

# Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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pour le Réarmement moral

# CAUX

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Caux, 07.08.00

Dear friends,

What a week! What a rich diet! We've argued over what is art, and whether there is a distinction between art and Art - but we can all agree that we've enjoyed massive doses of it. The Rt Rev Michael Marshall, Assistant Bishop of London, present for most of this week on "The Arts in Perspective", stressed in his Caux Lecture that art and religion can strike the same chords: "Both help in different ways to bring us closer to the unknown and to the transcendent." He insisted on the need for art, religion and science to dialogue peacefully, to inhabit together the territory of mystery. So we've touched on mysteries, in words, pictures, images and sounds, we've been touched, beyond telling. I am again amazed at how the same old framework, the walls, the rooms, can be transformed from one session to another, by a new team coming in, with a new vision of what they want to do through a few days here.

We ended the week in the bay window of the Great Hall, looking out over lowering clouds and the fading evening light, listening to the Fitzwilliam Quartet play Haydn's "The Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross". As it was originally written and performed, there were meditations read by Hugh Williams between the seven sonatas. At the start of the concert there were a few signs of light trying to break through the gathering clouds. But as the light failed and night fell there were candles in the hall, and the pearls of light around the lake in the night. But now as I write, I look out at clearing skies, and sun on the mountains.

Bishop Marshall took a series of morning meditations in room 401 that drew more and more people as the week went on, until on his last day, the room was packed, with people standing and others sitting on the floor in the middle of the circle. He took us deep into the mysteries of faith, and of calling, "the unknown and the transcendent". He feels a special calling to the world of the arts in London. It is hard to estimate what this may all mean, since he has expressed the hope that this is the beginning of a long association, but we feel great gratitude for this encounter.

I really am at a loss for words. And since most afternoons saw a choice of not less than six events or activities ("Arts à la Carte"), my view can only be highly personal and incomplete. World class music has been an important part of these days, with the Lienart duo, Belgian twins, on violin and piano, along with the Fitzwilliam Quartet, old friends of Caux now, playing in different combinations. Three craftsmen took us deep into their work and their solitary callings, struggling with matter. The opening evening took us into the world of stained glass, with the Swiss Emile Aebisher ('Yoki'), a founder of the stained glass museum in Romont. The following day it was the turn of Claude LeBet, another Swiss, a violin maker, holding up in one hand a little pile of pieces of wood that through his skill will become a violin. He took us into the history of his craft, and then into the sounds it produces, with four great violins that he'd brought with him, played in turn by the Belgian violinist.

Then it was the turn of Jan Van Nouhuys to take us into the world of silver and of silver-smithing and his decade-long struggle to create a market for modern artistic silver. He and his wife Anneke were interviewed in one of the morning sessions - each day there was an in-depth interview taking us deep into the life and convictions of an artist, with enough time and space to make a life come alive. The times when feeling lost and desperate, with the accountant saying "You can't go on," and something, some inner compulsion saying, "Continue, continue, continue." The Van Nouhuys' had been lead to create a movement, "Silver in Motion", which gave Jan the chance to express his artistry to the full, but also opened up a market to other artists (and competitors) and perhaps has marked the history of his craft.

The Stari Theatre from New York, under the direction of Russian Oleg Kheifets, presented Nicolai Gogol's 1842 comedy *Marriage: An Absolutely Impossible Event in Two Acts*. It was a strange experience to see and hear American actors on stage, with Russian names, to discover a world of matchmakers and arranged marriages - and questions of commitment and love that have not changed one iota over the years. Another smash hit success of the week was the *Cotton Patch Gospel* offered by the Blue Ridge Theatre Festival, a transposing of St Matthew's Gospel to the State of Georgia, in the South, and into the music of country and bluegrass. Then a recital of songs by Sylvie Söderlund, accompanied by John Burrows. Both Sylvie and John, with their spouses Gunnar and Melinda, have been leading forces behind this rich week, along with Elisabeth Tooms.

What a roller coaster it has been! On Swiss National Day - one of the only really nice days and evenings of the week, thank God - we went from a classical concert with the Duo Lienart, and from the disturbing, haunting music of Janacek to alpenhorns. Then at Hauts de Caux, the Cotton Pickers, the musicians of the *Cotton Patch Gospel*, offered us a variety of folk, western and rock.

And I've missed a good deal on this session since I've been meeting with the International Communications Forum that had its meetings in parallel! We saw a première of a documentary video about Bill Porter, the Forum's founder, who has just celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Next year will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Forum's founding and it now links 2000 media professionals around the world. This year's meeting was notable also for the participation of a group of six from Moscow.

The Caux night-life included a late-night showing of a new feature film by Jara Moserova on the ethical issues facing medicine - a brain transplant from an accident-mutilated old woman to the body of a brain dead young woman... to save one life out of two deaths.

Arts à la carte - 'the fusion of African, break dance, body popping and contemporary dance, with Platinum 4orce and Break Free'; flower arranging; Michel Orphelin giving a reading of a new work in progress; icon painting; producing wax cards; improvisation and theatre workshops; saxophone and piano improvisations; a series of short videos on Victor Sparre's art and beliefs by Axel Nelson, shown on Norwegian TV during Easter week... My head and heart and ears and eyes are still spinning!

Warm regards from a Caux where we've still not enjoyed much of a summer, but where we hope for a few days of sun where we can eat outside.

Andrew Stallybrass