

# WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



## The long decade

Wine: Australia shifts to terroir | A Parisian chocolate rebel

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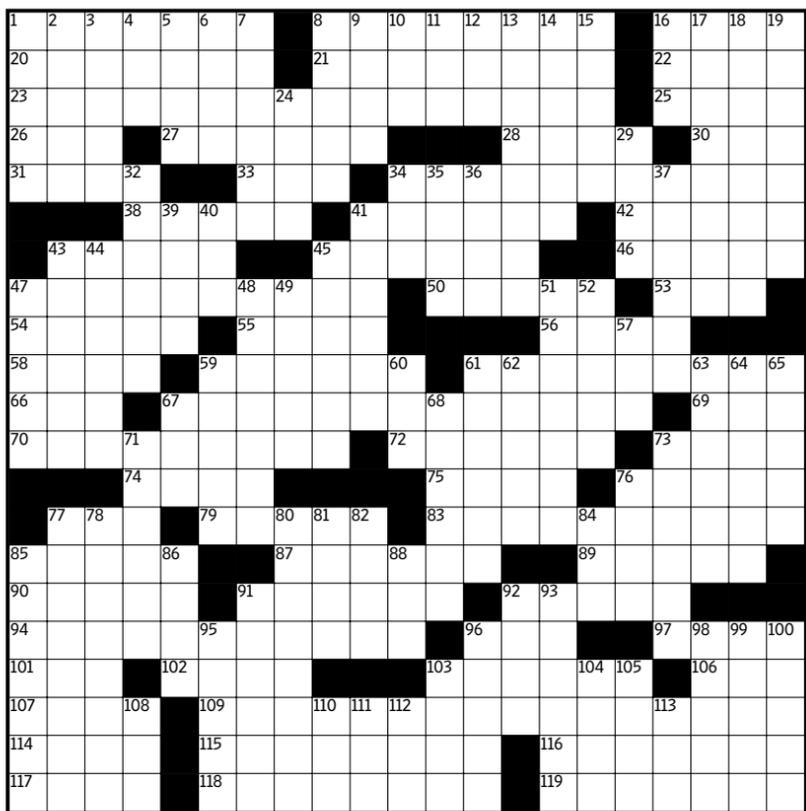
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## ❖ The Decade

# Amateurs were heros of noughties

BY SAM LEITH

**T**HE NOUGHTIES, IF they marked anything, marked the dawning of the age of the amateur in popular culture.

They saw the rise of reality television, the Internet-enabled spread of mash-ups, fan fiction, viral memes and home-made music, and the harnessing of the great machinery of democracy to the cause of light entertainment.

The signature form of participation in the Noughties was the telephone vote; its most-consumed artistic product, in all probability, the lolcat.

We looked up facts on Wikipedia. We got our news through social-networking sites and citizen journalists. We read analysis in blogs, and allowed the Twitterverse to decide what should and should not be in the public domain.

The ugly but useful buzzword “disintermediation” applies. You name it, we disintermediated it: professionals in everything from marketing and journalism to juggling and the singing of power ballads found themselves inched closer to redundancy.

Our popular culture, to borrow the term from file-sharing, went peer-to-peer. The public was empowered to decide, more than ever before, what it wanted to consume, when and how. It turned out that what the public most wanted to consume was... the public.

In terms of global reach, what “Baywatch” was to the 1990s, reality-television formats like “Big Brother” and the “X-Factor” were to the Noughties. The face of the age is no longer David Hasselhoff’s handsome, bronzed life-guard Mitch Buchanan; it is Simon Cowell—an average-looking middle-aged man with toilet-brush hair and his trousers pulled up to his nipples.

1999 saw the first series of Big Brother in the Netherlands. Thereafter, it swept through Europe like avian flu. It was in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland and the U.K. by 2000. The following year it invaded Poland—as well as France, Denmark, Greece and Norway.

It seemed an odd idea for a form of entertainment. It enabled you to sit on the sofa in your house, feeling slightly bored, watching a group of strangers no more interesting or distinguished than you sitting on a sofa in another house, feeling slightly bored. Except that the people you were watching weren’t allowed a television, so they were even more bored. Thus, perhaps, it made people feel good about themselves. It was a colossal success.

It marked an ontological shift. To entertain, you no longer needed to do; you simply needed to *be*.

Its successor formats put a twist on things. “I’m a Celebrity...” effectively puts the professionals in the stocks and arms the public with a crate of rotten tomatoes; “The X-Factor” asks its amateurs to pretend to be professionals, to the satisfaction of a nationwide panel of armchair A&R-men equipped with a remote control and a mobile phone.

Those mark a bit of a shift back—perhaps inevitable—from being to doing. Reality shows have tackled everything from butchery to home improvement. But the core feature

is the same: the key actors are amateurs—the public voting, the public competing, or both.

One other thing characterized the pop culture of the Noughties, and that is the peculiar sense of a culture suspended. Even the dominant reality-TV formats, now, are essentially a twist on old-fashioned talent shows. Nostalgia and repetition are everywhere.

This was a decade when not much happened. Ask the average pop critic what, if any, were the great musical movements that came out of the Noughties and see some head-scratching. Nu-Rave? Grimecore? The decade didn’t give us a punk, a grunge, a house, a hip hop—but it did give us a lot of new bands playing old tricks and old bands playing the same tricks.

Hipsters like the Strokes and White Stripes played raucous variations on old sounds; Coldplay and their like gave us stadium-filling Eighties-style MOR. Meanwhile reunion tours—Led Zeppelin, The Who, Pixies, The Police, Jane’s Addiction, The Sex Pistols—went from novelty to epidemic.

Versions of this apply across the board. For every mainstream film that was fresh and original, there were two that were sequels or remakes. Admittedly, the Noughties saw Pixar’s reinvention of the animated movie surge into new areas. But it was also in this decade that “reboot”—the starting-over treatment given to James Bond, Batman and Star Trek—became something you did to films rather than computers. Old superhero franchises dominated the box office; Rambo, Rocky, Indiana Jones and Die Hard returned; the Marvel and DC pantheons were strip-mined for heroes.

The writers and artists who filled the Anglosphere’s conversation in 2009 are by and large the same ones who dominated it in 1999: the same Young British Artists, only less young; the same en-fants terribles of literature, only less like enfants and more terribles.

The mass-market publishing sensations of the decade have been J.K. Rowling, Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown. All three writers are essentially retro acts: Rowling gives us a boarding-school yarn with broomsticks; Meyer gives us Judy Blume with fangs; Brown gives us stickle-brick Gothic.

At the literary end of the market the same big names still bounce around: Mantel, Byatt, Amis, McEwan, Houellebecq, Coetzee. Who has muscled in? Zadie Smith, now a decade established, still feels almost like the new kid on the block. This is, of course, to simplify—but not by that much.

The Noughties were a decade of old formats in new clothing and old names in new lights: a decade in which the public took charge of popular culture as never before... and then didn’t do very much with it.

They were a decade in which—given the most powerful communications tool in the history of the human race—we used it to watch strangers bicker and sleep, vote karaoke singers with funny hair to global superstardom and swap videos of cats falling into buckets of water.

I think we can be proud of ourselves. Onward and upward.

—Sam Leith  
is a writer based in London.

Below, two Harry Potter fans in Potsdam, Germany, hold copies of the German-language edition of ‘Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix’ in 2003; right, Olly Murs and Simon Cowell on ‘The X Factor’ program in 2009.





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## ❖ The Decade

# 2000-2009

## A whole world of trouble



Leading historian Andrew Roberts explores the 10 years that brought us terrorism, financial instability and the fear of climate change

**D**ECADES MATTER. FOR all that they logically oughtn't (why should human events move in neat 10-year cycles?) they really do condition the way we think about our past. For all the clichés flung up by them—the “Roaring ’20s,” the “Swinging ’60s,” and so on—we measure our history in these particular sized periods, and so it's worthwhile trying to think what people will make of the decade just ended, even centuries into the future.

For the Noughties, or 2000s, or whatever they wind up being called, will matter more than several other historical decades, because the threats unleashed during those years—particularly Islamic fundamentalist terrorism at its beginning and Western financial instability and the fear of climate change toward its end—will last far beyond 2009.

History doesn't repeat itself, but occasionally it can rhyme and echo, and the resonance of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 could certainly be heard among the din of the crashing Twin Towers on that fateful morning of Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001. It is impossible to conceive an overview of the decade without focusing on those two cataclysmic moments, only 17 minutes apart, when at 8.46 a.m. and 9.03 a.m. the World Trade Center's skyscrapers—the two supremely iconic architectural expressions of Western Capitalism—were hit by 19 Islamic murderers in two Boeing 747s.

Sept. 11 was the day when America and the West finally recognized, after many ignored warnings during the 1990s, that Islamic totalitarian terrorism could kill nearly 3,000 innocent people within a few hours, not in Sudan or Kashmir or Islamabad but in downtown Manhattan. The reverberations of that attack will be felt for many years, perhaps many decades, to come, both for good and ill, in some form or another.

The newly elected U.S. president, George W. Bush, responded to the attack by invading Afghanistan, overthrowing the Taliban government there and trying unsuccessfully to capture Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda leader responsible for planning the outrage. Then in March 2003, the Americans, British, Australians and a wide coalition of other countries also invaded Iraq and deposed its brutal dictator Saddam Hussein, who went into hiding, was discovered, and in 2006 was executed, amid regrettably chaotic scenes.



Top left, downtown Manhattan and the Brooklyn Bridge after the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001; top right, firefighters raise a U.S. flag at the site of the World Trade Center.

Instead of calming Iraq, however, Saddam Hussein's defeat led to an insurgency campaign against the coalition that was to lead to the deaths of perhaps as many as 150,000 Iraqis over the next six years, as a workable democracy was slowly and painfully established in the country. For all the controversy over the decision to go to war, Mr. Bush and the Australian prime minister, John Howard, were re-elected in 2004, and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2005.

Yet the Iraq and Afghan Wars did not witness the greatest loss of human life during the decade. That was the Hutu vs. Tutsi conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1998 and 2009, which was to lead to the loss of 5.4 million lives, easily the world's worst blood-letting since World War II. (With its classic sense of timing, the United Nations had previously declared that the years 2001-2010 were to be the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.”)

The financial system wobbled only momentarily in the wake of 9/11, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell from around 9600 to 8900, and the FTSE 100 Index fell from 5500 to just above 4500. A supportive phone call from the governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, to the deputy governor of the U.S. Federal Reserve, especially once reiterated by the state banks of France, Germany and Europe, steadied any jitters on the world markets and by the end of the year the FTSE 100 Index was above 5000. It was to be the subsequent slide toward war with Iraq that was to hit the global markets hard the following year, and the FTSE dropped to 3300 by the time of the U.S.-led coalition's invasion. In his attempts to keep interest rates low and money plentiful as America moved onto a war-footing, Alan Greenspan over-heated the American economy in a manner that was to leave it vulnerable four years later. In that sense, Osama bin Laden's attack led directly to the Credit Crunch seven years later.

Although the 9/11 attacks were easily the jihadists' single worst atrocity on one day, on Oct. 12, 2002, the Indonesian island of Bali saw an attack that killed 202 people, on March 11, 2004, al Qaeda killed 191 people in train bombings in Madrid, on July 7, 2005, a further 52 innocent people were blown up on London's transport system (along with their four murderers),



G8 heads of state pose in a giant beach chair for a family picture in Heiligendamm, Germany, in 2007: (left to right) French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair; Osama bin Laden; Iraqi civilians tear down a statue of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 2003.



Clockwise: ImageForum; Sipa Press/ Rex features; Corbis

and over four days in November 2008 in Mumbai, 175 people were killed in attacks on a hotel and synagogue. Furthermore, among many terrorist plots that were foiled by international intelligence work, was one that would have simultaneously destroyed five trans-Atlantic Boeing 747s in mid-ocean, killing perhaps as many people as died on 9/11. Anyone who thought the Twin Towers attack had been merely a lucky, one-off operation was forced to think again, although Mr. Bush's Homeland Security operation did succeed in protecting Americans on American soil.

Meanwhile, the Noughties saw the rise of China as a global superpower that could one day be able to contest the U.S. for global hegemony. The adoption of near free-market economics, along with an artificially low exchange rate, centralized decision-making that could ignore human and property rights in its development program, and above all a limitless labor base, gave China a competitive edge. Average year-to-year growth rates of 7.8% during the decade—albeit from a much lower initial base—saw the global balance of economic power starting to tilt eastward. The 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, in which China put on spectacular opening and closing ceremonies and won the largest number of medals, were also an effective propaganda showpiece for the People's Republic.

Alongside China, rival India scored impressive growth rates, and was able to call on similarly huge human resources. Nor is India saddled with the same long-term problems as China, because as a democracy it doesn't face the issue of what might happen when a newly empowered middle class starts to demand—as they have tended to throughout history—political power from what is effectively still a totalitarian state.

The undoubted and seemingly unstoppable rise of both China and India's economies has brought environmental problems that were highlighted as never before in the Noughties. Although their per capita contributions to pollution have been lower than those of other economies of the Western world—especially the U.S.—in absolute terms China became the world's worst polluter. The issue of man-made climate change had been with us ever since Margaret Thatcher put it on the political agenda in the late 1980s, but in the Noughties it became a dominant international issue, engendering

fierce passions on both sides of the argument. The Copenhagen Summit, bringing together 20,000 delegates from 192 countries, is at the very least a potent indication of how seriously the world takes the perceived threat of climate change.

To what extent the Noughties' appalling ecological crises and natural disasters were the result of our burning of fossil fuels, and other man-made actions, will long be the subject of debate, but there can be no doubt as to the extent of the devastation caused. The Noughties saw in particular a 40-degree-Celsius heatwave that hit Europe in 2003, the Indian Ocean Tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004, which was caused by the biggest earthquake eruption in 40 years, and which claimed the lives of no fewer than 229,866 people, and Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, which killed a further 2,000 people in and around New Orleans and cost the U.S. \$60 billion.

In 2008, Hurricane Ike grew to the size of the Gulf of Mexico before it made landfall in the U.S., and on May 2 that year Cyclone Nargis killed 146,000 people in Myanmar. Major earthquakes costing many lives also struck Bam, Iran, in 2003, Kashmir in 2005 and Sichuan in 2008. In Australia in February 2009, the deadliest bush fires in the country's history killed 173 people, injured a further 500 and left 7,500 homeless. In Britain, floods in Cumbria in 2009 were described by a U.K. government minister as "a once in a millennium event," despite similar disasters having overtaken Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire only two years previously.

On top of these natural disasters, the world saw epidemics in the Noughties that threatened to turn into pandemics, and which on occasion summoned up terrifying echoes of the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918, which killed almost as many people as World War I. Mad-cow disease, avian

## The Noughties saw the rise of China as a global superpower that could one day be able to contest the U.S. for global hegemony.



Clockwise from top: Employees leave Lehman Brothers' European headquarters in London on Sept. 15, 2008; a board in Tokyo indicates the massive drop in global stocks after the the Lehman closure on Sep. 16, 2008; Barack Obama on his campaign bus on April 1, 2008, in Scranton, Pennsylvania.



Clockwise: AFP, Sinopix/Rex Features, Charles Ommanney/Getty

flu, and the latest, the H1N1 epidemic, which started in Mexico in April 2009 and became known as Swine Flu, never turned into the mass killers that were widely feared, but they did momentarily allow mankind to glimpse what might indeed cull our species in the future.

On Jan. 1, 2002, the euro replaced the currencies of 12 of the European Union's 17 member states, and on May 1, 2004, no fewer than 10 new countries joined the organization, with Bulgaria and Romania also joining in 2007. To accompany the widening of the organization came the Lisbon Treaty, a deepening of its powers through the introduction of a new constitution for the body, and inaugurating the new posts of president of the European Council and a high representative (effectively a foreign minister). The Czech Republic finally ratified the treaty on Nov. 3, 2009, and a month later Herman Van Rompuy was designated the first president. Under the Lisbon Treaty the EU can now reform itself from within, without the need to subject its constitutional arrangements to the voters of Europe, who sometimes—as in the case of Ireland in June 2008—have had the tendency to vote no.

2008 also saw Barack Obama elected president of the U.S., who was somewhat prematurely also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year. Whatever he achieves as leader of the free world, the election of the first African-American president is undoubtedly a huge step in the direction of racial harmony in the U.S. His first steps, to increase the American military presence in Afghanistan by over 50,000 troops, has impressed those who wanted the war on terror to be prosecuted aggressively, however in his recent speech to the cadets of West Point he attached a sunset clause to the deployment, stating that troops would start to return after only 18 months. As the Noughties end, there is no sign that the conflict described by the Pentagon as “the Long War” is about to be either won or lost in the near future.

Nor is there much sign that the tragic movement of Russia away from genuine democracy and toward authoritarian rule, which began on March 27, 2000, with the election of Vladimir Putin as president and continued apace during the decade, is likely to abate. Four years after Mr. Putin easily won a second term in March 2004, he effectively swapped jobs with his Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, ensuring that he retained the reins of power. The Beslan school massacre of September 2004, which ended in the deaths of 334 schoolchildren at the hands of Chechen terrorists, allowed Mr. Putin to take control of the appointment of the powerful provincial governors, who had hitherto been directly elected, and Russia's short victorious war against Georgia over South Ossetia in August 2008 further strengthened Mr. Putin domestically.

The death and state funeral of Ronald Reagan in June 2004 gave the U.S. a chance to bid a moving farewell to perhaps its greatest post-war president. It rivaled the Queen Mother's funeral in April 2002 for dignity and pomp. Otherwise, there were all too few “feel-good” moments in the decade, but one such was certainly the survival of all 155 people on board a US Airways plane after its heroic pilot, Chesley Sullenberger, landed on the Hudson River in January 2009 after all of its engines suffered catastrophic failure.

It was catastrophic failure of another kind that was to characterize the end of the decade, however. After an almost unbroken run of growth in the FTSE 100, which had risen steadily from 3400 at the time of the Iraq War in March 2003 up to nearly 6800 in mid-2007—with banking-sector stocks

seen as among the safest—a cataclysmic collapse of confidence hit Western economies in the second half of 2007, largely as a result of a distrust of subprime property-related “toxic debt” in many of the financial instruments then being traded. The FTSE-100 Index plunged to 3500 by the start of 2009. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down at about 9000 by the start of 2009 from 14000 in autumn 2007.

In September 2007, Northern Rock had to be saved by the British taxpayer, and other famous high-street banks followed, including Royal Bank of Scotland. In the U.S., the mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac had to be nationalized on Sept. 7, 2008, and nine days later Lehman Brothers filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Only massive international state intervention saved the banking system from complete financial meltdown.

Nonetheless, by the end of the decade the U.S., Germany and Japan were back into growth, albeit still nerve-wracked about the possibility of a “double-dip.” Although 2009 saw a resurgence in stock prices, which have already made up more than half the fall, the confidence of the Western banking system has been broken, with bankers being personally vilified for what has been described, rightly on occasion but more often wrongly, as their greed and incompetence. Moreover, entire countries were shown to be vulnerable to the effects of the crisis, from Iceland to Dubai via Ireland and Greece.

In part the problem lay with the way in which the 24-hour news cycle came to dominate media dissemination during the Noughties. Mobile-phone use increased in Britain from under 35 million to over 75 million, in a country of only 63 million people.

Near-instant collective decisions can therefore be made on the back of news stories; consumer spending plummeted within moments of the collapse of Lehman Brothers, for example, and such speed of decision-making has led to exaggerated swings of mood in economies that before globalization—another phenomenon that sped up massively in the Noughties—had been far more insulated from each other. With massively decreased tax revenues, but public spending programs that are still rising, Britain's net debt as a share of GDP will be 56% for the current year and will rise to 78% in 2014/15. In Britain, too, a series of scandals relating to the expenses claims of scores of Members of Parliament of all parties utterly shattered the sense of respect in which politicians were once held, replacing it with very widespread contempt.

As this white-knuckle ride of a decade ends, therefore, the West is in a weaker position relative to the rest of the world than it has ever been since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution over two centuries ago. If the continuing financial reverberations and a lack of observable success in Afghanistan weaken the will of Western governments to deal with the problems of the coming decade—particularly a nuclearized Iran, and thus soon afterward a nuclearized Middle East—then the only serious contender for Man of the Decade will be someone who did not even so much as once appear in public throughout its course: Osama bin Laden.

Andrew Roberts is a historian based in London.

**Only massive international state intervention saved the banking system from financial meltdown.**

## ❖ The Decade



# An iWorld of difference

How the Internet came of age and changed our lives for good

BY PAUL SONNE

**A**T CERTAIN MOMENTS throughout the past decade, you knew technology was advancing at a rapid clip because the futuristic cartoon dreams of your childhood started coming true. The miraculous videophone from “The Jetsons” suddenly arose as Skype; Penny’s omnipotent pocket computer from “Inspector Gadget” surfaced as the iPhone; and that “Ghostbusters” proton-pack you once used to rid rogue poltergeists from under your bed showed up as the Large Hadron Collider, the world’s largest particle accelerator, which made zapping marshmallow ghosts seem like child’s play.

Though Time magazine recently dubbed the Noughties “the worst decade ever,” in terms of technological advancement it was arguably one of the best. For the first time, people paid for quick DNA tests to uncover hereditary risks, doctors installed artificial hearts and scientists used gene sequencing to define diseases. Hybrid cars inched the world closer to fuel efficiency, and the Segway scooter, over-hyped as it was, retooled the way we thought about transport. It was the age of the flat-screen TV, the all-consuming DVD, the magic-wand Nintendo Wii. Digital outstripped analog, ushering in TV that was for the first time on-demand. Our world became slicker, smaller, faster and—dare we say it in the era of terrorism, global warming and financial collapse—*better*.

At the outset, however, the prospects looked grim. The decade kicked off dishearteningly with a Y2K bug that never bit and a dot-com bust that very much did. Yet it gradually became clear that the major story of the 21st century’s first 10 years would still be exactly what everyone in the 90s thought it was going to be: the Internet’s coming-of-age.

The catalyst wasn’t simply the increased accessibility of personal

computers, but the proliferation of broadband Internet. In Britain, for instance, the number of households with computers jumped from 63% in 2003 to 78% in 2008, and broadband access soared from 11% of households to 62% over the same period, according to the OECD. Similar trends occurred across the developed world. The prevalence of broadband set the stage for uploading pictures, downloading music, viewing video in real time, buying goods in seconds and doing all manner of things that now seem commonplace, but were once constrained by dial-up. The information superhighway finally lifted its speed limits.

Broadband also paved the way for the explosion of what has been called, for better or worse, Web 2.0. “It’s a buzzword, but it defines something for the decade,” says Max Levchin, who co-founded the online-payment-processing company PayPal. Mr. Levchin says the shift to Web 2.0 came when people stopped using the Internet simply to receive information, and instead started using it to create information and interact.

That is, the superhighway in many respects was no longer one-way. Instead of perusing articles and sending emails, users were suddenly exchanging and creating content themselves—whether that meant building a blog on WordPress, editing a Wikipedia page, posting a photo on Flickr, selling an item on eBay or creating a Friendster, MySpace or Facebook profile.

“Up until 2003, blogging was the domain of peculiar weirdos who felt the need to talk about things publicly. People thought you were kind of a creep if you participated in these things,” says Caterina Fake, who co-founded the photo-sharing site Flickr.com in 2004. She says that before the advent of Friendster in 2002, the act of posting personal photos online publicly was seen as

taboo.

“The idea that people who weren’t necessarily single or who weren’t necessarily looking for dating would create a profile of any kind on the Internet, the idea that you would use your real name or that you would create a public friend list—these were all just sort of silly ideas in my head,” said Friendster founder Jonathan Abrams. “That really was what it was like in 2002.”

But then Internet behavior as we knew it underwent a change. Millions of users flocked to Friendster. Thousands more contributed to Wikipedia. A few years later, we were Facebook-friending, YouTube-ing and Tweeting. Life on the Internet became infinitely more robust, as we lived up to Aristotle’s assessment that we are all, by nature, political animals that feed on opportunities to reach out and touch. Or reach out and stalk. Or reach out and ridicule.

YouTube, which launched in 2005, allowed millions of Americans to watch Sarah Palin’s 2008 interview with news anchor Katie Couric on permanent repeat. It caught U.S. Senator George Allen using the racially loaded word “macaca” and exposed a flustered South Carolina beauty queen’s oratorical meltdown to the world. The Internet has never been better at saving our worst moments for posterity, a reality that has changed politics for good and expanded the dimensions of notoriety. “The thing with digital media is that it’s very easy to keep, and it doesn’t get wrinkled like old photos,” said Mr. Abrams—or, as Ms. Fake put it, “The Internet doesn’t forget.”

But that has increasingly alleviated the need to remember. Internet-equipped smart phones armed with GPS recall where buildings are lo-

cated so we don’t have to do so ourselves. WebMD reminds us of heart-attack symptoms so we know when to check into the hospital, while Facebook tells us when our friends’ birthdays are looming on the horizon. Amazon even calls up our personal tastes, by tracking past purchases and surmising what we might like.

“You saw a lot of different services leveraging the masses for good—Wikipedia being a good example,” said Kevin Rose, founder of the news-ranking Web site Digg.com. It was, perhaps more than any other, a decade of “power to the people” in real terms. With the rise of cheap access to personal computers and broadband, the Internet increasingly started to look like the democratic endeavor it was meant to be. Skype made it possible to talk to and see anyone, anywhere in the world, in real time for free. Equal access to

for papers to stay in the black.

Google, which entered the big leagues after its massive IPO in 2004, arguably affected more lives in the Western world than any other company this decade. The company consistently found itself at the forefront of technological development, particularly in the realm of search, but later in everything from mail to maps to mobiles. The numbers speak for themselves: Google counted nine staff members in 1999 and now employs more than 20,000; its search-engine service now handles over a billion queries a day; and YouTube, part of the Google empire since 2006, sees 20 hours of video uploaded a minute. Google has amassed a terrifying arsenal of information and power, the likes of which no single company has ever held before. One hopes the company’s initial informal motto—“don’t be evil”—holds for the next ten years, too.

Aside from the rise of Google, the decade also witnessed the advent of true mobility. The BlackBerry not only changed the way we did business, it started interrupting dinner and challenged the agility of our opposable thumbs. Apple demonstrated the power and potential of mobility perhaps more than any other company this decade, first with the iPod and later with the iPhone. Wireless Internet, 3G networks and smartphones contributed to the giant leap of mobility that defined the decade, catapulting the Internet into every waking moment of our day. For the first time, the gap between the real world and the virtual world closed.

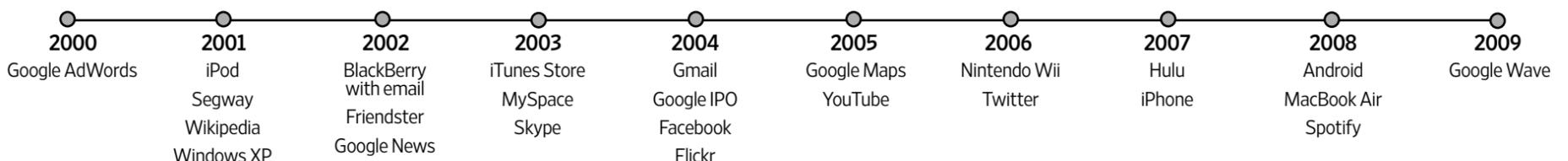
“Back in 2000, I used to talk about how the Internet would be really big when we didn’t talk about it as ‘the Internet.’ It would just be part of the daily fabric of our lives,” said Brent Hoberman, the co-founder of online travel site Lastminute.com. “Now we’re seeing that become a reality.”

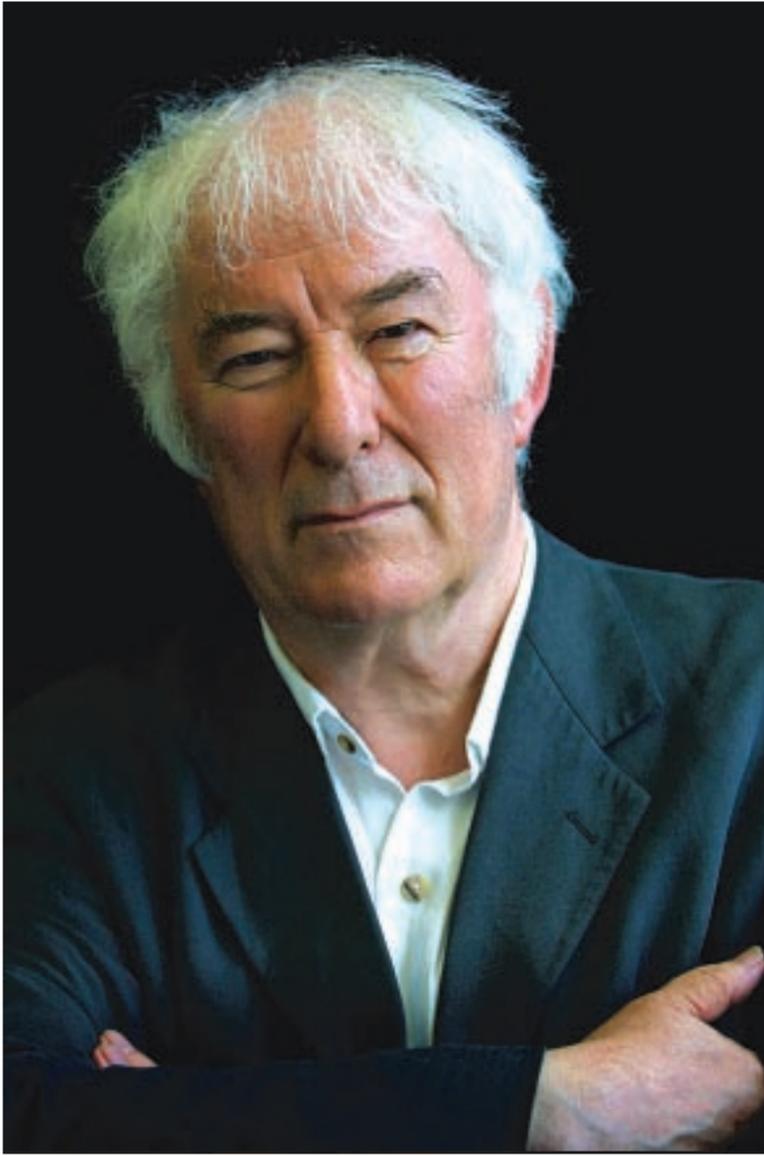
### The information superhighway finally lifted its speed limits.

online maps, books and articles made the tools of education more available than ever before, while the ease of starting a blog democratized the chance to be heard.

Yet equal-opportunity enjoyment also came with a price. Though the Napster freebee bonanza came crashing down in 2001 and the iTunes Store rose up in its stead in 2003, the music industry still hasn’t found a way to cope with piracy and the other challenges posed by the Internet. Meanwhile, the news business has found itself in similarly dire straits, with the demands of free content, the demise of print advertising and the disappearance of classified revenues due to Web sites such as Craigslist and Gumtree making it near impossible

Illustration by Elena Proskurova





# Ten years in culture

European intellectuals weigh in on the decade's top achievements in literature, film and the arts

Compiled by Javier Espinoza, J.S. Marcus and Paul Sonne

**Bernard-Henri Lévy**  
French philosopher

“‘The Pianist’ (2002) by Roman Polanski. If I really had to pick a single book or a single movie, I’d pick ‘The Pianist’—first of all, because the Polanskian orchestra is at its best in this movie. No instrument, no chord, no emotion is missing. But also, how shall I say this... Because I am deeply moved to see a man [Polanski] narrate his own destiny as he did, without having intended to do so. Because I’ve rarely seen one’s past operate, as it did, as the most frightening, the strangest and—alas—the most genuine of mirrors; because, like Flaubert for Madame Bovary, Roman Polanski can once again say: ‘This hounded, persecuted man, who is being chased by his destiny—well, that’s me.’”

**Zaha Hadid**  
British architect

“Anish Kapoor’s piece, ‘Marsyas’ (2002), in the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall. I think that material in this case was really instrumental, especially in the middle section, where the ring was suspended above you—there was that kind of element of danger, which made that exhibit really fantastic. His latest show at the Royal Academy is also spectacular.

In the same way, the integrity of material is wonderfully evident

when you walk between the mazes of Richard Serra’s pieces—if it were done in another material [other than sheet metal], it would not work. His show in 2004 at the Archaeological Museum in Naples was stunning—and I really enjoyed his show ‘The Matter of Time’ (2005) in Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Bilbao.

At this year’s Manchester International Festival, we created an intimate Chamber Music Hall for solo performances of J.S. Bach’s work, and I was lucky enough to attend the pianist Piotr Anderszewski’s opening night. It was a magical experience—and I have had his album, ‘Bach: partitas 1, 2, 6,’ on my iPod ever since.”

**J.M.G. Le Clezio**  
French author, Nobel laureate

“During the last 10 years there have been a good amount of excellent films, such as Roman Polanski’s ‘The Pianist,’ and Stephen Daldry’s ‘The Reader’ (2008). If I had to choose one film, it would be Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s ‘Black’ (2005) because it has the power of Indian cinematography, with the bitterness which makes it universal.

As for literature, there has been Khaled Hosseini’s ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’ (2007), or ‘The Butterfly’s Burden’ (2007) from Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, translated by Fady Joudah. Or

‘L’Aine des Orphelins’ (2000) (The Oldest Orphan) by Guinean writer Tierno Monémbo.

If I had to choose one person for those past 10 years, it would not be a writer or an artist, but a simple ex-

see his legacy come to fruition. So we have had such delights as the work of Vikram Chandra and Aravind Adiga, introducing us to the emerging India, and showing us how stale our own fictional uni-

**It seems that good English might eventually be saved by India. These are vivid, beautiful novels with a strong narrative—which is what people crave.**

—Alexander McCall Smith

traordinary woman, Ms. Rosa Verduzco, who dedicates herself (as she has been doing for all her life in relative obscurity) to teach music to her more than 300 children, mostly orphans taken out of jail, in the small town of Zamora in central Mexico.”

**Alexander McCall Smith**  
British author

“The last decade has been remarkable for one thing: the democratization that came with globalization. This has meant that we have had the opportunity to hear so many new and interesting voices. For my part, I have very much enjoyed the crop of new Indian writers who have shot to prominence in the last 10 years. As a fan of the late R.K. Narayan, the first Indian writer to write in English for a large Western audience, I have been delighted to

verse is in danger of becoming. The language is magnificent, too: it seems that good English might eventually be saved by India. These are vivid, beautiful novels with a strong narrative—which is what people crave.

Developments in the world of painting have not been so inspiring. I fear that the philosopher, Roger Scruton, is right when he writes about the triumph of banality and ugliness. Perhaps we shall rediscover beauty again in the decade to come.”

**Andrew Motion**  
Former U.K. Poet Laureate

“Poet Michael Longley’s reputation has always been overshadowed by that of his great contemporary and friend Seamus Heaney. But the more time passes, the more his ‘Collected Poems’ (2006) stands

clear as a magnificent achievement: tremendously subtle in its rhythms and thought-processes, unshowily bold in its reach, and very tender in its renderings and apprehensions. A book for a lifetime, let alone a decade.

In its watchful sympathy with natural things (and their vulnerabilities), ‘Collected Poems’ is an obvious partner for Al Gore’s ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ (2006), the film which more than any other of recent years has opened our eyes and stirred our conscience about the most vital issue of our time, climate change. Sure, it’s solemn. But there’s a world to be solemn about.”

**Thomas Demand**  
German artist

“In terms of culture, other parts of the world are now clearly visible—the art world has realized that places like Poland, Mexico and South Africa are not just satellites doing what we do but a little less well. They have relevance.”

“An obvious [highpoint of the decade] was Olafur Eliasson’s ‘The Weather Project’ (2003) at the Tate’s Turbine Hall. It’s a very challenging space—a hybrid of public art and museum space. ‘The Weather Project’ was quite simple and low-tech—actually a huge mirror—and invited people to be the center of their own experience.”

“It turns out that there has been



Left to right: Corbis, Alamy, ImageForum

Left to right: Irish poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney; Anish Kapoor's sculpture 'Marsyas' (2002) at the Tate Modern; Adrien Brody in Roman Polanski's 'The Pianist' (2002).

a constant repetition of key figures, who play much longer than in previous decades. [Damien] Hirst has been doing what he's doing for twenty years, and it's still amazing."

**Adam Zagajewski**  
Polish poet

"I think this decade in Europe was a little boring. Life has reached a stage of uneventfulness marked by procedural debates in the European Union. From my own point of view, I don't see this as a decade of discovery, more of continuity. I've been following the lives of poets like Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott."

"It seems that poetry is a bit on the decline. I see a diminishing interest—I don't know who is to blame. In Europe, when I attend poetry events, there is definitely less interest, but it may come back. Nothing is definitive."

"In Poland, there has been a lessening of the political function of poetry. Zbigniew Herbert has somehow emerged as this great figure in the popular perception—because he is viewed as the adamant poet who never gave into Communist demands."

**Manuel Borja-Villel**  
Spanish museum director

"One key event that has shaped the spirit of this decade is the World

Social Forum, which started in 2001. It highlights that the world has become globalized, and with it a new horizon for both dominance and liberation has been set up. A protest can be called a piece of art or (more importantly) a work of art turned into a political act).

One book has captured this awareness of having really become global. The book is 'Empire' by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, published in 2000. It has become a reference for its description of the radical change of paradigm we are going through, one in which the separation between the public and the private is being superseded by the institution of the commons and in which the multitude has substituted that of the political subject."

"Were we to consider that which has been determinant in the art world during the last decade, I would point to the development or growth of two parallel, apparently antagonistic movements, which are in actuality complementary to each other: On one hand, we have those artists who conceive their practice as political activism, on the other, there are the artists who deal with our modern past as a subject matter. We always thought of modernity as something yet to come, but they make a point that modernity is already our past, our own tradition. Both movements reflect a lack of concern for the idea of the artist as a genius, a form-giver, located above society."

## Fashion of the decade

The first decade of the 21st century has been notable for its recycling - of fashion, that is. Many of the best trends were familiar from times past, but often - as with jeans and messenger bags - placed in a new context.

### Trends that started and stayed



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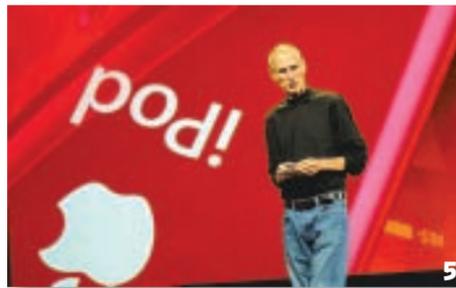
1. Trench coats came in in the mid-decade and show no sign of going anywhere.

2. The sheath dress had a revival in vivid colors.

3. Ballet flats became the women's walking shoe of choice.

4. Preppy roared back, making pink and madras safe for everyone.

5. Jeans marched into the office with the dot-com revolution.



5

### Come and gone... Some of the decade's newest styles have proven to be fads



3

2



1

1. Pants worn under the rear end will be a symbol of the decade's youthful rebellion.

2. The Gap attempted to go high fashion, but its overexpansion diluted the brand's image.

3. The wildly expensive It bag became a symbol of the global financial crisis.

4. Crocs fomented a revolution, but quickly went from fashionable to bargain rack.



4

Getty (3), Rex Features (4)



# The chocolate rebel

Although Jacques Genin considers himself a foundry man, his wares enliven palates and linger in customers' memories

BY LENNOX MORRISON

**W**HEN CHOCOLATE FIRST arrived in France around 1615, the “food of the gods” from Amazonian rain forests was declared by royal decree to be too good for plebeians and strictly for aristocrats only. Today, the fruits of the cacao tree are available regardless of genealogy.

However, culinary one-upmanship continues to thrive here and a penchant for *chocolat industriel*, or factory-made chocolate, is considered exceedingly bad taste. No self-respecting gourmet would allow anything but the finest handmade creations to cross their lips. They'd also want to know the percentage of cocoa beans and where they were sourced (usually Africa and South America, so smaller crops from Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea have rarity value). And they'd naturally enquire about the name of the chocolatier.

The big surprise in Paris this Advent is that the most talked-about chocolate-maker of the moment—Jacques Genin—is not a qualified maître chocolatier but a self-taught and self-declared “rebel” whose career in food began not in a kitchen, but in a slaughterhouse.

“Rebel” is not too strong a word to use in a country where standards in chocolate making are watched over by no less august a body than the Académie Française du Chocolat. The 40 or so academicians include historians and scientists who organize debates and lectures and are painstakingly compiling a definitive dictionary of chocolate-making terms.

None of which impresses Mr. Genin. “I don't even want to be called a master chocolate maker,” he says. “I call myself a foundry man who works with chocolate because that's what I do. I melt down chocolate to create fresh products.”

Raised in the Vosges in eastern France, 51-year-old Mr. Genin is one of nine children

of parents whom he describes as “heavy drinkers.” Kept out of school to help with housework, he fled the family home at age 12 and sustained himself by working in a slaughterhouse.

“It was a world of violence,” he recalls. “There was no room for the imagination or for sensitivity.”

After military service he moved to Paris and washed glasses at the bar of a jazz club. By working seven days a week and taking on “huge debts” he opened his first restaurant

## The most talked-about chocolate-maker in Paris isn't a qualified maître chocolatier but a self-declared 'rebel,' whose career began in a slaughterhouse.

when he was 28. This was followed by a second. In 1991, however, aged 33, he sold up and worked for a while as head pâtissier at La Maison du Chocolat. In 1996, he left to set up his own chocolate-making business. “It was the sensuality of the product which attracted me,” he says.

From his tiny workshop off the gourmet track in the 15th arrondissement he has built up his business to become a supplier of chocolates and petits fours to about 200 top hotels and restaurants around France, including the grandest establishments in the capital such as the Crillon, Plaza Athénée and Le Meurice. Outside catering circles, however, he was unknown.

That is, until 12 months ago when, in the full bite of the recession, he opened La Chocola-



Jacques Genin (right) and his boutique's architect, Guillaume Leclerc. Top left and bottom: chocolates from La Chocolaterie.

terie de Jacques Genin—a 400-square-meter temple to chocolate created within the shell of a 17th-century building in the fashionable Marais district. Mr. Genin admits the first year has been difficult. “If it hadn't been for my team who work here with me, there were days when I would have felt like giving up.”

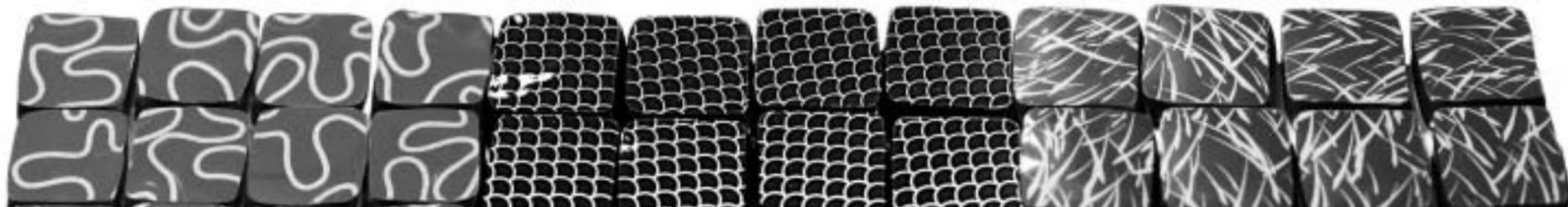
Since Christmas and New Year represent the peak sales period for chocolate in France, now is the time when chocolatiers need to be as busy as a gift-packing station at an Amazon warehouse. Mr. Genin says, “Things seem to be holding well now. If we have a successful Christmas, then this place will survive for a long time.”

In keeping with his original approach, there's no sign of tinsel, let alone a Santa Claus, when I visit his premises. On stepping into the high-ceilinged sanctuary of honey-toned ancient stone and blonde-oak parquet, the first impression is of a luxury accessory boutique. Indeed, the architect, Guillaume Leclercq, has designed interiors for Louis Vuitton.

On the ground floor of La Chocolaterie, beneath spot lighting, elegant black-clad assistants confer earnestly with customers peering into glass showcases. They're looking at polychromatic mosaics. On closer inspection, these mosaics are made up of two-centimeter squares of chocolate, hand painted with delicate patterns and displayed in single layers in silver metal boxes.

Alongside the chocolates are jewel-colored candies and caramels, and immaculate-looking pastries, all of which can be consumed on the spot in a tea-room area of fawn leather chairs and dark wood tables.

High overhead, there's a flicker of movement. I lift my gaze to see a svelte young woman, pony-tailed and in chef's whites, descending a spiral metal stairway from the up-



## BELGIUM

With many of the most prestigious chocolatiers in the world represented on or around the Place du Grand Sablon in Brussels, the picturesque square feels like the epicenter of the chocolate lover's universe.

One of the biggest names is **Pierre Marcolini**, who travels the world sourcing cocoa beans and then blends them into new flavors. As well as shops throughout Belgium, the chocolatier now has outlets in France, the U.K., Kuwait and Japan. A festive favorite is *Le Sapin Gourmand*, a Christmas tree modeled in dark, milk or white chocolate. And this year, there's a special Christmas log, *Bûche Opéra*, covered with a red chocolate shell in the shape of Garnier's celebrated opera house in Paris. [www.marcolini.be](http://www.marcolini.be)

Royal warrant holder to the Belgian court, family firm **Wittamer** next year celebrates its 100th anniversary. And since 1950, the first floor of its flagship shop on the Place du Grand Sablon has also been an elegant tea room offering a view onto the square. Now headed up by brother and sister team Paul and Myriam Wittamer, the company has expanded into Japan.



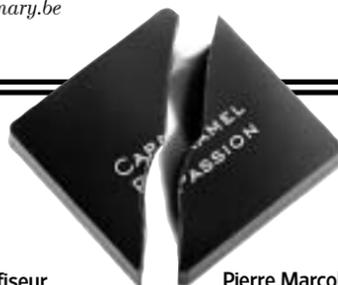
Wittamer

Alongside gift-box selections for beneath the tree, this year's festive speciality is the *Bûche sauvage*, a dark-chocolate and caramel Christmas log with a striking leopard-print pattern. [www.wittamer.com](http://www.wittamer.com)

Established in 1919, **Mary Chocolatier Confiseur** is also a royal warrant holder. Within the rococo interior of their main shop on Rue Royale their chocolate gallery offers more than 70 different handmade chocolates. There is also a newer outlet on Rue Edith Cavell. In response to customer demand, 2009 sees the return of traditional specialties from Christmases past such as chocolate *sabots* (clogs) filled with chocolate and a hand-decorated Christmas log, *Bûche de Noël*, fashioned entirely from chocolate. [www.mary.be](http://www.mary.be)



Mary Chocolatier Confiseur



Pierre Marcolini

per floor, bearing chocolates. She looks like a messenger of the gods, but in fact she's simply executing Mr. Genin's just-in-time business model. His products are all freshly made in airy kitchens above the shop and brought downstairs as required.

"When you make chocolates you're working with fats. Nobody would keep butter in their refrigerator for three weeks so why should chocolate be seen as a product with a long shelf life?" he says.

Jovial, and unashamedly sentimental, Mr. Genin says, "Yesterday a woman told me: 'I was thinking about you last night.' It wasn't me she'd been thinking about but my chocolates. I was thrilled because it meant that she'd remembered my product. My chocolates had made an impression on this person and stayed with her, and that's wonderful."

His first act on welcoming me into his kitchens is to hand me a chocolate éclair and an espresso. "Breakfast!" he says. "Then we can talk."

The air is scented with caramelized almonds. He sweeps me over to a marble counter where, with concentration worthy of a neurosurgeon, someone on his team is using chopped nuts to build a base for tiny dark chocolate pyramids with hazelnut filling. Mr. Genin hands me one of the chocolate pyramids, a speciality created for the festive season.

I bite in and within seconds my papillae are fluttering like cherub's wings, sending intimations of ecstasy straight through the cranial nerves. Mr. Genin looks deeply into my eyes, then smiles with satisfaction.

"I love it when someone tastes my chocolates and I see their eyes sparkle. For me, that's the moment when I feel my work is truly appreciated and rewarded."

*Lennox Morrison is a writer based in Paris.*

## SWITZERLAND

The Swiss are world-champion chocolate eaters, consuming 12.4 kg per person per year. Although this average is boosted by tourists, it's still a lot of chocolate. One of the leading names still using traditional methods is **Confiserie Sprüngli**, established in 1836. A family-managed company, with a flagship shop on Paradeplatz in downtown Zurich, their commitment to freshness and highest quality means that all 19 of their sales outlets are located within an hour from the town of Dietikon, where the chocolates are made. Among many special gift offerings is the Cube, a selection of mixed pralines and truffles in an unusual box opening out into three layers. [www.spruengli.ch](http://www.spruengli.ch)

England's Duchess of Devonshire is one of many fans of **Auer Chocolatier**, a fifth-generation family company. At their shop on Rue de Rive in Geneva, handmade chocolates are still served from antique wooden drawers and sold in beautiful cloth-covered boxes. The choice varies with the seasons. Available for six weeks over Yuletide is *Les épices de Noël*, a ganache flavored with gingerbread and festive spices, coated in dark chocolate. [www.chocolat-auer.ch](http://www.chocolat-auer.ch)

Confiserie Sprüngli



## Australia shifts to terroir

AUSTRALIA LED THE New World wine revolution. With its emphasis on rich, ripe fruit, successfully married with voluptuous oak flavors, its labeling by grape varieties and down-to-earth marketing, it seduced European markets raised on the tradition that wine should be understood as an expression of the soil.

### Wine WILL LYONS

By the middle of the Noughties, its domestic and overseas wine sales had ballooned to more than £2.5 billion, and the country was overtaking France as the biggest exporter of wine to the U.K. Its influence on winemaking was growing too. With a slew of graduates from Australia's numerous colleges and universities working in the northern hemisphere, practices honed in Australia such as temperature-controlled fermentation, hygiene and efficiency were being readily adopted in Europe's vineyards. Institutions such as the Australian Wine Research Institute were exporting the latest oenological science. As Australia's wine styles were exported around the world and the number of wineries grew to more than 2,000, the world's major drinks companies moved in with a series of takeovers, joint ventures and mergers. Now the landscape is dominated by major corporations such as Constellation Brands, Inc., Foster's Group Ltd., Hardy's and Pernod Ricard Pacific.

On one level Australian wine has mirrored the efficiencies honed in sister industry's such as beer. Entry-level or budget wine is now subject to sophisticated marketing practices with a standardized flavor deliberately produced to appeal to a mass market. With its immediate fruit flavors, easy to open screw-cap bottle and garish label, this wine is effectively made to be drunk like beer, with an afterthought to where it is produced. For brand Australia, the name of the grape variety, wherever it is grown, is all the consumer needs to understand the wine in the bottle. It worked, appealing to a generation of wine drinkers unfamiliar with the unfathomable and unpronounceable appellations of the Old World.

And yet at the other end of the spectrum, in the fine-wine category,

Australia is beginning to appreciate the notion of terroir and the complexities of France's Appellation Contrôlée system. All the European regulatory systems are based around an understanding that what makes a wine unique is not the grape variety or blend of grapes used in producing the wine but the character of the wine's vineyard, its combination of soil, climate and exposure to the sun.

France has encapsulated the system of terroir into law. The words Appellation Contrôlée guarantee that the wine will reflect the character of the region. In the U.S., the American Viticultural Area similarly guarantees the geographical origin of the wine. Incidentally, both systems are by no means a guarantee of quality.

While Australia's labeling integrity program does reflect regions in a loose sense, such as Southeast Australia or indeed in far greater detail areas such as the Barossa Valley, there appears to be a shift in philosophy.

"Thirty years ago the winemaker thought his job started in the winery," says John Duval, who for 16 years worked as the chief winemaker to Australia's most famous wine, Penfolds Grange. "Now we spend more time in the vineyard. We are trying to get over the 'big is beautiful, riper is better' practice of the past."

Mr. Duval, who now runs his own winery, John Duval Wines, points to the Barossa, the winemaking valley that sits around an hour's drive north of Adelaide. Amid its hot, arid plains, wines such as Grant Burge's Meshach, Penfolds Grange, Charles Melton, Peter Lehmann and Henschke's Hill of Grace have caught the world's attention with their deep, bold, voluptuous, spicy interpretation of Shiraz. Mr. Duval says work has shown there are now 13 different regions based on the geology of the region.

But unlike in Europe, which has experienced centuries of viticulture and where in a region such as Burgundy the ancestral inheritance is evident in the medieval monasteries and churches that pepper the landscape, in Australia it might be too early to conclude which grape variety matches which region. In recent years, Italian varieties such as Nebbilio have thrived in Australia.

While there are many wines that do show the expression of their region, in real terms the history of Australian terroir has only just begun.

## DRINKING NOW

**Clonakilla Shiraz/Viognier**  
Canberra District, Australia

Vintage: **2008**

Price: about **£40 or €45**

Alcohol content: **14%**

Some argue this is Australia's greatest red wine; it is certainly one of its greatest Shiraz's. Very much in the style of a northern Rhone, it has peppery, spicy nose with flavors such as raspberry and plum. The palate is tight, with refined tannins and exceptional length and poise.



# A culinary revival in Istanbul

The city's Ottoman restaurants rediscover a legendary cuisine with cosmopolitan roots

BY J.S. MARCUS  
Istanbul

**E**LEGANT RESTAURANTS ALONG the Bosphorus prepare fish beautifully and plainly, in a Mediterranean style similar to that of Italy or Greece. In Beyoglu, Istanbul's nightlife hub, tables are cluttered with tavern food in tapas-like portions. It's all delicious, of course—and a little familiar.

But when you encounter a delicate rice pilaf flavored with clarified butter, or a perfect slice of baklava, the dozens of pastry layers dissolving one by one on the tongue, it's a reminder that Istanbul is home to another cuisine, one as complicated and sophisticated as contemporary Turkish food is simple and sustaining.

The cuisine of the Ottomans, whose empire once stretched from Baghdad to Budapest, was perfected in Istanbul in the 15th and 16th centuries in the kitchens of Topkapi Palace, home of the sultans for 400 years. Ottoman control of the spice trade was at its peak, and the cuisine's hallmark is its deft mixing of sweet and savory flavors. Today, dishes such as delicately stuffed Black Sea mackerel and sea bass flavored with *mastic*, an aromatic resin usually reserved for desserts, are appearing on menus at some of the best restaurants. A chef in the classical Ottoman period might have devoted his whole working life to one dish; modern-day chefs have special training and often base their interpretations on archival research.

The cuisine's revival comes as many people in Istanbul are becoming more interested in their Ottoman heritage. The flowering of Ottoman restaurants is among the most visible results.

In September, a contemporary take on Ottoman cooking came to Topkapi Palace, with the opening of Karakol restaurant, just inside the palace gates in a meticulously restored guardhouse. "Turkish isn't Ottoman," says Vedat Basaran, co-owner of Karakol, where glass-and-silver chandeliers glitter over polished blond-stone floors. For dishes like pilaf and kebab, he says, "we use the same names but the techniques are different."

For example, modern Turkish kebabs are usually composed of lamb pieces roasted on a metal skewer. Traditional Ottoman kebabs could have been lamb, rabbit, duck or pigeon, often skewered on flavor-enhancing eggplant stalks. Karakol serves duck-breast kebabs with an almond-humus foam, recalling tarator, a traditional Ottoman sauce of ground nuts and lemon. At Mr. Basaran's Feriye Lokantasi restaurant, set right on the Bosphorus, skewers are rosemary stems.

Mr. Basaran anticipated the Ottoman revival back in the 1990s when he opened Tugra, a groundbreaking Ottoman-style restaurant in the opulent Ciragan Palace Kempinski hotel overlooking the Bosphorus. One of his most celebrated rediscoveries was the addition of dried cherries to stuffed grape leaves, giving the dish a lush, unexpected tartness.

Some traditional aspects can't



be authentically replicated, Mr. Basaran notes. The "perfume" of Ottoman dishes often came from rare ingredients like deer musk and ambergris, an aromatic whale secretion.

Priscilla Mary Isin, an English-born translator and food historian who has lived in Turkey since the 1970s, says Ottoman cuisine in its heyday reflected a society that was officially Muslim yet encompassed a range of religions and ethnicities. The empire's governors returned to the palace with recipes from provinces on three continents. "That's why the cuisine is so marvelous," Ms. Isin says. "It's a big synthesis." It was also "a fine cuisine of the elite," who could afford an endless supply of manpower, she notes. A telling illustration of the difference between Turkish and Ottoman cuisine, she says, is in a dish found in both, which she calls "eggs with onions." "It's a very simple dish," Ms. Isin says. "You fry your onions for awhile, plop in a few eggs, cook it and then you eat it with bread."

"But at [Topkapi] palace, there is a record of this same dish. You cut up on the onions, and you fry them very, very slowly, with lots of butter for an hour, until it caramelizes completely, then you add cinnamon, and then you put your eggs in. We tried that with friends of mine, sharing the stirring, and the flavor is unbelievable. If you've got the time for some cook to stand there stirring, it makes an amazing effect."

Topkapi Palace was constructed on a bluff over the Bosphorus starting in the 1460s. A series of low-lying structures almost like a nomadic encampment rendered in stone, it makes for a "very modest impression," says Il-

ber Ortayli, head of the Topkapi Palace Museum. "Our palace is very beautiful, but it is not as magnificent as European palaces."

What did astonish visitors was the display of material wealth. Ottoman textiles were sable-lined and brocaded with precious metals. Food was served on Chinese porcelain specially created for the sultan. The main courtyard was the setting for lavish banquets, with thousands of guests dining on dozens of courses that were extravagant even by the standards of western European royalty.

Europe's palace kitchens often were hidden, but the Ottomans' master architect, Mimar Sinan, made the Topkapi kitchens some of the palace's most conspicuous structures. Viewed from the Bosphorus, the kitchens' 20 chimneys are like European cathedral spires. Banquets were held in the vast loggia of the second courtyard—in effect, the empire's administrative center—but meals also were served in resplendent interiors, such as the imperial hall of the harem, decorated with imported Dutch tiles and Venetian glass, or the intimate "fruit room" lined with elaborately decorated panels.

In 2010, Istanbul will be one of Europe's "Capitals of Culture," along with Pecs, Hungary, and Essen, Germany. The year will be marked by infrastructure projects and cultural events, including the Topkapi kitchens' reopening in late 2010, Mr. Ortayli says. Before they were damaged in a 1999 earthquake, the kitchens displayed cooking equipment as well as a selection of Chinese porcelain. In the new exhibition space, more of the palace's porcelain collection will be placed on permanent view.

Food at Topkapi wasn't just something to eat, says Gülrü Neci-

Feriye Lokantasi restaurant with its Ottoman cuisine located along the Bosphorus; below, a classic 16th-century entrée: chicken stuffed with fragrant rice pilaf.



poglu, Harvard's Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture. It had political significance, representing the "generosity of the dynasty." When the Janissaries, the sultan's standing army, rebelled, they would turn over food cauldrons to show their disrespect, she says. Ottoman cuisine's popularity is a sign of "neo-Ottomanism," she says, a "nostalgia" for the empire's cosmopolitan past.

It's a reversal from the early decades of the Turkish Republic, when the government aggressively tried to erase evidence of the Ottoman Empire from public life. Wearing of the fez, which had been part of the empire's national costume, was outlawed, and the Roman alphabet replaced the Ottoman version of Arabic script. "Everything Ottoman was considered horrible," Ms. Isin says.

According to Jason Goodwin, author of mystery novels set in 19th-century Istanbul that are popular with Turkish readers, the popularity of Ottoman cuisine is "very encouraging." (His fictional detective, Yashim, is an expert cook who excels at dishes like imam bayildi, "the imam fainted," slow-cooked eggplant stuffed with tomato, onion and garlic.)

The cuisine's return, Mr. Goodwin says, allows Turks to "look at themselves in a more robust way."

J.S. Marcus is a writer based in Berlin.

## Arbitrage



## Moleskine 2010 desk calendar

City	Local currency	€
New York	\$21,60	€15
Hong Kong	HK\$198	€18
London	£16	€18
Paris	€19	€19
Rome	€20	€20
Brussels	€27	€27

Note: Prices, plus taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

## ❖ Film



Neytiri (Zoë Saldana, right) teaches Jake (Sam Worthington) the skills he'll need to survive on Pandora.

# The beautiful spectacle that is 'Avatar'

JAMES CAMERON'S "AVATAR" takes place on a planet called Pandora, where American corporations and their military mercenaries have set up bases to mine a surpassingly precious mineral called unobtainium. The vein of awe mined by the movie is nothing short of unbelievium. This is a new way of coming to your senses—put those 3-D glasses on your face and you come to a sense of delight that

## Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

quickly gives way to a sense of astonishment. The planetary high doesn't last. The closer the sketchy story comes to a parable of colonialist aggression and eco-vandalism in the jungles of an extragalactic Vietnam, the more the enchantment fizzles. Much of the time, though, you're transfixed by the beauty and visual integrity of a spectacle that seems all of a piece. Special effects have been abolished, in effect, since the whole thing is so special. Eye candy has been refined into caviar.

The word "avatar" wasn't invented by Mr. Cameron, though everything else in the production seems to have been. (With the help, that is, of a few thousand colleagues around our own planet.) In Hindu myth, an avatar is a deity descended to earth in human form. In computer parlance it's an icon that represents a person in virtual reality or cyberspace. In the movie it's a manufactured body that's remotely controlled—not by some hand-held clicker but through brain waves generated by a human being who functions as the body's driver.

If this sounds technobabbly in the description, it's dazzling in the execution. The main driver-to-be—or, rather, animating spirit-to-be—is an ex-Marine, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) whose combat injuries have left him confined to a wheelchair. He's part of a scientific program run by a tough cookie named Grace Augustine; she's played by Sigourney Weaver. The program has begun to explore Pandora, whose atmosphere is toxic to earthlings, using avatars with re-

combinant DNA—part human, part alien—constructed along the lines of the planet's dominant species; they're very tall, very blue, Brancusi-slender and Superman-agile. The movie offers several lyrical passages, but one of the best belongs to Jake. It's when he inhabits his avatar for the first time and discovers that his new legs can take his lithe new body through some of the most sublime scenery on not-Earth.

No description of that scenery will spoil the experience of the 3-D process (which dispenses with the usual eye-catching tricks) or the seamless integration of live action, motion-capture, animation, computer-generated images and whatever other techniques went into the mix—maybe witchcraft or black magic. (I haven't seen the IMAX version; that's for my next viewing.) Some of the flora suggest an anhydrous Great Barrier Reef (airborne jellyfish, coral-colored conical plants that spiral down to almost-nothingness when touched) or, in the case of Pandora's legendary floating mountains, represent an homage to the Japanese animation master Hayao Miyazaki. As for the fauna, they're not only prodigiously varied—flamboyant dragons, six-legged steeds, elephantine chargers with heads like battering rams, nature blue in tooth and claw—but creatures with convincing lives of their own, unlike the cheerfully bizarre creations that filled the Mos Eisley cantina in "Star Wars."

Then there are the *indigènes*, the French term for natives being appropriate because Pandora evokes the Indochina that existed before France's doomed war against an indigenous insurgency, as well as the Vietnam that became a battleground for American troops. They're called the Na'vi, and to describe them as humanoid may be to defame them, inasmuch as they, unlike most of the film's Americans, revere their planet and live in harmony with their surroundings. The most beautiful of the Na'vis—at least the one with the most obvious star quality—is a female warrior named Neytiri. As most of our planet already knows, Jake falls for her in a big but complicated way.

Big because Neytiri, as played by Zoë Saldana, is so alluring—cerulean-skinned, lemon-eyed, wasp-

waisted, long-tailed, anvil-nosed, wiggly-eared (trust me, it's all seductive) and given to feral snarls in the heat of battle. But complicated because Jake is secretly working both sides of the jungle. He's in love with Neytiri, and soon embraces her people's values. (Yes, there's circumstantial evidence that Mr. Cameron knows about "Dances With Wolves," along with "Tarzan," "Green Mansions," "Frankenstein," "Princess Mononoke," "South Pacific," "Spartacus" and "Top Gun.") At the same time, Jake is spying for a gimlet-eyed military commander, Col. Miles Quaritch. (Stephen Lang proves that extravagantly broad acting can also be good acting.) The evil colonel has promised the ex-Marine a procedure that will restore the use of his paralyzed legs in exchange for information that will help chase the Na'vi from their sacred land, which happens to be the only place where unobtainium can be obtained.

It's no reflection on Mr. Worthington or Ms. Saldana, both of whom are impressive—though how, exactly, do you judge such high-tech hybrid performances?—that their interspecies love story lacks the heat of Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet clinging to each other on the storm-swept decks of "Titanic." Teenage girls will not return to see this film half a dozen times or more unless they possess a rogue gene for wiggly ears. But then "Avatar" revises the relationship between everyone in the audience and the characters on screen. Actors have always been our avatars; they've always represented us in the virtual reality of motion pictures. In much of this film, however, they've been transformed by technology into a new and ambiguous breed of entertainment icon—not the quasi-human denizens of "The Wizard of Oz," or the overgrown glove puppets of "The Polar Express," but nearly palpable fantasy figures that inhabit a world just beyond our reach.

The fantasy quotient of "Avatar" takes its first major hit when the Na'vi take their first hit from the American military. It's not quite the American military; these heartless soldiers are civilian mercenaries who may also call to mind the Black-

water contingent in Iraq. But Mr. Cameron has devoted a significant chunk of his movie to a dark, didactic and altogether horrific evocation of Vietnam, complete with napalm, Agent Orange and helicopter gunships (one of which is named Valkyrie in a tip of the helmet to "Apocalypse Now.") Whatever one may think of the politics of this anti-war section, two things can be said with certainty: it provokes an adrenalin rush (what that says of our species is another matter), and it feels a lot better when it's over.

Other narrative problems intrude. For all its political correct-

ness about the goodness of the Na'vis, "Avatar" lapses into lurid savage rituals, complete with jungle drums, that would not have seemed out of place in the first "King Kong." While Sigourney Weaver's performance is a strong one, it isn't clear what her character is doing as an avatar, or how the Na'vi perceive her. What couldn't be clearer, though, is that Mr. Cameron's singular vision has upped the ante for filmed entertainment, and given us a travelogue unlike any other. I wouldn't want to live on Pandora, mainly because of the bad air, but I'm thrilled to have paid it a visit.

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# 'Morecambe': a comedy giant's life on London stage



Bob Golding as Eric Morecambe.

Benjamin Edelberg

**LONDON:** Eric Morecambe was such a giant of British comedy that 28 million people—more than half the country—tuned in to watch his Christmas Day performance with partner Ernie Wise in 1977.

The nation's fondness for Morecambe is palpable in the audience at the Duchess Theatre, where "Morecambe," a one-man show, opened last week after earning rave reviews this summer at the Edinburgh festival.

Deftly played by Bob Golding, Morecambe tells the story of his life while weaving in many of his best-known jokes and song-and-dance routines. "Johnnie Walker makes you see double and act single," he quips as he pours himself a drink. "Did you hear about the thief who stole the calendar? He got 12 months," he jokes while wiggling his glasses.

The humor is tame by today's standards, but drew boisterous laughter from the audience, which seemed wistful for a more innocent time. "It wasn't Christmas Day without the Morecambe & Wise show—it

was an institution," said one middle-aged woman in the audience.

Anyone unfamiliar with Morecambe's work may feel slightly out of step with the rest of the audience, but the strength of the script and Mr. Golding's performance make this an enjoyable evening even for a newcomer. The plot winds through Morecambe's early days as a child performer to his years playing rough clubs like the Glasgow Empire with Ernie to their eventual mastery of televised comedy in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Golding not only resembles the comedian but also gets his many physical ticks just right, from his funny walks to his wide grin and waggling eyebrows. After suffering a heart attack in the final scene, he dons a white tuxedo and sings one last number. If the production at times becomes overly sentimental, there's little doubt Morecambe's many fans will be forgiving.

—Jeanne Whalen

Until Jan. 17

[www.duchestheatre.co.uk](http://www.duchestheatre.co.uk)

# 'Tears of Eros': pleasure, pain in Madrid

**MADRID:** In his final book, "The Tears of Eros," French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille (1897-1962) intertwined the history of eroticism with a history of violence. Nearly 50 years after its publication, the book, which theorizes about the relationship between pleasure and pain, has inspired Spanish art critic and curator Guillermo Solana to create a wildly ambitious exhibition at Madrid's Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, called "Tears of Eros." With nearly 120 works on view—including paintings, sculptures, photographs and videos—the show brings together a diverse range of artists, from the Renaissance to the present day.

Aided by explicit references to Bataille, and implicit references to Sigmund Freud, the show tries to explore the connection between sexual desire and physical suffering, as expressed in imagery associated with a number of mythical subjects. By scouring the history of western art, and the inventories of several of the world's great museums, the show joyously joins what art historians try their best to separate. Hence, in a section called "Eve and the Serpent," we are presented with, among other

works, Jan Gossaert's Renaissance painting, "Adam and Eve" (1507-08), a signature work of the museum's permanent collection; Henri Rousseau's post-Impressionist jungle scene "The Snake Charmer" (1907); and Richard Avedon's infamous 1981 photograph of a naked Nastassja Kinski, wrapped in a giant snake.

Spread over two venues on either side of Madrid's center, the show starts out shocking us, with six solid centuries of naked bodies and its carefree approach to the history of western image-making. However, we realize gradually, and even gratefully, that the human body hasn't changed all that much since the Renaissance. And the jarring differences in form, style and technique eventually complement each other, allowing the very best works to rise above their thematic context in the show itself. Standouts include American artist Kiki Smith's voluptuous glass ensemble "Tears" (1994) and Man Ray's tiny photograph "Primacy of Matter Over Thought" (1929) featuring a double-exposed nude.

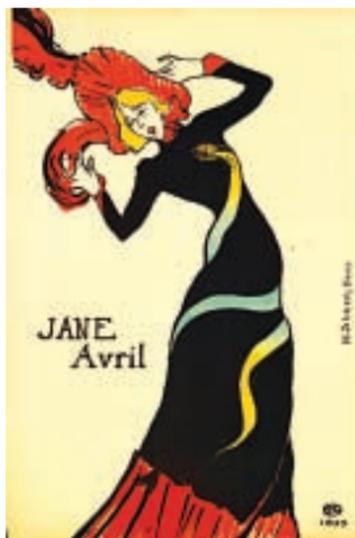
In addition to joining up sex with death, the show manages to add commerce to the mix by issuing sou-

venir "Tears of Eros" condoms, with Gossaert's "Adam and Eve" on the box.—*J.S. Marcus*

Until Jan. 31

[www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

Right, 'Untitled' (2004) by James White; below, 'Jane Avril' (1899) by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.



Pernille Klomp (left); James White (right)



John Haynes

Blake Ritson (left) and Alex Waldman in 'Rope' at the Almeida Theatre.

# 'Rope': theater revival of a Hitchcock 'experiment'

**LONDON:** Patrick Hamilton's 1929 melodrama "Rope" is better known in its incarnation as a 1948 film by Alfred Hitchcock, who called his movie "an experiment that didn't quite work out."

The same is true of the play's current revival at the Almeida Theatre, which has been reconfigured—for the first time in its history—to perform "Rope" in the round.

The play had a special frisson for its first audiences, which is why it ran for so long and made its author rich. It echoed the 1924 Leopold-Loeb murder case, in which the pair of gay, Jewish University of Chicago students murdered a boy simply because they wanted to commit a perfect crime, and had read (and misin-

terpreted) the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. (The great lawyer Clarence Darrow saved them from hanging.)

Hamilton's play shows the murderers, a pair of Oxford undergraduate aesthetes, one English, one Spanish, as they improbably give a supper party for the murdered boy's father and aunt, as well as a couple of Oxford contemporaries and an older poet, Rupert, who had been ahead of them at school.

They eat their "sandwiches and things—pâté, caviar, and salmon and cucumber" on an enormous chest in the center of the stage. It, of course, contains the body.

The drama takes place in real time, and consists of the macabre

cocktail and supper party, during which Rupert spots the single clue to the murder, and sets himself up as the representative of wider society and the agent of justice.

Director Roger Michell and an excellent cast do what they can with this creaky period piece. Hamilton's weird stage directions tell us about the characters' inner lives as well as their appearances; reading them makes it clear that we no longer share some of his audience's assumptions—which seem as old-fashioned as the dialogue. But it will make a mildly diverting alternative to the Christmas pantomime.

—Paul Levy

Until Feb. 6

[www.almeida.co.uk](http://www.almeida.co.uk)

# This Is Your Brain on Music

By Stuart Isacoff

Sometimes, the longer you journey toward a goal, the more it appears to recede into the distance. The experience is common to both alpine mountaineers and scientific researchers—especially, it seems, to those involved in neuroscience. It's a burgeoning field, with new discoveries at every turn. Lately much of its focus has been on the arts, and a spate of best-selling books has hit the marketplace with the promise of unraveling the secret of music's enduring power.

However, an abundance of brain scans, experimental studies and case histories has, in the end, failed to answer certain vital questions: What is music? Where can we find it in the brain? Why does it do what it does to us?

The brain is, in essence, a musical instrument—taking bits of material from a world of chaos, then shaping and modulating them into one graceful, lyrical stream. Yet, despite some scientific success in mapping its discrete compartments, it is an organ that resists efforts to render its workings in black and white. Cognition involves processes that are simply too wide-ranging and complex to be assigned to a single anatomical location.

Scientists have had to grapple with this, as well as with what is known as "plasticity." At a recent conference on "Emotion, Music & the Brain"—held at the State University of New York's Purchase Col-

lege Conservatory of Music in Westchester County in collaboration with the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function at the Bronx's Beth Abraham Hospital—Concetta Tomaino, Beth Abraham's vice president of music therapy, explained the phenomenon: "Simply put, the brain changes as it experiences and learns." In effect, those attempting to pin down its internal circuitry are chasing a moving target.

Yet, the plasticity that reshapes the brain as we grow is also a blessing. "The challenge is in knowing how it can change when there is damage," says Dr. Tomaino, "and then working with the neural networks that are still available." This is an area with remarkable success. Steven Sparr, professor of clinical neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, demonstrated at the conference that "emotions can utilize alternative pathways when the primary ones are damaged—allowing a patient with facial paralysis, for example, to regain a symmetrical smile in response to humor." Emotions, Dr. Sparr says—and thus music—are integral to human intelligence. "A mind without either is impoverished."

Inspired by the work of these doctors, I signed up to become a subject myself in an experimental

study at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, under the supervision of Preeti Raghavan, assistant professor of rehabilitation medicine and director of the Motor Recovery Laboratory. The nature of the new study was especially intriguing to me: How do injured pianists and those without injury differ in their muscular and neural reactions when playing?



Martin Kozlowski

Although I don't have any performance-related problems, I have been suffering from a slight shoulder tear, which placed me in the injured group. So one afternoon in October, I sat at a keyboard as Dr. Raghavan's team placed electrodes on my arms and torso, asked me to slip on a special glove to measure my hand movements, and put me through a lengthy protocol. I followed their instructions, though much of the time I had no idea why I was being asked to do so.

"Listen for the octaves," said

Mr. Reid before playing a tape, "and then try to duplicate them exactly." I assumed it was a test of my ability to mimic what I heard with all the subtle nuances of a professional artist. I was wrong. "Play the notes of the scale singly and slowly." "Perform a challenging piece that lasts 10 minutes." "Now listen to the octaves and again repeat them." "Squeeze your shoulder blades together."

A video camera caught it all, for the purpose of observing the way I moved my arm. I was asked to use biofeedback as a relaxation method while holding my hands in a playing posture, and then while playing. Finally, I was shocked with electrical pulses—more than once! I survived.

I met with the team again later to hear the results. "These are all preliminary," Dr. Raghavan warned me. "The study is still ongoing, and I can only give you a very general picture." The octaves, it turns out, were simply used to check on how I held up the three fingers between my thumb and pinky, since they have to be raised above the keys when the motion is performed. Meanwhile, the other electrodes relayed measurements of stretching, contracting, levels of tension and relaxation,

and the transmission of information in my body. The glove tracked finger "wobble." The shocks stimulated a nerve while the team watched their effects on distant back muscles.

"We want to know if there are any predisposing factors that might lead some individuals to injury," Dr. Raghavan said. Because my shoulder injury was on my left side, that was the hand and arm the team focused on. The results? My finger muscle activity was good, and my wrists relaxed. But . . . "Your upper trapezius and lower trapezius [muscles] are not behaving the way they do in pianists without injury," she reported. "When certain reciprocal relationships are disturbed, the resulting instability causes other muscles to strain in an attempt to restore balance." My results were a warning sign.

Dr. Raghavan is clearly on to something. Part of her research will involve righting the problems. But as the biofeedback portion of the test showed, another solution may rest in the brain itself, perhaps through visualization and meditative techniques. The research is still young, but it could well confirm truths as ancient as the hills.

*Mr. Isacoff is on the faculty of the Purchase College Conservatory of Music (SUNY) and author of "Temperament: How Music Became a Battleground for the Great Minds of Western Civilization" (Knopf/Vintage).*

## A Cultural Conversation / With Michael Symmons Roberts

By Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim

The poems of Michael Symmons Roberts inhabit the worlds of religion and science with equal ease. In "Corpus," his fourth collection of poems, which won him the 2004 Whitbread Award, close-ups of autopsies are followed by images of kites crowding the sky "as though the next world hung / above us like a mezzanine." A poem on the mapping of the genome sits amid a series of vignettes on "Food for Risen Bodies," in which men who were once silenced "slit their stitched lips free" and "whisper grace / through open wounds."

With the same grace and dexterity, Mr. Symmons Roberts moves between two worlds in his career. Author of five volumes of poetry and two novels, he is not only one of Britain's most successful poets, but also a prolific librettist. Since 1997 he has collaborated with Scottish composer James MacMillan on song cycles, choral works, two operas and an oratorio; other composers he has worked with include John Harle, Dominic Muldowney and Stephen Deazley.

For three days last week, Lincoln Center in New York City presented "One Evening," a staged production of "Winterreise" in which Schubert's song cycle, set to Wilhelm Müller's poems about a jilted lover wandering through a frosty landscape, is interspersed with excerpts by Samuel Beckett, whose love for Schubert is well documented. To tease out

parallels between Beckett and Schubert, director Katie Mitchell commissioned a new English translation of Müller's poems from Mr. Symmons Roberts.

"I was slightly concerned at first about taking poetry and translating it and making it singable," Mr. Symmons Roberts said



Zina Saunders

in a recent phone conversation. "But the more I listened to it, the more I thought it was possible. And the key was to try to fully inhabit in the English version the world of Müller's German poetry—this litany of repeated symbols of rejection and isolation and

wretchedness and cold."

Maintaining that imagery as well as the particular sound-color of individual words and phrases required a delicate balancing act for which he enlisted the help of baritone Mark Padmore, one of the most admired interpreters of Schubert's song cycle, who performs in Ms. Mitchell's production. "There was a point when it became important to work with Mark, where he would say this works and this doesn't, and we made quite a few changes.

"Clearly with music as wide-ranging and as emotionally powerful as Schubert's you can't ignore the way in which he picks certain words—these things are inescapably there. Sometimes the way the German line fell, I felt I could pretty much replicate in English. Sometimes a direct translation of a word was com-

pletely different in terms of its imagistic power. It was like a four-dimensional Sudoku: I really needed them to hold together as English poems, and hold them close to Schubert's music, and to Müller's poetry, as well as to Katie's vision of the production."

Mr. Symmons Roberts says that the exercise of writing in rhymes, though unusual, was an enjoyable one. On occasion, he resorted to half rhymes and power rhymes for aesthetic reasons. "In English poetry at the moment, full rhyme can carry certain sorts of associations that I didn't want to be there in this bleak landscape. In the language of 'Winterreise,' there is a very narrow range of imagery and the German is quite simple, almost simplistic."

In this sense, Schubert's lieder are far removed from the compositions Mr. Symmons Roberts has worked on with Mr. MacMillan. Many commentators have remarked on the fact that much of the great 19th-century song repertoire is based on very simple—even mediocre—poetry. According to this line of thought, great poetry dense with original imagery can be a stumbling block to composers.

The way Mr. Symmons Roberts sees it, "the music is primary, but the text comes first."

"With Jimmy I have found that the words he likes to set are quite an intense, rich poetic line, quite the opposite to the received opinion in British music that a libretto should be stripped so that the music can put on bright clothes.

"At the start of the Welsh National Opera commission [which resulted in 'The Sacrifice'] we each brought in recordings of operas. One was Strauss's 'Elektra' and one was Britten's 'The Turn of the Screw.' Not only are the pieces very different, but the li-

bretti, too: Strauss and Hofmannsthal are almost in this duel to see who can fire on more cylinders. In Myfanwy Piper's 'Turn of the Screw' you get this very sparse, pared down, beautiful path. We decided we wanted something closer to 'Elektra.' It appealed to Jimmy to have something very powerful and intense and dramatic. There's also the fact that he's a Scot, so there are aspects of the English tradition that he likes to turn against."

The symbiotic relationship between Mr. Symmons Roberts and Mr. MacMillan is rare in the world of contemporary opera. As directors become increasingly involved in the conception of new operas, they have begun to push aside not only librettists but also composers as the main attraction.

"I fear that the libretto is a dying art," says Mr. Symmons Roberts. "Many new operas now are either 'devised' by the director or composer, or adapted from novels or films, so the vital role of the words and story are often undermined. When fine writers—especially poets—are brought into the opera house, the results are often remarkable, such as David Harsent's work with Harrison Birtwistle or Alice Goodman's work with John Adams. I get less interested when the text appears to be there just to carry a story and is just chop-chop straight out of a novel."

*Ms. da Fonseca-Wollheim is a writer living in New York.*

# time off

## Amsterdam

### photography

"Edward Burtynsky/Oil" shows work by the photographer that documents the extraction and use of oil, and its consequences for the environment.

Huis Marseille  
Until Feb. 28  
☎ 31-20-5318-989  
www.huismarseille.nl

### fashion

"Cultuur Couture" presents designs by young fashion designers, Izumi Hongo, Setareh Mohtarez, Matthieu Thouvenot and Pierre-Antoine Vettorello.

Tropenmuseum  
Until May 16  
☎ 31-20-5688-200  
www.tropenmuseum.nl

## Antwerp

### photography

"Michiel Hendryckx—Rambling across Europe" shows images by the Belgian photographer documenting three years of wandering through Europe.

FotoMuseum Antwerpen  
Until Jan. 10  
☎ 32-3242-9300  
www.fotomuseum.be

## Berlin

### photography

"Don McCullin: The Impossible Peace Retrospective—1958-2008" shows 150 images by the British photojournalist.

C/O Berlin  
Until Feb. 28  
☎ 49-30-2809-1925  
www.co-berlin.eu

### art

"Zeigen: An Audio Tour through Berlin"

showcases works by 566 Berlin-based artists brought together by German conceptual artist Karin Sander.

Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin  
Until Jan. 10  
☎ 49-30-2576-2040  
www.kunsthalle-berlin.com

## Brussels

### fashion

"I Medici: A Renaissance in Paper—Isabelle de Borchgrave" shows 29 paper dresses created by Belgian artist de Borchgrave.

Jubelparkmuseum  
Until April 18  
☎ 32-2-7417-211  
www.mrah.be

### photography

"Photography Is Not Art" shows 200 photographic masterpieces by artists including Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray and Nan Goldin.

Museum of Ixelles  
Until Jan. 10  
☎ 32-2515-6421  
www.sylvioerlstein.museumofixelles.be

## Dublin

### art

"Philippe Parreno—November" presents 15 mixed-media works by the Algerian/French artist.

Irish Museum of Modern Art  
Until Jan. 24  
☎ 353-1-6129-900  
www.modernart.ie

## Leeds

### geology

"Objects of Contemplation: Natural Sculptures from the Qing Dynasty" displays "Scholars' Rocks," natural forma-

tions that were given the status of sculptures.

Henry Moore Institute  
Until March 7  
☎ 44-113-2467-467  
www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk

## London

### photography

"Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2009" showcases 60 works by emerging young photographers.

National Portrait Gallery  
Until Feb. 14  
☎ 44-20-7306-0055  
www.npg.org.uk

## Madrid

### circus

"The Greatest Show on Earth: Circus Toys" shows objects related to the circus, including games, posters, dolls, cut-outs and mechanical toys recreating the big top experience.

Museo del Traje  
Until March 7  
☎ 34-91-5504-700  
museodeltraje.mcu.es

## Paris

### art

"Deadline" shows works by 13 artists who died within the past 20 years, including Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-89), Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957-96) and Martin Kippenberger



private collection

(1953-97).

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris  
Until Jan. 10  
☎ 33-1-5367-4000  
www.mam.paris.fr

## Rotterdam

### design

"Trying is Buying' Jac. Jongert, 1883-1942" exhibits 300 works by Dutch designer Jac. Jongert (1883-1942).

Museum Boijmans van Beuningen  
Dec. 19-April 18  
☎ 31-10-4419-400  
www.boijmans.nl

## Venice

### art

"Prendergast in Italy" brings together

works by American post-Impressionist artist Maurice Prendergast

(1858-1924), created on trips to Italy. Peggy Guggenheim Collection  
Until Jan. 10  
☎ 39-041-2405-411  
www.guggenheim-venice.it

## Vienna

### art

"1880-1922: A Norwegian Expressionist" offers 40 paintings by Norwegian artist Aksel Waldemar Johannessen (1880-1922).

Leopold Museum  
Until Jan. 11  
43-1 52570-0  
www.leopoldmuseum.org

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.



Mirjana Vrbaski

Top, 'Havana Trekjes' cigar box (c. 1917-22) by Jac. Jongert, in Rotterdam; above: 'Girl' (2009) by Mirjana Vrbaski at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

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