

B.I.L.L. BOARD

SUMMER 2004
VOLUME 12
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NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE INSTITUTE FOR LIFETIME LEARNING

Looking Ahead to Fall 2004

The Curriculum Committee is putting together a wide array of stimulating courses and lecturers for the fall 2004 semester — something for everyone. Watch your mail for the catalog.

ARTS

The Sounds of Music — Tracy Wilson

Modernism: Its Beginnings and Development in European and American Art
— Maureen Hickey, Mark Peltz

What is Folk Art? — Barbara Cate, Sam Farber, Lee Kogan, Gerard Wertkin

LITERATURE

Great Plays on Film — Howard Arkans and Paul Smilow, Moderators

A Southern Sampler — Paul Stein

Wit, Wisdom and Woes: Grab a Seat at the Algonquin Round Table — P. Jaffe

A Pictorial History of Reading and Writing — Christina Gibbons

SCIENCE

The Conquest of Heart Disease — Robert McInerney, Sandor Wax

The Human Brain: Functions and Dysfunction — Keith Edwards, Siobhan McNally, Dorothy van den Honert

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Today's Headlines — James Cotter, Moderator

Exercise for Healthy Mind, Body and Spirit — Canyon Ranch, Staff

History of Oil — Karen Merrill, Darel Paul

Rise and Fall of Civilizations — Antonia E. Foias

Emperors, Kings and Conquerors of the Ancient World — Kerry Christensen, William Darrow, Matthew Kraus

AGE SMART: Your Mental Fitness Workout — Harriet Vines

Elections 2004 — Paul Flaum

Dates to Save

June 1: *The RoundTable* — Susan Arbetter, Joe Donahue, Paul Elisha, BCC

June 12: *The Influence of Science on Fine Art Photography* — Gregory Crewdson, Bob Gilson, David Hanson, Nancy Mowll Mathews, Robert Reichert, Berkshire Museum

June 14: *The U.S., the U.N. and the World* — Sir Brian Urquhart, BCC

June 18: *A Conversation with Maureen O'Flynn*, BCC

June 21: *Untangling Tanglewood* — Tony Beadle, BCC

June 24: *Grupo Corpo* — Jacob's Pillow

June 30: Berkshire Opera — *Rigoletto*, BCC, Pittsfield

July 2: Berkshire Opera — *Rigoletto*, Chapin Hall, Williams College

July 15: New York City Ballet, SPAC

September 8: Canoe Trip, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton, MA

September 12: Tenth Anniversary Celebration, Crowne Plaza, Pittsfield

September: *George Washington* — James MacGregor Burns, Susan Dunn

October 23: *The Lion King* — Old Boston Opera House

November 4: Folk Art Museum, NYC

November 21: Panel on the Theater — Jeffrey Borak, BCC

December 2: BSO Open Rehearsal — James Levine and Art Deco Exhibit, Boston Museum of Fine Arts

Share a wonderful evening with your
B.I.L.L. friends!

10TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION

Sunday, September 12

Crowne Plaza, Pittsfield
6 pm – Cocktails (cash bar)
7 pm – Dinner

Fun Filled Program
\$60 per person
Watch for your invitation!

President's Message

As B.I.L.L. completes another semester of outstanding courses, we can reflect with pride on our accomplishments. Today B.I.L.L.'s membership is over 1,000. In this year's courses, you filled over 3,000 seats and took part in special events over 1,200 times. Attendance totaled over 1,000 at special projects programs. While those numbers are impressive, we are proudest of the quality of the activities in which you took part. Obviously, B.I.L.L. is fulfilling a need for dynamic, educational and entertaining experiences.

Many of you primarily attend one type of activity. Why not broaden your scope in the coming year? If you have taken only courses, try a special event. If you have not attended one of the special projects, sign up for one that piques your interest. Take advantage of the many types of learning experiences offered to you by our organization.

B.I.L.L. does not shut down after the spring semester ends. For example, there is an exciting series of special projects scheduled for the month of June. Special events will take us to Jacob's Pillow, the Berkshire Opera Company and SPAC. Clearly, summer is full of many worthwhile activities in our beautiful Berkshires.

In September, we will be running at full speed again. We will kick off the year with a gala 10th Anniversary Celebration. An invitation will be sent to you shortly. Save the date—Sunday, September 12, 2004. Our fall semester promises to be one of the best ever so watch for your catalog.

Have a pleasant summer! I look forward to joining you at many B.I.L.L. functions in 2004-2005.



Printmaking Techniques

During the month of March at the Clark Art Institute, Michael Cassin, Curator of Education and James Ganz, Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs, presented a fascinating series of four lectures entitled *Making an Impression*. Each illustrated lecture was followed by a tour of the Print Room to study examples of the works discussed each week. Prints viewed included works by Durer, Rembrandt, Hogarth, Castiglione, Goya, Daumier, Toulouse-Lautrec, Daguerre (Daguerreotype), Warhol and several Japanese printmakers.

The lecturers traced the historical development of printmaking and discussed the tools used as well as the distinctions between various methods—from the earliest relief prints, wood cuts and wood engravings, through intaglio printmaking (etchings and engravings), lithography and early photography. Mona Sherman, Special Projects Chair, and the Clark Art Institute deserve special recognition for developing this course.

— Ruth Degenhardt



Michael Cassin describes a printing method.

Good Wishes, Alexandra

Thank you, Alexandra Warshaw, for providing sound guidance, continuous support and valued leadership during your tenure as BCC liaison. B.I.L.L. wishes you success and happiness in your retirement and hopes to see you often in our classes and at our events.

Summer Reading

If you anticipate taking the course, *A Southern Sampler*, in the fall 2004 semester, you may wish to begin the required reading over the summer. Paul Stein has selected for class discussion *The Ballad of the Sad Café* by Carson McCullers and *Light in August* by William Faulkner.

Thank You, Clark Art Institute

B.I.L.L. thanks the Clark Art Institute for providing a wonderful place in which to hold our classes. The auditorium is spacious, comfortable and offers much-appreciated media equipment.

A special thanks to Judy Ensign, our liaison with the Clark, who has taken care of our scheduling and media needs most graciously.

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HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!



B.I.L.L. 2003 – 2004 Volunteers

B.I.L.L.'s strength and vitality comes from its corps of active, committed volunteers—the people who plan courses, special events, special projects, recruit lecturers, keep our membership growing, help in the office, publicize our activities, communicate with our members, supervise class arrangements, provide leadership and pitch in when help is needed. These are the men and women, 232 strong, who gave B.I.L.L. their time, energy, creativity and skill during the past year. We hope we included everyone. They are our engine and our fuel, and we give them our thanks.

| | | | | |
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The Great Stone Arches

Few people in the Berkshires are aware of an old, beautiful and still functioning engineering marvel just a few miles away in Middlefield, Mass. Hidden in the otherwise wild Westfield River Gorge, there exists a series of seven tall keystone arch railroad bridges built in the 1830's. Amazingly, four of these arch bridges, set without mortar and essentially unmodified, are still in active use today! Some 16 freight trains and 2 Amtrak trains cross these bridges on a daily basis pulled by locomotives weighing 30 times more than those of the mid 19th century.

Railroads and steam locomotives were truly in their infancy in 1833 with just a few very short routes in operation in some eastern U.S. coastal locations. But with their New York competitors using the Erie Canal, the industrialists of Boston recognized that a railway link to Albany and to the burgeoning Western territories would be vital to their commercial interests. They launched a plan, sold stock and sought rights-of-way for a route from Worcester, Mass., to Rensselaer, NY. For a railroad, the barrier of the Berkshire Mountains was a

formidable obstacle. But a possible route, with barely negotiable grades, could go through the Westfield River Gorge more or less following an ancient Indian trail called "Unkamit's Path."

West Point graduate Major George Washington Whistler (he was the father of the great American painter, James McNeill Whistler and, therefore, "Whistler's Father") was hired to lead the surveying and engineering effort. Considering that the primitive "black powder, mule, and pick & shovel" construction technology of the day would not accommodate large excavations, Whistler laid out a route which would cross the river seven times. The Gorge is narrow and serpentine, with steep ridges rising on both sides of the river, and each crossing required a bridge. Three of those would be over 60 feet in height.

Master stone mason Alexander Birnie of Stockbridge and a crew of highly skilled Irish, Italian and Russian immigrant masons built the seven



massive dry-laid arch bridges using cut blocks of Chester Blue granite. The completed rail line, named the Western Railroad, opened in 1841. It was 150 miles long and climbed 1,458 feet — both world records at the time. Based on this remarkable achievement, Whistler was later commissioned by Czar Nicholas I to build a railroad from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

Following a well-marked footpath, one can explore these stone arch marvels and, with only a little imagination, "time travel" back to the mid 19th century. For a map and more description see <http://wizardshadows.com/page4.html>.

— Bob Desrosiers

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B.L.L.L. adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination and welcomes all people as members of our organization.

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