FRIDAY-SUNDAY, AUGUST 20-22, 2010

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Garden secrets

Designing France's greatest living landscapes

Wine: Cork taint and other faults | Arts: Edinburgh's rich performance

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Château of Versailles.

COVER, Gardens at the Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, Seine et Marne, France. Photograph by Yann Arthus-Bertrand/Altitude/Achille Duchêne.

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Eric Richmond

The Tallis Scholars, guest performers at Laus Polyphoniae in Antwerp.

WEEKEND JOURNAL.
EUROPE

Barbara Tina Fuhr EDITOR
Elisabeth Limber ART DIRECTOR
Brian M. Carney BOOKS PAGE EDITOR

Questions or comments? Write to wsje.weekend@wsj.com.
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Loaded Language / by Dan Fisher

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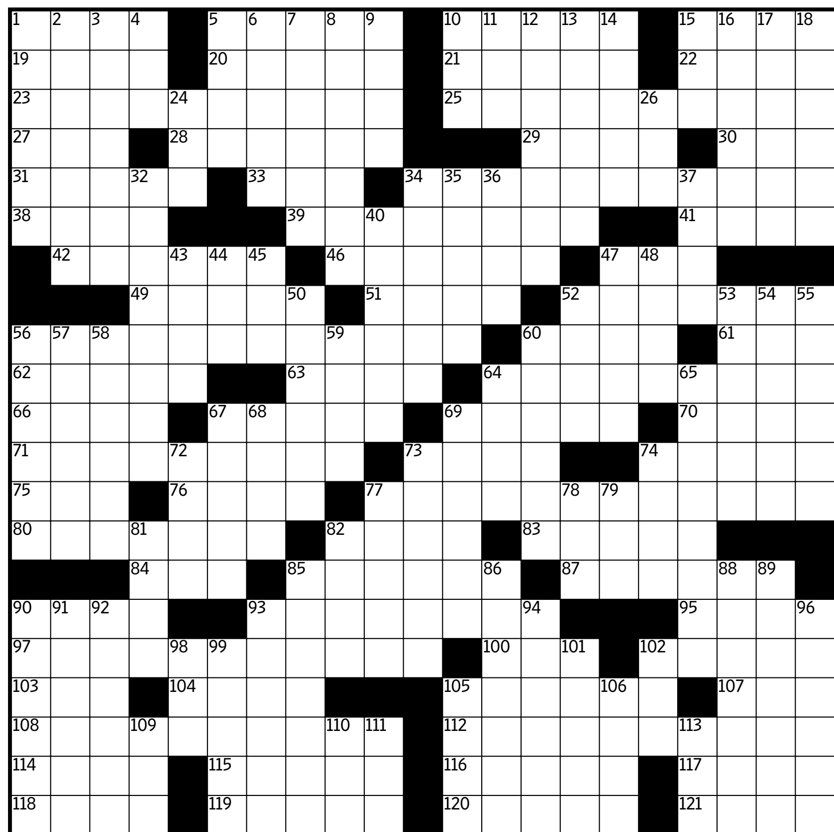

Down

1 Long vowel indicator
2 Coated, as with chocolate
3 Street clothes?
4 Piano player in Rick's place
5 Very
6 ___ water (facing trouble)
7 Waxy compound
8 Edith Wharton novel
9 Itches
10 "Face the Nation" carrier
11 Snickering sound
12 Trimmed
13 Music store section
14 Take a spin
15 Stand buy
16 Welcomes warmly
17 Squire's burden
18 Company known for packing bags
24 Jargon ending
26 Formerly known as
32 Like clear nights, compared to cloudy ones
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68 Gymnastics equipment
69 Hotel offerings
72 Hightailed it
73 Poorly insulated
74 Fence piece
77 "Ready ___..."
78 Indian bread
79 Affirmative for Ahab
81 Delineate
82 Unmannerly sort
85 Unusually lucky
86 Hazard for at-home wrestlers
88 Abstruse stuff
89 Merchant of music
90 Fishing hole maker
91 Five iron, formerly
92 Troupe group
93 Let off
94 Satrap's home
96 Group of five
98 Grand Teton grazer
99 Imogene's comic partner
101 "Real Time With Bill ___"
102 Ohio governor Strickland
105 Golf ball courses
106 Cubicle fixture
109 Louisiana hrs.
110 Sugar suffix
111 Home for un poisson
113 Scolding word to a dog

▶ **Get the solution** to this week's Journal Crossword in Saturday's Wall Street Journal and in next Friday's paper. Solve it online and discuss it at **WSJ.com/Puzzles**

Last Week's Solution

Berlin's new exclusivity

Trendy members-only Soho House feeds angst about elitism in gritty capital

By Vanessa Fuhrmans

Berlin

IN MOST WORLD-CLASS cities, the opening of a Soho House—a string of London-born, ultra-hip private social clubs—marks another exclusive playground for the creative in-crowd. In Berlin, where the members-only brand opened its latest outpost in May, it's sparked an identity crisis.

Launched 15 years ago in the eponymous London neighborhood, the Soho House franchise has spread to New York and Los Angeles, and will open in mid-October in Miami. Belonging requires a certain quotient of hipness—with credentials preferably in the media, entertainment, fashion or art worlds—the endorsement of two members and an annual fee between $935 and $1,800 (€730 and €1,400), depending on the city.

The Berlin club, a hulking Bauhaus building that housed a Jewish department store in the 1920s, then the Hitler Youth's headquarters, opened in glam style. At a preopening party, Damien Hirst spray-painted a shark on a construction wall that now decorates its cavernous, cement-floored lobby. In the weeks afterward, German celebrities such as Wolfgang Joop and director Wim Wenders and other Berlin glitterati have flocked to rub shoulders at the poolside bar or on its chintz-covered sofas.

At first glance, it's easy to see why Soho House founder Nick Jones chose the German capital as the club's first outpost on the Continent: In the 20 years since the fall of the Wall, Berlin has become Europe's hottest cultural mecca, teeming with galleries, night clubs and budding designers—just the kind of creative cool the club seeks to embody. "Berlin is like a child screaming and kicking in all directions, and we want to be part of that," says Chris Glass, the Berlin club's membership manager.

But not all Berliners, proud and protective of their anarchic, gritty brand of cool, are sure they want to grow up into the Soho House's more upscale version of it. The city's creative energy and social scene have long been shaped by the starving artists and hipsters lured by its cheap rents and abandoned building space over the years—the flip side of the capital's nearly 15% unemployment rate (roughly double the German national average) and nearly €60 billion debt burden. "Poor but sexy"—as Berlin's mayor, Klaus Wowereit, inadvertently branded the metropolis in 2003—a large contingent remains stubbornly wary of gentrification symbols, from the rise in rents and strollers in the once avant-garde neighborhood of Prenzlauer Berg to a €2.5 billion airport being built just outside the city. Even BMWs are suspect: Last year a record 270 cars, most of them luxury brands, were torched here.

The resulting reaction to the Soho House has been a mixture of fascination and fretting. "The city's scene still must be convinced of a club in which you have to pay a membership fee," cautioned the daily Berliner Morgenpost. German fashion blog "Les Mads" worried it would be a "step in the wrong direction" to try to "encapsulate" Berlin's creative scene in a members-only club. Vandalizers were more to the point: Shortly after the Soho House project was announced a couple years ago, they grafittied its façade with "No Exclusive Club!" and the insistence that the building become a youth center instead.

"What's special about Berlin is that a creative person without much money can come here and accomplish, contribute something," says Ortwin Rau, who operates a now-cult-status bar, youth center and African and Caribbean art market along the city's Spree river banks. "Tomorrow we'll have a class of creative yuppies instead and they'll create something, too, but it won't be the same."

The eight-story, 1928 building in the city's Mitte district now occupied by the Soho House was one of the city's first department stores to sell goods on credit to the poorer and mostly Jewish residents who lived nearby, but was later "Aryanized" and expropriated by the Nazis. After the war, it served as the East German Communist Party's headquarters and from the late 1950s until the end of the Cold War housed the party's central archives. Then, it stood empty and in crumbling disrepair for more than a decade, until British investors bought it from descendents of the building's original owners.

In recent years, the city's hipster social scene has grown increasingly more upscale with such locales as Grill Royal, a clubhouse-style bistro popular with Berlin's media, art and fashion crowd, and Bar Tausend, a sleekly styled music speak-easy. The China Club, elegantly bedecked with modern Chinese art, caters more to Berlin's establishment than its emerging creative class.

In Berlin, Soho House has sought a different approach. At €900 ($1,155), annual membership costs much less than the $1,800 fee in New York. Soho House tapped a couple of dozen of the Berlin scene's top movers and shakers to recruit 20 to 30 founding members with the right hip and creative credentials.

On the rooftop overlooking the blocks of communist-era prefabricated concrete-slab buildings that still dominate the neighborhood, members can dine poolside on grilled swordfish. But the menu also includes Berlin's signature snack of curry sausage and French fries, for €5, and the lobby has ping-pong and foosball tables. The club is also playing up the site's history. Its dinner-event space, where the first East German president had his offices, has been redubbed the Politburo. A 40-room hotel, with small rooms starting at €100, a still-to-be-opened restaurant and the spa are open to non-members, as well.

Thorsten König, director of Miracle Music and Entertainment, a Berlin-based music industry consulting firm, was asked to help scour for members. Afraid Soho House would be too posh or expensive, "many of the people we asked weren't sure they wanted to do it," he says. But as buzz builds, friends and acquaintances have been clamoring to get in, he says. Still, the city's artists, he adds, have shown less eagerness.

"Berlin is still Berlin; it's still the city that is cheap and practically bankrupt," Mr. König adds, eating sorbet poolside. But, as he sees it, the city and inhabitants are growing up: In Berlin, for something like the Soho House, "this is the right moment."

Espen Eichhofer/Ostkreuz for The Wall Street Journal (2)

Above, a sign in the concrete-floored lobby at Soho House is in line with Berlin's heavily graffitied aesthetic; right, the club's rooftop 'cocktail' pool.

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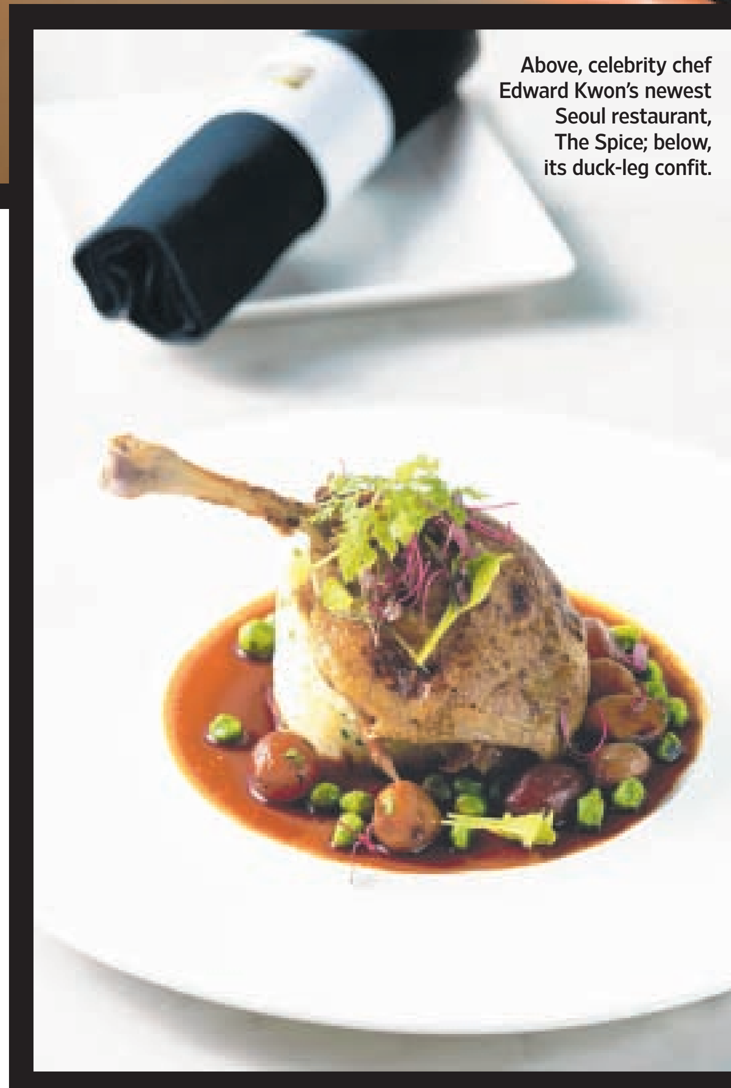
Above, celebrity chef Edward Kwon's newest Seoul restaurant, The Spice; below, its duck-leg confit.



SeongJoon Cho for The Wall Street Journal (2)

Seoul draws foodies

The city offers a surge in international and Korean haute cuisine

BY HELEN SEUNGHEE YOON

Seoul

FOR MANY YEARS, dining in Seoul was distinguished mainly by mom-and-pop restaurants and a late-hours dining called *pojang-macha* in outdoor tents—all serving cheap Korean food.

But over the past few years, Seoul has quietly become a city for foodies. Just this spring, Zagat's, the U.S. publisher of survey-based dining guides, produced its first Seoul edition. The variety and sophistication of restaurants has exploded; foodies seeking Spanish tapas, Uzbeki shurpa and New York-deli style pastrami sandwiches can now find them here. And Korean dishes are being revamped to mirror the broader upgrading.

So while gourmands from outside Asia are still more likely to stop in Tokyo, Hong Kong or Beijing than Seoul, a visitor who hasn't seen the city for a while will be stunned by the options, cuisines and quality that it now has to offer.

The change is largely shaped by the hundreds of thousands of South Koreans who have studied or worked overseas in the past decade, developing a broader palate and keener sensibility about the dining experience along the way. Among them are young Korean chefs who have gone off to train in culinary capitals like Paris, London and New York, then returned to start their own restaurants.

"Ten years ago, it was rare to see chefs who studied overseas," says Lee Yun-hwa, a food critic and chief executive of Diary R, a Seoul-based restaurant-guide publisher. "Now there are so many that people are no longer impressed by an overseas diploma. A great chef should have more than that, such as their own creative recipes."

Both Korean and foreign chefs are experimenting with multicourse menus—a typical Korean meal consists of many dishes served all at once—and more artistic presentation. Their aim is not only to increase its appeal to foreigners, but to show Koreans that their national cuisine, at its best, is on par with the finest French or Italian or Japanese food.

> The food boom in Seoul has also had its gimmicky side, such as the arrival of celebrity-owned restaurants.

The food boom has also had its gimmicky side, such as the arrival of celebrity-owned restaurants.

Here's a snapshot of some of the people and places shaping Seoul dining now:

Boomerang Chefs

When Eo Yoon-geun returned to South Korea in 2003 after seven years in Italy, where he studied at the Culinary Institute of Italy and worked at the Four Seasons Hotel in Milan, his plan was to join a hotel staff. But then a new realization hit.

"I wouldn't be able to try unique things," says the chef. "I wouldn't be able to show the true color of my cooking." So instead he opened his own restaurant, Ristorante Eo. (Italian food, which first appeared in South Korea in the 1950s, is by far the most popular foreign cuisine in the country; hundreds of cafes serve Korean takes—meaning spicy—on spaghetti and risotto.) He thus became a pioneer in the most powerful force transforming the Seoul dining scene: the chef-owned restaurant, of which there are now dozens. Mr. Eo's place is the highest-ranking restaurant in Zagat's new Seoul guide, though he describes his clientele as the type that doesn't need help from a book.

"The people who come here know what good food is," he says.

A few blocks away on the fourth floor of a humbler, multipurpose building, chef Kang Kyung-jin estimates 90% of the business at her tiny French restaurant, Swell, is from repeat customers.

"I know their personal stories, their birthdays and tastes," says Ms. Kang, who opened the four-table restaurant in 2003, after returning from studying at Le Cordon Bleu in London.

Restaurants like hers and Mr. Eo's, she says, attract people because "an owner-chef can be more focused on his or her own cooking style." She says she's resisted customers' suggestions that she expand Swell or open new restaurants. She doesn't want anything that's beyond her control.

"Expansion is meaningless for me," she says.

Upscale Korean

The image of Korean cuisine outside the country tends to be shaped by what people know about kimchi, the cabbage-based condiment that is present at nearly every meal but is hardly representative of the variety and complexity of food here.

An even more constraining idea about Korean food exists inside the country: that it should always be cheap.

Since South Korea's government began two years ago to step up its overseas food-promotion efforts, officials have been wrestling with price and image issues. After a rice wine called makgolli—a downmarket drink at home—became a hit among trendy young Japanese two years ago, government marketers and producers created new bottles and labels, hoping to encourage Koreans to look at it anew.

A few chefs are trying to counter Koreans' preconceptions on price.

Nick Flynn, the Australian executive chef at the two InterContinental hotels in the massive Coex trade

Seong Joon Cho for The Wall Street Journal (2)

Above, Eo Yoon-geun, chef and owner of Ristorante Eo in Seoul; a bit of beef at Ristorante Eo.

tower and convention center, tapped a dozen members from his 400-person staff to experiment with upscale Korean tasting menus.

The team, a mix of old and young chefs from Korea and abroad, came up with a 75,000-won (about €50) prix fixe dinner called "Made in Korea" that rotates seasonally and is served in six courses.

"Not many people are accustomed to eating everything at once, so we thought, Let's focus on individual, smaller portions," Mr. Flynn says.

They aimed for distinctive presentation. Japchae, stir-fried glass noodles with vegetables, eggs and meat, is customarily served in a heap on a dish. Mr. Flynn's team put it in a rice-paper parcel, on a plate with seared scallops, fresh herbs and dabs of the soy-based marinade that's commonly used in the dish.

The menu is built around Korean produce, which Mr. Flynn researches on buying trips several times a year. On a recent trip to Jeju island south of the Korean peninsula, he and a crew of six other chefs made deals with farmers for seafood, a number of varieties of lettuce and spinach, cactus fruit and a crop that's new to the island: apple mangos.

Perhaps the most aggressive attempt to take Korean food upscale can be found in one of Seoul's ritziest areas, Apgujeong, where a restaurant called Jungsikdang offers a menu for two at 200,000 won (about €130). The chefs there even created their own twist on the soybean-paste soup called dwengjang jigae that's a side dish in many meals. They've used the paste, which gives the soup a more intense taste and smell than Japanese miso, as the base for a risotto with cuttlefish, sesame leaves and zucchini.

Star Allure

South Korea's success at exporting movies and TV dramas made many of its actors famous around Asia. A few have capitalized by opening restaurants, as Hollywood actors have for decades.

Movie star Lee Jung-jae started the trend in 1998 with an Italian restaurant, Il Mare, in the Daehakno neighborhood. More recently, actor Bae Yong-joon's "Gorilla in the Kitchen" restaurant near Dosan Park in Apgujeong was for a time so popular that it drew lines of tourists, particularly Japanese women.

The restaurant displays no photos of Mr. Bae, star of "Winter Sonata," part of the "Korean Wave" of TV dramas that became international hits. There's no hint at his involvement. But fans know.

Now, the celebrity-restaurant trend has reached a new stage with the return of 38-year-old Edward Kwon, star of a different sort—a star chef. Ten years of cooking achievements outside Korea have made him a name in food circles back home. In 2003, while working at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco, he was named to a Top 10 list of young chefs by the American Culinary Federation. He went on to work in China and then as senior executive chef at the Burj Al Arab Hotel in Dubai.

Mr. Kwon has opened three restaurants in the past year in Seoul. His newest, The Spice—in Seoul's expat-heavy Itaewon neighborhood—offers dinners for 40,000 won (about €26).

"Everyone thought that I would open up in an expensive area but I wanted to serve value without a high price tag," he says. "My target is not 1% of the population in Seoul. I can cook for the homeless. It doesn't matter who they are."

—Helen Seunghee Yoon is a writer formerly based in Seoul. Evan Ramstad and Jaeyeon Woo contributed to this article.

Finding fault with wine

Wine
WILL LYONS

FINDING FAULT WITH a wine is a snob's dream. I remember one incident a few years ago, when a friend of mine, who had recently entered the wine trade, obviously wanted to impress his female dining companion and make his mark as a man who knew a thing or two about wine. It was the second bottle of an Italian red we had ordered and although, I have to admit, it did smell a little earthy, it was by no means corked. Undeterred, my friend insisted on calling over the sommelier.

Much theatrical posturing ensued in which the sommelier flamboyantly sniffed the cork before pouring himself a tasting measure of the wine in question and, after tasting, confidently declared to the table: "This is not corked." I had to agree but took no pleasure in watching my friend's expression crumple. I can't remember whether he actually brought himself to drink the aforementioned bottle, but I do recall enjoying the wine very much.

The problem with identifying wine faults such as cork taint, oxidation, sediment and tartrate crystals or brettanomyces (a subject I will return to later) is that more often than not there is no fault with the wine at all. It just doesn't taste quite how the drinker expected it to. Take our "earthy" Italian wine. If one is used to a softer, approachable, supple form of wine such as an Australian Merlot instead of the bitter, tannic and dry flavor of an Italian grape variety such as Nebbiolo, then naturally the Italian wine can come as a bit of a shock to the palate.

Similarly, when a wine is served with small pieces of cork floating inside the glass, it isn't actually corked, it is just that the cork has crumbled and fallen into the glass. These may seem basic rules to some but I wager right now there is someone beckoning the sommelier over, arguing that there are small bits floating on his wine and he will under no circumstances drink "corked wine."

So how does one identify corked wine? Firstly, it is worth pointing out that in the U.K. this is becoming less of a problem as more wine producers are reverting to screwcaps. Unfortunately for those wines bottled with a cork, there are still corks that are contaminated with TCA, a chemical compound 2,4,6-trichloroanisole that gives the wine an unmistakable pungent, mouldy odor.

By far a more common fault, in my experience, is the wine that has been ruined through oxidation. This is when a small amount of air has seeped in through the cork, leaving the wine smelling "sherried" or without any discernible fruit characteristics. Rarer these days, but still prevalent in some wines, is the occurrence of opening a bottle to find it is "off," displaying a foul-smelling nose. When I worked in the wine trade a few years back, I learned that this was because of the wine being contaminated by bacteria left over in the winery.

Sediment collected at the bottom of a wine glass can be unpleasant to drink but is entirely natural and expected in wines that are aged. Decanting the wine should avoid this experience. Small tartrate crystals that appear in white wine are also nothing to worry about; they form naturally in the winemaking process.

One fault beloved of wine snobs is that of "brett," or brettanomyces, to give it its full name. Hugely controversial, brett is a yeast that imparts a distinctive flavor to a wine, best described in my experience as a sort of smoky bacon flavor. It is found predominantly in red Bordeaux, and for many the taste actually improves the wine, adding complexity and character. Those who don't like the taste, and there are many, often say that it is a result of bad winemaking.

But as Master of Wine Anthony Barne says: "It is a taste that is almost endemic in older clarets and one we all came to know and love as part of the taste of red Bordeaux.

"If you go back 20 years, it was really the Australians who were perhaps more scientific winemakers then the Bordelais were in general. They had identified brett as what they considered to be a wine fault, and then they were finding it in a lot of clarets and were always looking for an angle as to why Australian wines were superior to French wines. But unless it is really strong, I don't see it as a huge problem, I must say."

A view echoed by Simon Staples, sales director at Berry Bros. & Rudd wine merchants, who says, "It's a fault I rarely come across and if I had to be honest, if you mention it, I don't think most people know what you are talking about." Which is precisely why the wine snobs love it so much.

DRINKING NOW

Château Gruaud-Larose
St. Julien, Bordeaux, France

Vintage: **1996**

Price: **about £75 or €90**

Alcohol content: **12.5%**

Gruaud-Larose is known as one of the 'super-seconds.' I have tasted the '09, '03, '89 and '83 in recent months and have been impressed by its fresh, floral character. The '96 has just a hint of brett amid its forward cherry, spicy notes.

Gardens of delight

Meet the man behind the grand landscape of Versailles

By Lennox Morrison

Paris

TOWARD THE END of his life, King Louis XIV of France was hindered by gout from walking freely through the immense and wondrous gardens he had willed into existence at the Château of Versailles. But that didn't prevent him from dictating, step by step, how visitors were to view them. He prepared at least six different guides, each linked to the season and time of day, so as to ensure the best possible play of light and shadow. For instance, the tour for Marie-Béatrice d'Este, second wife of King James II of England, was designed for July 19 at 6 p.m.

Today, the Sun King's perennially awe-inspiring gardens, a 30-minute train ride southeast from Paris, are officially listed as one of 200 or so "jardins remarquables" (notable gardens) by France's Ministry of Culture—and perhaps the best living guide to them is Alain Baraton.

Known as "The Gardener of Versailles," Mr. Baraton started out at the château as a ticket seller but, thanks to his agricultural school training, he was quickly reassigned to the gardens. Today, he is head gardener for the greater part of the grounds, and he and his wife, Corine, live there in apartments once inhabited by royal favorites, such as the great playwright and actor, Molière.

On an overcast summer morning, the tall windows of Mr. Baraton's office are thrown open to birdsong, his German shepherd Pym sprawls at his feet. The stone walls are lined with timeworn plans of the gardens through the centuries—gardens universally recognized as France's finest expression of art and nature, and as writer Lucien Corpechot adjudged in 1937 "the divine shock of perfection."

As the story goes, in 1661, at age 23, Louis XIV visited Vaux-le-Vicomte, the country estate of his finance minister, Nicolas Fouquet, and was outraged by its magnificence. The young monarch immediately commanded the architect, decorators and gardeners who had worked on it to build him a palace of unsurpassable opulence, with grounds to match.

At the time, Versailles was a foul-smelling swampland and the plans for the gardens drawn up by the king's principal gardener, André Le Nôtre, looked impossibly ambitious. But with an absolute monarch impatient for results, thousands of men were set to work; at one point 36,000 laborers were on site. The transformation they wrought appeared almost miraculous.

Today, the geometric gardens immediately in front of the château remain the model for formal gardens in the French style. The rambling grounds beyond, within which nestles the Normandy-inspired hamlet where Marie-Antoinette played at being a dairymaid, are a superlative example of the romantic, landscaped garden.

Le Nôtre, who masterminded many other famous gardens, remains France's most celebrated gardener. And over the centuries, the men who have tended the living masterpiece of Versailles have found their own way of making their mark.

"We occasionally come across bottles buried by the gardeners who planted them. There's usually a date, a name, sometimes a dedication. I once found a bottle dated 1850, which was very moving," explains Mr. Baraton, who today directs a team of 70 gardeners. As an author of many books on Versailles and on gardening, and with his own radio show on France Inter, the 52-year-old Mr. Baraton reveals the "detective work" involved in restoring the gardens to their original colors. Having spotted a painting of the gardens by 18th-century artist Jean Cotelle depicting red, blue, pink and white in the flower beds of the Grand Trianon, Mr. Baraton raked through ancient archives to find the original seed orders. By comparing these with literary accounts of the period, he was able to double check which varieties were brought to flower.

His latest book, "Walks in the Gardens of Versailles," was published in June by Art Lys in English: His insider's tip is to view castle and gardens "back to front" from the vantage point of L'Etoile Royale, a star-shaped meeting of paths at the far end of the Grand Canal.

"It's a very beautiful and astonishing spot," Mr. Baraton says. "You're surrounded by nature and yet you see the whole castle laid out in front of you just as the King imagined it."

To uncover more about France's outstanding gardens, head to the Tuileries Gardens (www.louvre.fr/llv/musee/jardins_tuileries.jsp) in Paris. Burrowed within the 17th-century stone walls of a former royal guard house is the Librairie des Jardins, the country's foremost horticultural bookshop.

On a recent blazing summer afternoon, in the cool vault of her underground office, bookshop director Françoise Simon sparks with enthusiasm about her stock of more than 4,000 books and her polyglot, horticulturally savvy staff.

"We're always happy to answer queries from the public," she says. "And we also act as a point of connection between gardeners and publishers and authors. Books have come into being out of ideas first discussed here."

Asked to name her best-loved gardens, Ms. Simon produces a long, handwritten list. Among her favorites is the sumptuous Château de Chantilly, a 45-minute drive north of Paris, where Le Nôtre—before being set to work at Versailles—created a masterpiece in leaf and flower for Louis II de Bourbon Condé.

"Le Nôtre liked to work with light, with sunset and sunrise," she says. "You can see that very clearly at Chantilly. The gardens are very elegant, à la française, and complete harmony reigns between château and gardens."

Another of Ms. Simon's choices is the entire town of Cahors in Lot, in southwestern France, five-and-a-half hours' drive from Paris. In keeping with the architecture of the oldest quarter, the streets have been planted with 30 gardens on a medieval theme. A walking tour, called "The Secret Gardens of Cahors," has won a listing from the Ministry of Culture.

'A garden is like an outside room, and a room fascinates us not when we discover it all at once but when we let ourselves be surprised by it, gradually.'

Designed by landscape gardener Patrick Charoy, director of the town's nature, cities and gardens department, and opened in 2002, the tour can be followed year-round with a free map from the tourist office on Place François Mitterrand or by looking out for the trail of bronze acanthus leaves set in the pavement (www.tourisme-lot.com/en).

While all the gardens are medieval in atmosphere, some are also historically authentic. "I searched through ancient manuscripts to find out what was being planted at the time. The result is that, for instance, in the Monk's Vegetable Garden you'll see fennel, nettles, arugula, marigolds and orache—an early variety of spinach—but not tomatoes, aubergines, peppers and sweetcorn, which only came to Europe after Christopher Columbus's voyages to America," Mr. Charoy says.

Ms. Simon adds, "Thanks to the flowers and plants, the old buildings really come alive. It's truly innovative. Medieval and yet at the same time contemporary."

One of the delights in Cahors, she says, is the tiny scale of some gardens. "A large garden has the power to impress us but a small garden can touch our emotions. I need to visit both types of garden."

Her sentiments are shared by Christian Maillard, secretary of the Conservatoire des Jardins et Paysages, France's national association to protect and promote gardens and landscapes. "You must be able to experience an emotion," he says. "When I visit a garden what remains with me afterward are the special moments; a lawn of squirrels, a wisp of mist, a special effect of the light, a meeting with the owner who shares his memories.

"A garden is like an outside room and a room fascinates us not when we discover it all at once but when we let ourselves be surprised by it, gradually," continues Mr. Maillard, co-author of the guidebook "Parcs et Jardins en France," published by Rivages in 2008.

He recommends the Jardins de l'Imaginaire (Gardens of the Imagination) in Terrasson-Lavilledieu in the Dordogne, about five hours' drive south of Paris (www.jardins-imaginaire.com). Opened in 1996, the six-hectare site features a dedicated water garden but also makes use of water throughout to express the underlying theme: the history of mankind. The beauty of reflections in water is perhaps

Corbis (2 top); Alamy (1 mid bottom); Sam Thekkethil; http://www.flickr.com/photos/natureloving (bottom left)

Clockwise from upper left, the Hedge Maze Garden at the Château of Villandry; gardens at the Château of Versailles; Alain Baraton at Versailles; swirl of flowers in Versailles; a pavilion in the gardens of Versailles.

William Daniels for The Wall Street Journal Europe

best viewed along the sinuous banks of the River Loire, famously rich in fairytale châteaux.

"Water is used to symbolize the passage of time, which sometimes moves as swiftly as a torrent and sometimes as regularly as a great river. As you explore the gardens you come upon fountains and water jets, waterfalls and pools," Mr. Maillard says.

The presence of water, he adds, is a crucial element in any garden. "The sound of water and the reflections within it bring a sense of peacefulness and yet at the same time they bring life."

Among the enchanting gardens described in her guidebook "Jardins des bords de Loire" ("Gardens on the Banks of the Loire"), published in 2005 by Editions Ouest-France, award-winning author and horticultural expert Lucienne Deschamps recommends Château de Villandry in Indre-et-Loire. Completed in the 1530s, it is the last of the large châteaux to be built in the Loire Valley in Renaissance style (www.chateauvillandry.com).

"It's absolutely typical of a Renaissance garden with a very regular design, and there are raised terraces so that the gardens can be viewed from above," Ms. Deschamps says. "Part of the specific character of Villandry is that vegetables are used as a decorative element. For instance, artichokes, Swiss chard, cabbages. The plantings change every year according to the colors and foliage desired."

Back at Versailles, Mr. Baraton tells a story about Le Nôtre, the landscape gardener who basked permanently in his monarch's favor, an unusual occurrence at Louis XIV's court. "When Le Nôtre was an old man it was the king himself who pushed him through the gardens in a wheelchair," Mr. Baraton says.

If the Sun King could somehow revisit the gardens today, would they meet with His Majesty's approval?

"He'd be very happy with the work of the gardeners. He wouldn't see the same tools as were used in his day but he would see that the spirit of the gardeners remains the same."

—Lennox Morrison is a writer based in Paris.

❖ Golf

Crosswoods Indoor Golf Center in Chandler, Arizona.

Brandon Sullivan for the Wall Street Journal

Driving into the future

Simulated golf is taking players into a course of their own

By Jeff Neuman

THE GAME OF golf has a lot to answer for—complex rules, white belts, high levels of frustration and profanity—but at least when you play, you're out in the elements, interacting with the natural world.

Unless you're not.

"The mainstream golf world doesn't grasp the idea that there are a lot of rounds of golf being played indoors," said Bill Bales, the founder and chief executive officer of aboutGolf, which designs and manufactures golf simulators endorsed by the PGA Tour and used on the U.S. Golf Channel's instructional show "The Golf Fix." "They don't count these rounds, but [the golfers] are wearing shoes, using their clubs and balls, having a satisfying experience playing against each other and by themselves.

"I really think we can grow the game of golf beyond the circle of current golfers by creating this thing that is like the game outdoors, but you can do it at night, you can do it for an hour, you can do it without anyone behind you trying to hurry you along."

Golf simulators have been around since the early 1970s. They were amusement-park novelties, tucked in the back of a retail shop or in a forgotten corner of a golf center. Today they're serious pieces of equipment, with a $50,000-$60,000 (€39,000-€46,000) price tag and engineering worthy of a space shot. But are they golf?

"The hardest thing to do is to convince someone who played in a sim 15 years ago to come and check it out," said Ken Reynolds, who was partner and chief operating officer of the EverGreens Indoor Golf Center near Lake George, N.Y. Those antediluvian machines featured grainy photos of a course projected onto a simple screen; you whacked a ball into the screen, a device measured the time it took for the ball to pass through two points, and after calculating and extrapolating, it told you your distance and transported you to your next location.

Today's most advanced simulators put you in a true 3-D environment, as though you've been transported physically into an ultra-high-definition video game. Stereoscopic cameras are trained on the hitting zone, where they record club speed, ball speed, launch angle and all components of spin. The flight of the ball, projected into the virtual course in the time it takes the ball to hit the screen, replicates the shot that would result in the outside world with remarkable precision.

Full-swing simulators have to serve two distinctly different purposes: entertainment and performance. The entertainment side is on display at the indoor golf centers that are springing up. In the U.S., golf leagues have taken the place of bowling leagues for an evening's recreation; there are couples leagues, skins games, match play, all taking place on simulations of great courses from all over the world. Brad Lefebvre, chief development officer for the Crosswoods Indoor Golf Centers in the Phoenix area, travels with a group of friends who use the simulators to familiarize themselves with the places they're going to play.

"I can bring a client in, and we can play in two hours," said Mr. Lefebvre. His leagues attract golfers looking to avoid the blistering summer heat and occasional winter rains—"it's the first time in my business life I pray for bad weather"—and ladies' nights draw a full house for a round of golf and wine tastings.

But it's the performance side where things have changed the most. The old simulators were notorious for simplifying ball flight. The swing that gave you a big drive down the fairway indoors might produce a duck-hook on the course; the machines were useless for serious practice. Today, they provide all the feedback a golfer can handle, an abstract of angles and velocities for every shot.

Dave Hollinger, the head men's golf coach at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, is sold on the value of the simulator for his players. "We had one kid who didn't hit the ball high enough to get out of chutes and over trees," he said. "He worked all winter on getting his ball flight right, and this kid reached the round of 16 at the U.S. Amateur Public Links championship, and finished seventh at the Canadian Amateur."

Some Tour pros are taking notice. Luke Donald, currently 10th in the Official World Golf Rankings, put an aboutGolf simulator in his Chicago home a year ago. "I use it in the winter as a way to practice, simulate real golf, and play some golf courses that we play on tour," he said in a phone interview. "The thing I like compared to other simulators is you can work the ball left to right and right to left and it's very accurate. Others I've seen, to draw the ball you have to aim out far to the right to bring it in, but this one reflects how the ball really moves in flight."

On full shots, the simulator delivers on its promises of realism and accuracy. But roughly half the shots in a round of golf are played from within 50 yards of the hole, and it's here that the indoor game requires some large mental adjustments.

On touch shots like pitches and chips, golfers generally pick out a target visually and play the ball to that point. On a simulator, you have to play from information instead of what you see. If you're 30 yards from the green, you have to develop the feeling of hitting the ball 30 yards; it becomes a question of muscle memory rather than hand-eye coordination and judgment. The putting elements have improved, but they call for a similar adjustment; you have to learn how softly to stroke an eight-foot putt toward a hole on a screen 25 feet away. The good thing is, we can all use more time practicing eight-foot putts, but it's difficult to hold onto that feeling when you go back outside and face a whole different set of sensory inputs.

No simulator can prepare a player for the variety of lies and ground conditions he'll find on the course. Every lie on an artificial mat is level; uphill, downhill, and sidehill lies require knowledge and practice you can't get indoors. The simulator will deduct distance for a shot out of thick rough, but that does little to help you learn how to hit it. And there's no way to simulate the techniques you need from sand.

A beginner trained solely on simulators will face some eye-opening challenges when he emerges from his bubble. But they've clearly advanced beyond the gimmick or toy stage, to become a valuable tool for golfers looking to improve—which is to say, all of us.

Arbitrage

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Note: Prices of a 40-inch Bravia LX900, plus taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

❖ Top Picks

Mastering the abstract impulse

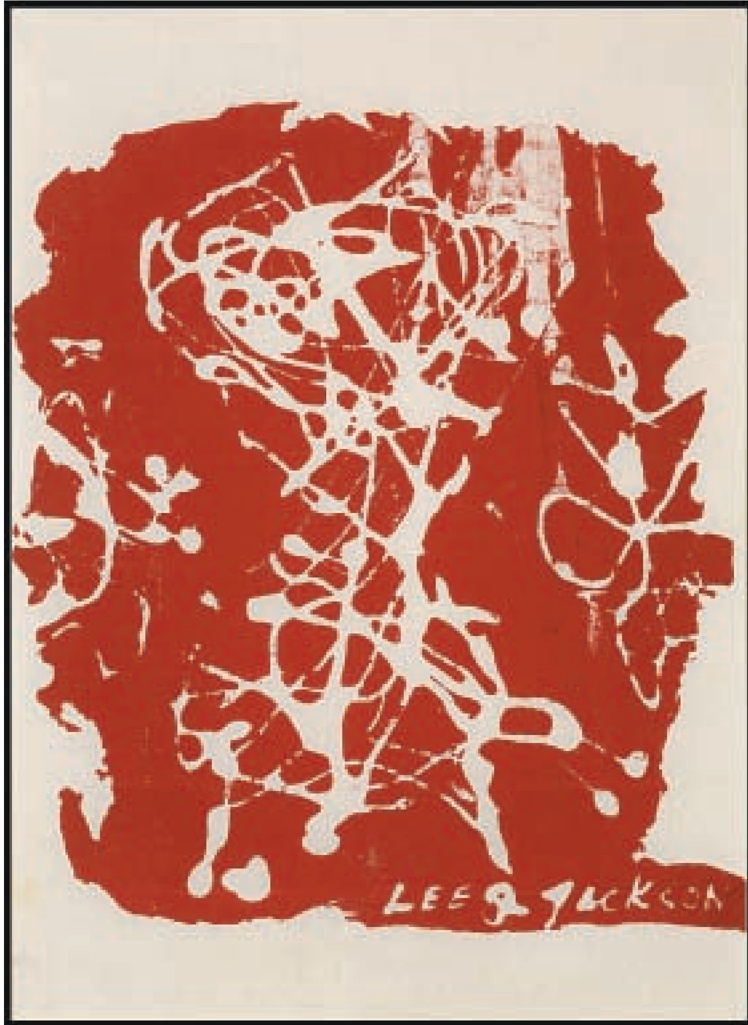
BERLIN: Paris artist Hans Hartung can feel like European modernism's missing link. Born, raised and educated in Germany, Hartung (1904-89) was old enough to absorb the living legacy of German Expressionism and ingenious enough to find his own way to abstraction in liberated Paris. His work is often grouped together with that of other French abstract painters, like Jean Dubuffet and Pierre Soulages, allowing us, if we wish, to consider him part of Tachisme, France's answer to American Abstract Expressionism. We can also place him, more generally, in the movement known as L'Art Informel, a broad critical term that sometimes embraces the whole of abstract painting. However, a new exhibition in Berlin shows that he is also a link to the age-old German tradition of printmaking.

Earlier this year, the Berlin State Museums received a large donation of over 200 Hartung prints, and the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin's superlative museum of prints and drawings, has used the occasion to mount a major show of graphic art called "The Esprit of Gestures: Hans Hartung, Informel, and its Impact." We can see several decades of Hartung's lithographs, etchings and woodcuts placed alongside graphic works by artists as diverse as Jackson Pollock and Damien Hirst.

The Berlin show demonstrates that works on paper are masterful vehicles for the abstract impulse. A 1950 untitled print by Pollock compresses into two dimensions the qualities of a richly textured action painting. And Hartung's own graphic work from the same years, like a 1953 etching of finely overlapping black lines, also distills the effect of his paintings.

The show goes on to chronicle Hartung's full development as a graphic artist, culminating in his serene woodcuts from the 1970s, when bamboo-like stalks replaced the harsh scratches of his middle years. Like the woodcuts of Dürer and Cranach, or Nolde and Kirchner centuries later, these pieces are at once austere and elaborate, using black ink to reach depths that a full palette rarely can. —*J. S. Marcus*

Until Oct. 10
www.smb.museum



'Ohne Titel' (ca. 1950) by Jackson Pollock.

© Pollock-Krasner Foundation / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2010

Style and splendor in Paris

Collecting
MARGARET STUDER

THE GLAMOROUS BIENNALE des Antiquaires will next month launch the autumn season of European fine art and antiques fairs.

The 25th Biennale (Sept. 15-22) takes place in Paris at the glass-domed Grand Palais, one of the world's most splendid exhibition centers dating back to 1900 and the golden age of the Belle Époque.

Some 80 dealers will offer paintings, sculpture, drawings, decorative objects, furnishings and more, covering ancient to modern times.

Among them will be Bernheimer-Colnaghi of London and Munich. On this stand will be a gourmet's delight in "The Oyster Eater," a painting of a young man tucking into some plump specimens, by Paris-based 17th-century artist Henri Stresor (price: €1.75 million). "The Ill-Matched Lovers," a 16th-century canvas by Lucas Cranach the Elder and his studio featuring a lascivious old man and a knowing young woman is priced at €680,000. At the time, the theme of the deadly sins of lust and avarice personified in the pair was popular.

Galerie Schmit of Paris, which specializes in French masters of the 19th and 20th centuries, will bring Pierre Bonnard's "Nu accroupi penché en avant" (1918), a painting in gentle pastel colors of a nude woman (price: €1.7 million). Marc Chagall's colorful flower painting, "Femme profil avec un bouquet de fleurs" (circa 1958-59), will be priced at €900,000.

Seven international jewelers will also have stands, including Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Harry Winston and Piaget. Piaget will be taking part for the first time. "The Biennale has become an inescapable venue for jewelers," says Piaget Chief Executive Officer Philippe Léopold-Metzger. Piaget will show around 60 handcrafted models, including a dashing white gold ring set with 182 brilliant cut diamonds, green tourmaline, emeralds and a citrine in the shape of a lemon slice (price: 83,500 Swiss francs). The ring was inspired by the Cuban cocktail, Mojito.

Bernheimer-Colnaghi (2)

Top, 'The Ill-Matched Lovers' (16th century) by Lucas Cranach the Elder; price: €680,000. Above, 'The Oyster Eater' by Henri Stresor; estimate: €1.75 million.

Inside Mr. Olbricht's curious collection

KREMS, AUSTRIA: As an endocrinologist, Thomas Olbricht kept a vitrine full of miniature ambulances in his waiting room. The cars served as ice-breakers, easing patients into conversations that eventually must have wended their way into the intimate and uncomfortable details of pending medical procedures. These days, Mr. Olbricht no longer practices medicine, but he still collects, now mostly art.

Heir to the Wella hair-care company, Mr. Olbricht recently opened his collection—one of Europe's biggest—to the public for the first time. It spans a wide variety of artists and periods, mostly grouped according to hefty themes such as love, death or time. Critical reaction was swift and near unanimous.The collection was derided as campy, and overly spectacular, a cautionary example of what happens when too much money meets bad taste.

The adventurous, and at times eyesore-inducing, collection of the former doctor is now at the Kunsthalle Krems, Austria. There, the thrills begin in a *wunderkammer*, or a modern cabinet of curiosities, where, in Renaissance tradition, art and natural and man-made artifacts mingle to astonishing effect. Juxtaposed with a taxidermied Siamese goat is a tiny, anatomically correct model of a pregnant woman, carved from ivory for teaching purposes in the 17th century, as well as memento mori-filled works from Albrecht Dürer from 1498 and contemporary artists such as Cindy Sherman, Damien Hirst and Ged Quinn.

The next rooms are titled "Religion," "Love" and "Sex," and all their attendant color and spectacle begin to feel like emotional manipulation until you come across the quiet surprises that also lurk inside. There is Wang Du's cheeky sculpture, "Femme, Femmme, Femm, Fem, Fe…" (2006), which shows three versions of the same woman, either with an outsized torso, outsized legs or at normal size. In the room "War and Terror," Jacque Callot's 1633 series on the misery of war is juxtaposed with Francisco de Goya's "Los Desastres de la Guerra" (1810), Jake and Dinos Chapman's 1999 abstracted, cartoon version that references Goya's, as well as other, lesser works with similar motifs.

And therein lies the rub: over the last 20 years, Mr. Olbricht has assembled both serious works as well as kitsch, works by superstar artists as well as little known ones. That he manages to collect according to some own internal register should be enough for a conversation starter, just like the ambulances in his old waiting room. —*Helen Chang*

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Achim Kukulies

'Irene' (1980) by Franz Gertsch.

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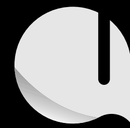

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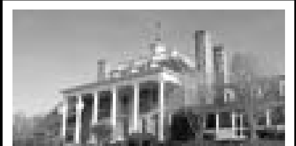

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Edinburgh's rich performance

By Paul Levy

Edinburgh

THE THEME OF the 63rd Edinburgh International Festival is "Oceans Apart." The words, says Australian director Jonathan Mills in his program statement, are intended to convey both "images of the harsh physical journeys" of exploration from the 14th century, supposed dates of the first, pre-Columbus voyages of discovery, and also the brutality of "colonial invasion." "Oceans Apart" gives us a way to find common threads among performances so culturally diverse as to be radically different, such as a Samoan choreographer's take on "The Tempest," or a Chilean group's fusing of cinema and theater, or an American rock/gospel riff on Sophocles's "Oedipus at Colonus." Given what I've been able to hear and see already, it makes sense.

The EIF, which takes place this year from Aug. 13-Sept. 5 (along with 11 other events around the same time including the Fringe, Book, Film and Television festivals, known collectively as the "Edinburgh Festival"), seems as rich as any EIF I can remember in the nearly half-century that I have been coming to the festivals. The only problems I've encountered are to do with needing to turn the volume control up or down. The opening event at the revamped Usher Hall was a concert performance of American composer John Adams's millennium commission "El Niño" by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by James Conlon, with the huge Edinburgh Festival chorus, augmented by members of a girls choir, three soloists and an ethereal trio of countertenors. They made an impressive noise, and though I suspect it was difficult to make out the words, most of the audience benefited from a printed libretto—reading which has made me wonder whether it could possibly be worth the bother to stage this fascinatingly demanding piece.

The 11 a.m. Queen's Hall performances are usually the musical highlight of the festival for me, but this year I've attended only mezzo Magdalena Kozená's luscious recital of 16th- and 17th-century Italian vocal works, "Lettere amorose," with the period instrument group, Private Musicke, which played a couple of instrumental numbers by the Spanish Gaspar Sanz (c. 1640-1710) that struck me as the complex rhythmical mother of all rock music. On Monday, I'm looking forward to Simon Keenlyside's recital with Martin Martineau, which includes Schumann's "Dichterliebe."

Carl Heinrich Graun's opera "Montezuma" was known to me only because its (Italian) libretto was by Prussian king Frederick the Great (1712-86). Indeed, it is a wonderfully weird mixture of Voltairean attitudes to religion and Protestant political liberalism; but the Baroque music is worth performing. If you like falsettists (I do), "Montezuma" has at least three—the Mexican emperor himself, Cortes and his Spanish captain. Director Claudio Valdés Kuri has provided his stage crew with ample occasions for humor and wry Postmodernist comment, and even the music director, Gabriel Gerrido, joined in the fun. As the innocent, noble, near-naked celebrant of human sacrifice Montezuma, Flavio Oliver manages his top notes even after a startling back-flip. His betrothed, sung by soprano Lourdes Ambriz, goes him one better: performing coloratura passages while climbing the steps of an Aztec Pyramid on her back.

Volume control problems cropped up at the New York theater troupe Elevator Repair Service's marvellously straightforward staging of Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises." This was the world premiere of director John Collins's piece, which simply tells the story as it is in the novel, narrated by Jake Barnes (Mike Iveson), but with appropriate moments of minimal scenery and props, and mime and vigorous dance. It was, however, too long; and I have it on the best authority (Mr. Mills himself told me) that it has been cut by 45 minutes for future performances.

The Opéra de Lyon's exuberant hip-hop film plus animation plus live CCTV "Porgy and Bess" was distressingly loud. The reason seemed to be that the Lyon orchestra pit is very deep, and the band was unable to change their dynamics to cope with the Edinburgh Festival Theatre's ground-floor-level arrangement. Conductor William Eddins found it impossible to prevent his orchestra drowning out the talented cast of youngish soloists, who did their best with the politically incorrect South Carolina "Gullah" dialect of the libretto. Porgy (played in a wheelchair throughout by Derrick Lawrence) and Bess (a glorious soprano, Janice Chandler-Eteme) would have been more convincing if they'd sung their duets facing each other and making eye-contact; but when they did, we couldn't hear a note. On the other hand, the energy with which the singers and dancers used the split-level stage almost made up for the noise.

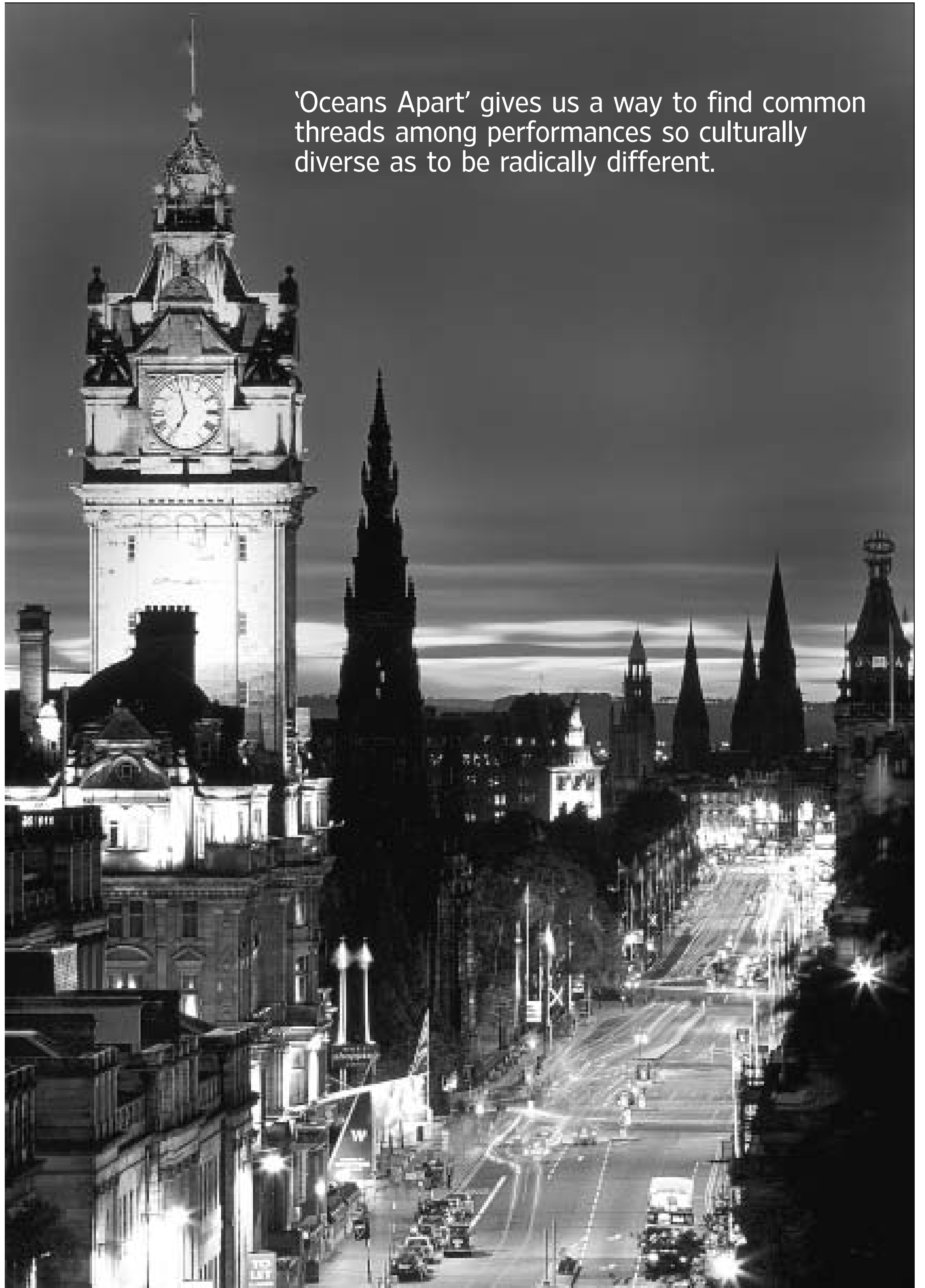
The Cleveland Orchestra appeared just as the scandal about banning distinguished Cleveland music critic, Don Rosenberg, from writing about them was in the news. There was a volume problem with the kooky first half of their first program—two organ pieces by Charles Ives and his ear-splitting "From the Steeples and the Mountains" for four sets of tuned bells, trumpet and trombone. But we soon realized these were really chosen for their brevity, so that we could manage Bruckner's Eighth symphony and still get home at a decent hour. There is little that needs saying, except that in Bruckner's four mighty movements the Cleveland Orchestra proved that they are still one of the world's great musical beasts. With Franz Welser-Möst conducting, this titanic piece reverberated alike in the Usher Hall and in the souls of the audience.

Still to come: a terrific program of dance; Lee Breuer's soul music version of a Greek tragedy, "The Gospel at Colonus," (Aug. 21-23); the world premiere of Alistair Beaton's "Caledonia," (which deals with a late 17th-century financial crash caused by speculation; Aug. 21-26); and the European premiere of Brett Dean's Opera Australia "Bliss" (Sept. 2 and 4).

Fringe tips: Michael Morpurgo's "Farm Boy," the sequel to "War Horse" (until Aug. 30) and Peter Straker's cabaret performance "I'm Still Here" (until Aug. 30).

Paul Levy is a writer based in Oxfordshire.

'Oceans Apart' gives us a way to find common threads among performances so culturally diverse as to be radically different.



'The Sun Also Rises' on show at the festival; top, Edinburgh's Princes Street with the Balmoral Hotel.

Alex McKnight, top, Gary Yeowell/Getty Images

Longest River, Wide Adventure

By Hugh Pope

When Dan Morrison began a 3,600-mile road-and-river journey down the length of the Nile River, he started at Lake Victoria in Uganda. As he reports in "The Black Nile," his account of the grueling trip, he was led to a rooming house on an island and shown a "six-by-seven windowless cell." The ceiling was "a layer cake of plastic, tree branches, more plastic and corrugated metal, all covered by a moss of dusty cobwebs. A red plastic basin of dirty water sat near the door; a foam mattress occupied half the floor." The walls were painted "an optimistic blue," and he was similarly full of hope: "It's perfect," he told his host.

The windowless cell turns out to be one of the nicer places he stays on the trip through Uganda, Sudan and Egypt to the Nile's terminus in the Mediterranean. This is hard-core travel: struggling through thigh-sucking holes in treacherous beds of matted hyacinth and papyrus, enduring the maddening frustrations of broken-down bureaucracies, and coping with the long silences and sudden terrors of bush wars.

Mr. Morrison's trip is more alongside the river than on it. The Nile's beguiling line on the map has not been a through-route for many decades. The collapse of colonial empires, wars and the failings of modern states have made several stretches virtual no-go zones for outsiders except missionaries and a few stubborn Cairo-to-the-Cape adventurers—some of whom pay for their romantic dreams with their lives.

His quest, he says, is to bind together and make better sense of a region mostly known for its many dead ends, like the ancient land of the Nubians steadily being submerged behind dams, or the vast, mysteriously burning Sudanese swamps of the Sudd. Mr. Morrison is also a writer in search of material: In an early mission statement, he declares himself "tired of struggling for crumbs of piecework from a fast-shrinking roster of newspapers and magazines. The hustle made me feel small. I needed to do something big."

Finishing the trip was certainly an achievement. The harder the going for Mr. Morrison, the more expressive his writing. He describes the "visual tinnitus" of flat waters and swamp plants. He starts the day with muscled arms that are "coiled pythons" but after long hours of paddling are turned into "useless sleeves of cement." He rides in a Land Cruiser madly driven on "invisible currents of wet paste." A truck ride in Sudan is intensely comic, recounted by the author with slow-motion precision as the gear-shift breaks off and the resourceful driver puts his foot on the clutch and opens up the under-floor transmission so that he can still change gears—with a screwdriver.

Dangers, amusing road-trip predicaments and well-turned phrases compensate for the book's lack of an over-arching argument. Mr. Morrison wears his journalistic experience lightly—he sets out with a tourist map so poor and out of date that, he discovers, it puts towns on the wrong side of national borders. But his reporting background allows him to step back for some deft backhanded analysis. He notes, for instance, that Egypt's crumbling inertia makes the entire country feel like a "slow-decaying element."

The Black Nile
By Dan Morrison
(Viking, 320 pages, £16.99)

The book is at its best in Sudan, describing a country torn between the dividing lines of many Nile worlds: Muslim and Christian, desert and jungle, oil wealth and poverty, Arab and African. Mr. Morrison shows how hard it will be after years of war and famine to reintegrate the south with the north, or for the south to govern itself as an inclusive, coherent state. He finds an occasional ray of hope—people seem surprisingly ready to let bygones be bygones, as when he has to hunt hard in Malakal for any physical or political damage caused by street battles a few months before. But a sense of foreboding is more common. He meets a Sudanese aid official who tells him: "A girl child here has a nine times better chance of dying in childbirth than of finishing primary school."

Alamy
A shallow, rocky stretch of the Nile River near Aswan, Egypt.

"The Black Nile" is not so much about the river as it is about the lands where it flows. Mr. Morrison travels mostly by minivan, jeep or truck. On the Nile itself, he rides through southern Sudan in a Norwegian aid group's raft, bristling with soldiers and weapons in case of attack from forces opposed to the Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He boards a ferry to voyage down Lake Nasser, the long lake formed in the 1960s by the late Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser's Aswan High Dam. And early in the trip, accompanied for a while by a childhood friend, Schon Bryan, Mr. Morrison paddles a canoe on the river. But the two never open Mr. Bryan's bag of fishing rods.

Even if he wasn't often wet with more than perspiration, Mr. Morrison does pay ample attention to the Nile's troubles as a waterway. The problems begin at its source, where the over-fished Lake Victoria is increasingly clogged with hyacinth, which has to be mechanically hauled out. Three decades ago, the author tells us, fish were abundant and many of them five feet long; Mr. Morrison sees fishermen making do with undersize 15-inchers.

One Ugandan "Nilometer" measuring the river's ever-varying level shows the river below the lowest recordable mark. Demands on the Nile's bounty can only grow as tributary states above Egypt and Sudan— Uganda and Ethiopia in particular—are making new demands for water as they seek to develop their own agriculture. The author's clear-eyed asides illustrate the conflicts of interest over various countries' needs for power-generating, flood-controlling dams. At the site of Sudan's new Merowe Dam, "cement trucks churned on the tarmac, men walked with hard-work swaggers, and—whatever the serious human rights issues, the forced displacement, the lack of environmental review, the destruction of farmland, the arrest and torture of opponents—I had to admit the thing was a sight, big and impressive and cool."

Above all, Mr. Morrison's peppery anecdotes, his refreshing honesty and his ability to show how Africans view their difficulties save "The Black Nile" from being simply a memoir of an author's self-prescribed endurance test. Instead, the book gives us a compelling portrait of life along the Nile—from lonely fishing communities on Lake Victoria to the cacophonous collisions of Cairo. Mr. Morrison's more discouraging encounters also quietly pay tribute to triumphs of the human spirit. Mr. Bryan, the author's companion and verbal sparring partner for the first third of the account, later writes to him: "It's good to be desperate once in a while. Gives you an appreciation of the looks on people's faces when they're desperate and you're not."

Mr. Pope is the author, most recently, of "Dining with al-Qaeda: Three Decades Exploring the Many Worlds of the Middle East" (Thomas Dunne).

Romancing the Self

By Michael Caines

Which of the 18th century's many revolutions has had the greatest impact on the world? It is an absurd question, but if put to Tim Blanning, he might well give it a provocative answer: it was not the American, the French, the Industrial, or the Agricultural Revolution; it was the Romantic one

Emerging from the era of the philosophes—of the Enlightenment and its great works of rational investigation and discourse—Romanticism rejected what it saw as the cold rigors of Newtonian science, the mechanical view of the universe and the deadening neoclassical approach to art. In their place, as Mr. Blanning argues in his new book, "The Romantic Revolution," artists, writers, philosophers and composers turned to a single, defining concept: "absolute inwardness."

Rousseau proclaimed in his "Confessions" that "the man I shall portray shall be myself. Simply myself." Many were to follow his example. Goya and Fuseli put the stuff of their ambiguous, disturbing nightmares on to canvas. Beethoven's music expressed the inner life of a genius (and earned him comparisons with Napoleon Buonaparte, a heroic artistic counterpart for another kind of genius). Goethe has the hero of his bestselling novel "The Sufferings of Young Werther" say much the same: "I return into myself, and find a world!" Over a long period, at different paces in different places, these were the radical figures who turned the Enlightenment world upside down.

A cynic might add that the image of the tortured genius sold very well, especially as the market for books, concerts, even ballet, expanded. Mr. Blanning keeps an eye on the sales figures of Byron and Sir Walter Scott, as well as Rousseau and Goethe—evidently, bypassing the rules of the dusty old ancients and declaring oneself to be a directly inspired voice of divine nature had its commercial advantages. Mr. Blanning also nicely observes that the writers who praised the glories of nature, such as the Rhine valley or the Swiss Alps, encouraged an increase in tourism to those regions, via the decidedly unnatural means of railways and steamships. "The Romantic Revolution" concludes with a coda, ominously titled "Death and Transfiguration," that speedily takes this dubious history up to the present day.

The Romantic Revolution
By Tim Blanning
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 264 pages, £14.99)

If the Romantic cult of the great composer or musician turned audiences into idolaters—worshipers at a newfound shrine, the concert hall—then Fanny Burney's novel "Evelina" (1778) offers a wise rejoinder when it refers to the Pantheon in London as being more like a chapel than a place of diversion. "I could not be gay and thoughtless there as at [a pleasure garden]," Burney's heroine writes. Perhaps this could stand as a comment on the dangers of Romanticism—purporting to set the people free from the rational strictures of the Enlightenment, it also offered a new prison, in a kind of emotional fanaticism, an enforced sense of worship demanded and transcendence regained. Not everybody accepted the invitation.

In recent years, Prof. Blanning has written long books on both classical music ("The Triumph of Music") and society as a whole since the 17th century ("The Pursuit of Glory"). "The Romantic Revolution" offers readers who prefer their books to last 200 rather than 700 pages an excellent example of his talent for lucid exposition and choosing the right quotation (or two) to illustrate an argument. Although the thread of that argument does disappear from time to time, lost in the wonders of these exciting times, this is, for the most part, a remarkably deft and compelling account of intellectual and artistic developments, making speedy connections between diverse works of art and their creators.

Readers of "The Triumph of Music" will not learn anything new here about figures such as Beethoven, Paganini (the virtuoso violinist, rumoured to be cloven of foot), Rossini, Liszt and Schubert, but they will at least find them placed in a complementary context. In a few pages, Mr. Blanning goes from a discussion of the artist Caspar David Friedrich to the composer John Field to the poet Alfred de Musset. He describes how some took their inspiration from Shakespeare, others from medieval architecture, or folk music and poetry.

In Germany, in particular, inwardness found an outward expression in the decisive reaction against French dominance; Mr. Blanning gives the best possible example of this nationalist impulse when he mentions Fichte, delivering the first of his "Addresses to the German Nation" in Berlin, in the winter of 1807–8, with French drums striking up in the street outside the lecture hall. Not much later, Shelley would declare that "I consider Poetry very subordinate to moral & political science," while Wordsworth estimated that he had "given twelve hours thought to the conditions and prospects of society, for one to poetry." So much for absolute inwardness.

Mr. Caines works for the Times Literary Supplement, and recently edited an anthology about the 18th-century actor David Garrick.

time off

Huelgas Ensemble, artists in residence at Laus Polyphoniae in Antwerp; below, French conductor François-Xavier Roth at 'Musikfest Bremen 2010'.

Luk van Eeckhout

Amsterdam
festival
"Uitmarkt" opens the cultural season with over 400 previews across 34 outdoor and indoor stages, offering a variety of content ranging from theater, dance, pop and classical music to opera, children's theater and film.
Museumplein, Leidseplein, Vondelpark
Aug. 27-29
☎ 31-2062-1131-1
www.amsterdamsuitburo.nl/uitmarkt

Antwerp
music
"Laus Polyphoniae 2010" is an exploration of baroque and polyphonic music from 12 historical sources composed in the period from 1050-1550, featuring Huelgas Ensemble, Capilla Flamenca, Claire Chevallier and others.
In and around St. Augustine Church
Aug. 21-29
☎ 32-3292-3680
www.amuz.be

Bremen
music
"Musikfest Bremen 2010" is a classical-music festival, featuring performances by the Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Helsinki Baroque Orchestra, Orchestre des Champs-Elysées, Masaaki Suzuki and others.
Musikfest Bremen
Aug. 21-Sept. 11
☎ 49-421-3366-77
www.musikfest-bremen.de

Buñol
tradition
"La Tomatina" invites fruit-flingers to the tiny Spanish village of Buñol in Comunidad Valenciana for an annual fight featuring 125 tons of tomatoes and about 45,000 participants.
Buñol
Aug. 25
☎ 34-963-6063-53
www.tomatina.es

Cologne
art
"A.R. Penck" is an exhibition centered around a painting created by the German artist in 35 consecutive hours, alongside other paintings and 10 felt sculptures.
Museum Ludwig
Until March 3
☎ 49-221-2212-6165
www.museum-ludwig.de

Dresden
art
"Glöckner: Works until 1945" offers a retrospective of works by German artist Hermann Glöckner, including sketches, collages and sculptures.
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Aug. 28-Nov. 7
☎ 49-351-4914-2000
www.skd.museum

Gothenburg
"Gothenburg Dance and Theater Festival" features dance, performing arts, new circus and theater shows from around the world, including Alain Platel and Yukiko Shinozaki.
At various locations
☎ 46-31-3683-238
Until Aug. 28
www.festival.goteborg.se

London
art
"Fourth Plinth Programme—6 New Proposals" showcases maquettes by artists shortlisted for the next commission of the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, including work by Allora & Calzadilla and Katharina Fritsch.
St. Martin-in-the-Fields
Until Oct.31
☎ 44-20-7983-4100
fourthplinth.co.uk

art
"Unfold: Art from Cape Farewell 2007-2009" presents new work by international artists addressing climate change, created through their involvement with two expeditions to the Arctic and one to the Peruvian Amazon between 2007 and 2009.
Kings Place Gallery
Until Oct. 2
☎ 44-20-7520-1490
www.kingsplace.co.uk/

art
"Blacked Out" displays light installations, photography, drawings and sculpture by artists including Sally Butcher, Joe Clark, Avril Elward and Lisa Metherell, all working with light in a blacked-out space.
Arch 897
Aug. 21-28
☎ 44-781-4027-680
www.blackedoutexhibition.co.uk

Malmö
festival
"Malmö Festival" offers eight days of art events, theater, street performance, comedy, dance and music by acts like Band of Horses, Melissa Etheridge and Archive.
At various locations
Until Aug.27
☎ 46-040-3410-00
www.malmofestivalen.se

Paris
music
"Rock en Seine" features performances by Arcade Fire, Massive Attack, Roxy Music, Queens of the Stone Age, Underworld and others.
Domaine national de Saint-Cloud
Aug. 27-29
☎ 33-01-4112-0290
www.rockenseine.com

Sablé-Sur-Sarthe
music
"Sablé Festival" is a highly respected baroque festival, with performances by Amandine Beyer, Nicolau de Figueiredo and others.
In and around Sablé-Sur-Sarthe
Aug. 24-28
☎ 33-2-4362-2222
www.sable-culture.fr

Venice
art
"Giacomo Favretto (1849-87): Fascination and Seduction" showcases 80 works by the Venetian artist.
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia
Until Nov. 21
☎ 39-041-4273-0892
www.museicivicivenezìani.it

Wuppertal
art
"Nature becomes Art" shows illustrations and photography by Georg Arends.
aAug. 24-Jan.2
☎ 49-202-563-2626
www.natur-wird-kunst-ausstellung.de

Source: WSJE research

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