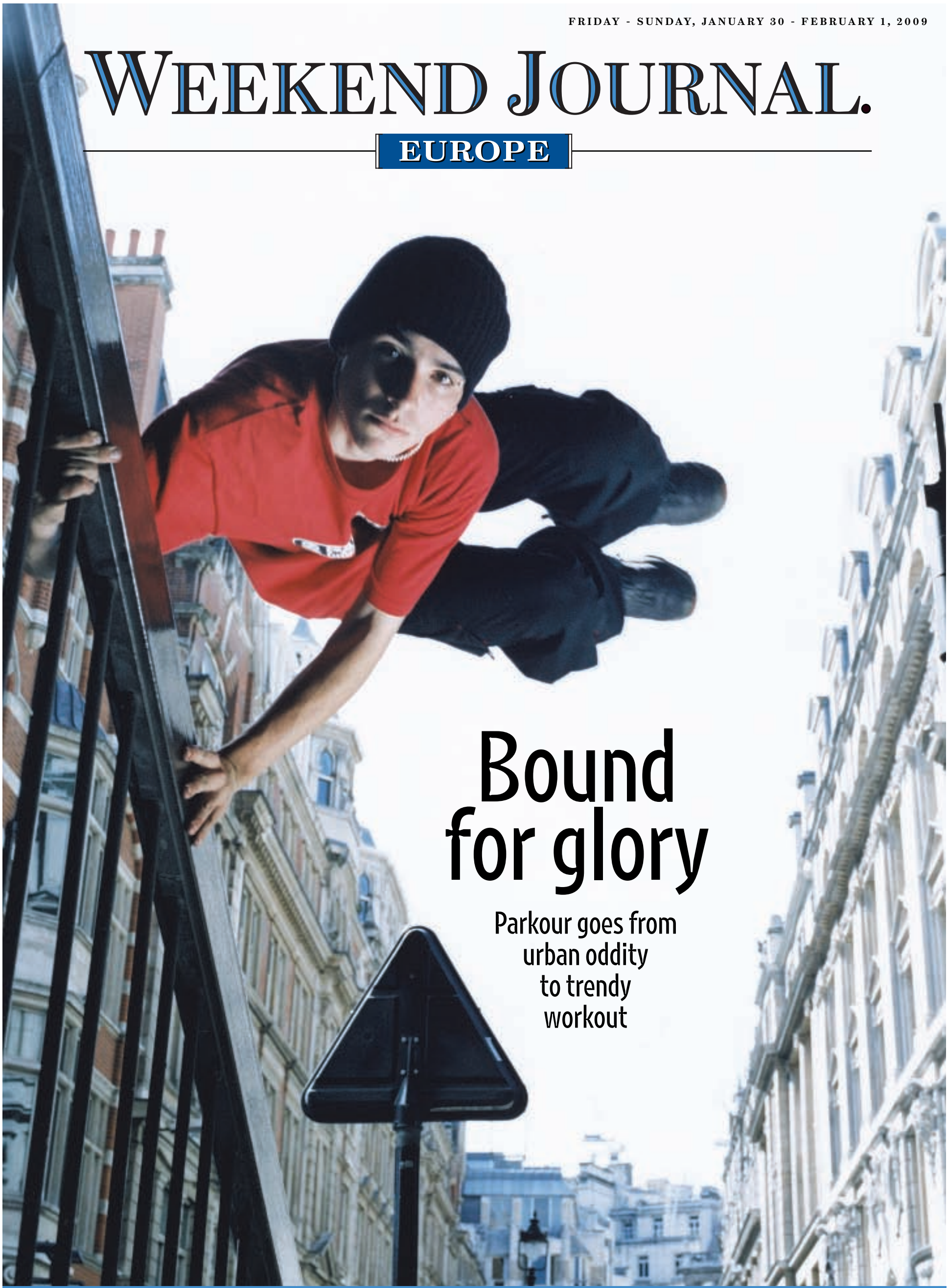
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 1, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



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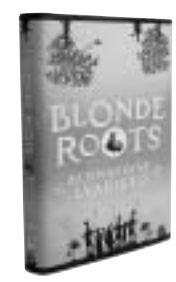

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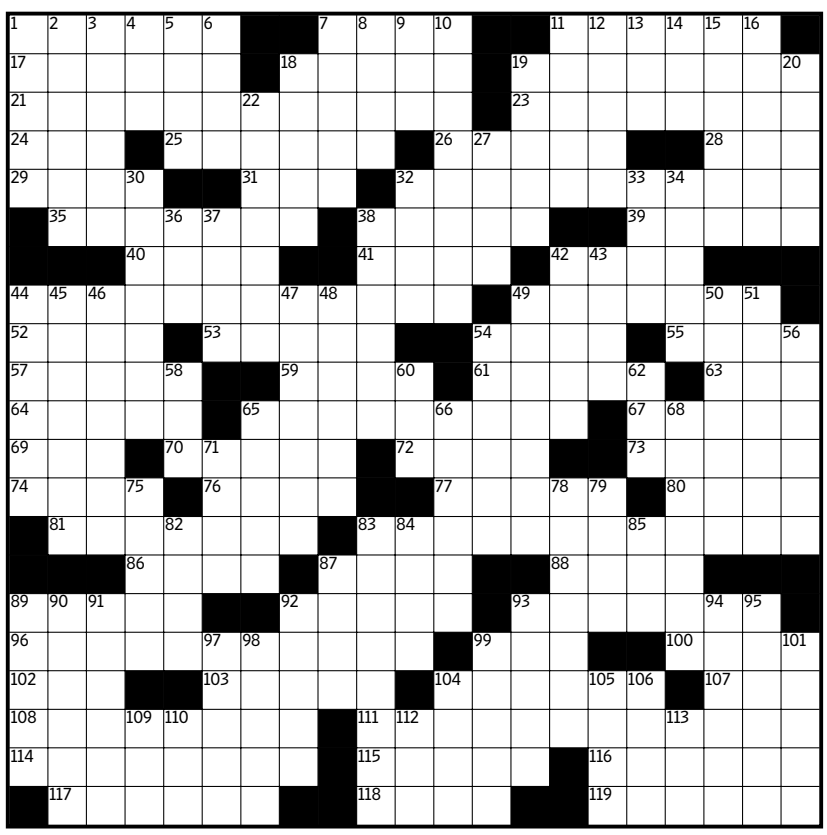

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Last Week's Solution

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Getty Images

Protect your skin in winter

By Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan

KEEPING SKIN SOFT and healthy in cold weather can be a challenge even for regular spa clients; it's even harder for men who would rather keep their facials and exfoliating treatments to a minimum.

But Anthony Sosnick, founder and president of men's skin-care label Anthony Logistics, finds that a simple skin-care regimen helps keep his complexion from flaking or cracking during cold, dry winters.

First, he cleans his face every morning with a cleanser that contains glycolic acid, which he says has natural exfoliating qualities. That helps to remove dead skin cells and dirt, which makes for an easier shave. "We always say, 'You would never wax your car without washing it first,' and it's really key because when you cleanse and exfoliate, it allows the products you use to work much better," Mr. Sosnick says.

He always does his shaving in the shower, because the steam softens the beard hairs, making it easier to get a clean shave.

Also, Mr. Sosnick says he uses a non-foaming cream or gel. "The more air that you have in it, the harder it is for the blade to get close to your skin," says Mr. Sosnick. He also seeks out shaving creams or gels with aloe vera beads that break as you shave, dispersing moisturizer during the process.

After shaving, he wipes his face with an astringent toner that has a low alcohol content so it's less drying and includes ingredients such as chamomile or calendula that are hydrating for the skin. He seeks out these same ingredients, along with aloe vera or wheat protein, in his moisturizer, which he applies after the toner. At the end, he dabs on a light cream with super-moisturizing ingredients like shea butter around his eyes, where the skin is more sensitive.

His skin-care ritual at night is simpler. He typically splashes water on his face to clean it, then uses a "high-performance moisturizer" as a night cream. Two to three times a week during the winter, he'll use an exfoliant in place of his regular cleanser in order to do a more thorough job of getting rid of dry skin.

Mr. Sosnick says that if he is disciplined about sticking to this regimen, he usually doesn't have to have hydrating facials to repair his skin during the winter. "If you're using products consistently and effectively, facials shouldn't be as important," he says. "You're essentially doing the same thing that [facials are] doing—but every day."

A glimpse of the future of luxury

By Teri Agins

THE PARTY IS OVER for the fancy labels that once scored big on $600 stilettos and $1,500 "It" handbags. This year, world-wide sales of luxury goods are expected to fall between 3% and 7% from a year earlier, according to a Bain & Co. study.

Moreover, many fashion-industry veterans believe last fall's steep discounting of European designer goods by 70% or more did lasting damage to the perception of luxury. People now feel like they were ripped off by high prices all along—and they are vowing never to pay full price again. If you can buy a Michael Kors wool dress for $230 on sale, as I did, you may wonder if its original $2,400 price wasn't a bit high to begin with.

The discounts follow other moves that have blurred the distinctiveness of luxury. When hip designers like Proenza Schouler, Roberto Cavalli and Viktor & Rolf can create nifty pieces that sell for under $100 at H&M and Target, it raises the question: Why can't they keep the prices in their signature collections from creeping over $1,000?

"It will take at least a year or more for people not to become nervous, thinking that if they had waited a couple of months longer, they could have bought something at 50% off. People don't want to be made a fool of," says John Idol, chief executive at the Michael Kors fashion house.

Now, luxury designers and retailers are responding to the new environment by altering the way they make, price and sell their goods.

We surveyed some of the smartest people in the luxury business in Europe and the U.S. to find out what luxury shopping might look like in coming years.

Some features:

Permanent price cuts. The weak U.S. dollar boosted the prices of euro-denominated Italian and French luxury goods by a third or more in the past few years. Shoes that once cost $550 shot up to $700 or $800—giving even the most rabid fashionistas sticker shock.

"Designer clothes are way overpriced; there's no way that a blouse that a woman paid, say, $1,500 for three years ago is now worth $4,000," says Allen Questrom, a former chief executive at Barneys New York and the former Federated Department Stores. His prediction: Prices will fall to better reflect the "price-value relationship of the merchandise."

"We have to lower our prices," agrees Alber Elbaz, the designer for Lanvin in Paris, where prices for cocktail and evening attire range from $2,600 to $8,000. "For the past month I have personally been on the phone asking our manufacturers, our fabric makers, all our suppliers to give us a better price," Mr. Elbaz says. "It's the subject of the day."

Left, Ungaro lowered the prices on the jacket and skirt for its fall collection; above, Michael Kors is showing both pricey and less-expensive handbags.

Emanuel Ungaro, another French fashion house, has already cut prices on 18 items for early fall delivery, dropping the price of one jacket, for instance, by 20% to $1,800. Prices for high fashion have become "way too expensive, and it's time to lower them," Ungaro CEO Mounir Moufarrige said through a spokeswoman.

More high-end bargains. Upscale chains such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus are stocking far less merchandise this year, in hopes that they won't have to mark it down. But savvy shoppers won't be starved for bargains. For one thing, consumers may keep refusing to pay full price, despite fashion labels' efforts to make clothes more affordable. But also, there's a glut of fancy merchandise still in the pipeline.

The Web sites that peddle excess designer inventories at a discount are here to stay. Gilt Group Inc., a members-only discount Web site, has about 25 sample sales a week, featuring labels such as Missoni, Vera Wang and Valentino. Another site, Shopittome.com, sends alerts to its members as soon as retailers start marking down their favorite designers by 40%.

No matter where the economy goes, a new generation of consumers "are spending differently and shopping online," says Alexis Maybank, co-founder of Gilt. Apparel makers have adapted to the presence of discounters, accepting smaller margins in order to sell more—and sometimes even making goods expressly for the outlets.

More luxury goods made outside of Europe. With growing pressure for lower prices, more luxury makers will have no choice but to shift more production from Italy and France to China and other places.

"You can't tell me that you can't get the same quality in China that you can in Europe," says Mr. Questrom of Barneys and Federated.

Three years ago, womenswear label Lafayette 148 hired Barbara Gast, a production veteran of Italian luxury maker Ermenegildo Zegna, to move to China and teach 120 Chinese workers how to produce and finish fine-gauge knitwear, which sells for an average price of $350 a sweater for cashmere and $228 for merino wool.

"Our suppliers have told us that our product is on the same level with those made in Italy," says Deirdre Quinn, president and co-owner of Lafayette 148. Last year, the $100 million-a-year brand moved all production to its newly built factory in Shantou, China.

Of course, many labels won't broadcast such moves; don't be surprised if you see more labels that read: "Styled in Italy."

Upscale labels mix it up with more inexpensive items. The Marc by Marc Jacobs label plans to add more "exclusives"—items found only at its own stores, says Robert Duffy, president of Marc Jacobs. Those exclusives will include more inexpensive items, he says. "We have always believed in having a broad mix of prices, like our $11 flip flops ... and our $28 rain boots," he says.

Michael Kors boutiques—which sell handbags and shoes at various price levels, ranging from $150 platform sandals to a $3,200 python handbag—are employing a similar strategy, showcasing high and low-priced options alike. "Customers already cross-shop between designer shops and Zara, so we're just allowing them to do it in our own stores," says Mr. Idol.

Lord & Taylor is taking market share from higher-end merchants by offering designer looks for less, says Richard Baker, CEO of NRDC Equity Partners, which owns Lord & Taylor. He cites $89-to-$350 shoes with "the look of Gucci and Prada—styles that can cost $700."

Burberry Group, a brand whose outerwear runs from $400 to $5,000, is launching its first jeans line, priced from $150 to $250. Says Angela Ahrendts, Burberry chief executive: "Our luxury positioning is more democratic than any of our peers."

Michael Kors boutiques are featuring high-end, midrange and moderately priced shoes (left to right: $595, $295 and $150) in the same store.

WSJ.com

Red-tag sale
Join a discussion about the pricing of luxury retailing, at **WSJ.com/Fashion**

Bank on London's recession-proof plays

By Paul Levy
Special to The Wall Street Journal

IT'S SAID THAT SALES of pianos increased after 1929, as people could only afford to entertain themselves at home. In that case, it might be a hopeful indicator that earlier this week the Society of London Theatre reported that West End box office receipts in 2008 increased by 3%, totaling more than £480 million, and that audiences were also up 1% over 2007, reaching 13.8 million. Whatever the outlook for the coming months, it's certainly clear that the great playwrights—from Shakespeare to Stoppard—are flourishing in the West End.

Here, a look at some of the new London productions worth checking out.

Manuel Harlan

Above, Victoria Hamilton and Mark Bonnar in 'Twelfth Night'; left, the cast of 'Oliver!' performing 'Consider Yourself' and Rowan Atkinson (below left) as Fagin.

'Oliver!'

It may seem odd for producer Cameron Mackintosh to have hired Britain's hottest director, Rupert Goold, merely to re-stage Sam Mendes' 1994 production of Lionel Bart's "Oliver!" with the same (superlative) sets by Anthony Ward and the 1994 choreography revived by its creator, Matthew Bourne. But the reason is simple: That production ran until 1998, and the current—commercial—revival, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, has already taken £15 million in advance bookings.

This is recession-proof theater. It also shows what real talent can do with a musical that is not of the first rank. In particular, Mr. Bourne's crowd scenes—especially the opening workhouse anthem of "Food, Glorious Food" with what looks like 100 children on the stage, and the scene in which the Artful Dodger (a bendy-legged, show-stealing Ross McCormack in the performance I saw) welcomes Oliver (a slightly underpowered Harry Stott at the press night) to the gang of child criminals ("Consider Yourself")—are so fine and so precisely executed that I'd enjoy going back a second time just to take in all the details. The same holds for Mr. Ward's sets, where the streets of the City of London twist and tangle at the back of the stage, while the dome of St. Paul's reaches starwards.

Rowan Atkinson as Fagin is the show's big new attraction, and you can't help but warm to his stunningly un-PC portrayal—though I would have been happier with a slightly edgier, even creepier approach to the character. The late Lionel Bart (whose photograph touchingly descended from the fly-tower at the opening night) was a proper East End Jewish Cockney, and this fact disarmed any criticism of the anti-Semitic aspect of his Fagin—but his saccharine ending, in which Fagin leaves with his swag rather than facing the gallows as Dickens intended, needs a mitigating touch of nastiness. The just-adequate performance of Jodie Prenger, who was chosen by "the public" in a tacky TV show to play Nancy Sikes, demonstrates the puerility of this method of casting—and indeed, it seems to have worked a little better for Oliver; but the casting of the Dodger was done in the time-honored professional way.

Until July 18
☎ 44-844-482-5138
www.oliverthemusical.com

Michael Le Poer Trench (2)

'Every Good Boy Deserves Favour'

The large Olivier thrust stage of the National Theatre provides sufficient space for some startling business in "Every Good Boy Deserves Favour," Tom Stoppard and André Previn's "play for actors and orchestra."

Some apparent orchestra members are picked out and tossed about like feather pillows (still clutching their violins or clarinets) by brown-shirted Soviet military men, and by others who seem to be personnel of the mental hospital where much of the action is set. These gymnastic feats, Sir Tom told me recently, were not in the original 1977 production, and I agree with him that the additions by directors Felix Barrett and Tom Morris work terrifically well on this big stage.

Indeed, they give another dimension to the play, making explicit the unspoken undertow of violence that informs this drama of the perversion of Soviet institutions.

Ivanov (Toby Jones)—who hears and conducts a non-existent orchestra—shares a cell-like room with a political prisoner, Alexander (Joseph Millson). He is incarcerated in the psychiatric institution because, as the cheerfully complaisant doctor (Dan Stevens) says, "Your opinions are your symptoms."

The acrobatics, too, provide yet another respect in which the orchestra is an essential actor in the ingeniously wrought play, not just a stage property.

In the program Sir Tom tells the story of how he and Mr. Previn (then principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra) decided to write "a real play, to be performed in conjunction with, and bound up with, a symphony orchestra," not just a "recitation for the concert platform" or "a piece for singers." The 65-minute show not only needs the full forces of the Southbank Sinfonia, who are required to act as well as play Previn's sometimes amusing, sometimes shocking score, but also some terrific ensemble playing by the small cast of actors.

Toby Jones and the Southbank Sinfonia in 'Every Good Boy Deserves Favour.'

Simon Annand

Until Feb. 25
☎ 44-20-7452-3000
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

'Twelfth Night'

This is a near-perfect production of Shakespeare's 1601 comedy of sexual ambiguity, anti-Puritanism and reflections on theatrical deception. Rather than struggle against the problems posed by "Twelfth Night," Donmar artistic director Michael Grandage has embraced them.

Originally Viola was, of course, a boy acting the part of a girl pretending to be a boy, Cesario (the splendid Victoria Hamilton), and the denouement depends on the audience accepting that she can be mistaken, even by the duke, for her twin brother, Sebastian. Mr. Grandage has not taken the easy way out offered by, for example, fitting up the twins with identical wigs.

Instead this production insists that the audience participate in the pretense, and accept that this pair, who are quite alike, cannot be told apart; the emotional impact of the play demands this. Thanks to the high standard of the acting, Christopher Oram's gorgeous 1930s costumes and beautiful, distressed wood sets, Neil Austin's mood-setting lighting and especially composer Julian Philips's hyper-appropriate music, we enthusiastically suspend our disbelief.

The passion the bereft Olivia (Indira Varma) conceives for Cesario/Viola is so well done that we scarcely notice the rapidity of her change of spirit.

The choice role of Malvolio is taken by Derek Jacobi, theatrical knight and national treasure; though this is his debut in the role, it will be hard for any subsequent performer of it to ignore. (He just this week won the London Critics' Circle Theatre Award for Best Shakespearean Performance, a shared prize with David Tennant in the RSC's "Hamlet.") His minute-long face-pulling, as he teaches himself to smile and fawn upon Olivia, is a tour de force, as is his appearance in Bermuda shorts with yellow knee-socks. But he, too, takes the hard way out, and leaves very little wriggle-room for sympathy for Malvolio. His Puritan enemy of deception eagerly embraces deceit.

The final words in the play, "And we'll strive to please you every day," belong to the fool. Zubin Varla (sings and) plays Feste so that he deserves to have the last say—he makes him the resonating conscience of the play, the character who reminds us that "Present mirth hath present laughter," entails that "Youth' a stuff will not endure" and, sadly, "The rain it raineth every day."

Until March 7
☎ 44-844-482-5120
www.donmarwestend.com

'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

Director Gregory Doran's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is part of the Royal Shakespeare Company's London season, at the Novello Theatre, just steps away from what used to be their permanent, now much-missed London home at the Aldwych Theatre. (It will be followed by another transfer from Stratford, "The Taming of the Shrew," from Feb. 12-March 7.)

Designer Francis O'Connor's chief conceit is to line his minimal set with mirrors, so the audience sees itself reflected, until we're distracted by hundreds of light bulbs descending for a magical, twinkling fairy-land. In this modern-dress staging, the fairies themselves are another matter—sometimes punks, sometimes sinister rockers with voodoo dolls echoing the puppet-changeling boy, which is operated by one of them. I particularly liked the scene in which they become the lingerie-fairies, with coat-hangers bearing bras, knickers and frilly slips.

But the fairies are also part of the single flaw of this production: It has a bit too much mime-like gesture—pointing skywards when speaking of the moon, for instance, rather than letting the words do the job themselves.

Still, Mr. Doran's lovers execute their share of the plot without fudge or frills in a good, clean, clear exposition of the entanglements. If Katherine Drysdale giggles a bit too much as Hermia, her diminutive stature does much to make her jealous scuffles with the taller, altogether excellent Helena of Natalie Walter as funny as possible. Edward Bennett is a fine Demetrius, overshadowed only a tiny bit by Tom Davy's hippy-dippy Lysander.

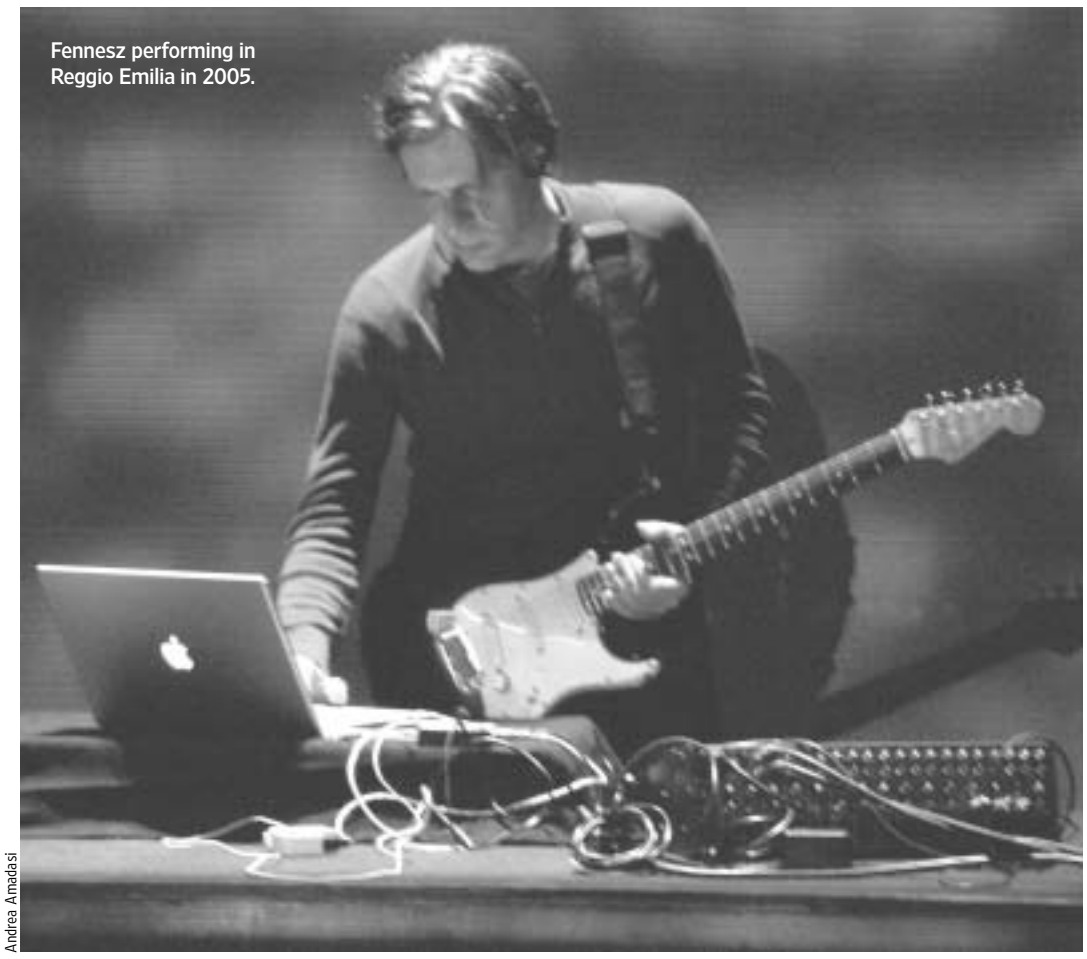
Peter de Jersey speaks Oberon's lines with unusual clarity, while Mark Hadfield, as a vicious Puck, tries hard to get even with the king of the fairies. Of the terrific Rude Mechanicals, initially gathered around a falafel stall, Ryan Gage's Flute deserves some cheers for the funny freedom he seems to feel when he finally appears in a frock.

The star, as ever, is Bottom; and Joe Dixon, with full donkey's head and beer belly, really rocks. This unnuanced production doesn't take the play very seriously, but its emphasis on the comedy makes for a painlessly jolly evening.

Until Feb. 7
☎ 44-844-482-5170
www.rsc.org.uk

Mixing melody with noise

By Paul Sharma


Fennesz performing in Reggio Emilia in 2005.

Andrea Amadasi

CLICKS AND SCRATCHES have become as common as guitar, drums and bass for many an aspiring musician. But they are nothing new to Christian Fennesz, an Austrian musician whose mix of electronic music, pop and noise has helped define a genre—by including the sounds that engineers once took pains to remove from recordings.

Starting with the 1997 album "Hotel Parallel," his use of digital artifacts such clicks and distortion—often called "glitch"—has steadily made its way into the mainstream. His trademark mix of laptop-generated sounds, samples and distorted guitar provides an aural reflection of our digitized and urbanized landscape, forming a European counterpoint to the other main source of electronic music: U.S. urban.

By mixing melody with noise, and sometimes sculpting the noise to create distinct forms, the effect is of patterns appearing out of chaos. With this in mind, perhaps not unsurprisingly, Fennesz (he uses only his surname) has explicitly explored history—both personal and public.

On his 1998 10-inch single "Fennesz Plays," Fennesz broke down popular song structures by sampling elements of the melody of the Rolling Stones' "Paint it Black" and the Beach Boys "Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)." By pushing the samples through a haze of noise, both songs were radically restructured to the point of being considered new compositions by an Austrian court.

The sound of these remixes was the jumping off point for Fennesz's 2001 breakthrough album "Endless Summer," which sounds like a far-off radio playing pop songs while a city goes about its business. The 2004 follow-up album "Venice," went on to capture the city's unique soundscape—where there are no cars, only water and labyrinthine echoes.

After "Venice" Fennesz collaborated with such jazz and classical musicians as Ryuiji Sakamoto, Mike Patton and Keith Rowe.

Now, four years after "Venice," Fennesz has just released his most recent solo piece, called "Black Sea." While drawing on his distinct sound world, the work is more classically oriented than his previous albums. He uses new software, called physical modeling synthesis, which recreates how a violin or guitar string—or even a saxophone reed—vibrates in space. The new virtual instruments can be mixed together to create a modern electronic orchestra.

We spoke to Fennesz by phone as he worked on a score for Austrian filmmaker Gustav Deutsch.

Q: "Black Sea" seems more abstract than your previous two albums. Was this a conscious choice?

I think the reason is that album can be seen as a single composition. It unfolded at its own pace, with longer tracks and more space between the pieces. "Venice" and "Endless Summer" are more song-oriented, but now the melodies are are more hidden. It certainly is calmer, but there is darkness here and there.

Q: When you play live, your sound is more aggressive than on your recordings. Is there a difference in approach when performing?

It is a question of volume. When playing live I can go back to my rock past as a lead guitarist with a band, and I like the physical impact of sound. Also, achieving high volume is difficult at home! But live, I have many hundreds of samples which I can draw on and play in lloopp [a program that allows live playing and manipulation of loops] and can program the software in real-time. It is impossible to reproduce the studio recording when I play live, but it is possible to recognize compositions. In the studio, I use different software to work out sound designs and create happy accidents.

Q: The use of samples in music has become all-pervasive, but you use samples very differently from the way mainstream artists do.

In Vienna, when I started in the early '90s, people were much closer in style and I hung out with musicians that did house, techno or jungle. What I found over time was that I made a circle back to rock and pop, but also European classical electronic music of the '50s and '60s, people like Bernard Parmigiani and the INA-GRM school. So for me, working with someone like Keith Rowe, who comes from the improv school of the '60s, is easy. But some people find it hard to understand that it is possible to cross these categories. But I am still interested in dance music for production techniques, as the mainstream uses technology very quickly. Even in the '80s, I would check out Michael Jackson, to see how the record was put together.

What I find interesting is that classical composers generally shy away from the use of electronics.

I find that strange, because there is so much to explore in both worlds—putting the two worlds of electronic and acoustic together I find really interesting. So, I am exploring how microphones can be used in different spaces to capture the sound of a room. Also, I am looking at combining software that emulates spaces with real reverb, building parameters that emulate a Vienna concert hall, which makes for interesting recordings.

Physical modeling synthesis directly emulates acoustic instruments using mathematical modeling, rather than recording and then sampling the sound. It works out how a string moves on an instrument and then generates the sound. Using this you can design an artificial instrument that sounds midway between a guitar and a violin, for example. I think this is a very interesting way forward. It has been around since the '90s but I just started using it for "Black Sea."

Q: When you first started using glitch and noise it sounded strange, but it has now become part of the sound vocabulary.

I think hearing has really changed; people are definitely listening in a different way. It is quite funny. When I played my first 12-inch release in '95 to my mother she heard unstructured noise, but it was some of my easiest music with beats. Now she says, "Why don't you make music like that?" So things have really changed in a period of ten years.

What music interests you now?

I have been listening to West African kora music, such as Toumani Diabate's "Mande Variations," but closer to home, KTL with Peter Rehberg which is quite dark. But also I like music from the late Renaissance, such as William Byrd.

Perhaps part of the attraction of polyphonic music is that it has small melodic fragments that flow by quite fast, whereas Romantic music has long melodic lines.

Yes, too long! The lines are too obvious and too much on a stage. I like things which are more hidden and not so easy to find. Kora music has a pulse, but not an obvious rhythm and perhaps that's what draws me to it and West African guitar styles. I like rhythm, but not one that is underlined, so I look for the whole piece to work at an organic level, with the melody and rhythm working together creating a pulse, but without having to use a bass line or a drum beat.

What are you working on now?

I am working on a film score for Gustav Deutsch. This is the fourth time we have worked together. Then I start work on music for a Japanese science-fiction film. I like the soundtrack to Chris Marker's great "Sans Soleil," which was made with analog synthesizers. The same with Tarkovsky's films—even the remake of "Solaris" was good.


Christie's

'La cuirasse d'or' (circa 1907), by Kees van Dongen; estimate: £1.5 million-£2.5 million.

London sales are year's first test

THE YEAR'S FIRST big test of the art market comes next week when London's international auction houses hold benchmark sales of impressionist and modern art.

As global economic worries deepen, expect the auction results to give some indication of where this blue-chip segment is headed. For those who still have money to spend, it could be a great opportunity to snap up major artworks at attractive prices—a real buyer's market.

Collecting
MARGARET STUDER

Giovanna Bertazzoni, head of Christie's London impressionist and modern art department, notes that the cornerstones of many major collections were laid in times of economic slowdown. "Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé started collecting in the early 1970s, in a climate which is not dissimilar to today's economic environment," Ms. Bertazzoni says.

The Saint Laurent-Bergé collection will be offered in a celebrity sale at Christie's in Paris on Feb. 23-25. Sotheby's will hold its London auctions on Feb. 3-4; Christie's on Feb. 4-5.

Here, some highlights from next week's sales.

Carrying the highest estimate will be Claude Monet's "Dans la Prairie" (1876) at Christie's. The painting of Monet's wife serenely reading in a field of bright flowers is expected to fetch in the range of £15 million. Also at Christie's, Monet's peaceful landscape on the banks of the River Seine, "La Promenade d'Argenteuil" (1872), is estimated at £3.5 million-£5 million.

At Sotheby's Camille Pissarro's tranquil garden scene "Le Jardin de Maubisson, Pontoise" (1881) is valued at £2 million-£3 million. Edgar Degas's iconic bronze sculpture "Petite danseuse de quatorze ans," depicting a teenage ballet dancer, is estimated at £9 million-£12 million.

When the original wax sculpture was first shown in Paris in 1881, its realism caused a sensation. Also at Sotheby's is a delicate pastel on paper by Degas from circa 1901 depicting two waiting dancers in filmy yellow and pink costumes (estimate: £3.5 million-£4.5 million).

German expressionist paintings have risen dramatically in price in recent years. Sotheby's has one of the movement's most recognizable works in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's dramatic and colorful "Street Scene" (1913). The painting reflects the vibrant life on the streets of Berlin with its fashionably dressed and haunting women (estimate: £5 million-£7 million).

A series of exotically colorful and lively paintings at Christie's by Dutch Fauvist Kees van Dongen will appear at auction for the first time. They include "La cuirasse d'or" (circa 1907), a seductive portrait of a dancer (estimate: £1.5 million-£2.5 million).

Asia's lost treasure trove: The temples

By Tom Wright

Bagan, Myanmar

IN THE LATE 13th century, the mighty Mongol emperor Kublai Khan rode onto this sprawling plain dotted with thousands of brick pagodas. Soon after, the Mongol hordes came crashing down, and more than 200 years of artistic flowering, akin to Europe's Renaissance, was snuffed out almost overnight.

Time has stood still since then—or so it can seem to modern-day visitors to the ancient city of Bagan, the center of a Buddhist empire that once stretched across a large swath of modern Southeast Asia. What remains of ancient Bagan are a few humble villages interspersed among some 2,500 Buddhist pagodas and temples, making the Bagan Archaeological Park one of the richest, and surely one of the least-visited, artistic treasure troves on earth.

Myanmar, the former Burma, has been ruled since 1962 by a repressive military junta, and tourism here has never really taken off. Further isolating the regime was the military's decision to block foreign aid in the aftermath of the May 2008 cyclone that left 130,000 dead or missing. As a result, Bagan, formerly known as Pagan, today attracts only a tiny fraction of the numbers flocking to Asia's other ancient sites, such as the famed Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia.

Crowds jostle to photograph Angkor Wat at sunrise, but at Bagan, it's possible to be completely alone at almost any time of day—especially outside the peak November-to-February season of dry, cool weather. Part of Bagan's charm is in getting lost and happening upon a small temple with a half-finished fresco—the artist interrupted, perhaps, by the Mongol invasion—or an underground monastery where monks have meditated for more than 800 years.

Some say tourism to Myanmar isn't ethical because much of the money visitors spend ends up in the hands of airlines and big hotels linked to the military. The U.S. and the EU have imposed economic sanctions banning imports of Burmese products, and some nongovernmental groups advise against travel there.

A number of Burmese, though, including some members of the National League for Democracy party of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, say international tourism is a lifeline in a country with poor living standards. Independent travel—staying at boutique hotels, shopping in family-owned workshops, eating at small restaurants—is the best way to put money directly into the hands of locals, says Nyo Ohn Myint, a leading opposition figure. State-organized package tours, which generally book guests in government hotels, should be avoided, he says.

Getty Images (5)

Above, a Buddhist monk; left, detail from a fresco inside one of the temples.

A two-hour flight from Yangon, Myanmar's largest city and home to its only international airport, takes visitors to an airstrip on the plain near Bagan. It's also possible to travel by overnight boat along the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay—a magical way to arrive in Bagan, but schedules change often. Upon arriving, most foreign travelers check in at one of a few modern hotels in the heart of the archaeological zone, on the riverbanks near "Old Bagan." The ancient walled city's wood palaces and houses were destroyed long ago. What remains—thousands of brick pagodas and temples and a small number of Hindu shrines, plus several unfortunate government-built, modern structures—is spread over 41 square kilometers on a semi-arid plain bordering the site of the old city.

Visitors are well-advised to arrange for a guide in advance—but not through a government agency, such as Myanmar Travel & Tours (myanmartravelandtours.com), that books travelers in state-owned hotels. Instead, rely on independent agencies, such as Diethelm Travel, or an independent travel portal such as myanmartourguide.com. One option is to hire a guide in Yangon and take a test tour of a local sight, such as the golden Shwedagon Pagoda, before the trip to Bagan. Or you can roll the dice and have a guide meet you there. Guides generally charge about $100 a day, not including travel fare.

WSJ.com

Burmese days
See more photos from Bagan, at **WSJ.com/Travel**

Guests must pay a $10 fee to enter the thousands of sites in the archaeological zone—an occasion when it isn't possible to avoid paying the government. Once in the zone, hire a bicycle, oxcart or car—or arrange for a one-hour balloon flight over the pagodas at dawn. (Balloons Over Bagan, a husband-and-wife tourist business owned by Brett Melzer and Khin Omar Win, will pick you up at your hotel.) For many independent visitors, a sturdy pair of walking shoes, a detailed handbook (such as Paul Strachan's "Imperial Pagan") and a flashlight will suffice. Flashlights are a must if you hope to see the frescoes properly, because most of the temples don't get much natural light. If you forget to bring one, a guardian at the temples may lend one to you for a few kyat, the local currency.

First-time visitors should set aside at least two days to see the main sites. Climb the steep steps of the Shwesandaw Paya, or "Sunset Pagoda," for an unbroken view of the gold and red stupas and temples. The terraced pyramid, topped by a bell-shaped dome and golden finial, was erected by King Anawrahta, founder of the first Burmese empire. After seizing power, he conquered the Mon kingdom to the south in 1057 and introduced Theravada Buddhism to the Burmese people, who previously adhered to beliefs influenced by Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism and animism.

A period of religious fervor ensued. In time King Anawrahta and his heirs would oversee one of the world's greatest religious building projects, completed by legions of slaves and financed by the kingdom's mineral wealth. Bagan became a center of Buddhist learning, the equal of sites in India and Sri Lanka, with 13,000 religious structures at its height, according to some historians.

Invading armies and earthquakes, most recently in 1975, have leveled many of the pagodas. The military junta has allowed inauthentic restorations—including a rebuilding of Old Bagan's palace in 19th-century Mandalay style and the construction of a concrete viewing platform resembling an air-traffic control tower—prompting an outcry from archaeologists. The tower, with its cocktail bar and $10 ticket price, is a prime example of the attractions opposition leaders want tourists to avoid—and a major reason the United Nations hasn't approved Myanmar's application to list Bagan as a World Heritage site.

Ensconced inside some of the main temples are huge Buddha statues; sprinkled among the temples are small pagodas and other religious structures, some with exquisite frescoes depicting Buddha's life. Frescoes in the single-

# of Bagan in Myanmar

Zefa/Corbis

Left, young Buddhist nuns carry plates; above, a statue of the Buddha at the Sulamani Temple; below, a view of the Bagan temples.

chambered Nandamannya Paya, dating from the 13th century, tell the story of the "Temptation of Mara," in which nubile females try to distract the Buddha from attaining enlightenment.

Outside the pagoda, a guardian who opens the doors for visitors, Win Kyaw, laments the falloff in tourism since the cyclone. Like many guardians, he is a former temple restorer and tries to supplement his government salary by selling $25 reproductions of the pagoda's murals, done with acrylic paint, sand and glue. "I haven't sold any paintings since the cyclone," he said. "Before, I'd sell two or three a day."

Just a few meters away, in a hardscrabble village, is an underground monastery with steps descending into a rock-hewn labyrinth of corridors and cells. With an emphasis on meditation in Myanmar's Buddhist traditions, it's possible to see monks deep in a trance. A few years ago, a monk died while meditating in the underground monastery and wasn't discovered for days. There are no admission fees or appointments. Just walk in.

Once you've had your fill of medieval temples, it's just a short flight back to Mandalay, where Myanmar's last kings reigned before the British deposed them in 1885. Many tourists travel on to beautiful Inlay Lake, surrounded by the majestic Shan mountain range. But another option is to head back to Yangon to explore the more recent past. A jewel in the British Empire's crown, Rangoon, as it was once known (the name changed to Yangon—and Burma to Myanmar—in 1989), rivaled Singapore for its leafy avenues and fin-de-siècle architecture. Today, Yangon is crumbling, its colonial edifices in need of paint. Yet it rewards visitors with an acute sense of the past.

One gem is the Strand Hotel, the sister establishment of Singapore's Raffles Hotel. Built by the Armenian Sarkie brothers at the start of the 20th century, it catered to the region's first Western tourists. In the 1990s during a thaw in Myanmar's relations with the West, a group of Asian entrepreneurs refurbished the Strand, in what turned out to be a bad bet. Now, the hotel is a beautiful, stuccoed white elephant, with ceiling fans and comfortable sofas in each suite and butlers on every floor. A night in the Strand, including breakfast, can go for as little as $160.

Yangon's enormous, gold-plated Shwedagon Pagoda is the holiest Buddhist shrine in Myanmar and the site of Ms. Suu Kyi's famous 1988 address calling for democracy. Two years ago, monks led protests here against the military and were crushed. But last year, days before the 20th anniversary of Ms. Suu Kyi's speech, students, monks and other antigovernment forces stayed away from the Shwedagon stupa and other traditional rallying points, fearful of government reprisals.

Although violent crime against foreigners is rare, the U.S. State Department advises U.S. citizens traveling in Myanmar to register with the U.S. embassy and carry their passports at all times so that if questioned by Burmese officials, they will have proof of U.S. citizenship at hand. On my recent stay, the roads around the golden stupa were lined with army vehicles, and plainclothes policemen with short-cropped hair were all around, on the lookout for acts of dissent.

Getty Images

Left, a hot-air balloon tour of Bagan; right, the Strand Hotel in Yangon.

Trip planner: See Myanmar without helping the junta

How to get there: Thai International Airways has flights daily from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport to Yangon International Airport (www.thaiair.com). Or fly direct from Singapore to Yangon with Silk-Air, Singapore Airlines' regional carrier, which has an early-morning and afternoon flight (www.silkair.com). Air Mandalay, Yangon Airways and Air Bagan fly daily to Bagan from Yangon. Schedules change so check with the airlines. Getting a tourist visa for Myanmar can take time, so apply at least a couple of months before you plan to travel.

Where to stay: In Yangon, the Strand, a neoclassical gem, has 32 restored rooms and rates as low as $160 per night (92 Strand Road; ☎ 95-1-243-377). In Bagan, Thiripyitsaya Sakura Hotel, set on the banks of the Irrawaddy River, offers many rooms with great views. Prices can drop as low as $60 a night in the low season.

Where to eat: In Yangon, Le Planteur is a French-Indochinese restaurant serving a mix of French and Asian cuisines in a restored colonial bungalow (22b Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon. ☎ 95-1-541-997). For high-quality Bamar food (the name for the cuisine of Myanmar), head to Monsoon, a former colonial shop-house just around the corner from the Strand Hotel (85-87 Theinbyu Road, Yangon. ☎ 95-1-295-224). In Bagan, Nanda Restaurant serves Bamar food in lacquerware trays with compartments to hold rice, curries and spicy salads. The management often puts on traditional puppet shows in the evening (☎ 95-61-60790/60754). Located on the main road of New Bagan, Mahar Bagan serves good Chinese and Bamar food. The owner, U Aye Thwin, is a former tour guide who can answer questions about the sites (no phone number).

What to do: Diethelm Travel, the largest organizer of package tours to Myanmar, can hook you up with a licensed independent guide (Dusit Inya Lake Resort, 37 Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Mayangone Township, Yangon. ☎ 95-1-652-898; 652-905; 652-906; www.diethelmtravel.com). In Yangon, visit the Shwedagon Pagoda, the holiest Buddhist shrine in Myanmar and site of the 1988 pro-democracy protests. Wander around the port district near the Strand Hotel, once a major commercial hub of the British Empire.

Bogyoke Aung San Market, known as Scott's Market in colonial times, is a great place to bargain for paintings, rattan, textiles and jewelry. Afterward, sit at Zaw Gyi House, a traditional open-air Burmese teashop, to watch the world go by (Bogyoke Aung San Road, Padedan).

Bagan: Touring the ruins, with or without a guide, is the highlight of any trip to Myanmar. Be sure to take a hot-air balloon tour of the pagodas at dawn; Balloons Over Bagan charges $295, including champagne breakfast (Business Suite 03-06, Sedona Hotel, Yangon. ☎ 95-1-652809; www.balloonsoverbagan.com).

Shop for Bagan's famous lacquerware screens, bowls and jewelry boxes in Myin Ka Par Village, near the Myasadi Pagoda.

Bound for glory: Parkour goes from urban oddity to fitness fad

By William R. Snyder

Special to The Wall Street Journal

AFP

FROM A CAFÉ TABLE in Barcelona's Plaça dels Traginers, the patter of feet can be heard in a nearby alley. A flock of pigeons explodes into the air, scared by the approaching noise. Then three young men appear, sprinting in running shoes, soccer jerseys and gym pants. One clears a bench with a smooth jump. Another vaults a public fountain in the square.

In a flurry they're gone.

Later, in a more sedentary moment, one of the trio says over coffee that the locals usually assume they're pickpockets running through the area after robbing a tourist. But these men aren't brigands. They're traceurs, urban athletes who practice an emerging sport called parkour, which combines the grace and athleticism of gymnastics with the daredeviltry of movie stunts and the mental discipline of the martial arts.

The name parkour derives from the French word "parcourir," which means to travel, and the basics are this: to navigate an urban landscape by climbing, jumping and running over any obstacle in your path and doing it all with artful fluidity.

Mark Toorock, who started doing parkour in London seven years ago then moved to the U.S. to launch americanparkour.com, a Web forum and online training site, says the common definition is to go from point A to B as quickly as possible. "But that's oversimplifying it," he says. "Parkour is a training methodology using surroundings to improve mobility, athleticism and mental strength."

In recent years the sport has become a magnet for thrill-seekers and extreme athletes. As traceurs perform seemingly impossible feats—leaping from building roofs and sometimes dropping as far as a couple of stories, then landing with a precision roll that absorbs the shock—they are using parkour to turn concrete landscapes into playgrounds.

Now, they are also making the jump into the mainstream, offering organized classes to fitness buffs who are looking for an exciting new way to work out.

Parkour began in the early 1990s in Lisses, a suburb of Paris, where a group of childhood friends including David Belle, one of parkour's pioneers, started tumbling around their old schoolyard. Before long they were developing new moves that let them navigate smoothly through cityscapes.

As the first traceurs, they enjoy an exalted status in the community. "Those early guys were just listening to their inner-child," says Draza Lakovic, a traceur in Belgrade. "When you look at the world like a child, it all seems possible."

Parkour has also gotten a boost from Hollywood. Mr. Belle, among others, has advised directors and even performed stunts in major films. The 2006 James Bond movie "Casino Royale" opens with an elaborate parkour chase scene.

With the broader exposure, parkour is becoming more user-friendly—and moving inside. Urban Freeflow is a London-based network of traceurs and training academies. Its founder, who goes by the name Ez, manages a team of professional traceurs with full sponsorship (from Adidas) who teach classes. In other cities, specialized gyms are opening with indoor obstacle courses and grueling immersion programs to condition participants for parkour-based fitness regimens. "We have people coming to the gym in their fifties and sixties because they know it's a great workout," Mr. Toorock says.

Public performances are also more common. At one such demonstration, at Waterloo Place in London last August, a large crowd gathered as heavy bass music blasted from loudspeakers and watched a traceur quickly scale the pedestal of the Duke of York's Column. With impressive strength and agility he lifted himself to the ledge from a pull-up position. He turned and faced the audience, then dropped down five meters into a roll, then rose and paused for applause. It all flowed beautifully, as if the monument were originally erected only to be climbed.

For years the parkour community was small and exclusive, limited to France. Then in 2002, Mr. Belle starred in a commercial for the BBC entitled "Rush Hour." In it he plays an office worker trying to beat the traffic home. Instead of walking or driving he runs, rolls and jumps across rooftops. The one-minute ad attracted the interest of athletes like Mr. Toorock, who at the time practiced martial arts. "There was something real about watching David," he says. "There are no cables or special effects. He had taken human potential to a new level."

Now, with more than 50,000 traceurs registered on various club Web sites, the U.K. has surpassed France as the hub. Spain and Germany also have large parkour troupes in cities like Madrid and Frankfurt.

On the grounds of Belgrade's historic Kalemegdan Castle, Mr. Lakovic will "jam," slang for a parkour workout, by scaling the old fortifications or vaulting over piles of ruins, often drawing a crowd of tourists. "Spectators see a traceur making a run, doing it smoothly going over walls and balancing on railings," he says. "But to stand on a railing, I've probably practiced one hundred times a day for months. The castle walls are perfectly spaced to try jumps."

The medieval quarters of other old European cities are well suited for practice. "Smaller alleyways and areas where things are closer together are best," says Ez. "University campuses are popular, too. Anywhere that's designed for pedestrian movement instead of cars."

If "Rush Hour" introduced parkour to Europe then a 2003 documentary titled "Jump London" announced its emergence on the global scene. The film stars Sébastien Foucan—one of Mr. Belle's childhood friends and a cofounder of parkour—performing a number of runs across many of London's landmarks.

The documentary's narrator used the term "free running" since the word "parkour" had no meaning for the British audience. At first it was a superficial difference, but over the last five years a rift has formed between parkour purists and free runners. "In layman's terms parkour is about efficiency of movement while free running has evolved to include more acrobatics like flips and jumps," says Ez.

While there is bickering among some, most traceurs seem indifferent to labels. "Ultimately both are about movement through a space," says Miguel Martinez, a university student in Salamanca, Spain. "It doesn't matter if you call it free running or parkour, what matters is that you push your physical limitations."

Parkour practitioners generally don't hold organized competitions. But last year, Urban Freeflow hosted a tournament of sorts, the Barclaycard World Freerun Championships, with 24 teams from 18 countries competing on an indoor course. It wasn't a traditional sporting event with clear winners and losers. Instead, the athletes judged each other.

Unlike skateboarding or BMX biking, parkour has met little resistance from local police and governments when performed in city parks and neighborhoods across Europe. In the U.K, police from London, Surrey and Birmingham have even approached Urban Freeflow about adding parkour to their training regimen, Ez says.

And educators are considering parkour as an option at schools. "Officials in London have been very receptive to us because it engages kids in an athletic activity," Ez says.

Matt Sheppard, sports director at London's Quintin Kynaston School, says that because of parkour's place in pop culture, it attracts students who might not otherwise participate in a sports program.

Documentaries may have introduced parkour to the general public, but the Internet is responsible for its growing popularity. More than 83,000 videos on YouTube are tagged with "parkour." Forums and Web sites facilitate discussions of technique and also encourage group participation.

"I can post a message on Facebook saying I want to jam after classes," Mr. Martinez says. Usually a few friends will show up at a plaza, park or neighborhood for a couple of hours.

Advertisements from cars to shoes have also used parkour stunts, some hiring traceurs from Ez's Urban Freeflow, helping to promote the sport. A new video game, "Mirror's Edge," is built around parkour; now kids can do the moves without ever leaving the couch.

The hype has been beneficial, though most parkour practitioners don't think it will last. "It's the big thing right now. The movies and commercials bring us publicity," Mr. Toorock says. "But what will really draw people to parkour is that we're re-branding the word play." His hope is that parkour will soon become a common sight on school playgrounds, taking the discipline full circle.

Urban action

A look at five basic parkour moves

Speed Vault ▶

This is a fluid move for clearing obstacles between waist- and chest-high without slowing the pace. One hand is placed on the obstacle for stability and then the traceur jumps, moving both legs to the opposite side of the hand.

◀ Wall Run

Going over walls instead of around them is a hallmark of parkour. So if a wall is too tall to easily jump or vault over, a traceur can employ the wall run. Using the corner of a wall, the traceur can step back and forth between either side to propel himself higher until he can grasp the top.

Cat Leap ▶

This is a type of jump for spanning large gaps or leaping at high speed. The idea is to land against a wall—feet first, so that they absorb the shock—while grabbing the top of the wall with the hands. Then a traceur can pull himself up over the ledge or drop down depending on his path.

◀ Tic Tac

This is sort of like a step, used to get over other obstacles. For instance, to get over a tall fence, a traceur can jump first to a nearby bench and then rebound over the fence (all at a full run, of course).

Rolling ▶

Mastering the roll is key for anyone who wants to make long leaps without blowing out a knee or ankle. Rolling absorbs shock and momentum. After landing on his feet, a traceur will bounce forward into a tumbling somersault, then spring up and continue running.

Photos: www.urbanfreeflow.com/Siro Micheroli; Reuters; Newscom

Parkour online: classes, videos

PARKOUR IS AN elusive sport: Traceurs can cover several city blocks in a short period, making it difficult to watch in person for more than a few seconds. But since they usually videotape their exploits and post them on the Internet, the best spot to watch parkour is often in front of a computer screen.

Even so, most major cities in Europe have troupes that practice regularly in public areas—their Web sites list demonstrations and meetings.

But why just watch? Parkour is quickly becoming a gym discipline like spin classes or aerobics. Soon, bounding over makeshift walls or balancing on rails in a parkour class could be as common as a 30-minute treadmill workout.

Here, some of the larger parkour community websites and their offerings, from classes to discussions.

Siro Micheroli

Urban Freeflow ▲

Based in Surrey, U.K., Urban Freeflow was the first organization to establish a regular class schedule, teaching at gyms throughout the London and Surrey areas. The site is full of articles on moves and theory as well as professional-grade videos and a schedule of regular public events.

www.urbanfreeflow.com

Glasgow Parkour Coaching

A simple Web site promoting parkour training in Glasgow, Scotland. The group doesn't have a gym yet, so classes are taught outdoors, even in foul weather conditions.

www.glasgowparkourcoaching.com

Parkour Portugal

Great for beginners, this Web site offers a comprehensive training regimen from basic moves to strength-building workouts.

www.parkour.pt

Parkour One

This is a portal Web site for the German city chapters of parkour, including Berlin, Cologne and Munich. Each city has a professional team; some members offer private lessons. It also has small photo and video galleries.

parkourone.de

Parkour Netherlands

A detailed site for the entire country, which includes popular locations for practicing, times for meet-ups, a discussion on techniques, photos, videos and lessons.

www.parkour.nl

Parkour Italy

This community is based in Rome and offers a discussion forum, private outdoor lessons and the occasional public demonstration during warmer months.

www.apki.it

—William R. Snyder

The state of blacks in golf

The U.S. has an African-American golfer-in-chief, but pro and amateur play is lagging behind

THE THRILLING, emotionally charged inauguration of the U.S.'s first African-American First Golfer cannot go unnoticed in this space. Barack Obama, who plays left-handed, clearly loves the game and shoots in the 90s. During his final prepresidential vacation last month in Hawaii, he managed to squeeze in two rounds and has said that he aspires, postpresidentially, to become a single-digit handicapper.

From a golf perspective, the most intriguing aspect of the inauguration festivities was the appearance at the Lincoln Memorial con-

Golf Journal
JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

cert of the world's First Golfer, Tiger Woods, also an African-American. This was of interest, first, because Mr. Woods appeared nervous. For us golf fans, it was the first time I can recall getting to witness Mr. Cool operating out of his comfort zone, which suggests that his serenity in the clutch may not be a gift from God after all, but something that can be learned. There's hope for us all.

Second, and far more significant, was the simple fact of Mr. Woods's appearance. Since turning pro in 1996, he has resisted making politically tinged statements of any sort, much in the apolitical, "Republicans buy sneakers, too" mode of his friend and early adviser Michael Jordan. When asked at a press conference in 2007 whether he harbored political ambitions, he was quick to respond, "Hell, no. Noooooo. No. Uh-uh. Next." And his remarks a week ago Sunday were definitely nonpartisan. In introducing the U.S. Naval Glee Club, he merely expressed his support for the military and pride in his father's Special Forces service.

Still, you never know where things can lead. In November, Mr. Woods called Mr. Obama's election "absolutely incredible" and expressed regret that his father hadn't lived long enough to see it happen. By his standards, that comment and his appearance at the Lincoln Memorial constitute a torrent of political activism. Even if not conceived as such, they are just the sort of groundlaying "first steps" that a savvy political operative might recommend.

Stan Badz/PGA TOUR

Getty Images (2)

Above, Tiger Woods at the pre-inaugural concert; right, Kevin Hall and his caddie at a 2006 tournament; top right, Tim O'Neal.

Despite several similarities between Messrs. Obama and Woods—both are about 185 centimeters tall, are multiracial with one foreign-born parent, and rose to the apex of their professions by virtue of preternatural talent and exceptional focus—there is one striking difference. The organization that Mr. Obama leads, the U.S. government, reflects the rich racial composition of American society at large, whereas the organization that Mr. Woods dominates, the PGA Tour, does not. Many hoped early on that Mr. Woods's example would change the face of professional golf, but that has not happened. And the half-dozen leaders of the African-American golf community I spoke with last week would like to see that situation change as soon as possible.

"If you turn on the golf tournament Sunday and Tiger Woods isn't playing, what do you see? About 140 white guys competing and no blacks," said Eddie Payton, the golf coach at historically black Jackson State University in Mississippi. "What kind of message does that send to kids? That they should watch basketball instead, even though they aren't going to grow up to be 6-foot-10? If we don't get some black players on Tour soon, we're going to lose a generation of potential African-American golfers."

At the recreational level, African-Americans' participation was only about half the 14.5% rate of whites in 2003, according to the most recent data available from Golf 20/20, an industry group whose charter is to expand the game. And there are shockingly few African-Americans among the club pros and teachers in the PGA of America—only 145 members and apprentices out of about 28,000. Mr. Woods is the only active African-American on the PGA Tour. The LPGA has none.

The two most often mentioned names in the pipeline for the PGA Tour are Kevin Hall, a deaf golfer who played at Ohio State, and Tim O'Neal, who played at Mr. Payton's Jackson State. Mr. O'Neal, a father of two, has been on and off the Nationwide Tour for a decade, including five seasons with full playing privileges, and has won $423,630. But he lost his tour card at the end of last year and this year is scrambling to find opportunities to play overseas. Twice, in 2000 and 2004, he missed getting his PGA Tour card at the Tour's qualifying school by a single stroke.

"If there were three other blacks striving to make it on the Tour with Tim, I guarantee he would have made it by now," said Mr. Payton. "The problem is he carries the weight of the entire generation of African-American golfers on his back, and for a caring young man, which he is, that's a lot of weight to carry."

On the female side, one leading contender is Shasta Averyhardt, a 185-centimeter-tall long hitter with a textbook swing from Flint, Mich.

Why the paucity of African-Americans at the top level? "They need help, they need money," said Charlie Sifford, now 86 years old, the only African-American player in the World Golf Hall of Fame. In February for the first time, an exemption named in honor of Mr. Sifford will open a place in the field for a minority player at the Northern Trust Open at Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles. "Maybe something will come out of that, maybe not," Mr. Sifford said.

Making it to the PGA Tour requires a long and expensive apprenticeship, ideally starting with national junior competition, then college golf in a top program with the best coaching and facilities, then three to five years or more of competition on the developmental tours, typically requiring a stake of $70,000 to $100,000 a year. This process overwhelmingly favors those who either grow up as the sons or daughters of Tour players or teaching pros, and thus have easy access to instruction and courses, or come from wealthy families or clubs, whose members frequently band together to sponsor promising players postcollege. Not many young African-Americans fall into those categories.

"The main thing that's missing for young African-American players is training," said Lee Elder, the first black to play in the Masters. "We need some kind of academy or training ground that will support minority golfers who want to take their games to the highest level."

To their credit, the PGA of America and other organizations have become more proactive in reaching out to African-Americans. The PGA now sponsors the Minority Collegiate Golf Championship each May, at which the number of competitors has grown to 187 last year from 92 in 1998, and uses it as a recruiting vehicle. Although its primary purpose is to introduce youngsters to the life values inherent in golf, not to develop great players, the First Tee program is nonetheless working on a concept to help identify young single-digit-handicap minority players and match them with top regional instructors.

"The first question I'm asked is usually, 'When are you going to produce the next Tiger Woods?'" said Joe Louis Barrow Jr., the First Tee's chief executive. "But the fact is that it took Tiger's dad 20 years to produce Tiger, so you've got to be realistic." And Mr. Woods's case, as we know, was a best-case scenario.

WSJ.com

Will change come?
Listen to a conversation with John Paul Newport about blacks and golf at **WSJ.com/Sports**

Arbitrage

The price of a Sunday brunch buffet

City	Local currency	€
Frankfurt	€38	€38
Paris	€38	€38
New York	$52	€39
Brussels	€49	€49
Tokyo	¥6,303	€54
London	£55	€59
Rome	€65	€65
Hong Kong	HK$728	€71

Notes: At a luxury hotel; prices, including taxes, as provided by hotels in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

AFP

The little football team that could

By Leila Abboud and Max Colchester

AFP

Getty Images

Hoffenheim's Senegalese striker Demba Ba in a match with FC Schalke 04 in December; top right, Hoffenheim owner Dietmar Hopp.

IN INTERNATIONAL soccer this year, the story to beat all stories is the overnight success of TSG 1899 Hoffenheim. This once-obscure football club from a tiny village in southwest Germany is in first place in that country's premier professional league, the Bundesliga. The team has scored more goals than any other and shot down famed clubs from Hamburg, Hanover and Munich. Its style of play, which draws on the speed and energy of a group of players whose average age is 23, can leave its opponents befuddled.

"I don't know what these guys ate," said Joris Mathijsen, a defender for HSV Hamburg, whose team fell behind Hoffenheim 3-0 after just 36 minutes during a match in October and never recovered. "They were so much better than us."

The story has been widely hailed as the stuff of miracles: a group of nobodies from a town with one stoplight taking on football's established powers. But Hoffenheim's success is almost solely the result of the unusual devotion of one benefactor—Dietmar Hopp, the 68-year-old billionaire who co-founded and built SAP AG into a global technology powerhouse.

Mr. Hopp, who is Hoffenheim's principal backer, has spent €150 million on the team in the past 18 years, including building them a futuristic €60 million stadium that seats 30,000. But for all the money he's spent, Mr. Hopp has also shown two qualities rare among billionaires with sports teams: patience and a genuine connection to the team. Mr. Hopp not only grew up in Hoffenheim, he played striker for the team himself as a teenager. "I could never play for them now," he says. "They're too good."

Hoffenheim was founded in 1899 as a local gymnastics club. For most of its history, it was an obscure amateur side in the lower divisions of German football where the village's young men would play on the weekends. In 1990, Mr. Hopp started to support the team by buying footballs. At the outset, his aims were modest: to give kids in the sleepy town something to do. He built a youth training facility and a 5,000-seat stadium in the hills above the village. As the team began to improve, Mr. Hopp continued to treat it like a startup venture. While other football moguls aimed their funds at signing star players, he took a more conservative approach. In the last 18 years, 80% of his investments have gone to infrastructure.

Hoffenheim slowly advanced from the fifth division in 2000 all the way to the second in 2006. Only then did Mr. Hopp make the final move to complete the journey. He contacted one of Germany's best football tacticians, Ralf Rangnick, about becoming coach.

Nicknamed "the Professor" for the diagrams he used to sketch during his time as a TV commentator, Mr. Rangnick had coached top-level teams. He'd recently been fired from FC Schalke 04 after the team's management grew frustrated by his purist style and disregard for traditional hierarchies. "At a big club, you have a lot of money and specialists for everything," he says. "But when things start to go wrong on the field, you realize you are actually kind of powerless."

Though he immediately told Mr. Hopp he couldn't imagine coaching a team that was in the third division, he agreed to meet with Mr. Hopp at a golf club the mogul owns. After several meetings, the 50 year-old Mr. Rangnick and Mr. Hopp realized they had much in common. The coach believed in nurturing young players, which fit the philosophy of Mr. Hopp, who was known as "Papa Hopp" at SAP for the way he took care of his software engineers. "I convinced him that I would provide him with every conceivable freedom to create a soccer model that would never be possible in the mature structures of existing clubs," said Mr. Hopp. "That excited him."

Mr. Rangnick wanted Hoffenheim to play a flowing and attacking style with players taking only one or two touches as they drive the ball up the field. On defense, he was a disciple of "pressing," a technique pioneered in Dutch football in the 1960s. He ordered his scouts to fan out across the world looking for fast and powerful players aged 16 to 22. One of their first finds was Demba Ba, a lanky 22-year-old striker playing in Belgium's pro league, whose speed has helped him score seven goals and two assists so far this season. Another was 24-year-old Vedad Ibisevic, a previously unknown striker who, despite a recent injury, is the Bundesliga's top scorer this year with 19 goals in 17 games.

To force them to attack quickly, he put them through a drill where players play nine-on-nine in a long, narrow corridor on one side of the field. They aren't allowed to pass the ball backwards or touch the ball more than twice before passing it on. The idea is to force players to look far up the field and attack quickly. "The first few sessions, it was absolute chaos," Mr. Rangnick says.

Nonetheless, the team made it to the Bundesliga in 2008 and won 11 games in the first half of the season. It enters its next game on Jan. 31 in first place.

WSJ.com

The beautiful game
See a video about the Hoffenheim soccer team at **WSJ.com/Sports**

Powerfully good cookie: A Chinese New Year's ritual

By Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan

Tay Kay Chin-Polaris for The Wall Street Journal

On properly made pineapple tarts, the pineapple jam forms ochre domes.

WHEN I WAS GROWING up in Singapore, Chinese New Year meant one thing: my grandmother's pineapple tarts.

The salty, buttery, bite-size circles topped with coin-size dollops of dense, homemade pineapple jam were an obsession for me. We had them in the house just once a year, at the lunar new year, when Singaporeans spend two days visiting friends and relatives to swap tales of business and children's test scores over tea and sweets.

Year after year I'd be reminded how superior my grandmother's tarts were. In our friends' homes, I would nibble politely and think, this crust is too dry. Or too flaky, or not flaky enough. There's too much pineapple, or too little. Only my father's mother got it right, I believed. I also believed she would teach me to make them one day. And then, when I was 11, she died.

I didn't know her well but, by all accounts, my grandmother was a remarkable woman. Born to a farming family, she married a wealthy man only to watch her husband's generation lose most of the family money. To buy schoolbooks for her three children and put food on the table, she set aside her pride and turned to handwashing the neighbors' clothing. At Chinese New Year, she would bake and sell hundreds of cookies and tarts.

Ever since her death, Chinese New Year has been tainted with some regret for me. The cookies I bake and set out, though tasty (or so I think), never come close to the memory of my grandmother's. I didn't fully grasp the care she put into them until I was in my 20s and baking in my Washington, D.C., kitchen. Other than one aunt, the women in my immediate family are confessed klutzes in the kitchen, with no baking skills or tips to impart. I experimented using clipped-out recipes and then a growing compendium of cookbooks.

My failures were legion. One Thanksgiving, a cheesecake pie I attempted was so lumpy that the guests were incapable of any pretense of enjoyment (one very nicely inquired if I possessed a whisk). I had less luck with Chinese cookies, which are tricky as they rely heavily on texture and are typically less sweet, which makes them a hard sell to begin with. Mine were burned, too salty, not done enough.

On a recent trip to Singapore, I reached out to the few family members who had lived with my grandmother and helped her bake. I asked to help with this year's pineapple tart production.

The process began at dawn, when the "aunties" (my aunt and her sisters and mother) headed to a market to pick up the 70 pineapples they'd ordered. Their plan that weekend was to make 3,000 tarts. Twenty-three years after my grandmother's death, her tarts remain so famous that family members and friends still request jars filled with them at the new year.

All morning, we squatted over low stools in the backyard, peeling pineapples and using knives or Chinese-style soup spoons to painstakingly gouge out the eyes from each fruit. After chopping and juicing, we mixed the pulp and juice in massive woks and pots with cinnamon and several knots of the fragrant, tropical pandan leaf used in many Southeast Asian desserts. (The flavor is vanilla-like, but more complex.) Then we spent three hours sweating and stirring over the hot stove—a sauna and a workout all at once. We worked mostly in silence, my lousy Teochew (my family's Chinese dialect) being a slight hindrance. But using a tossed salad of Mandarin, English, Teochew and the occasional Hokkien phrase, I soon learned some things about my grandmother.

My Tanglin Ah-Ma (as I called her, because she once lived in Singapore's Tanglin area) had always loved to cook, although no one knew where she'd learned. She was well known for her deliciously sour salted-cabbage soup and dau yew bak, a stew of pork belly braised in anise, bashed garlic and a thick, dark soy sauce. An invitation to dinner at her place was a coveted thing.

She was devoted to feeding her family with the best food she could put on the table, sometimes rising at 3 a.m. to make Bak-zhang—a pyramid-shaped sticky-rice dumpling filled with meat and wrapped in a pandan leaf—for the family breakfast. As my cousins who lived with her got older, she let them play with dough in the kitchen as she made her pineapple tarts, imparting her method in the process.

As a child, when I'd visited my Tanglin Ah-Ma, she would urge me to eat as many tarts as I wanted, and she made sure I had plenty to bring home. But because of our limited ability to communicate, I never really felt I knew how she felt about her "Ang moh" (a Teochew phrase that implies "Westernized") granddaughter. But now I understood. The soup, the Bak-zhang and the tarts were proof enough.

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Just like Ah-Ma made
See a recipe for pineapple tarts at **WSJ.com/Food**

A comic's 'Good Hair' day

By Lauren A.E. Schuker

MAKING A DOCUMENTARY film about hair was an unusual choice for Chris Rock, the performer best known for his stand-up comedy, hit television series "Everybody Hates Chris" and big-screen acting roles in films such as "Lethal Weapon 4."

"A hair documentary, especially for a guy, is a hard sell—no, it's a weird sell," says the 43-year-old comedian, who both produced and wrote "Good Hair." The low-budget documentary traces the growth of the $9 billion industry rooted in the maintenance of African-American hair and its place in ethnic community and culture.

"With no disrespect to my agents or managers, every time I brought up the idea of a hair documentary, someone changed the conversation," says Mr. Rock, who came up with the idea for "Hair" more than a decade ago. "They'd say, 'That's nice, but what about this cop movie instead?' "

But for two years Mr. Rock pursued the project with the team behind his critically acclaimed HBO series "The Chris Rock Show." (HBO owns "Good Hair," but is open to selling the theatrical rights.) Inspired by what he calls his young daughter's "hair envy," or uneasiness with her naturally curly hair, Mr. Rock set out to investigate the nexus of power and politics related to how African-Americans style their hair.

Traveling to beauty salons and barbershops across the U.S., from Harlem to Dallas to Beverly Hills, he interviewed ordinary people about how the choices they make about what's on their heads affects their lives. He documented an intense hair competition between top stylists at the Bronner Bros. Hair Show and Battle and queried black celebrities such as actress Nia Long, the Rev. Al Sharpton and poet Maya Angelou about the political implications of their own hair habits.

Mr. Rock spoke with The Wall Street Journal from Park City, Utah, where he was premiering the film at the Sundance Film Festival last week.

Reuters/Corbis

Above, Chris Rock; below, the comedian interviews a young girl about getting her hair relaxed in his documentary, 'Good Hair.'

Q: The documentary includes so many different aspects of the black hair industry, from Hindu temples in India where hair is collected and exported to the U.S., to hair salons that specialize in relaxing hair, to the Bronner Bros. Hair Show. How did you decide what to include?

Doing a documentary is kind of like being a cop—you don't know where it is going, and you just keep digging deeper. I had no idea I would be going to India for the film when we started.

And Mr. Dudley—the guy who owns one of the few African-American-owned hair-product companies—I met him at an Obama campaign function. I was wondering who these old dudes were, and I thought they must be rich, and the next thing you know, we got the idea of going to the Dudley [headquarters] in North Carolina, where they make the hair relaxer.

Q: The film stays relatively neutral on whether people should alter their hair, relax it, or not. But it explores the political implications of relaxing one's hair. Do you have an opinion one way or another?

When I initially got the idea about doing a hair movie, I was a younger guy and I was dating and I was a little judgmental about weaves and all that. I was more of a Public Enemy and "Fight the Power" kind of guy—all about natural hair and all that. I'm older now, and a lot less judgmental.

Q: Do you relax your hair?

When I was younger, I had a Jheri curl, I had relaxer. I was about 14 when I got my first Jheri curl—it was wet and disgusting. It stains the collar of your shirts. And I definitely went through a phase when I was trying to look like the Jacksons. But then, after I did "Lethal Weapon" and got my first million bucks, I thought, "I am never putting another chemical in my hair again." I don't really know what that means about me, but I just thought, "I am not burning my scalp again. I'm done."

Q: That reminds me of a scene in Malcolm X's autobiography, where he describes in detail the process of relaxing his hair.

Yeah, I love that scene in Spike Lee's "Malcom X," when Denzel [Washington] is getting his hair relaxed. We thought about putting it in the film—but we didn't have money to buy the clip. Or there's "Coming to America," with Eddie Murphy, when the family is going to get a Jheri curl. But this was a low-budget movie, and despite the trip to India, we only spent about $1 million on it.

Q: The film really focuses on black women's hair. Did you intend it for a mostly female audience?

Not at all. Women really love the film, and I can't imagine men volunteering to go see it, but maybe they will. I make art for every audience. I'm a black guy, so whatever I do is black, but I think that if what you do is good enough, it appeals to everybody. I mean, Chinese food—it's Chinese, it doesn't include French fries—but it appeals to everyone, it's the most popular food in America. I think art can be the same way.

Q: You interview a lot of women for the film about their hair, mostly hairdressers, actresses or performers. Why did you decide to interview Al Sharpton?

Al Sharpton was perfect for the film because of his hair. I didn't choose him because he was Al Sharpton or an activist or anything, I chose him because he's got this hair! I mean, the guy obviously puts a relaxer in his hair, so you knew he would have a perspective on this.

Q: Speaking of public figures and their hair, what do you think of Michelle Obama's hair? Does she relax it?

Please, I'm not playing hair police. I think it's beautiful, but I'm not going to speculate. Michelle Obama is not getting a hair critique from me. I can just see the press conference now—it would be a disaster. There's no way I am ruining my invite to the White House.

Q: So you won't talk about Michelle Obama's hair—you must be very close to the Obamas. Were you involved in the campaign?

Of course. I donated a lot, a lot of money. I stumped for Obama—I mean, my tour was pretty much a 5,000-seat Obama rally every night I did so much McCain and Hillary bashing. I like to think I did my part.

HBO

Warner Bros. Pictures

Brendan Fraser (left) and Paul Bettany in 'Inkheart.'

Overdone effects blot 'Inkheart'

AS THE RECENT and bountiful crop of holiday films gives way to the painfully slim pickings of a week like the last one, movie criticism starts to feel like seasonal work akin to fruit picking, except that fruit pickers don't pick fruit they know is overripe or rotten. "Inkheart" may not be rotten to the core—instead of maggots, the fantasy adventure seethes with good intentions—but the overripeness of its special effects can't be overstated. Not since the thunderous digital onslaughts of "Jumanji" has the big screen seen such too-muchness.

Film
JOE MORGENSTERN

Brendan Fraser plays Mortimer "Mo" Folchart, a book collector with a special gift that qualifies him as a Silvertongue. When he reads aloud, characters leap off the page—not just figuratively, as they do in fine literature, but literally, in the same way Jeff Daniels's movie-star character steps out of the screen in "The Purple Rose of Cairo." Unlike Woody Allen's lyrical film, however, the invincibly graceless "Inkheart," which was adapted from a novel by Cornelia Funke, imposes an arbitrary rule. When a character escapes from a book into real life, a real person automatically gets sucked in. That's what happened to Mo's wife, Resa, almost a decade ago, and that's why Mo, accompanied by his 12-year-old daughter, Meggie (she's played attractively, though quite maturely, by 16-year-old Eliza Hope Bennett), traipses around looking for a copy of "Inkheart," the dungeons-and-dragons novel that ingested Resa and might still be forced to disgorge her.

What the movie disgorges is an almost endless, and eventually meaningless, succession of bad guys from the book, along with dragons, flying monkeys, a petulant weasel, a melancholy fire juggler played by Paul Bettany, a minotaur, a sand monster similar to the one Mr. Fraser encountered in "The Mummy" and, as if this literary version of "Jurassic Park" weren't already overpopulated, little Toto, the dog from "The Wizard of Oz." Still, "Inkheart," which was directed by Iain Softley, presents a couple of genuine mysteries. One concerns the oppressively drab, high-contrast cinematography, which turns out to be the work of Roger Pratt, one of the best shooters in the business. Another involves the cast, which includes such superb actors as Helen Mirren and Jim Broadbent. How did they get sucked into the script?

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Opening this week in Europe

- **Doubt** Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, U.K.
- **Frost/Nixon** Germany, Italy, Sweden
- **Slumdog Millionaire** Portugal
- **The Curious Case of Benjamin Button** Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, U.K.
- **The Reader** Czech Republic
- **Vicky Cristina Barcelona** U.K.
- **Waltz with Bashir** Turkey

Source: IMDB

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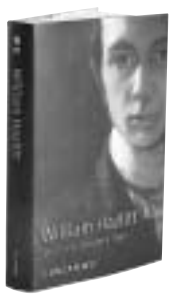
A man of letters and his many ex-friends

By Saul Rosenberg
Special to The Wall Street Journal

WILLIAM HAZLITT (1779-1830) was the finest English essayist of his age—and his age, in literary terms alone, was an extraordinary one. He was also mercilessly pursued, especially later in life, by accusations of immorality and worthlessness. Only in the past 50 years or so has his reputation seriously recovered from the attacks he endured in his lifetime. Duncan Wu's biography purports to complete the rescue operation and to identify Hazlitt as "the first modern man."

Mr. Wu notes that Hazlitt invented or perfected many forms of modern journalism, including art and drama criticism, the literary review, the political sketch, and particularly the personal essay. He was also one of the first and most articulate proponents of Romanticism, whose exaltation of personal experience Mr. Wu rightly takes to be fundamental to our own age. The author's primary goal, however, is simply to offer a massively detailed account of a subject more sinned against than sinning.



Hazlitt lived through the French Revolution and the rise and fall of his idol, Napoleon. He knew well almost every British writer of note: Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and a host of lesser figures, including Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt. Indeed, there appears to be almost no literary figure Hazlitt did not know, whether as friend or enemy. By the end of his life, many were enemies.

That Hazlitt, a famously amiable conversationalist, largely turned his friends against him is no great mystery. He was brought up in a Nonconformist household, where he developed an instinct for contrarian honesty. And he reviewed the work of friends and acquaintances in a vituperative ad hominem style. Of Shelley, Hazlitt wrote: "Egotism, petulance, licentiousness, levity of principle is a bad thing in any one, and most of all, in a philosophical reformer." He praised Wordsworth's poetry as "one of the innovations of the time" but damned Wordsworth as "the God of his own idolatry." Of J.M.W. Turner, whom he thought his day's finest landscapist, Hazlitt remarked that Turner "painted pictures of nothing, and very like." A broad streak of ingenuousness led him to expect friends to judge his criticisms objectively, however humiliatingly delivered.

Such obtuseness is particularly odd, for Hazlitt was, as Mr. Wu notes, a critic of remarkable psychological acuity. His "Characters of Shakespear's Plays" (1817) launched a whole school of criticism. Typical is his view of Iago as combining "great intellectual activity" with "a total want of moral principle" and thus "seeking to confound the practical distinctions of right and wrong, by referring them to some overstrained standard of speculative refinement."

Like so many 19th-century British writers, Hazlitt was astonishingly prolific, but it was not until 1805—at age 26, after abandoning ministerial studies, entering into radical circles and attempting a painting career—that he turned seriously to writing. In the 12 years before "Characters," besides marrying and fathering a son, he produced lectures on English philosophy, an enormous amount of periodical writing and several important letters against Malthus, in which he argued (prophetically, as Mr. Wu notes) that Malthus's strictures on measures making it easier for poor people to have children provided honorable cover for deeply inhumane policies. Within another three years Hazlitt had published three collections of lectures on English writers, a book on the English stage and a collection of occasional essays, along with withering attacks on those whose political evolution disappointed him. Hazlitt was an anti-royalist all his life. Never deviating, he was disgusted by what he saw as the time-serving pro-royalist tendencies of the once fierce republicans Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey.

English essayist William Hazlitt.

Bettmann/Corbis

But by 1820 Hazlitt's reputation and finances were collapsing under personal attacks that his own work (and political positions) invited. Blackwood's Magazine called him a "mere quack." His "Political Essays" were described by one reviewer as "a collection of trash." Another "shut the volume 'with feelings of unrelieved disgust.'" His marriage declined with his fortunes, and so began a separation that precipitated the episode with which he destroyed what reputation remained to him.

Always in love, Hazlitt fell madly for his landlady's daughter, Sarah Walker, making himself profoundly ridiculous in the process. In the unrequited aftermath, too used to turning his life and his own feelings about it into literary material, he published "Liber Amoris," a thinly disguised and otherwise very frank account of his passion for Walker. Presented with such red meat, the first of a series of self-styled moralists inquired of his readers whether "his countrymen" would not "pray to Heaven that their children may die ignorant of [Hazlitt's] existence." Others piled eagerly on, attacking a "precious record of . . . slavering sensuality."

Where he was not denounced, he was ridiculed. Blackwood's Magazine, Hazlitt's special persecutor, kept the story alive for years. And most of his remaining friends withdrew from—to quote two of them, Joseph Parkes and Henry Crabb Robinson—"that semi-Lunatic Hazlitt" and his "disgusting," "low and gross" and "tedious" book. Mr. Wu gamely defends Hazlitt here as everywhere. "One day," he writes, "'Liber Amoris' will be given its due as a classic of Romantic prose." But surely Hazlitt was indeed "semi-Lunatic" in not seeing that the book was merely fuel for the fire.

His last years track a sorry financial and personal decline, including the wreckage of a second marriage, until his death from stomach problems and general ill-health. Through it all, Hazlitt produced a prodigious amount of work of remarkable quality, including the last two volumes of a life of Napoleon, whom he venerated for having "conquered the Grand Conspiracy of KINGS against the abstract right of the Human race to be free."

Was Hazlitt truly the first modern? Others lived by their pen, and Romanticism was in part a reaction to the Enlightenment, which has the better claim to modernity's birth. What Mr. Wu gives us is, if not a broad, persuasive argument, an astonishingly detailed account of Hazlitt's life—from his writing habits down to what he ate for dinner and with whom. Along the way the author paints a vivid portrait of an England racked by pro- and anti-Revolutionary fervor, and particularly of London, with its finery and squalor, its artistic delights and banal necessities—"Othello" at the theater and the bailiff at the door. Drawn steadily in by the biography's fantastic detail, we sink into Hazlitt's world itself. There may be better books on Hazlitt, but none that offers us so direct an experience of the writer's actual life.

Mr. Rosenberg is a writer and editor in New York.

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The Great Provoker
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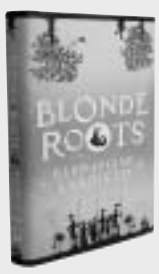
In 'Blonde Roots,' a novel version of slavery

By Nadya Labi

IN THE NOVEL "Blonde Roots," writer Bernardine Evaristo imagines what might have happened if the ships of the triangular trade had sailed in reverse—with white "Europanes" destined for the plantations of black masters in the islands off the coast of "Amarika" and exchanged for rum and other luxury goods headed to the "United Kingdom of Great Ambossa" in "Aphrika."



While playing hide-and-seek with her three sisters, 10-year-old Doris Scagglethorpe—the blonde, skinny daughter of a cabbage farmer—is snatched from the coast of England, chained to an iron collar, sold for a shiny kettle and two caskets of grog, and shipped to a slave market.

The daughter of a Nigerian father and white British woman, the 49-year-old Ms. Evaristo started out as an actress in the 1980s, starring in plays that she co-wrote for a production company she helped found. After touring with the company for six years, she turned to writing novels—in verse or with a poetic component.

In Bernardine Evaristo's book, Europeans toil for black masters.

Bernardine Evaristo

Her early works include the semi-autobiographical "Lara" (1997), which chronicles the life of a mixed-race girl growing up in all-white Woolwich, England, in the 1960s and '70s, and explores 150 years of her family's history on three continents; "The Emperor's Babe" (2001), which tells the story of a black girl who grows up in Roman-occupied London in 211 A.D; and "Soul Tourists" (2005), a book that follows two 20th-century lovers on a road trip as they encounter ghosts like Pushkin's African great-grandfather and the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets.

The author says she has been trying to write in prose since 1991, but "every time I tried to write a prose novel, I would lose my poetic voice." In "Blonde Roots," aiming to reach a wider readership than a poetic work usually claims, she managed to stick to prose.

Ms. Evaristo hopes her book serves to address Britain's involvement in the slave trade, which she says has been largely ignored. In the city of "Londolo" in the "UK" of Great Ambossa, Doris works as a house "wigger," acting as a personal assistant to her master Chief Kaga Konata Katamba I, or Bwana.

She tries to escape by means of the Underground Railroad—a network of disused Tube trains—but ends up working on a sugar cane plantation. Bwana, for his part, expounds in an anti-abolitionist tract about his earlier adventures as a slaver in the "Dark Heart of Europa" and the inferior brain capacity of the Caucasoi, whom he deems are "not of our kind."

In the novel, Ms. Evaristo tethers her imagination to slavery's brute realities. "It was very important to put in all the details about the atrociousness of the trade and the fundamentals about how it happened," she says. In a chapter entitled "The Middle Passage," Doris is bolted in a prone position in the belly of a ship: to her right is a woman who is dragged away at night to be raped by the black sailors; to Doris's left, for three nights, is the corpse of a 17-year-old milkmaid who gave up on living after being gang-raped by captors.

"As I was reading that section to the public, I was like, 'Oh my God, this is very unrelenting,'" Ms. Evaristo says. "I was quite pleased about that, too. In that section, there is no room for comedy."

WSJ.com

Alternate universe
Read an excerpt from 'Blonde Roots,' at **WSJ.com/Books**

Will Malbec be a victim of its own success?

WE WOULDN'T USUALLY revisit a type of wine just 18 months after a broad blind tasting. But we were at a fancy holiday party recently, the kind where only the trendiest wines are served, and the red was Malbec from Argentina. When we mentioned the wine to another guest, he said, "Oh, my wife discovered Malbec last summer and now she won't drink anything else."

Shira Kronzon for The Wall Street Journal

Tastings
DOROTHY J. GAITER AND JOHN BRECHER

Then we were on a radio show and the producer said, "Malbecs have been my husband's favorite for a year or so." In October we did a blind tasting for a law firm in Texas and the organizer suggested Malbec. The drumbeat of Malbec enthusiasm just kept coming: from Journal economics expert David Wessel in Washington, from Dottie's sister Juarlyn in Atlanta, from former Open That Bottle Night celebrant Chris Morris of Richmond, Va., who wrote: "Our best bottle of the year was the Gascón Malbec '07—and only 13 bucks!"

The explosive emergence of Malbec from Argentina is like nothing we've seen since the sudden rise of Merlot more than a decade ago, and this is even more interesting: While much of Merlot's attraction was that it was smooth and easy, Malbec is more challenging, with spicier, edgier tastes. We decided it was clearly time to revisit this phenomenon with this question in mind: How is Malbec handling its newfound fame?

To quickly recap how we got from there to here: Malbec is one of the classic grapes of Bordeaux, but it's not much of a factor in France anymore outside of Cahors, where it makes the famous "black wine." Argentina's resurgent wine industry placed its bets on Malbec and it has paid off big-time: Argentina's wine imports into the U.S. have risen eightfold since we first wrote about its Malbec in 1999. And look at it this way: As recently as 2003, Americans drank about 11 bottles of Australian wine for every bottle of Argentine wine; for the first 11 months of last year, that figure was less than three to one. Argentina has become the fourth biggest exporter of wine to the U.S. by volume (following Italy, Australia and France), having overtaken Germany, Spain and Chile over the past five years. Argentina's Malbec has become so popular that there are now more U.S. Malbecs than we've ever seen—and not just in California: We recently tried a Malbec of unusual clarity and spiciness from Pearmund Cellars in Virginia (Berry Hill Vineyard 2007; $25).

In the past, we have found that wines that gain sudden popularity end up suffering for it (see "Merlot"). Simply put, here's the equation: Everybody and his brother and sister decides to get in on the action, so they plant vineyards in less-choice areas. Maybe they allow the vines to grow like crazy, producing watery grapes. And then, to make up for the deficient fruit, the winemakers use all sorts of shortcuts that ultimately give the wines an overlay of flavors—often oaky, vanilla flavors—that leave the wines tasting like sweet, woody water with some coloring added.

Can Malbec avoid this fate? We bought 50 to find out. There are so many on shelves today that we could have bought 100 different ones. We picked up most of the well-known names, but included a few more-obscure labels as well. We bought only the 2006 and 2007 vintages, since those are the ones you are most likely to see and because these wines were made since Malbec started its ascent. And while we did not set a price limit, the vast majority cost less than $20, with a bulge between $10 and $12.

First, let's say this: We have been Malbec fans for a decade now and we continue to believe the excitement about Malbec is justified. These are tasty, interesting wines, with spicy, black-pepper tastes, some blackberries, good acidity and crisp edges. The good ones taste like ripe fruit and earth, maybe with some sage or rosemary, and are often terrific bargains. Our best of tasting and one of our best values, Altos Las Hormigas 2007, a longtime favorite, cost just $10.99 and was bursting with clean, true fruit. Our other best value, Trapiche "Oak Cask" 2006, was exceptionally bright for such a big wine and also cost just $10.99. In fact, we liked the majority of the wines and were delighted to welcome some new names among our favorites. (Two of our longtime favorites, Susana Balbo and Alamos, were good this time but were outshone by others.)

All that said, we also feel it's a good time to raise a yellow flag because more wines than we would have expected—and more than in past tastings—were not very pleasant. They tasted too much like bulk wines, made with little fruit and less care. Too many were dripping with vanilla-oak tastes that obscured any real fruit flavors. And here's an interesting note: One of the charms of good Malbec is its zingy acidity, which helps to leaven its bold tastes; some of these, however, tasted almost like acid had been poured onto the top, leaving an overlay that was so strong it actually tasted more like a layer of ReaLemon. Oddly, some even tasted like they had a little shake of salt. We don't like salt in our wine.

We still believe the growing aisles of Argentine Malbec are a safe bet at your wine store, especially considering the low prices. We would urge producers not to kill the golden goose by producing oceans of similar-tasting, inauthentic, characterless wine. Consumers clearly have warmed to Malbec because it is interesting, different and a little bit riskier than Merlot. Turning it into bland, sweet Merlot would be a mistake. And, trust us, consumers aren't dumb. They'll know—just as they know right now that good Malbec is one of the wine world's great red-wine bargains.

The Argentine Malbec index

In a broad blind tasting of Malbec from Argentina from the 2006 and 2007 vintages, these were our favorites. These are generally medium-bodied wines that might age well for a couple of years, but are ready to drink now. They pair beautifully with steak and substantial, savory eggplant and lentil dishes.

VINEYARD	PRICE	RATING	COMMENTS
Altos Las Hormigas 2007 (Mendoza)	$10.99	Very Good/ Delicious	**Best of tasting and best value (tie).** Serious pepper and spice, with some crispness and plenty of blackberries and plums. Quite dry, yet bursting with fruit.
Trapiche 'Oak Cask' 2006 (Mendoza)	$10.99	Very Good	**Best value (tie).** Memorable black-tar nose, with some charred wood. Rich, black wine with good minerals. Fresh and lively despite its weight, with big, bright fruit.
Achaval Ferrer Winery 2007 (Mendoza)	$22*	Very Good	Just plain pleasing. Ripe, tasty and easy to like, with a soulful earthiness and a dash of lemon. Comfort wine, easy to sip and easy to like. Drink now.
Colomé 2006 (Valle Calchaquí, Salta)	$25*	Very Good	Spicy, somewhat herbal nose. True, fleshy fruit, with a black-pepper core and fine acidity that keeps it from tasting heavy and too concentrated. Rounder and more complete than most, truly satisfying.
Famiglia Bianchi 2006 (San Rafael, Mendoza)	$16.99	Very Good	Spicy and peppery, lighter than some but with ripe, earthy fruit. Nicely balanced, with black cherry-blackberry fruit and some interesting edges.
Bodega Lurton 'Reserva' 2006 (Mendoza)	$13.99	Good/ Very Good	Tastes true and nicely crisp, but more relaxed than many, like everything was taken down a notch, so it's especially good with food.
Bodega Noemia de Patagonia 'A Lisa' 2007 (Rio Negro Valley)	$21.99	Good/ Very Good	Looks pretty, like black velvet, and it tastes that way, too, dark, with some sleekness. John thought it was overly smooth, so it lacked some authenticity, but Dottie disagreed.
Henry Lagarde 'Reserve' 2006 (Mendoza)	$15	Good/ Very Good	Good structure in a lighter package than many, with good acidity and softer tannins. Long, friendly finish. Restrained and very easy to like, almost like Malbec Lite, in a good way.
Rutini Wines 2006 (Mendoza)	$15.95	Good/ Very Good	Fleshy, dark and nicely acidic. Well-balanced and approachable, with a lovely, long, blackberry finish. Easy to sip, but not lacking character.

Note: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious and Delicious! These came from California and New York. *We paid $24.99 for Achaval Ferrer and $22.99 for Colomé, but these prices appear to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

WSJ.com

Wine with an attitude
Watch John and Dottie taste and talk about Argentine Malbec, at **WSJ.com/Tastings**

de gustibus / *By John Fund*

Seeking Sherlock Holmes

New York

Sherlock Holmes devotees gather here and in many other cities every January to celebrate what they believe to be the birthday of "the world's greatest consulting detective." This year the Holmes hobbyists can tell that their hero is making a comeback.

A big-budget movie will premiere in November starring Robert Downey Jr. as Holmes and Jude Law as Dr. John Watson. It will portray the detective as a "tortured perfectionist" who has a dash of a Victorian James Bond about him. A BBC drama that began shooting this month will place Holmes in the London of today. Less eagerly anticipated by the hobbyists is a new comedy film in the works at Columbia, starring Sacha "Borat" Baron Cohen as the detective and Will Ferrell as Watson, but even it represents homage (of a sort) to Holmes.

Corbis

This year's New York gathering of the Baker Street Irregulars, named after a group of boys who aided the great detective in Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, attracted several outsiders such as myself because we are just a few months away from the 150th anniversary of Conan Doyle's May 22 birth. But while you may think that he was the author of the Holmes stories, it is the amusing conceit of the Irregulars that Holmes and Watson actually lived. Conan Doyle, they contend, was merely Watson's opportunistic literary agent, who took credit for chronicling Holmes's exploits.

Holmes hobbyists take their passion seriously, with the annual New York celebration stretching over five days of sleuthing, scholarship and schmoozing. Since the Irregulars were founded 70 years ago, members have published learned papers addressing unresolved questions in the "canon," or the 60 original Sherlock Holmes stories published between 1887 and 1927. Devotees have included Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, the late science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov and singer-songwriter Neil Diamond.

Some members take a stab at writing their own pastiches. Lyndsay Faye, a young actress and author, will have her recounting of Holmes's pursuit of Jack the Ripper published this April by Simon & Schuster. "Holmes and Watson are one of the finest literary friendships of all time," she says. "They are the reason Sherlockians read the stories again and again. The two of them fight for justice—starkly different men who complement one another to perfection."

Membership in Holmes societies was overwhelmingly male until recently, but there's now a large female contingent in groups such as The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes. Patricia Guy, the author of several books on wine, flew all the way from Verona, Italy, to attend this year's BSI bashes. She says Sherlockians in continental Europe often make up in passion for their small numbers. "I'm a great comfort to an Italian bank worker who visits me frequently, because I'm the only one who can discuss his endless questions" about Holmes, she told me. "He's clearly eccentric, so some would say I'm his therapist."

Indeed, I first realized what rich storytelling possibilities the Holmes character and milieu offered after seeing a 1970s romantic comedy called "They Might Be Giants." The movie starred George C. Scott as a judge who goes mad after the death of his wife and imagines himself to be Holmes. Joanne Woodward plays Dr. Mildred Watson, a therapist assigned to monitor him. The two team up and use inspired lunacy to combat a modern-day Professor Moriarty, the arch-nemesis of Holmes in the original Conan Doyle tales.

So the popularity of Sherlock Holmes exists at several levels. Many readers merely want to tackle one of the master detective's "three-pipe problems" and solve it. Others love the stories because they speak to the desire of many of us for rationality, justice and fair play. "I know justice is often messy and incomplete," says Michael Miller, who works as a state prosecutor in Minneapolis and is a longtime Sherlockian. "But in the Holmes stories you can find satisfaction that criminals will be caught and all mysteries will be logically resolved."

The stories are also popular because they stir up nostalgia for Victorian England and the civilized rectitude of the era that Holmes embodies. Vincent Starrett, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, summed up that aspect of the appeal of Holmes and Watson in a 1942 poem called "221b":

Here dwell together still two men of note
Who never lived and so can never die:
How very near they seem, yet how remote
That age before the world went all awry . . .
Here, though the world explode, these two survive,
And it is always eighteen ninety-five.

Mr. Fund, a columnist for WSJ.com, has been reading Sherlock Holmes stories since the age of 8.

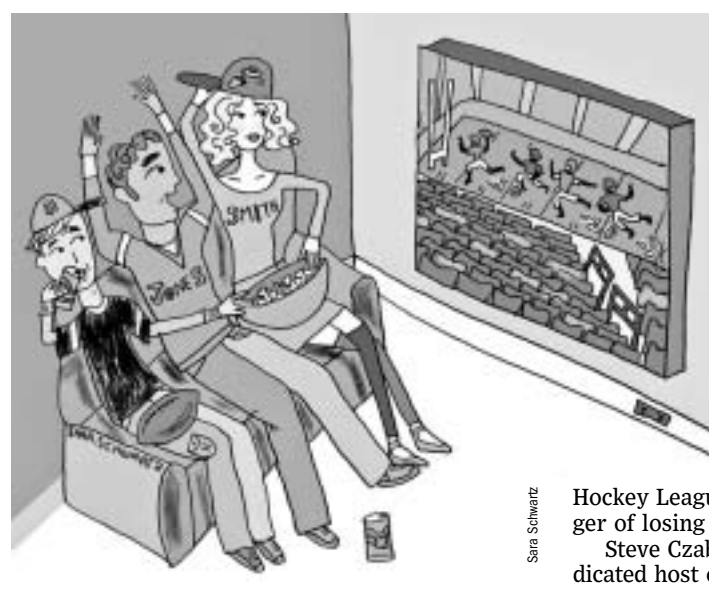
Don't Take Me Out to the Ballgame

By Jonathan V. Last

In an economic crisis, the weak die first. So it was no real surprise that the first sports casualties of the current recession came from minor U.S. professional leagues: Last month the WNBA shuttered its premier franchise, the Houston Comets, and the Arena Football League, which had been scratching out a living since 1987, canceled its 2009 season. The question is, were these failures part of a normal, recessionary, thinning of the herd? Or were they the early warning signs of a pro-sports bubble that may be about to burst.

Viewed from a certain angle, the major American sports leagues (the National Football League, Major League Baseball, and the National Basketball Association) look healthy. On Sunday, the Super Bowl will become the highest-rated American TV broadcast since last year's Super Bowl, continuing the big game's hyperdominance. Television ratings for regular-season NFL games remain solid, even though broadcasts have expanded to five networks. This winter, baseball's top three free agents signed contracts totaling $423 million; up from the $395 million that the top three free agents received in 2007. Total attendance at MLB games in 2008 was off just slightly from the all-time high of 79.5 million. Last year's NBA finals drew their highest TV audience in four years.

However, there also have been troubling signs since the fall of Lehman Brothers last September. The Washington Redskins, which have the highest payroll costs in the NFL, laid off 20 front-office employees. The NFL cut ticket prices 10% toward the end of the season. Commissioner Roger Goodell let go 150 of the 1,100 workers at the league office. The Minnesota Vikings needed help selling out their first home playoff game in eight years—as did the Arizona Cardinals when they hosted their first-ever playoff game en route to the Super Bowl.



Sara Schwartz

For its part, baseball is witnessing a serious erosion of TV ratings, which have been declining for over a decade. This year's World Series was the lowest-rated contest ever. The New York Yankees are building one of the most expensive stadiums ever made—but have yet to sell out their luxury boxes.

TV ratings are down markedly for the National Basketball Association. Although last year's NBA Finals ticked upward from 2007's worst-ever mark, the Nielsen numbers are a fraction of what they were in the early 1980s. NBA attendance figures are flat, but teams at the bottom of the league are losing ground and falling below even professional hockey levels.

Yet teams keep building new stadiums. They're charging bigger premiums for high-end and luxury seats. Parking, concessions and player salaries keep going up, too. Is it all sustainable?

Perhaps. America's obsession with sports has created a nearly continuous 90-year boom. There have been down moments, but neither the NFL nor MLB has ever contracted, ie. eliminated, a team—the ultimate sign of failure. The National Basketball Association hasn't eliminated a franchise either, since it took on its modern form in 1976.

During the Great Depression, baseball did take a significant hit: Attendance dropped 40% from 1930 to 1933 and didn't return to pre-Depression levels until 1945. Player salaries declined 25%. But no teams went belly-up.

> The recession begins to pinch pro sports teams' finances.

Matters might be different this time.

First, franchises have become accustomed to the public financing of stadiums and arenas. During the construction boom of the 1990s, some 50 ballparks, stadiums and arenas were built in the U.S., according to BusinessWeek. On average, taxpayers footed 70% of the bill—even though team owners reaped the benefits. In baseball, for example, Forbes calculates that the median ballpark is worth $100 million to a team, or a quarter of a franchise's total value. In the '90s, teams argued that new stadiums added to a city's economic vibrancy. Yet studies now show that subsidies for sports stadiums actually create a slight drag on the local economy. And even if cities wanted to believe the boosters, the bad times should now make the current crop of publicly financed stadiums the last. The Vikings, for instance, have started asking Minnesota lawmakers about building a new facility for their team. The response has been laughter.

In recent years, teams have also become reliant on revenue from corporate clients, in the form of naming rights and luxury-box purchases. U.S. corporations spend roughly $10 billion a year on sports sponsorships. Those should be the first expenditures ditched by any company looking to save money. There's some evidence that these cutbacks have already begun: No one has stepped up to buy the naming rights to the Giants' or Jets' new stadiums, which were projected to fetch $30 million each.

For the sports lucky enough to have national television contracts, TV revenues are safe—for now. The NFL's current deals run through 2011. MLB has TV deals in place through 2013. The NBA is signed on through 2016. In the meantime, TV networks may find it hard to recoup their investments. Advertising money is always tight during a recession. If the Detroit auto makers don't survive, there will be a lot of open air time on Sunday afternoons that truck ads used to fill. This week, just days before the Super Bowl, NBC was still in active negotiations to sell ad time that usually is snapped up far in advance.

If all of the above were not enough, major-league sports now face an existential threat to their business model: cheap, big-screen, high-definition televisions. Professional sports have been threatened by technology before—for years, MLB refused to allow radio broadcasts of games because team owners were afraid they would cut into ticket sales. Yet in the end, these "threats"—radio, television, color TV—wound up feeding demand for the product.

So why might HDTV be different? First, the cost analysis has changed. It's now more expensive to attend, say, eight NFL or 20 MLB games than it is to buy a large, high-def flat-panel set. And unlike prior technologies, which offered low-resolution approximations of sporting events, high definition offers *better* fidelity than you get in person. Which may be why the NFL experimented this season with broadcasting games at movie theaters in 3-D.

Adding an extra layer of danger for pro sports is the fact that big-time college sports now represent a plausible alternative product. The collegiate levels have made great strides in the quality of play and, unlike the pros, they have relatively fixed costs.

Not everyone believes there's a sports bubble. Smith College sports economist Andrew Zimbalist says that the success of pro sports "has been linked to the underlying success of the economy. As the economy falters, that will tend to drag down pro sports." But Mr. Zimbalist doesn't see any of the Big Three franchises going under, although he allows that the National Hockey League could be in danger of losing a team or two.

Steve Czaban disagrees. A syndicated host on Fox Sports Radio, Mr. Czaban believes that demand for high-end tickets, both lucrative season packages and corporate luxury seats, will shrink. "The worst-case scenario, for example, for the NFL," he says, "is there's a dozen teams that can no longer sell out their home games." That would cause TV problems, he adds, since the NFL restricts broadcasts on games that aren't sold out. And pools of unsold tickets would create further downward pressure on ticket prices as consumers realized they don't need to pay a premium for season packages to get seats. Problems could accelerate from there, particularly for teams in weaker markets.

"The U.S. government is buying banks, major retailers are going under, and a half-a-dozen newspapers are folding up shop," Mr. Czaban says. "Why is it we think this could never happen to sports?"

Mr. Last is a staff writer at the Weekly Standard.

time off

Amsterdam
art
"From Abildgaard to Hammershøi" shows a selection of 80 Danish drawings of landscapes, portraits and studies of the human figure from the first half of the 19th century.
Van Gogh Museum
Until April 5
☎ 31-20-5705-200
www.vangoghmuseum.nl

Athens
art
"The Eras of the Moderns: From Monet to Yves Klein" presents works by 51 major modern European artists, exploring three historic periods of art.
B&M Theocharakis Foundation
Until Feb. 22
☎ 30-21-03611-206
www.thf.gr

Berlin
history
"The German Language" exhibits historic documents, books, art and videos tracing the history of the German language from the Carolingian period to the present day.
German Historical Museum
Until May 3
☎ 49-30-2030-40
www.dhm.de

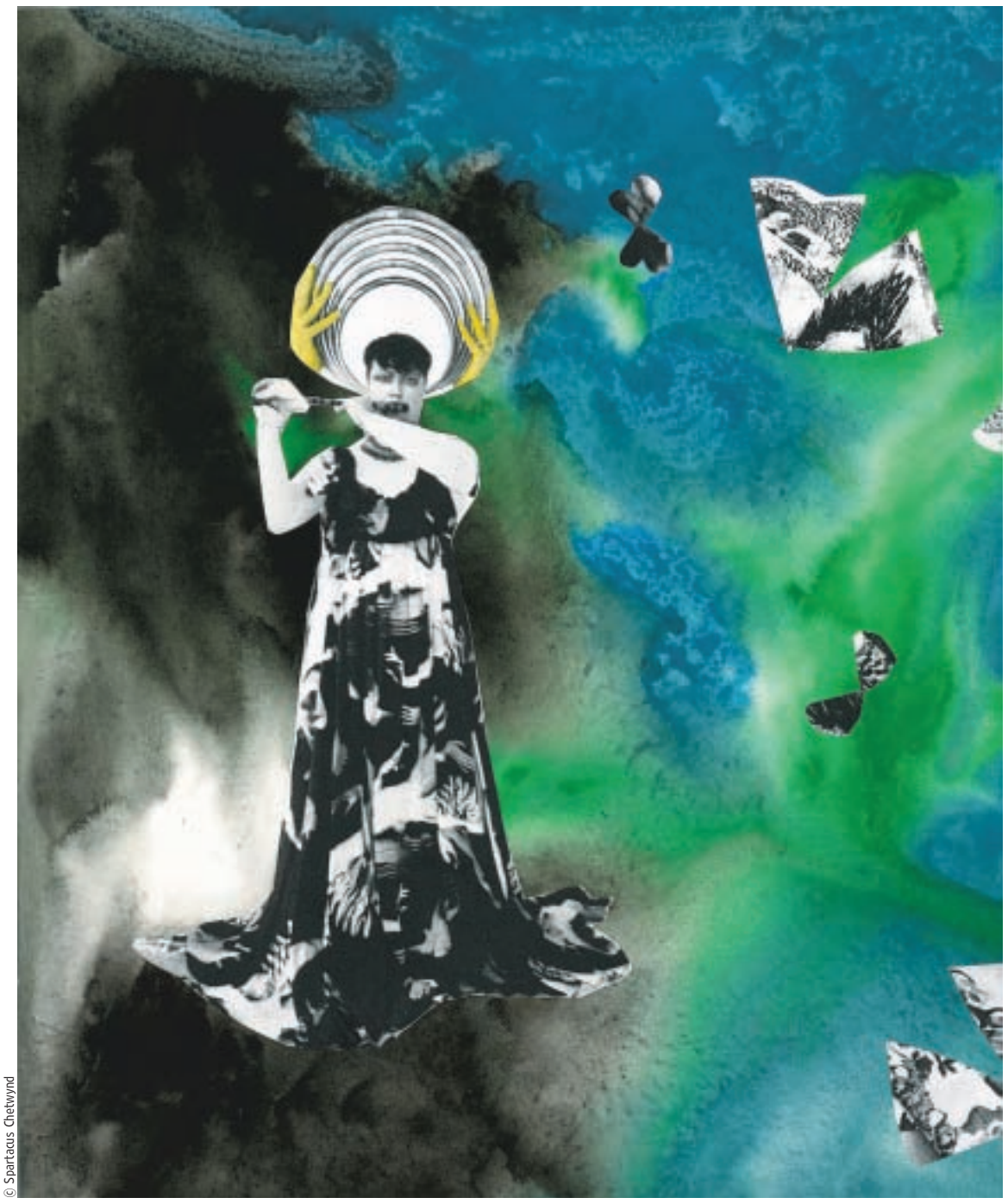
art
"Rothko/Giotto—Tactility in Painting" explores the influence of medieval and Renaissance Italian art on the work of American abstract expressionist artist Mark Rothko (1903-1970).
Kulturforum,
Sonderausstellungshallen
Feb. 6-May 3
☎ 49-30-8301-465
www.smb.spk-berlin.de

film
"Berlinale: Berlin International Film Festival 2009" shows 400 films from around the world, with an international jury that includes Tilda Swinton, Isabel Coixet, Henning Mankell, Wayne Wang and others.
Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin
Feb. 5-15
☎ 49-30-2592-00
www.berlinale.de

Brussels
photography
"Robert Capa—Retrospective" showcases 150 photographs by the war photographer (1913-1954).
Musée Juif de Belgique
Until April 19
☎ 32-2-5121-963
www.mjb-jmb.org

Bucharest
art
"A Forest of Sculptures" presents a collection of 39 sculptures by European artists, including Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti, César, Max Ernst and Kenneth Armitage.
National Museum of Contemporary Art
Until March 1
☎ 40-21-3189137
www.mnac.ro

Florence
art
"Love, Art and Grace—Raphael: The Madonna of the Goldfinch restored" exhibits the newly restored painting "Madonna del Cardellino," or "Madonna of the Goldfinch" by Italian Renaissance painter Raphael (1483-1520).
Palazzo Medici Riccardi
Until March 1
☎ 39-055-2760-340
www.palazzo-medici.it



© Spartacus Chetwynd

Above, 'Hermito's Children, TV Pilot (promotional material),' from 2008, by Spartacus Chetwynd, in London; top, 'Diane' serving dish, 1973, by Alexander Calder, in Rome.

Gdansk
art
"C.h.o.s.e.n." explores the theme of contemporary Messianism through works by 18 artists from Poland and Israel.
Wyspa Institute of Art
Until Feb. 28
☎ 48-58-3204-446
www.wyspa.art.pl

Hamburg
art
"Matisse: People Masks Models" exhibits 110 works by French artist Henri Matisse (1869-1954), exploring portraits in paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints.
Bucerius Kunst Forum
Until April 19
☎ 49-40-3609-960
www.buceriuskunstforum.de

Helsinki
art
"Daughters of Sun Goddess—Japanese Femininity" shows a selection of 600 Japanese wood engravings alongside art by contemporary Japanese artists.
Museum of Foreign Art
Sinebrychoff
Until May 17
☎ 358-9-1733-6460
www.sinebrychoffintaidemuseo.fi

London
art
"Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009" addresses the new culture of globalization in works by contemporary artists working in various media, from painting to film and video.
Tate Britain
Feb. 3-April 26
☎ 44-20-7887-8888
www.tate.org.uk

theater
"Enjoy!" is a dark comedy written by Alan Bennett (born 1934), starring Alison Steadman and David Troughton and directed by Christopher Luscombe.
Gielgud Theatre
Until May 2
☎ 44-20-7850-8740
www.gielgud-theatre.com

Manchester
art
"Witness: Women War Artists" displays works by female war artists from World War I to the Kosovo conflict alongside personal reflections from the artists.
Imperial War Museum North
Feb. 7-April 19
☎ 44-1618-3640-00
north.iwm.org.uk

Paris
film
"Werner Herzog: Adventure Cinema" is a complete 55 film retrospective of the German filmmaker Werner Herzog (born 1942).
Centre Georges Pompidou
Until March 2
☎ 33-1-4478-1233
www.centrepompidou.fr

photography
"Robert Frank, a Foreign Look: Paris/The Americans" shows photography by Robert Frank (born 1924) alongside his films "Pull My Daisy" (1959) and "True Story" (2004).
Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume—site Concorde
Until March 22
☎ 33-1-4703-1250
www.jeudepaume.org

opera
"Yvonne, Princesse de Bourgogne" is the world première of a new opera by Philippe Boesmans, after Witold Gombrowicz's play of the same name.
Théâtre National de l'Opéra—Palais Garnier
Until Feb. 5
☎ 33-1-4001-1789
www.opera-de-paris.fr

Rome
ceramics
"The Conquest of Modernity—Sèvres, 1920/2008" combines the ceramic collection of the Capitoline Museums with more than 100 items of china from the National Sèvres Factory.
Musei Capitolini
Until March 8
☎ 39-6-6710-2457
www.museicapitolini.org

Stockholm
art
"Moderna Museet Now: Tabaimo" shows three animated video installations by Japanese artist Tabaimo (born 1975): "public convenience," "midnight sea" and "dolefullhouse."
Moderna Museet—Museum of Modern Art
Until April 19
☎ 46-8-5195-5200
www.modernamuseet.se

Toulouse
art
"Gothic Masterpieces in Normandy" exhibits Gothic sculpture and gold work from XIIIth to XVth century Normandy.
Ensemble Conventuel des Jacobins
Until April 20
☎ 33-5-6122-2192
www.jacobins.mairie-toulouse.fr

Turin
archaeology
"Egypt's Sunken Treasures" shows artifacts excavated from waters of the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, taking visitors on a voyage back to the Ptolemaic, Byzantine, Coptic and early Islamic eras.
Scuderia Grande—Reggia di Venaria Reale
Feb. 7-May 31
☎ 39-011-4992-333
www.lavenariareale.it

Vienna
art
"Gerhard Richter: Retrospective" shows 80 oil paintings, 80 watercolors and a selection of drawings by the German artist (born 1932).
Albertina
Until May 3
☎ 43-1-5348-30
www.albertina.at

Vilnius
art
"Pirosmani" presents 35 paintings by Georgian primitivist painter Niko Pirosmanashvili (1862-1918), also known as Pirosmani.
Vilnius Picture Gallery—Lithuanian Art Museum
Until May 31
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Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.