

A Propos de Rien

For the May 2006 mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Jim Caughran, 43 Dingwall Ave, Toronto Ontario M4J 1C4, Canada; email caughranJim at gmail dot com. Illo by Rotsler. Thanks again to Marty Cantor for providing Rotsler illos to Corflu 21. Dingbats are Monotype Sorts, chosen randomly.

The firmest fayth is found in fewest woordes.

Edward Dyer (c. 1540-1607)

Götterdämmerung

Canadian Opera Company, Frances Ginzer, Christian Franz.

Götterdämmerung has a complicated plot, unlike most operas. [*La Bohème: They're young and poor but carefree and happy. They fall in love. She gets sick and dies, and it's so sad.*] I should have spent some time studying up on it, but the surtitles made it comprehensible. It's long—started at 6pm, went to 11:30 with two half-hour intermissions.

It was costumed in modern dress, and the sets were weird—all scenes had a floor with a highway centreline marked,

and skid marks turning left into the stage (assuming driving on the right). There were electrical wires overhead, even in the corporate boardrooms. They sparked in the opening scene, the Norns spinning the rope of destiny, when the rope broke.



Götterdämmerung isn't about modern times. Executives don't carry broadswords into corporate boardrooms, nor do they swear on spears. This was a distraction, not an enhancement. The scenes were weird in last year's production of Siegfried, but they didn't get in the way.

But a review pointed out that corporate boardrooms are appropriate places for treachery and back-stabbing, and I met a friend who exclaimed how much she liked the sets.

But Wagner, the orchestra and the singers made it all worthwhile. The music is massively impressive, the difficult singing was made effortless. The orchestra used new tuben (designed by Wagner for the Ring), and they sounded fantastic.

Norma

Canadian Opera Company, June Anderson.

One reviewer called the set for this one "an explosion in a lumberyard". I guess it saves money.

But the singing was fantastic.

Orfeo

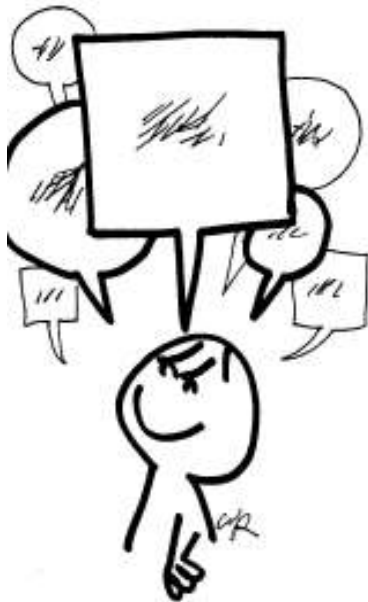
Opera Atelier, Daniel Belcher. The orchestra is the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, of some renown on their own. I have heard their Messiah twice.

Claudio Monteverdi invented opera with this. Since the form was new, he spent some time explaining the scenes that modern opera wouldn't, but it was real opera. The lead was a baritone; another detail that would be different today. Scenes were mostly paintings with different lighting for different effects, but Apollo descended in a sun chariot.

Opera Atelier was a new one for me. We'll have to try their version of **The Magic Flute** next year.

We haven't seen much theatre, but did see a good **Our Town** at a new theatre in the distillery district. Met Murray Moore there.

Comments on comments on



TALKS TOO MUCH

February Mailing

VISIONS PARADISE— Sabella

Kinky vision on the cover. ✧ Sorry to hear of your father's death. ✧ Flash drives wear out; backing up to them means they're used more and may wear out faster. But they are cheap and handy. ✧ Your Nanking denier sending you his book may have been extending some offer of friendship. Or dropping a gauntlet.

OPUNTIAS—Speirs

59.5 Enjoyed your family history. * Bicycle handlebars to guide the exercise horse?

59.3 Does metaphor count for naught in your idea of poetry? I'd put it before rhyme, but would call much playing with language poetry.

⇒ The prices for the telephone gadgets seem quite high, given inflation since. In particular, the Tollometer; ten dollars would buy a lot of clocks at that time. * I would include cooperation among the things contributing to humans' evolutionary fitness; your remark implies it's outside an "evolutionary basis".

ALPHABET SOUP— Stevens

"Can anyone do art?" My elementary teachers convinced me I couldn't draw. I've later convinced myself that anyone can learn to draw; it's not a talent but a skill. Art is harder. ❁ Novels from the 20s with photos from the teleplay? Anachronism time? "Tele-" implies distant communication, which at that time were

telegraph or radio, neither of which had good picture quality.

KING BISCUIT TIME— Lichtman

While all of us read *1984* back in the distant past, still everyone—sf readers and others—remembers it as the quintessential police state, and recognizes references to it.

RAJASTHAN and APDR— me

I had some feelings about sending something to Fapa that wouldn't have been mailable 45 years ago when first I entered the Association. ➤ And in aPdR: In the Trufen online group, Tom Becker provided the answer to "When do you start to call it a police state?": "When it's too late."

ADVENTURES EARTH— Sapienza

I suppose the Australian rivers running inland disappear from evaporation; much of Australia is desert. ☞

Page count is less meaningful than it was when people used 10 or 12 point pica with no options. We have fanzine tools beyond our wildest dreams of not all that long ago. ✕ Yes, nostalgia ignores all the bad parts. Especially the right-wing calls for a return to times that never were. * *Tale of Two Cities* tightly written? I recently began it (for the first time; my education is spotty) and noticed how Dickens was obviously paid by the word.

LOFGEORNOST—Lerner

I have not read many years of *Extrapolation*, nor do I recognize the

name Dena Benatan. Was she putting sf down, or saying “Let people read it on their own”? ✕ I remember a speculation that during most of human prehistory, hundreds of thousands of years wouldn’t make a lot of difference in people’s lives. Yet I wonder; sit down and think of all the technology developed before the technology of writing. Include flint-work—several generations of flint technology—other aspects of weaponry and hunting, tanning, travois, animal husbandry, skis or snowshoes, fishing in several forms, farming, and many other things. Add in preliminary tries, refinements and false starts. I suspect something would come along every generation or two. ➞ In the sixties when an astronomer wrote a book about Stonehenge as clock (to skepticism or outrage from archeologists or prehis-

torians) he made the point that the rocks have subsided to compensate for the precession of the Earth's axis; somehow it corrected itself. ♣ And Canada's record in timekeeping is not great; I doubt there is yet a Cesium clock here, and at one time the astronomers were saying to the NRC, "You call that a time service?" ♣ With only three in the audience, I can see why theatre ticket prices are high. Or do I have that backward?

VOICE OF THE HABU— Wells

I guess that if you're fast enough, you could plug a power bar into itself. A couple of times faster than the speed of light should do it.

NICE DISTINCTIONS— Hlavaty

On computers vs. books: "We still need the kind of knowledge that comes only from old-fashioned books, and always will." What about the books I read on computer screens? ♣ "Franklin manages to describe his dealings with stupid Caucasians in reasoned and measured tones." As an Afro-American in the early part of the 20th century, that was probably necessary; expressing anger against whites would not be a survival tactic.

SWEET JANE—Eklund

Are that many movies worth seeing? **Munich** was an excellent movie I

wished I hadn't seen; the violence got to me. ☀ Best movie I've seen recently is **Water**, a Deepak Mehta film about widowhood in India in the 1930s. Two of (Earth, Air, Fire) preceded it; we've tried to rent them but they are always out. 🌈 I remember walking in Los Angeles (with my ex and Elmer Perdue), stopping at a stop light, asking why we were waiting—Californians did, at the time—and walking across. My wife informed me that the man who was behind me was in a police uniform. No ticket, or even warning. And in Banff once, the RCMP warned us and ticketed some of the local teenagers. Tourists get special treatment. ➡ I think SUVs and most other passenger trucks are attempts to be macho.

ANNEX—Searles

Glad you're still with us. ♦ Your doctor's lack of haste in diagnosing prostate cancer is in accord with the statistics; if you've got to get cancer, prostate cancer is the one to get.

No EXIT—Green

Enjoyed your note about the Stack of Things to Do and the dangers of fanning.

FOR FAPA—Lindsay

I'm surprised at that \$10000 spent at one shop from a cruise ship. | I used to name my computers Yeti, but since we named a cat Yeti, I haven't worried about a name. Tools probably shouldn't have personalities; it might mean unpredictability.

* Do you still have a dial-up Internet connection? You reminded me to install Web Developer Express, free from Microsoft. I don't have a lot of hope for it, but want to check out.

FELINE MEWSINGS— TUTIHASI

The trouble with selling a house for a large profit is that you then have to buy another to live in. Only exception is if you die. All that was left of my parents' estate was the house. 🌸 It is a mistake to rely on Social Security and company pensions, but many people do.

LOFGEORNOST—Lerner

I recall reading in the '60s (I think) of someone trying to find unilingual Gaelic speakers in Scotland; they found 5, 4 of whom were under five years old, and the other was over 80.

You seem to have found people who spoke it by choice in the '70s.

ROAD WARRIOR—Feller

I shared an office c. 1961 with people doing the first computer translations, from Russian and Chinese to English. The project began with an assumption that humans could easily clean up after a machine version; that all that would be needed was some sentence reordering. They had a rude awakening, and you've seen how far machine translation has gone since—not terribly far. I suppose that good translation will wait for computers to be able to hold concepts and express them in words.

SEAL WITH KISS— Morningstar

Smart birds: It becomes evident that humans' conceit over their intelli-

gence is misplaced, and that there is a spectrum of intelligence on which we may be further along than some other species. There are probably several spectra; I don't know that I could interpret sonar like a dolphin, or, even if I could see that well, distinguish a distant mouse from a leaf, like a hawk. | "Queue" seems preferable to your uses of "line", but it is losing popularity here, where it held on for longer than in the US. Dunno about Britain. ★ My PDA has study words for Scrabble and a couple of novels; if I'm stuck somewhere I have something to do.

CLAIMS DEPARTMENT— Garcia

Most pop music is too much of Clank & Whine for me. I am therefore ignorant of SKA.

TARGET: FAPA—Eney

Yes, some Muslims overreacted to the cartoons, but so did their critics. ► What have you read of I.F. Stone? He was a dig-out-the-facts investigator, something we could use in this age of unquestioned press releases.