

President's Report for the 2016 Annual General Meeting (16 March 2016)

Introduction

2015 was again a very busy and varied year for the Goethe Society Wellington! We continued with the monthly newsletter drawing together the Goethe Society's own activities, any German-related activities in the community, the Stammtisch, the Goethe-Institut or German Embassy's activities and any notices from members. The lecture series, film evenings and the German language competition continued to be organised by the Goethe Society in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut, New Zealand.

All events remained open to anyone interested in 'things German', refreshments are provided, and entry is free of charge. In 2015 we also varied the times and days of various events to ensure a wider or different audience could attend some events. For instance, two of the Film evenings were held on Thursdays at 5.30 pm so that tertiary students could come directly from their classes to the films.

Calendar of Events 2015

February:

Following on from the inaugural one in November 2014, a further **Hauskonzert with Pascal Harris** was hosted by Jacqui Bisley on Sunday, 22 February. The programme for this *Hauskonzert* included Schubert: Impromptus D.899 Numbers 1-3 (followed by an interval), Berg: Sonata Op. 1 and Beethoven: Sonata Number 23 in F minor Op. 57.

Pascal Harris studied piano under Professor Terence Dennis at the University of Otago and graduate with a Bachelor of Music (with First Class Honours) and a Bachelor of Arts in 2005. From 2006 to 2007, Pascal studied for a Postgraduate Diploma in Piano Performance at the Royal College of Music, London, with Gordon Fergus-Thompson. He has participated in many master classes with such pianists as Konstantin Sherkbakov and Piers Lane, and recently has benefited from the advice of Jorg Demus and Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Since his debut solo concert at the Waikanae Art Gallery in 2003, Pascal has given concerts throughout New Zealand, in London and Tokyo. His debut with orchestra was in the Brahms first piano concerto in 2005 with the Dunedin Youth Orchestra. He has won special prizes at the National Performing Arts Competition in Wellington (2002), the Kerikeri National Piano Competition (2004) and various music prizes at the University of Otago, including the Simon Gibson Memorial Prize (2006) for outstanding Honours student. From 2007 to 2013 he lived in Tokyo where he regularly gave concerts and taught. He returned to New Zealand in 2014 and is now based in Wellington. In 2013 he released his first CD, a recording of Schubert's complete Impromptus.

Margaret Sutherland and I attended **the Netzwerk-Deutsch-Treffen 2015** that same weekend and reported on the previous year's activities and events of the Goethe Society Wellington. Margaret (as GANZ representative from Wellington) also reported on the 2014 Goethe Oral Competition. This was a great setting to hear from other regions in New Zealand of the variety of activities, events and issues – in schools, at universities and within communities – that are happening or being discussed, etc.

March:

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Goethe Society Wellington was held on Wednesday, 18 March, starting with a delicious pot luck dinner at Helen Fawthorpe's house. The 2015 Committee was elected as follows:

President – Kristina McGuinness-King

Treasurer – Keith Conway

Secretary – not elected at AGM

German Programme Representative – Margaret Sutherland

Student Representative – Thomas Minot

Committee Members – Helen Fawthorpe, Michael McBryde and Jacqui Bisley

Thomas Minot later agreed to be the Secretary of the Society for 2015. Thanks were recorded to Maren Luehrs for her wonderful service as Secretary for the past several years, and to Emma Brooky for her enthusiastic engagement as Student Representative for 2014.

The minutes of the 2014 AGM were accepted with no amendments required. The matter of appointing an honorary auditor remains on the workplan for the Committee. The Treasurer's report was accepted. It was recorded that the matter of the unpaid honoraria for those who assisted with the Oral Competition in September would be followed up by the Treasurer. Also it was recorded that we would need to do a little more marketing of the Entertainment Books fundraising method in order to increase sales of these. The formation of a Goethe Society Wellington Award for those students within the Wellington region who are applying for the New Zealand/German Student Exchange was discussed and remains an item on the Committee's 2015 workplan. The President's report was briefly discussed and that discussion led onto the outline of events for 2015 including the planned lecture series, the German Oral Competition, as well as the planned reception at the Ambassador's Residence.

The first lecture of 2015 Series was held on Wednesday, 25 March: **Emeritus Professor Hansgerd Delbrück - "42 (and more) assassination attempts on Hitler"**. This event was very well attended and a great way to kick off our lecture series for 2015. Emeritus Professor Hansgerd Delbrück taught German at Victoria University of Wellington from 1982 until 2006. Previously, he taught at the University of Tübingen, where he also received his PhD. In his talk on "42 (and more) assassination attempts on Hitler" Professor Delbrück addressed three questions: Why did all these attempts fail? What motivated the would-be assassins? And what were the arguments of German resistance fighters who stopped short of assassination attempts? The talk included an account of the only assassination attempt on Hitler made by a woman, and also revisited Churchill's response to the German resistance movement.

April:

The second of the lecture series was held on Thursday, 16 April: **Uta Plate - Goethe-Institut New Zealand Artist in Residence (2015) - "My Journey in my Life & My Journey in New Zealand"**. German director and educational theatre practitioner, **Uta Plate** was the Goethe-Institut New Zealand Artist in Residence in 2015. The Artist in Residence programme offered by the Goethe-Institut in co-operation with Wellington City Council allows artists from Germany a three-month scholarship to work and live in New Zealand. Uta worked with Toi Whakaari while in New Zealand. In this address Uta talked about her work with second year acting students at Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School as well as her participations in workshops in different contexts in Christchurch, Auckland and Gisborne.

With a specific focus on young people, particularly those from marginalised groups and communities like asylum-seekers, prisoners and those in social care, **Uta Plate** has been working on theatre projects in Germany and around the world for twenty years. Her work combines improvisation, movement and writing to help inspire young people to create work that is relevant and meaningful to them and their own experience. Her work has taken her around Europe, to South America, China and Palestine. In 1999 Uta joined the newly reopened Schaubühne theatre where the new artistic team around Thomas Ostermeier and Sasha Waltz started. She initiated and developed the 'laboratory' Schaubühne where she was responsible for programming and curating activities for audience development as well as running workshops and directing their youth theatre division.

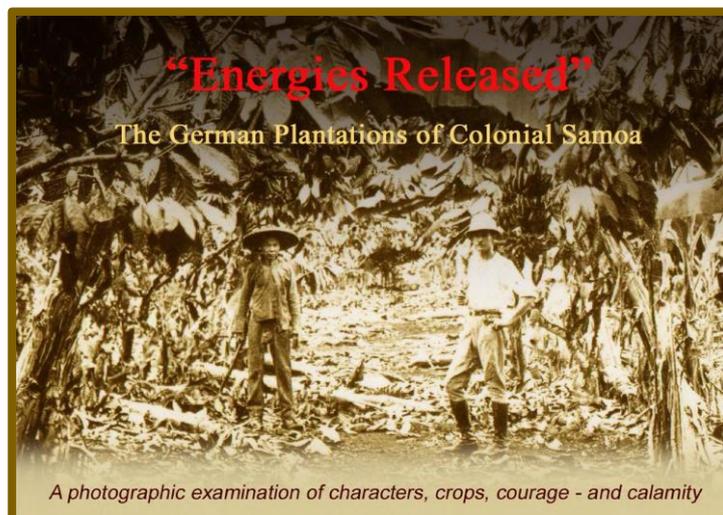
May:

On Wednesday, 20 May, **Thom Conroy** gave a lively reading of and insights into creating his novel, ***The Naturalist***, in which Ernst Dieffenbach, the main character, travels around New Zealand – with a pet weta - and translates Darwin's *Journal of Researches*. His novel has been described by Random House as 'A fascinating, moving novel based on the real life of Dr Ernst Dieffenbach: scientist, explorer, revolutionary, outcast.' Featuring Darwin, Charles Heaphy and the notorious Maori chief Te Rauparaha, *The Naturalist* connects New Zealand's past with world history and brings to life the story of a remarkable man. Despite the small audience it was a stimulating and very enjoyable event. Vic Books came to the event with copies of *The Naturalist* available for purchase, so a number of those present had the chance to start their Christmas shopping!

Thom Conroy is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Massey University, where he coordinates the Masters of Creative Writing degree. He is also a fiction writer whose historical novel *The Naturalist* was published with Random House in 2014. His work has appeared in various journals in the US and New Zealand, including *Sport*, *Landfall*, *New England Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and *Kenyon Review*. His fiction has been recognised by Best American Short Stories 2012 and has won various other awards, including the Katherine Ann Porter Prize in Fiction and the Sunday Star-Times Short Fiction Competition.

June:

On Wednesday, 10 June **Tony Brunt** gave us an amazing and very interesting insight into the German plantations of Colonial Samoa and the families who lived and worked there, entitled "***Energies Released. The German plantations of colonial Samoa***". This event was well attended by around one hundred people, including members of the Wellington Pasifika communities and Society members as well as tertiary students with an interest in History, Pacific Studies and International Relations.



Tony Brunt is an Auckland writer and researcher who specialises in the photographic legacy of the German colonial period in Samoa. He is of English, German and Samoan descent, and has created an online photo exhibition on the German Samoa theme for the Museum of Samoa, "To Walk Under Palm Trees," viewable at <http://germansinsamoa.net/> This is a project arose from some chance discoveries in a private album or two that Tony happened to see. (His presentation on the German plantations of colonial Samoa was first delivered at Auckland Museum in February 2015.)



Goethe Society Wellington representatives were invited to attend two events in June: firstly, a **Cocktail Reception in honour of the newly formed New Zealand German Friendship Group** hosted by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Anne-Marie Schleich and Lindsay Tisch, MP, at the Beehive on Wednesday, 3 June.

And secondly, **the Matariki Reception hosted by the Governor-General**, Lieutenant General Sir Jerry Mateparae and Lady Janine Mateparae at Government House on Friday, 19 June. Pictured with me (see left) at the Reception is Thomas Minot, Secretary of the Goethe Society Wellington (2015).

July:

To celebrate 25 years of German reunification, **the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Anne-Marie Schleich invited members of the Goethe Society to a Cocktail Reception at the Residence** on Wednesday, 22 July. This was a very well attended and wonderful evening (complete with warm fires!), and we would like to thank Dr Schleich for this very kind invitation.

As part of the **celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Wellington on 25/26 July, Victoria University hosted a programme of events** at Old Government Buildings, **including a lecture on Professor von Zedlitz—from esteemed teacher to outcast**. Dr Margaret Sutherland, Senior Lecturer in the German Programme at Victoria and GSW Committee member presented on George von Zedlitz, one of Victoria University's founding professors. Taking up his position as Victoria's first professor of modern languages in 1901, von Zedlitz had a distinguished career until the outbreak of WW1, when the Alien Enemy Teachers Act 1915 was passed specifically to remove him from his post. His story illustrates the manner in which political and historical circumstances can impinge on the private sphere.

As part of this lecture, Helen Fawthorpe, also a member of the GSW committee and immediate past president, **presented on the history of the Society, its links with the German Programme and our current objectives and activities**.

On Wednesday, 29 July the Goethe Society Wellington also **supported the German Programme's Kaffeestunde for Years 12 and 13 students at Victoria**. This was well attended by students and teachers and was an opportunity for them to be immersed in 'real campus life' for a couple of hours, talk with staff of the German Programme, the Student & Academic Services Team and current students, and find out more about student experience at Victoria, German degree programmes & subject combinations, student services, overseas exchange opportunities and career pathways – all that in a relaxed atmosphere, whilst enjoying light refreshments and cake.

The Kaffeestunde in 2014 had been a great opportunity for those who took up the invitation as they enjoyed their time and obtained helpful answers to so many questions they had. Particularly moving was one student's remark, who turned to her teacher upon leaving and said: "I'm so glad that I came here, because otherwise I wouldn't be looking forward to uni so much. It's like, I'm sick of school but now I'm also pumped for uni." In setting the date for the 2015 Kaffeestunde, the German Programme considered a date before the Goethe Orals so that students can familiarise themselves with the university surroundings and people, and hopefully feel a little more relaxed when coming back for the competition. It is also hoped that the beginning of the new Trimester might find them motivated for such an outing and give them adequate thinking time before the start of enrolments at university.

August/September:

Many thanks to Margaret Sutherland and Philippa Watson for all their hard work to organise **the annual German Oral Competition 2015 and Prize-giving**, the Society's biggest school project, and to all those members, teachers and friends of the Society who volunteered as judges on the day. The students compete in Prepared Reading and Conversation categories and are judged by both a German teacher and a native speaker of German. Each participant is graded Excellence, Merit or Credit according to their achievement and receives a certificate. The students with the highest marks in each year will also receive book prizes. Certificates and prizes are presented during a prize giving ceremony with students, teachers, parents and representatives of the German, Austrian and Swiss Embassies invited.

The below report is provided by Margaret Sutherland, with photos from the Prize-giving evening taken by Kevin McGuinness.

Report on the Annual German Oral Competition 2015:

The annual Wellington Goethe Society Oral Competition for secondary school students took place on Saturday, 8 August 2015 at its usual venue at Victoria University. This year 119 students were pre-registered for the event, but on the day itself, numbers were affected by a flu epidemic that made itself felt in many Wellington secondary schools. Despite this approximately 80 competitors made their way to the Kelburn campus in time for the 9 am start.

The smooth running of the event was made possible by our 34 willing judges and by a group of ushers recruited from students of German at Victoria University of Wellington, many of whom had themselves taken part in the competition as school students. They were able to calm nerves and direct competitors to the rooms in which the two obligatory tasks, prepared-reading and conversation, were to take place. Competitors, judges and ushers all enjoyed the refreshments which were provided by the Goethe Society.

The prize-giving took place on Wednesday, 2 September. Despite the lower number of competitors on the day of the competition, the Goethe Society was delighted with the interest that the prize-giving generated. Students were accompanied by parents, siblings and friends, a larger number than in previous years. Members of the Goethe Society were also encouraged to attend.

The certificates and prizes were presented by representatives of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Embassy of Switzerland and the Goethe-Institut, all of whom generously donated prizes, as did the Austrian honorary consul, who was unable to be present at the occasion.

The top prize is always awarded to a student with the highest overall mark. Known as the Jacoby Prize, this award commemorates the work of two of the Society's founding members, Dr Peter and Mrs Ilse Jacoby. For the first time in the history of the competition, which dates back to the 1960s, this award was shared by three students, who each received the same result.

Two secondary school students, Cate Hensen and Grace Belworthy (Wellington Girls' College), spoke about their experiences in Germany as recent recipients of a PAD award, and Schyana Sivanantham, a German student at Victoria University of Wellington, provided an inspirational, illustrated account of her experiences as a winner of a DAAD Winter Course in the summer of 2014-15 and of the advantages of including German in a programme of study at tertiary level. The formal part of the evening was concluded by a supper for those attending.



In August we also had our **first of a series of film evenings, showing the film 'Hannah Arendt'**, the 2013 movie by renowned German director Margarethe von Trotta, centred on the life of German-Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906 -1975). Arendt's coverage for the New Yorker magazine of the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann for Nazi war crimes - "The Trial of the Century" - in which she introduced her famous concept of *the banality of evil*, attracted major controversy at the time.

October:

On Thursday, 8 October we had our **second film evening in the 2015 series, showing 'Die geliebten Schwestern'**. Based on the life of Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), *Die geliebten Schwestern* tells the story of the poet's long relationship with two sisters, Caroline and Charlotte von Lengefeld, and his eventual marriage to Charlotte.

This sumptuous costume drama, set within the houses of the Thuringian aristocracy and amidst fecund nature, re-enacts the growing closeness between the three. It portrays the successes and tensions of Schiller's literary life, amidst the turmoil of his unconventional domestic arrangements. Revolution in France, Weimar and its cultural milieu, the beginnings of letterhead press, all provide a fascinating backdrop to this story which is written and directed by Dominik Graf. The film was nominated for a Golden Bear Award at the 64th Berlin Film Festival. It has been praised for its cinematic style, its portrayal of character and its modern take on the drama and emotion of the story.

On Wednesday, 14 October members of the Goethe Society Wellington attended **the Reception to celebrate the 25th anniversary of German Reunification** hosted by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Anne-Marie Schleich and Mr Cheng Tan at the Boatshed, Taranaki Street Wharf, Wellington.

On Wednesday, 21 October, **the next in the lecture series, “Auf von Zedlitz’ Spuren – In search of George von Zedlitz”** was presented by Chris Chapman. During his recent research Chris (a Society member) has collected a lot of material that speaks of the ‘human interest’ stories surrounding George William Edward Ernest von Zedlitz, the first Professor of Modern Languages at Victoria College, Wellington. The lecture began with a short summary of his life, and then Chris spoke briefly about his investigations. The main theme was how and why von Zedlitz (and his family) were perceived as enemy aliens during and after WWI and also during WWII, how that affected their lives and how von Zedlitz rose above it. Chris delivered an interesting talk about von Zedlitz, his family and personal history, his life in New Zealand and the intriguing character he was.

November:

On Wednesday, 4 November we held the **final Film Evening for 2015** where we watched ‘**Haus Tugendhat’ (Dieter Reifarth)** about the history of this icon of modernist architecture as related by family, historians and former residents. Those attending were treated to home cooking by Jacqui Bisley – bread and sausage rolls as well as shortbread straight from the oven!

Dieter Reifarth’s film relates the history of this icon of modernist architecture. Designed by Mies van der Rohe and built in Brno in the Czech Republic between 1928 and 1930, the building provoked passionate debate within architectural circles of the time. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2001, the turbulent history of this ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ is related by family, historians and former residents. Beautifully filmed and using archival footage and photographs, the documentary seeks to convey the aesthetic of the building which its owners described as ‘pure’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘liberating’.

It was wonderful to see 30 Society members celebrate a very busy year of events and activities in social setting at the **Goethe Society Wellington 2015 Christmas Dinner** on Wednesday, 25 November. This was our final GSW event for 2015 and was held at the Brooklyn Deli, an Austrian delicatessen. The team at Brooklyn Deli prepared a German/Austrian-style dinner that included Frittatensuppe, a starter of traditional Austrian spreads and Speck on Rye Sourdough Hausbrot, Steirischer Frühlingssalat, Bavarian Bratwurst with Sauerkraut and Potato Mash, Wiener Schnitzel and Potato Salad, Austrian Beef Goulash with Spätzle and Pinzgauer Kasnockn’. And for dessert there was Kaiserschmarrn and Zwetschkenröster or Marillenpalatschinken!



Additional Activities:

The Society also supports **the monthly Stammtisch**, that provides the opportunity to speak German in an informal setting. Anyone who would like to speak German is invited. The Stammtisch takes place on the last Thursday of each month at 5.30pm, and during 2015 moved to the Southern Cross

Garden Bar Restaurant, Te Aro, and more recently to the new Muenchen Food Hall and Bier Haus on Queens Wharf.

As part of our efforts to promote 'all things German', **we also participated in the *Kaleidoscope of European Carols*** on Saturday, 5 December, 7-9 pm at the Botanic Gardens' Soundshell. This was aimed at sharing the Christmas spirit and our diverse European cultures through song and dance. The line-up included French, Hungarian, Irish, Maltese, Polish, Swedish, German, Scottish, and many other performances. Monika Smith offered to bring together a group of singers for a German carols item at this event.

Apart from sharing the Christmas spirit and our diverse European cultures through song and dance, this event also raised funds for the New Zealand Red Cross through selling European baking. Red Cross volunteers provided candles and drinks in exchange for a donation. Helen Fawthorpe assisted the event organisers by organising the donation of some German/Austrian/Swiss baking for the sale.

The Society also promoted (and members attended) many **Goethe-Institut New Zealand events and activities**, such as the German Film Festival (September 2015), the Marius von Mayenburg's play *The Ugly One* that premiered on a New Zealand stage at Circa Theatre from 11 July - 8 August 2015, and the German films, *Victoria* (Director: Sebastian Schipper) and *Pheonix* (Director: Christian Petzold) that screened at the New Zealand International Film Festival (17 July - 4 August 2015). We also promoted the *Lifewrap* series (<https://vimeo.com/channels/lifewrap>) and the *Lifewrap Adventskalender* produced by Steffen Kreft, together with the Goethe-Institut, a novel gift idea in the festive season.

Through the monthly Newsletter and various emails to our distribution list, we have also promoted community events such as the **Organ Recital by Roland Voit** (Germany) featuring music-inspired paintings by German artist Herbert Grawe and held at Old St. Pauls late March; or the **Garage Project's Brauhaus - German Style Beer Event** held at the Prefab Hall late November. They were serving a Keller Beer in a German Oak Barrel made by one of the last remaining original Oak Barrel suppliers to Oktoberfest, alongside some traditional, and not so traditional, German food.

In Summary

My deepest thanks goes to the Goethe Society Committee members, Dr Margaret Sutherland, Dr Michael McBryde, Helen Fawthorpe, Thomas Minot, Keith Conway and Jacqui Bisley for their many and varied contributions to organising and hosting events – and contributions in all the other ways that this extremely busy past year has called for! A special thanks goes to Keith for his many years of service as the Society's Treasurer! We wish him well for his forthcoming posting to Vietnam. We are also very grateful for the continued financial support and assistance from the Goethe-Institut, New Zealand, and for the continued support of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Dr Kristina McGuinness-King
President
Goethe Society Wellington