The Owl Club

NOTICE

Tuesday 21st May 2024: Notice of meeting #1360

Founded 1894

Visit our website at www.owls.org.za for current notice, back notices, Constitution (as amended 2021), *In Memoriam* 1894-2023, list of members and more.

Committee 2024/2025

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Peter Hyslop, Kevin Rorke, Anthea Serritslev & Martin Hess .

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Dinner bookings:

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Bank details

The Owl Club, Standard Bank of South Africa

A/c no. 071 818 006

Bank branch code: 051 001

This month's edition:

Editor: Peter Hyslop

Contributors: Hugh Amoore, Mike James, Mike Bruton & Tony Murray.

Photography: Alan Lindhorst

Drawings: Tony Grogan, Peter Hyslop, and Sheila Camerer.

Wheelchair availability:

Kelvin has a wheelchair available should any member facing mobility challenges wish to use it for meetings. Contact Owl Peter Hyslop (064-690-9059) & see page twelve for more details.

Dear Fellow Owls

The 1360th meeting of The Owl Club preceded by dinner, will be held on Tuesday 21st May 2024, 6:00 pm for 6:45 pm start, in the Grill Room, Kelvin Grove Club.

Chairman: **President Owl Ron Duff.**

Guest speaker: **Frans Rautenbach** on the topic of:

"Showing Not Telling: How to Drive Free-Market Reform"

Frans Rautenbach is an advocate and labour lawyer based in Cape Town, and the author of a number of books dealing with a range of topics, including labour deregulation, the free market, and decentralised government. He has acted as a consultant to the governments of Uganda and Tanzania and has appeared as part of the legal team of the Free Market Foundation.

"*Frans Rautenbach will address the burning issue of reform of the economic system in South Africa. He will explain how a silent revolution has started to take place in the world at large, and in our country, of ordinary citizens taking the matter of reform into their own hands, helping themselves. He will set out why a free-market system should be the aim of any process of reform."*

Music: ***"Fun for Four Clarinets - Little and Large"***

"The evening's music will showcase the unusual combination of 3 clarinets and bass clarinet. The young players, all current or former members of the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, Danielle Rossouw, Annelize de Villiers and Nathan Huysamen, are joined by Owl David Little. The programme will be varied, ranging from the rare to the familiar."

WPB: **Keith MacHutchon** on the topic of:

"Antarctica: the Frozen Continent "

"My Waste Paper Basket chat will cover some interesting fast facts on the Continent of Antarctica, as well as a few snapshots of recent experiences that we have enjoyed and learnt from at UCT, during our research to date."

Dinner price: R320. Dress: Black tie (or similarly elegant attire).

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS:

Any Owl who does not have internet access is welcome to telephone the Secretary Bird at 082 440 8204 or 021 671 3121 to book a perch.

All other Owls are encouraged to use the Pay'n'Perch procedure by paying their (and their guest's) dining fee into the Club's bank account by EFT and instructing the bank (using the option provided) to send a remittance confirmation email to secretary@owls.org.za whereupon their perches will be booked.

Besides details of your invited guests (see above), no further emails will be needed from you unless you also have special dietary needs or if you are using a dining credit.

In all cases, bookings will close at 6:00 pm on Sunday 19th May 2024.

All bookings will be acknowledged.

The April 2024 Meeting

On Tuesday, 16th April, fifty-four Owls and five Guests gathered for the 1359th meeting in the Grill Room Kelvin Grove, Newlands. The proceedings started at 18:45, with President Owl Ron Duff welcoming all and inviting Owl John van der Linde to deliver the Grace, followed by a three-course dinner (see page fourteen for the menu and Grace). The President then asked Owls to charge their glasses and to rise for the Toast to South Africa, followed by a short break.

Owl President Ron then reminded the assembled Owls about the forthcoming 3rd Colloquium which will be held at Kelvin on Friday, 7 June 2024 at 10h30, the topic being: "The changing role of the arts in society through the ages". Owl Ron then wished those celebrating birthdays in April everything of the best. This included five Owls marking birthdays in their 80s: Owls Angel Tordesillas, Geoff Davies. John Webb, Bruce Ditrich, and Keith Bryer. Owl Ron also extended his best wishes on behalf of the club to Owls Paul Murray, Julian Wannell, and Leon de Wet, all of whom are also celebrating birthdays in April.

New Owl Viljoen Van Heerden was then (with due ceremony) inducted, welcomed into the fellowship and invited to dwell in harmony with fellow Owls. The President then (requesting that guests remained seated) ordered that the lights be dimmed whilst he proposed the traditional Toast to Our Guests.

Above : Tony Grogan *Drawing of Owl President Ron Duff.*

Below: Tony Grogan: Drawing of New Owl Viljoen Van Heerden.

The guest speaker for the evening, Professor Peter Anderson, was then introduced. Professor Peter Anderson teaches in the English Department at UCT and is a much-published poet. A report on his presentation is covered in more detail herein.

The Chorister Robin, Owl David Little was invited to introduce the musical performers for the evening and Owldom was indeed privileged to be able to listen to two of South Africa's finest musicians, Tertia Visser Downie, and Albie van Schalkwyk. The evening's programme was a mix of serious and entertaining music from "Back to Bluesy" pieces, some originally for 4 hands but some also arrangements from various sources. This is reported on page six.

Owl Tony Murray was then invited to fill the Waste Paper Basket with his presentation titled: "The Nightclub Singer and the Spy" which he did with an immaculate and humorous delivery and with wry humour; see pages seven to nine.

To conclude the evening, Owls and their guests were invited to raise their glasses in a Toast To The Owl Club following which the President wished all a safe flight home.

Above: Tony Grogan *Drawing of Professor Peter Anderson.*

Middle: Peter Hyslop, *Drawing of Tertia Visser Downie, and Albie van Schalkwyk.*

Below: Sheila Camerer, *Drawing of Tony Murray*

Guest speaker: Peter Anderson: “Why Poetry? ”

Opening his talk, Peter said that he felt exactly like a little old lady at the Left Book Club in the 1930s railing against the Spanish government who, when called to do her part by the callow young Oxbridge chair, banged her stick on the floor and said very firmly “how can I possibly know what I’m trying to say until I have said it”

It is true not only of this present address but also of why Peter writes poetry of this life – “how can I possibly know what I’m trying to say until I have said it?” And so he writes this stuff. WH Auden famously said “Poetry makes nothing happen” – nada, zilch! But that doesn’t only mean that poetry is ineffectual, it also means that it makes happen the nullity of life, the countless things on which we build our stories of being - this life which we love and for which we yearn. So it is for him. He limited himself to just two excerpts of his own poetry:

First Light[1]

Surely you will know it: somewhere beyond
the last cold city lights, the last of that
small-hour transit air: sweet milk, myrrh, the dung
of standing cattle, a wind-farm milling
that least shift of it under garnet lights.

That’s where you pull over to fill the tank,
empty bladder, stamp feet on the concrete
of an oily forecourt, where the muzak
miscarries on cold air. Cheerful coma.
So many hours out, you find your mind hangs.

You’re stuck in two-thirds of a precious thought
wrought to the pitch of music, singing you
almost aloud. You have to stop the engine
in your shook cells, ringing skin, and you look
out from the halogen day to total

night without. You see there this rind of blood,
thin as a theory of conflagration,
some impossible seam of carbon’s own
kiln fired of itself under its own weight,
and every critic in you screams Lush! Lush!

Romantic guff! The thing is, it hangs there,
same as the meaty fumes of fuel, the tract
of phatic Xhosa at the pump, money,
the Coke your hung mind pleases at, the bin
you bung it in. Enduring lateral

lightning, the crush of smelter coke. All hope
of making sense of things combusted, you
will climb back into your ton of doubtful
sovereignty and bowl on at however
many rpm. Day will come as detail,
as finches, their handful of gravel flung,
as dreary kilometres, as cattle
knee-deep in the porridge of the landfill
somewhere, and forgetting your small Xhosa
for this long sigh in English, myrrh and dung

indeed. It’s not that you’ve anything much
to say, milling your breath for its dividend
of the purportive real, something to hope
of a gust of finches, a can of Coke,
the red peel of a sunrise, poetry

slapping in your heart’s bilge till it gasps out
the usual noises: yes, people suffer,
yes, the dorps hang on under the spires, strewn
with crematorial grit, shitloads of rubble,
yes, sparrows fall, crows prosper, and who cares?

Will you know this, or do you still? Perhaps
that is really what the eastern fissure
insists. That there be some things sufficient
of common quandary, intense enough
to look at in any language and make

this mess of. Let’s say of the travelled heart.
It’s no manifesto, but of some kind
of history, of being as that bag-man you
saw rummaging in the first light, who lugged
the same stuff, tipped it all out, put it back.

Or as GK Chesterton said “poets are mysteriously silent on the subject of cheese”.

It is axiomatic that poetry is about two things, love and death - this is what he tells his students and what he was told as a student - to which he would add a third – there’s hardly a poem that is not about the subject of poetry itself.

Above: Peter Hyslop, *Drawing of Peter Anderson*

Guest speaker: Peter Anderson: "Why Poetry? "

So what is poetry and where is it? Well, even those of you who sensibly avoided it like the plague were taught to speak by it – nursery rhymes, songs, hymns etc. It is there at our very beginning, and to perpetuate a scientific fallacy (and to invert it) here phylogeny recapitulates and is anticipated by ontogeny – it seems very likely that poetry, or song, was in there at the beginning of human speech and consciousness. For what else is it but some attempt to say the, as yet, unsaid, speak for the unspoken, to speak – even – the unspeakable.

His beloved Auden also said that poetry was among our chief means of what he said was "breaking bread with the dead." He agrees and writes to that end. TS Eliot spoke of the new provincialism coming into the world, a relegation of the country of the dead. As he ages, more and more of his acquaintances are dead as are the bulk of the traditional poets - he talks to and with, them. He may offer nothing other than Auden for bread and Chesterton for cheese, but poetry has some hope then, if it can be counted among the bread and cheese of this world.

He then questions why he writes poetry? Perhaps to overcome some of the negative liabilities of speech, certainly to talk with the dead. Above all he has this appreciation of language as a road we can all use. Most of our use of language is smooth going on the tar, the backs of cornflakes boxes, plane tickets, bird books, novels, books about Owls. But at life's extremities we run out of tar and have to take to the dirt roads and drive language more adventurously. Eventually, we must get out where all roads end, and walk, and the legs we use, the eyes we use, and the maps we make, all these are what we call poetry.

He began to write poetry because it brought the world in under his wing. He recalled something about Table Mountain, and a poem about an otter that turned out to be his reflection in the water and was his first publication, an overseas publication at that, when he was about 7 years old. Then he was schooled to it by a gifted headmaster who made him believe Peter's words reached him. So it was also an invidious ego, a aggrandizement. Then at that uncertain age at which we feel so certain of ourselves, he fell under the spell of the romantics, particularly South African romantics – figures like Roy Campbell - and a kind of colonial nature worship. He taught his way out of that – he had to if he was going to be a poet. He taught himself the hardest way, by teaching himself, at long last, the craft of poetry, or what we call prosody and which his students deride – things like metre and rhyme, stanzas and forms.

Above: Sheila Camerer, *Drawing of Peter Anderson*

hardly a poem that is not about the subject of poetry itself. This was the hardest apprenticeship, and now he finds that he is always fighting to free himself from it. But perhaps he has learnt that all our gifts – life being the greatest of those gifts – come to fruition only under discipline, planning, pruning harvesting, and storing – we have added apples to bread and cheese!

He writes poetry because it asks him to. The words are all around us, doing their daily work. Often they are put to mundane use, sometimes even brutal use – but there come times when an unfathomable yearning seeks to order them into a kind of summoning spell to call the world closer. He does all the terrible things poets do, drink coffee, walk in Newlands Forest, smoke cigarettes when it gets really bad, hammering on the laptop. He doesn't know how it happens, it comes against the grain, the world comes and the words come. At this late stage he knows of no other way of saying that this life confounds and hurts him and yet it is his constant prompt to gratitude, despite that. His poems have not bought money or fame or, alas, adoring women. They have brought only a disciplined hypermania in which state he and the world fit in ways they never do otherwise, and the rest is as mysterious as cheese, as final as life and as strange as this last poem which was about a lockdown dream.

He wondered how well his audience remembered lockdown and the peculiarity of the psyche of that particular state. He had the constant apprehension that he was dreaming a succession of episodes of one dream following another, following another. All seemed to be one continuous dreaming. This episode stayed with him and the words came to him as they come to the audience now and these are the last he addressed to the parliament. It is called The Folded Lake and it starts with a reference to Matthew Arnold.

Above: Tony Grogan, *Drawing of Peter Anderson*

Guest speaker: Peter Anderson: “Why Poetry? ”

The Folded Lake[1]

The poet says Come to the window. Turn
your head: the rain is depending from a skyful

of seawater, ripping in the gusts of landfall,
knocking down the coral flowers, soaking

the dumped ash of a long winter. It is so
beautiful. Through the cloud the great ships

moan like whales, and the cloud stinks of fish.
Winter that will not yield. If you like, we can chase

curfew and get to the granite and strip
to swim in the surge, drive home in the heat

of the car, complicit, sad and alive, choosing
our music, which may be the only thing to do.
Spring that is late has put out plum blossom
like popcorn, and the mountains shine back

at it their unseasonal ice. We have bread to tear
that the prior earth has yielded in its array

of wheat, where the cranes dance. To say
we are speechless is to say we are staggered

at what has to be said, that we have seen
what our hand has done. We are beseeched

in the bowels of Christ to think we may be
wrong, as we are. Wrong as the world is, that is

lovelier than rain on an iron roof, waking us
to consciousness again, of our salt skin.

I dreamed I took a lake out of its valley,
folded it over my arm and traversed a range

more home than ever home was. How many
suns were sunk there? Come to the window:

there is all the world we know, and all we care
to know. Help me shake out the lake again.

1. PR Anderson, Night Transit, published by Dryad Press, 2023 .

Peter Anderson was educated at UCT and Oxford. He worked as a teacher and publisher before returning to academia in 1997. He has published four volumes, Litany Bird, Foundling's Island, a long poem In a Free State: A Music (“Destined to be a landmark in South African poetry” – J.M. Coetzee), and Night Transit (Dryad). He is the recipient of South Africa’s Thomas Pringle Prize for Poetry (2018) and the Sanlam Literary Award (2006). His work has appeared in The London Magazine, Denver Quarterly, TEXT, The Rialto, New Contrast, New Coin, Stanzas, The Hopkins Review, Blue Earth Revue, Rougarou, Tears in the Fence, and other magazines.

Source for photograph and short biography:

UCT English Literary Studies website:

https://humanities.uct.ac.za/department-english/contacts

Musical Notes: Tertia Visser and Albie van Schalkwyk
"Piano 4 hands - Back to Blues"

Owl David Little introduced the performers for the evening's programme, pianist Tertia Visser Downie, and Albie van Schalkwyk, a performer in a number of fields.

The evening's programme was a mix of serious and entertaining music from "Back to Bluesy" pieces, some originally for 4 hands but some also arrangements from various sources. Between Bach and the jazzy pieces, the Owls were taken on a quick tour through folk dance type music from Dvorak, Brahms and Moszkowski in the first half, contrasting well with the two sets of waltzes by two contrasting but equally famous Strauss composers: Johann II and Richard. Our guest performers ended on a light note with three blues pieces by contemporary composer Mike Cornick.

What an accomplished duo are guest performers are. Tertia Visser Downie is an accomplished South African pianist who studied under national and international piano masters John Antoniadis, and London-based Martino Tirimo, after winning the prestigious Mabel Quick Overseas Scholarship. She completed her Honours degree in Music at the University of Stellenbosch, as well as achieving the Unisa Performers' and Teachers' Licentiates, with distinction in both qualifications.

Tertia is regularly invited as an official accompanist at globally acclaimed music competitions and regularly accompanies talented and award-winning musicians at various events and concerts, enhancing her profile as a leading South African accompanist impacting the international music scene.

Tertia's talent is versatile and in 2009, she joined renowned poet Philip de Vos on a national tour to bring masterpieces "Pictures at an Exhibition" by Mussorgsky and "Kinderschenen" by Schumann to stage, radio, and television. In 2008 Tertia took the leading female role in Pieter Dirk Uys's play, Appassionata, and performed the Beethoven Sonata with the same name.

Above: Tony Grogan, *Drawing of Tertia Visser Downie, and Albie van Schalkwyk*

Below: Sheila Camerer,

Drawing of Tertia Visser Downie,

Tertia has produced numerous CDs of her own as well as establishing and managing her "Tots in Tune" programme designed to introduce classical music to young toddlers. She also released a CD with well-known cellist Marian Lewin at the end of 2009.

In November 2016, she received her Fellowship from the Trinity College of Music. She has been organising the very successful Erin Hall Concert Series in Rondebosch since the beginning of 2014.

Albie van Schalkwyk established himself as performer in a number of fields over the past 40 years. One of the leading chamber musicians and vocal accompanists in South Africa, he has also performed as soloist with South African orchestras, performed solo recitals, given master classes for singers and accompanists, worked as a mu¬¬sic producer for the SABC, and arranged music for various combinations, including Broadway musicals and operas for 2 pianos and orchestral pieces for 3 to 8 pianos. He completed his Ph.D. in Music at the University of the Free State in May 2012.

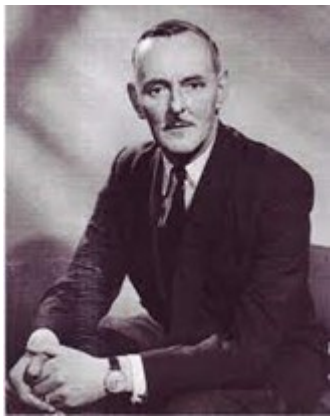
His interest in vocal music, and the art song in particular, has led to many fulfilling concert partnerships with singers. One of these was the formation in 1994 of The Songmakers' Guild, a Cape Town organisation which provides a regular platform to performers in the field of the art song and from which he recently retired as Artistic Director. He was involved in the Neuberg Internationale Kulturtage summer school as coach and performer for over 20 years and during one university sabbatical year worked as coach in the Vocal Department of the Mozarteum Music University in Salzburg, Austria. In 2009 the SA Academy of Arts and Sciences awarded him the Huberte Rupert Prize for his contribution to ensemble playing and teaching over more than 30 years.

Above: Sheila Camerer, *Drawing of Albie van Schalkwyk*

WPB: Owl Tony Murray "The Nightclub Singer and the Spy"

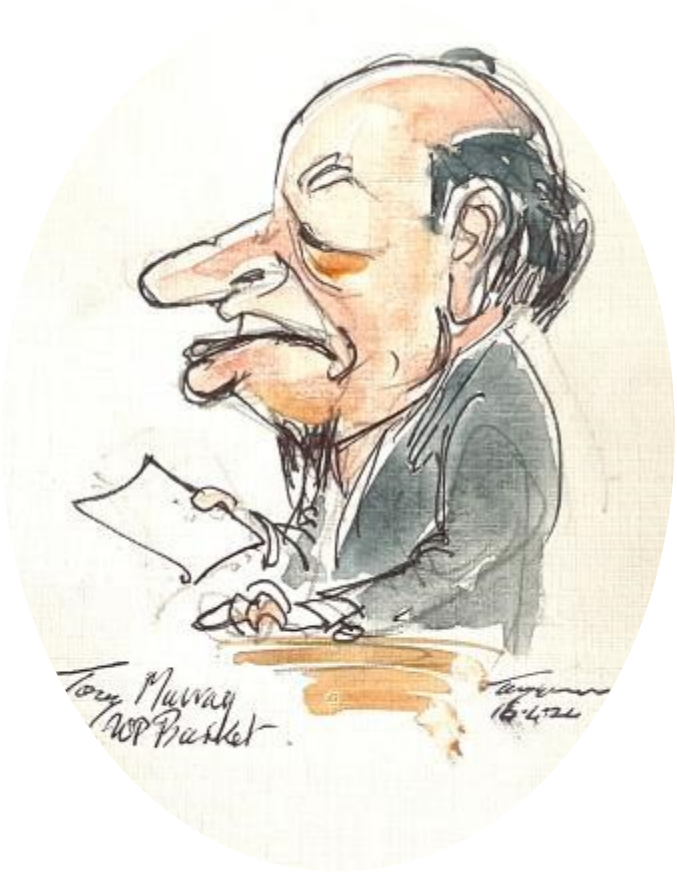
The great body of lasting popular music which was written between 1910 and 1970 has never had a convenient name. Calling it "pre-rock pop" is rather patronising for the songs of Gershwin, Kern, Porter and the like. Jazz musicians call the tunes that have entered their repertoire as "standards" while disk jockeys use the rather condescending term "Evergreens". Then an American impresario assembled a series of albums for Ella Fitzgerald which he labelled "The Great American Songbook". That's all very well but it ignores the significant body of English songs by Noel Coward, Novello, the Beatles, Lloyd-Webber, and lesser-known writers.

Two of these songs undoubtedly are in the top 100: A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square - unmistakably belonging to London – and These Foolish Things, perhaps less place-specific. The image–rich and evocative lyrics for both are the work of a most interesting character named Eric Maschwitz.



He was born in Birmingham in 1901 and went to Repton public school and Cambridge University, where he took part in theatrical productions. After graduating he took a job at the BBC, then in its fledgling years and run by a bunch of talented amateurs, and he immediately caught the notice of the influential Director-General, Sir John Reith. His first assignment was to invent a chat show. The directive: "Find interesting celebrities and interview them". This became the celebrated programme In Town Tonight with the innovative signature tune The Knightsbridge March, which ran under various hosts until 1960. That accomplished, he was given the task of editing The Radio Times, a post he held for six years. During this period he began writing the books and lyrics for stage musicals including Goodnight Vienna and Balalaika which both had extended runs in the West End. His two blockbuster songs were written in 1936 (These Foolish Things) and 1940 (A Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square, which was immediately recorded by Vera Lynn and Glenn Miller).

Eventually he became Head of Variety at the BBC.



Left Above: Alan Lindhorst, *Photograph of Owl Tony Murray*

Left Below: Eric Maschwitz.

Right: Tony Grogan *Drawing of Owl Tony Murray.*

WPB: Owl Tony Murray "The Nightclub Singer and the Spy"

Hollywood noticed his talent, and in 1937 he was invited there to write screenplays, most famously Goodbye, Mr. Chips for which he received an Oscar nomination. He returned to England at the outbreak of war and became a postal censor in Liverpool. But his ability was soon recognized and he was transferred to the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6 D Section (sabotage). In 1940, he briefly worked to establish a resistance organization in Beverley, Yorkshire, before being assigned to the Special Operations Executive. Soon afterwards was sent as a secret agent to New York and Ottawa. His special assignment: to negotiate arrangements for the reception and accommodation of the Royal Family in the event of the invasion of England. He then transferred to the Political Warfare Executive. He ended the war as chief broadcasting officer with the 21st Army Group, leaving the army as a Lieutenant-Colonel.

In the early days of peace he was put in charge of "No 1 Field Broadcasting Unit" and was responsible for taking over the "Reichssender Hamburg" in May 1945. This appropriation enabled the British occupation troops to start broadcasting programmes for their soldiers in northern Germany, and became the nucleus of the British Forces Network, inaugurated with Maschwitz's help in July 1945, which eventually became the British Forces Broadcasting Service.

But even when in the army he continued moonlighting and wrote the book and lyrics for several shows. In 1947 George Melachrino scored the revue, Starlight Roof, with book and lyrics by Maschwitz, which introduced Julie Andrews to the stage. If I recall correctly, another of his successful shows, Zip Goes a Million, was brought out by African Theatres and played at the Alhambra.

In 1958 he rejoined the BBC as Head of Light Entertainment, with a mission to create shows which would appeal to a younger generation. About the job he said, "I don't think the BBC is a cultural organisation. We've got to please the people". His first television show was The Black and White Minstrels. By 1962, he was serving as assistant to the BBC's Controller of Programmes, and it was in this capacity that he requested BBC Survey Group to examine possible ideas for a science fiction drama series; the results of the study led to the creation of the long-running Doctor Who series. He left the BBC in 1963 to join Britain's Independent Television Network.

But all the time he was pursuing the parallel hobby of writing or adapting musicals for amateurs, and his versions of Die Fledermaus, The Du Barry and White Horse Inn graced the boards of many dramatic and operatic societies throughout England.

It is quite apparent that Eric Maschwitz was a very talented, imaginative and competent administrator. He was a man of great charm who knew simply everybody in show-business. He was also a ladies' man, and as he put it: "I have had great happiness from women and made several good women unhappy". Among his conquests was Hermione Gingold (the lady who could prompt Maurice Chevalier's failing memory in Gigi) to whom he was married for some twenty years. While in Hollywood he had a tempestuous affair with the exotic Anna May Wong, the first notable Chinese-American actress.

Both these ladies claimed that they were the inspiration for his image-laden ballad, These Foolish Things – but Maschwitz set the record straight in his own memoirs. The plaintive recollections, he asserts, were inspired by a torrid youthful affair with a nightclub singer named Jean Ross.

Ross was a typical flapper, from a wealthy family. She was intelligent but had hated school, and feigned pregnancy in order to be expelled. Aged nineteen, after a spell at RADA, she took to singing in fashionable nightspots like the Café Royale where her good looks and flamboyant personality were more appreciated than her decidedly second-rate voice. When the affair with Maschwitz ended, the depression was at its height and the nightclub scene faded away. Out of love, out of a job, she escaped to the European centre of jazz, theatre, and high-life – Berlin, where there were ample opportunities for aspiring actresses.

WPB: Owl Tony Murray "The Nightclub Singer and the Spy"

Here she was quickly assimilated into the wild and decadent dying days of the Weimar Republic and linked up with a group of dissolute English intellectuals led by the poet W.H. Auden – in the 1970's we would have called them hippies.

Ross obtained employment as a dancer in an acclaimed production of The Tales of Hoffman and appeared as Anitra in Peer Gynt. When these paydays ended she became a fashion model for popular magazines by day, while by night she turned into a bohemian chanteuse singing in the sleazy cabarets located along the notorious Kurfürstendamm. An acquaintance recalled "She had a surprisingly deep, husky voice. She sang badly, without any expression, her hands hanging down at her sides—yet her performance was effective because of her startling appearance and her air of not caring a curse of what people thought of her". Soon she became known as an uninhibited party girl. She entered into a variety of sexual liaisons, including one with a tall, blond, (post-war Hollywood) film star Peter van Eyck, which resulted in pregnancy and a botched abortion.

The political situation in Weimar Germany rapidly deteriorated as the incipient Nazi Party continued to grow stronger day by day. By 1932, Weimar Germany was in the trough of an economic depression, with millions of persons unemployed. Berlin residents experienced "poverty, unemployment, political demonstrations and street fighting between the forces of the extreme left and the extreme right". Ross experienced the brutality of fascism at first hand when her Jewish landlady was assaulted and her fiancé murdered, and it made a lasting impression.

As the political climate deteriorated the British ex-pats realised they had to leave Germany. Back in London Ross began to associate with left-wing political activists and met Claud Cockburn, an Anglo-Scots journalist. He influenced her to join the Communist Party and arranged for her to get a job at The Daily Worker. Under the by-line "Peter Porcupine" she became a respected film critic with a deep insight into Continental and Russian films – gained from her days in Berlin. Her reviews of early Soviet cinema were later described by scholars as "ingenious pieces of dialectical sophistry".

Came the Spanish Civil War and she was persuaded to join the left-wing Republican cause. While Cockburn fought with the Fifth Regiment, Ross served as a war correspondent for the Daily Express. When Cockburn was at the front lines, Ross ghost-wrote his columns for him, "imitating his style and filing it at the Daily Worker under his name while continuing to send her own reports to the Express". She had several dangerous encounters with the enemy and was besieged in Madrid along with other writers such as Ernest Hemingway. Her wartime experiences, especially the atrocities she witnessed and the friends she lost in combat, solidified her lifelong commitment to anti-fascist resistance.

Sixty days after the fall of Madrid, Ross gave birth to a daughter by Claud Cockburn, who at the time was married to another person. Several months before her daughter's birth, Ross filed a deed poll in which she changed her surname to Cockburn. Three months after the birth, Cockburn walked out on Ross. Following her abandonment Ross did not have another recorded male partner. She later told an acquaintance "having a man around was like having a crocodile in the bath".

For the remainder of her life, Ross devoted herself to advancing the ideology of socialism and raising her daughter Sarah. She continued to engage in political activities including protesting against nuclear weapons, boycotting apartheid, and opposing the Vietnam War. She died in reduced circumstances in Putney in 1973 aged 61. Eric Maschwitz lived comfortably a few miles away in the stockbroker belt. I am sure that if he knew of the plight of his former flame, he would have helped out despite their vastly different political outlooks.

Sarah, her daughter, went to Oxford where she created some waves at the Oxford Union, then became a respected barrister and, under the name Sarah Caudwell, a successful writer of detective stories. his experiences in the dying days of the Weimar Republic. One of the stories, "Goodbye to Berlin" was based on Jean Ross and her botched abortion. Although gay, he had played a part in procuring the procedure by pretending to be the father.

By now you will probably guessed that Isherwood's character Sally Bowles was modelled on the escapades of Jean Ross. She was none too pleased with the book, not only because she felt that the association of herself with the naïve and apolitical character of Sally interfered with her lifelong work as a professional writer and political activist, but also because she feared that Isherwood's thinly-disguised story recounting her lifestyle and abortion in Berlin would further strain her difficult relationship with her status-conscious family – and abortion at the time carried a long prison term. To prevail upon Ross to give consent for the novella's publication, Isherwood said he was in the direst financial circumstances. Ross, who herself was often impoverished, sympathised with any friend in a similar situation. As a personal favour to Isherwood, she withdrew her objections.

WPB: Owl Tony Murray "The Nightclub Singer and the Spy"

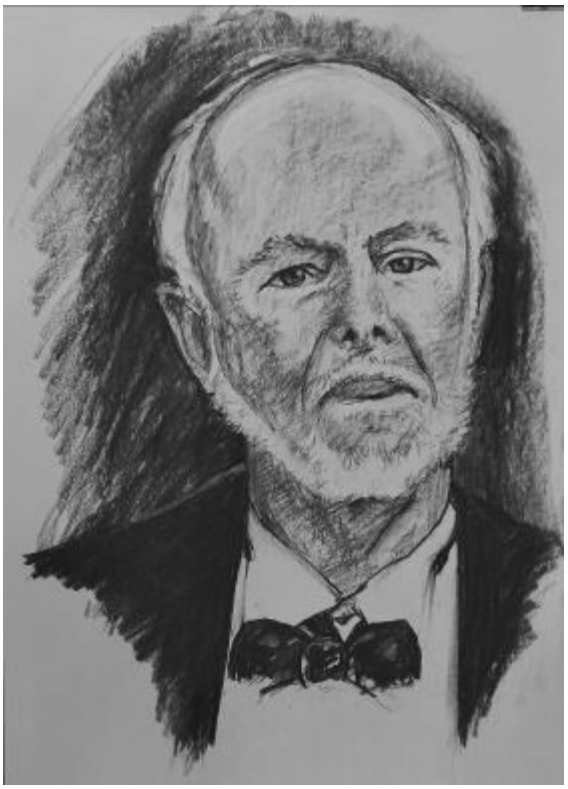
A few years later "Goodbye to Berlin" was adapted by the American playwright John van Druten into the hit play "I Am a Camera" and this in turn became the blockbuster musical and film "Cabaret" with its eponymous hit song. Ross was particularly annoyed at Liza Minelli's interpretation of Sally as a vacuous and vulgar vamp. Stage actresses such as Julie Harris and Judi Dench had portrayed her, more or less as Isherwood intended, with an aura of sophisticated innocence.

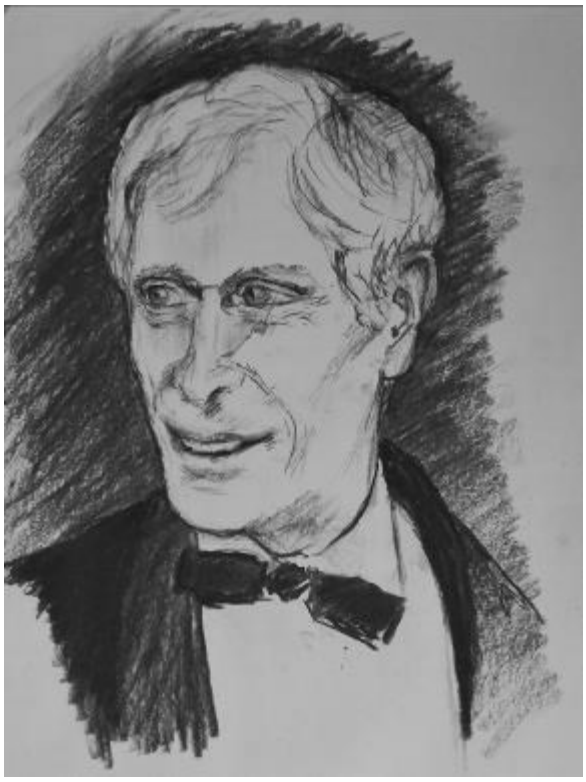
Sally Bowles in turn is reputed to have inspired the character Holly Golightly in Truman Capote's Breakfast at Tiffany's which of course produced another hit song, "Moon River".

Now isn't it strange that Jean Ross, debutante, night club singer, war correspondent, dedicated socialist and political activist should have inspired three songs which are in the top 100 of the Great American Songbook. Eric Maschwitz, lyricist, spy, broadcaster, philanthropist, and man-about-town would no doubt have approved.

Above left: *Photograph of Liza Minelli*
Above right: *Photograph of Judi Dench*

Seen & Noted at the April Meeting





Above left: Sheila Camerer, *Drawing of Owl Mike Bruton*
Above right: Sheila Camerer, *Drawing of Owl Richard Morris*

Seen & Noted at the April Meeting

Captured by photographer Alan Lindhorst (clockwise from top left): New Owl Viljoen Van Heerden inducted and welcomed into the fellowship by Owl President Duff; Professor Peter Anderson; Owls Bishop Christopher Gregorowski and Paul Murray deep in conversation; New Owl Viljoen Van Heerden with Owl Nigel Gwen-Evans and Tertia Visser Downie in partnership with Albie van Schalkwyk at the piano.

Member's News

Wheelchair Availability

Kelvin has a wheelchair available should any member facing mobility challenges wish to use it for meetings - and thus enjoy the fellowship that an Owl Club meeting offers. It should be reserved in advance; a call a day or two before a meeting to Owl Peter Hyslop (064 690 9059) or the Secretary (082 440 8204) will suffice.

Membership Part 1: A New Owl and Two Aspirant Owls

The Committee is pleased to announce the election of Tessa Graaff(Art & Music: sponsors Owls Richard Morris& Martin Hess) and looks forward to her playing her part among us at our assemblies.

The Committee has considered proposals of membership for Prieur du Plessis (Literature: proposed by Owls Ashmead & Babb) and Mark Palmer Edgecumbe (Art & Literature, proposed by Owls Lindhorst & Hess) and believing them to be worthy of admission to our fellowship agreed to Notice them; Any Owl who may wish to comment on these candidates is invited to convey his or her views to the President or the Secretary before the next Committee meeting on 27 May.

Membership Part 2: Recruitment

Owl Nigel Gwynne Evans, who has the Committee portfolio for membership, with the full support of the Committee challenges each Owl to introduce a young(er) person who would enjoy and add to the fellowship Owls enjoy.

It is over to you.

Putative Owls should be brought to one or if possible two meetings, introduced to at least the Owl President and one other Committee Owl. Those who - having experienced a meeting or two - wish to be considered for membership should be put forward by their sponsors; the Proposal of Membership form can be obtained from the Secretary.

Communication and POPIA

The Club is obliged as a matter of law to have regard to members' privacy rights; these extend to email addresses, and the Club's privacy policy (a requirement in terms of the POPI Act) spells out how the Club will use and safeguard each Owl's personal information. In order to do so notices to Owls will not expose other Owls' email addresses (for example making use of the blind copy functionality where a notice is sent to more than one Owl), and all communication to Owls from the Club, or on Club matters, must be limited to communication from the Secretary Bird (or in regard to subscriptions payable or paid – or overdue – from the Fiscal Shrike). Committee members have access to members contact details as they need these to fulfil their portfolio duties.

Third Owl Club Colloquium

Owls are cordially invited to attend the Third Colloquium of the Owl Club on the theme 'The changing role of the arts in society through the ages' at 10h30 on Friday, 7th June 2024 in the Pavilion, Kelvin Grove Club, Newlands.

The programme includes talks by Owl Nicholas Ellenbogen (performing arts), Owl Peter Hyslop (fine arts), David Attwell (literature) and Owl David Little (music), followed by discussion and debate.

Guests are welcome. Please RSVP as soon as possible to Owl Mike Bruton (mikefishesbruton@gmail.com) with your name and the names of any guests.

A fee of R60, payable at the door, will be charged to Owls and guests to cover the costs of tea/coffee and biscuits. Owls and guests are invited to enjoy lunch at the Terrace Restaurant at Kelvin Grove Club after the colloquium at their own expense.

Owl Club Excursion

Owls are invited to attend an excursion to Owl Angel Tordesillas' extraordinary private library at his luxurious home in Sea Point at 11h00 on Saturday, 15th June 2024. Angel will brief us on his book collection, highlight the most interesting and valuable books, and treat us to some authentic Spanish hospitality! Spaces are limited so all participants should urgently let Owl Mike Bruton (mikefishesbruton@gmail.com) know the names of Owls and their guests who wish to participate. Full details on the excursion will be sent to all participants. Don't miss this once-off opportunity.

Member's News

Owl Mike Bruton reports on the Darwin bust to be mounted in Simon's Town

Owls may remember the WPB that Owl Mike Bruton gave at the Owl Club last year on the significance of Charles Darwin's visit in June 1836 on the HMS Beagle to the Cape of Good Hope as well as the talk by Cape Town sculptor, Johan Steyn, on his artistic career. Steyn's talk was accompanied by a display of a superb clay maquette of a young Charles Darwin that he had created. Owl Mike and Johan Steyn, in collaboration with the Simon's Town Historical Society, Cape Town Heritage Foundation, Cape Town City Council and the Geological Society of South Africa, have mounted a campaign to raise funds for a bronze bust of Darwin, cast from Steyn's clay maquette, to be mounted on Simon's Town Jetty to commemorate the historically significant visit of the British naturalist to the Cape. In addition, a fully rigged, three-masted sailing ship, the Oosteschelde, is currently retracing the voyage of the Beagle around the world and will drop anchor in Simon's Town for two weeks in April 2025. At the time of the visit of the Oosteschelde Owl Nicholas Ellenbogen will be producing, and performing in, a play about the significance of Darwin's visit to the Cape and Owl Dirk Durnez will be mounting an art exhibition on 'Darwin, Evolution and Biodiversity' in his Art@Africa gallery on the V&A Waterfront.

Owls who wish to know more about the Darwin Bust campaign should contact Owl Mike Bruton. Mike's email address is: mikefishesbruton@gmail.com

Above: Sculptor Johan Steyn with his clay maquette representing young Charles Darwin.

The three-masted sailing ship, the *Oosteschelde*, is currently retracing the voyage of the Beagle around the world.

(Image credit: Wikimedia/VollwertBIT)

The Owl Club
Tuesday 16 April 2024
The 1359th Meeting

President: Owl Ron Duff
Dinner @ 6.45 pm
Grace: Owl John van der Linde
Dinner
Toast: South Africa: The Owl President
A break for the tables to be cleared

The 1359th Meeting @ 7.55 following dinner:

Announcements: The Owl President
Induction: Owl Viljoen van Heerden
Toast to our guests: The Owl President
Talk: "Why Poetry" by Peter Anderson
Music 1st set: "Back to Blues" – One piano, four hands, with Tertia Visser and Albie van Schalkwyk

Interval/Bar break

Music 2nd set:
WPB: Owl Tony Murray " The Nightclub Singer and the Spy"

Toast: The Owl Club, The Owl Preside
Duff

And a safe flight hom

KG
KELVIN GROVE

The Owl Club
Tuesday 16th April 2024

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Starter
Mushroom Soup

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Main Course
Grilled hake
Served with warm tomato basil and green olive on garlic new potatoes

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Dessert
Apple crumble
served with whipped cream

Grace

Heavenly Father we thank You for feeding us
As you feed young owls when they call up-on You-
Give us such trust in Your providence
That carefree we may hoot on our perches.
But before we take up our knives and forks
Or hear the popping of the corks
Let's pause - and thank the Lord divine
For these, His gifts of food and wine.
AMEN.
Grace by Owl Bishop Leslie Stradling.