

Never enough said about Queen Zog

Leah Garchik

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One of the Bay Area's loveliest outdoor cultural venues was visited by a rattler recently, but a friendly one, perhaps a lover of drama. No venom was spilled, and the show went on. "Our staff is trained to deal with all forms of wildlife," said the boss, who was at the same time leery of this report frightening snake-wary patrons. But even the Garden of Eden had a reptile, and that resort - despite lack of physical fitness center and on-call hairdresser - still has a {ostar}{ostar}{ostar}{ostar}{ostar} reputation.

Elsewhere outdoors, Saturday night's Mill Valley fundraiser for Word for Word was a show-stopper: **M.F.K. Fisher's** story "I Was Really Very Hungry" was performed in front of a crowd of almost 100, seated at long banquet tables and served the food and wine Fisher described. There were no hors d'oeuvres, no nibbles before dinner; guests were supposed to be "really very hungry."

This was part of the Savory Thymes series, in which chef **Ali Ghiorsi** cooks up dinner served in the hillside home/amphitheater of **Hans Schoepflin**, and tickets are sold to benefit arts and environmental groups. There was an audible gasp after **Nancy Shelby**, playing Fisher in this first person story, said she "waited in a pleasant warm tiredness for the wine," and a corps of Word for Word players swooped in to place a glass of drink in front of each guest.

The performance, enjoyed while sitting in a grove with crows swooping through the trees in the darkening sky, was a celebration of theater and art and generosity and most of all, as Ghiorsi said, quoting some unknown sage, of "that fine and dizzy place where hunger

and gluttony meet."

-- A small group of visitors were at **Margaret Jenkins'** studio last week for a preview/taste of "Other Suns," which opens at the Novellus Theater at YBCA on Sept. 24. It's a collaboration between Jenkins, the Guangdong Modern Dance Company of Guangzhou, China, and composer **Paul Dresher**, with **Bun Ching-Lam**.

Rehearsals here started with seven stand-ins for the Chinese dancers; when those dancers arrived a few weeks ago, the stand-ins - with many translators - taught them their parts. In a journal of her China visit, Jenkins wrote that a language gap leaves little room "to be unguarded or unclear. But the room is always full of laughter which entangles the voices and is intertwined in the movements."

-- From there, I nipped over to Delancey Street for InCA Productions' 25th anniversary party, including clips of documentaries made over the years (on Western history, technology, the environment, **Amelia Earhart** and, hilariously, **John Cleese** on wine) and two new ones. The second was a stunner, "the most wonderful project," said InCA founder **David Kennard**. It was the San Francisco Symphony's "Keeping Score" series, and guests were treated to a tiny preview of a forthcoming piece about **Charles Ives**.

Many guests were folks who'd been involved in these projects and future ones, including staffers from the Symphony and **Bea Bowles** and **Terry Clark**, a pair of tangophiles involved with the making of "The Secret History of the Tango."

-- One more that night: Marking the 30th anniversary of his Modernism gallery, **Martin Muller** presided over the opening of a **Jerry Kearns** exhibition, followed by dinner for 36 at Modernism West, his gallery at Foreign Cinema. Each of the 36 place settings at one long table was piled with books fastidiously wrapped in Muller's trademark red paper. Swiss-born Muller is the sort of fellow who wears hand-tied bowties (yellow at dinner) and speaks multiple languages in the course of a meal. He's also a loyal and generous pal.

In the words of Kearns, the artist, "Martin believes in you, loves art and respects the artist." In the most difficult relationships, a gallery-owner representing an artist can "be like a movie director," he said. "You have to battle for your creative rights." Muller "has never told me what to do."

In one toast, Muller paid homage to **Queen Zog** of Albania, a tribute, he said later, he makes at least 400 times a year. The gallerist, as his friend **Barnaby Conrad** pointed out, is an avid fan of Dada.

Public eavesdropping

"We spent time in prison together, so I know she'll do my hair right."

Woman to woman, overheard at Diamond Heights Safeway by Tong Ginn

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