelry, including brooches, necklaces, pendants and diadems created between 1903 and 1920 by Wiener Werkstätte jewelers and promoted by model Emilie Flöge.
Wien Museum Karlsplatz
Until Feb. 22
☎ 43-1-5058-7470
www.museum.vienna.at

Zurich
art
"The Love Story Continues: Rama and Sita in the Park-Villa Rieter" presents 65 artworks from India, illustrating the Ramayana, an ancient Sanskrit epic.
Museum Rietberg—Park-Villa Rieter
Until May 3
☎ 41-1-2063-131
www.rieterberg.ch

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.



Above, 'Small Labyr' (1959), by Constant, on show in The Hague; top, 'Körin' (2006), by Kuniaki Kuroki, in Venice.

Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, photo: Sylvia Korving

Amsterdam

art
"Holy Inspiration, Religion and Spirituality in Modern Art" presents 100 works of modern art from the Stedelijk Museum, addressing spiritual experiences.
De Nieuwe Kerk
Dec. 13-April 19
☎ 31-20-6386-909
www.nieuwekerk.nl

fashion
"Passion for Fans" exhibits 200 historic fans from the 16th to the 20th century, collected by Isabella Henriette van Eeghen (1913-1996), a historian and archivist.
Museum Willet-Holthuysen
Until March 29
☎ 31-20-5231-822
www.willetholthuysen.nl

Berlin

art
"Ancient Luxury in Glass and Marble—The Amphora from Olbia and Trapezophora from Ostia" showcases the Olbia glass amphora, created around 120-80 BC, before the invention of the glass-blowing process.
Altes Museum
Dec. 19-April 19
☎ 49-30-2090-5577
www.smb.spk-berlin.de

Bonn

art
"Erhard Klein: Thoroughly Concentrated" shows work by German artists Joseph Beuys, Sigmar Polke, Imi Knoebel, Blinky Palermo and others on the occasion of gallerist Erhard Klein's 70th birthday.
Kunstmuseum Bonn
Until Jan. 11
☎ 49-228-7762-60
www.bonn.de/kunstmuseum

Brussels

anthropology
"Omo: People & Design" exhibits 1,250 art and everyday objects from the 12 nomadic tribes of the Omo River valley in Ethiopia.
Royal Museum for Central Africa
Until Aug. 31
☎ 32-2-7695-211
www.africamuseum.be

Geneva

anthropology
"Art of Metal in Africa" presents a collection of ancient and contemporary African statuettes, masks, weapons and coins forged from metal.
Musée Barbier-Mueller
Until Feb. 15
☎ 41-22-3120-270
www.barbier-mueller.ch

The Hague

art
"XXth Century" showcases modern and contemporary artwork depicting differing visions of reality. With art by Hendrik Mesdag, Jan Toorop, Theo Van Doesburg, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian and others.
Gemeentemuseum Den Haag
Until March 1
☎ 31-70-3381-111
www.gemeentemuseum.nl

Hamburg

art
"Jakob Philipp Hackert: European Landscape Painters in the Age of Goethe" shows 70 paintings and 70 works on paper by German landscape painter

Jakob Philipp Hackert (1737-1807).
Hamburger Kunsthalle
Until Feb. 15
☎ 49-40-4281-3120-0
www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de

art
"Roy Lichtenstein—Posters" showcases 70 posters, by the American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997).
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
Dec. 19-March 1
☎ 49-40-4281-3427-32
www.mkg-hamburg.de

Lisbon

art
"Waltercio Caldas: Horizons" exhibits drawings, engravings, stage and wardrobe design by Brazilian artist Waltercio Caldas (born 1946) alongside sculptural works especially conceived for the show.
Centro de Arte Moderna—José Azeredo Perdigão
Until Jan. 4
☎ 351-21-7823-474
www.camjap.gulbenkian.pt

London

photography
"This Is War! Robert Capa at Work" shows 150 images, some never-before-seen photographs, vintage prints, contact sheets, handwritten observations and newly discovered documents by photographer Robert Capa (1913-1954).
Barbican Art Gallery
Until Jan. 25
☎ 44-20-7638-4141
www.barbican.org.uk

art
"Saul Steinberg—Illuminations" showcases more than 100 drawings, sculptures and collages in a retrospective of Romanian-born American cartoonist and illustrator Saul Steinberg (1914-1999).
Dulwich Picture Gallery
Until Feb. 15
☎ 44-20-8693-5254
www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

theater
"Oliver!" is a staging of the classic British musical by Lionel Bart based on Dickens' novel, "Oliver Twist," directed by Rupert Goold and starring Rowan Atkinson as Fagin.
Theatre Royal Drury Lane
Until Sept. 26
☎ 44-0870-8906-002
www.theatreroyaldrurylane.co.uk

Madrid

photography
"Zoe Leonard: Photographs" presents a selection of 160 photographs depicting everyday contrasts in New York city by American artist Zoe Leonard



'Adult Hamar girl' (2004), by Hans Silvester, on show in Brussels.

(born 1961).
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia
Until Feb. 16
☎ 34-91-7741-000
www.museoreinasofia.mcu.es

Munich

photography
"Nature as Artifice: Dutch Landscape in Contemporary Photography" illustrates new perspectives on landscapes with photography by 15 Dutch artists, including Hans Aarsman, Wout Berger, Henze Boekhout, Edwin Zwakman, Cary Markerink, Marnix Goossens and Driessens/Verstappen.
Neue Pinakothek
Until Jan. 19
☎ 49-89-2380-5195
www.pinakothek.de

festival

"Tollwood Winterfestival 2008" is an annual festival staging a Christmas market and cultural events throughout the city up to New Year's Eve.
Tollwood
Until Dec. 31
☎ 49-89-3838-500
www.tollwood.de

Paris

history
"Bonaparte and Egypt: Fire and Light" shows about 400 works of art and artifacts from 1769 to 1869, illustrating Egypt's influence in France and France's role in Egypt's transition to modernity.
Institut du Monde Arabe
Until March 29
☎ 33-1-4051-3838
www.imarabe.org