Meeting Herta Müller

My family was driving down Massachusetts Avenue in Boston trying to find our hotel when suddenly I saw Herta Müller walking on the sidewalk with two men. One was her husband, Harry Merkle, and the other was Philip Boehm, the translator of Müller’s 2009 novel *Atemschaukel* published in 2012 under the title *The Hunger Angel*. Boehm was accompanying the author on the reading tour through the U.S. to promote the novel. Müller was sporting her signature look: short bobbed hair with pointy edges, red lipstick, and black clothes.

This was not the first time that I was about to meet one of the authors that I had published on, but it was the first time (and most likely the only time) that I was going to introduce, interview, and interpret for a Nobel Prize winner. Yet, it was not the aura of the Nobel that made my heart beat faster for a few seconds when I spotted Müller as much as the realization that I was about to meet the writer whose works I read, analyzed, and struggled with for several years while working on my dissertation.

I knew Müller, the writer, well but I didn’t know what to expect from my encounter with Müller, the person.

Shortly after the Nobel Prize in literature was announced in 2009, I was asked to give two lectures on the life and works of Herta Müller at Smith College and Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, where I teach German. At the time, my offer to give the same lecture at the Goethe Institute in Boston was politely declined. To my surprise, however, the Institute contacted me in January 2012 and asked if I would introduce Herta Müller at a scheduled reading in May and moderate and interpret for her during the subsequent question-and-answer session with the public after the reading. I was ecstatic!

And, yet, this seemed a tall order to fill. A few days later, I received another call from the Institute: would I also please interpret for Herta Müller at her reading hosted by Agni, a literary journal, at Boston University? Müller had specifically requested a moderator who knows her writings well. As a Romanian who was culturally raised German and who had written her dissertation on Müller’s works, I fit the bill.

Search for Georgia (The other Georgia, that is)

During my Peace Corps service in Azerbaijan from 2009-2011, I made trips to the Republic of Georgia and spent time in Georgian populated areas in Azerbaijan. This developed my interest in Georgian culture and the Caucasus region, and, as my service came to an end, I realized that I was not ready to leave; I wanted to experience “region life” in the Republic of Georgia (rural life outside the capital). Therefore, I spent another year volunteering in a teaching program with a similar structure to the Peace Corps, sponsored by the
Three of our students took advantage of a new US-German internship opportunity last summer through collaboration between the American Chamber of Commerce in Atlanta (AMCHAM) and Bridgehouse Law. This year, six students from UGA will live in Germany and work with one of several corporations: Samantha Harris will work with UPS in Köln; Jakob Kagel will work at the Schlosshotel Kronberg in Taunus; Xieran Li will work with ARAG in Düsseldorf; Lindsay Quandt will work with ING Bank in Frankfurt; Sydney Wiggins will work at Ernst & Young in Eschborn; and Jonathan Wolfe will work with AGCO GmbH in Allgäu. Dr. DiBella in the department helps with selecting these students and facilitates their applications.

In the fall, German students from UGA attended a networking event in Atlanta, where they met potential employers, and heard from students who had interned in Germany the previous summer. One of the students was Soleil Robichaud, a UGA senior, majoring in German, Marketing, and International Business. Soleil interned with Fresenius Biotech in Munich, where she was put to work immediately organizing the business unit’s annual International Partner and Sales Meeting – a 3 day event held at a thermal spa in the Austrian Alps.

In addition to her work obligations, she gathered with other interns for a “meet-up” in Berlin, where they visited governmental buildings, and attended the public screening of the Euro Cup Semifinal game against Italy. In a second meet-up, interns joined Soleil in Munich. Highlights of the visit included a tour of Mozart’s birthplace, St. Peter’s Graveyard, and Mirabel Gardens in Salzburg.

About the internship, Soleil wrote that “I knew it would be a great opportunity for me to do three things: (1) get some real world experience in the business world before I graduated, (2) learn more about the business culture in Germany, and (3) practice and perfect my German speaking skills. This summer really was a dream-come-true for me. I could not have had a better experience. Apply for the program. It will change your life.”
October 3rd is a German holiday. It’s called Unity Day, which commemorates the anniversary of German reunification in 1990. Berlin seemed like a logical place to be for this holiday as the greatest tensions in the divided Germany were here, with the formation of the Berlin Wall. The collapse of the Wall was the symbol for German reunification. The simplest analogy would be that Unity Day is Germany’s 4th of July. I wanted to see how people celebrated in Berlin.

Instead of travelling by train, I found a car pool to Berlin. There is a website called mitfahrgelegenheit.de where one can contact a stranger about hitching a ride with them to a certain destination. I contacted a person driving to Berlin and it only cost me 10 Euro, much more reasonable than the 40 Euro for a one-way ticket by train! I arrived at my Youth Hostel at 11:30 at night and discovered that I only had enough cash to pay for two nights.

Deutsche Bank had given me 3 different PIN numbers to memorize and I kept getting them confused. I was trying to withdraw cash at the ATM, and with that in mind, I found a Deutsche Bank in the area and tried withdrawing cash at about midnight. To my horror, I discovered that, because I was using the wrong PIN number, the ATM ate my debit card.

At this point I had no money, no debit card, and no way of getting home. To make matters worse, I was completely alone in the city. Instead of panicking, though, I kept calm by making a mantra of a quote from A Game of Thrones. “Fear cuts deeper than swords.” The only thing I could do at this moment was talk to the receptionist at my youth hostel. The receptionist was able to give me a refund of my first night - just enough to get a one-night room. I was also able to contact my roommate, who lives in the Berlin area, and a friend in Rostock. My friend was able to help me unlock my phone!

With a renewed sense of vigor, I kept looking up rides. I was also able to contact my roommate, who lives in the Berlin area, and a friend in Rostock. My friend was able to find me a ride back home. I felt like my luck was finally turning around. All I had to do was get on one train to get to the other side of Berlin. I was afraid I wouldn’t have enough money to pay the driver, so I took the risk of riding the train without a ticket. In Germany, people who ride trains without tickets are called “Schwarzfahrer” (black riders). Normally this isn’t a problem. Ticket inspectors occasionally make surprise visits, but those are few and far between. Except on federal holidays. Trying to ride a train without a ticket on a federal holiday is like speeding down the highway on the 4th of July—the police and ticket inspectors are everywhere. As soon as the door closed, a man next to me pulled out a badge and yelled (in German of course) “Ticket inspector, prepare your tickets!” The first thing I did was play the dumb American who doesn’t speak German. When the man approached me I just said immediately, “I’m sorry, I don’t speak German…” He proceeded to speak to me in English at which point I realized that I was doomed.

The inspector told me to ‘wait here’ as he went around and inspected more tickets. He found another four “Schwarzfahrer” and began herding them off at the next station. He was about to tell me to get off the train when another Schwarzfahrer panicked and ran off the train. The inspector chased the runner, and as he did, the doors on the train closed. As the inspector instructed me; I was still waiting in the same spot. On the train, I met the inspector’s gaze as my train took off without him.

I had no money, no debit card, and no way of getting home. To make matters worse, I was completely alone in the city.

Here is what I learned and recommend to everyone else:

1) No matter how paranoid you are, have your PIN number written down until it’s memorized.

2) Make sure you have a ride home BEFORE you arrive at your destination.

3) People are more understanding than you think, so don’t hesitate to ask for help.

4) Friends are wonderful, and they will be able to help you.

5) Take deep breaths.

I am not letting this debacle frighten me from traveling alone. I just need to remember lessons 1 and 2. Besides, the Berlin Philharmonic is performing Wagner and Tchaikovsky in two weeks; do you expect me to miss that?
I am interning in one of the most hipster, multicultural, historical, graffiti-covered, fast-paced, transit-friendly cities in the world - Berlin!

Over the summer, I applied for an internship with the U.S. Department of State Student Internship program, which provides students with the opportunity to intern at various U.S. Embassy posts all over the world, or to possess land an internship with any of the various bureaus that comprise the Department of State in D.C. I applied specifically to intern in Berlin, which was interviewed by a staff member here at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, and I got the position, bringing me to my current daily commute every weekday morning in the 5-10 degree Celsius winter weather (with lots of snow!).

I am literally forced to practice the German I know daily, as I go through my normal day to day activities of other passengers piercing into someone they saw as just another clumsy tourist—someone only passing through their city—and I could understand where the wariness was coming from.

I wish I could say this understanding was so profound that it aided my search for local friends. What has helped is that I am more confident in my own language skills and quicker to reach out to someone I see something in common with. I make jokes and ask questions and discuss popular American television shows in German, making sure that all the while, I take bigger steps at the train station.

The air was chilly and the sky was a pale gray, a typical afternoon in Berlin. As I boarded the train, I heard a shrill scream behind me. Then, audible female gasps and the rush of male footsteps. For a split second, I wondered what the commotion was. I glanced up to see arms extended out to me.

That’s when I realized the commotion was me. Both of my feet had left the platform, yet neither of them had made it onto the train. I had fallen into the gap between the train and platform. By moving to Berlin, I intended to immerse myself in German culture and language. Of course, I was not looking for quite such a literal immersion.

Adapting to the culture was straightforward. In my flatshare, I learned to live with open windows and balcony doors in freezing temperatures, to sort trash five different ways, to sing the praises of a bicycle and to enjoy three hour Sunday brunch buffets. The language immersion, however, was not as simple, as it depended partially on befriending Germans. Berlin is brimming with foreign exchange students, future musicians and part-time workers. In a city of 3.5 million people, many of them are not here to stay, a fact recognized and heeded by the locals who are, making the German friends I sought wary of bringing new faces into their social circles. I found that if you manage to strike the perfect balance of uncool and apathetic (headphones and an extensive wardrobe of black are helpful), the next step is to convince your local German that you are worthy of their time (a precious and protected commodity) and that their investment will pay off in years of close-knit friendship (the only kind that exists). Bonus points if you can contribute a working knowledge of Techno-House music and organic groceries.

As I pulled myself out of the gap between the train and platform on that winter afternoon, I felt the gazes of other passengers piercing into someone they saw as just another clumsy tourist—someone only passing through their city—and I could understand where the wariness was coming from.

I wish I could say this understanding was so profound that it aided my search for local friends. What has helped is that I am more confident in my own language skills and quicker to reach out to someone I see something in common with. I make jokes and ask questions and discuss popular American television shows in German, making sure that all the while, I take bigger steps at the train station.
When I left the German department of the University of Georgia back in May of 2012 right after Graduation – I left with mixed feelings. I was excited heading back home to Germany in order to pursue my studies in Munich, but I was also upset about leaving Athens. I felt as if I had just closed a chapter of my life, leaving sweet memories of Georgia and my life as a Grad student behind. I could not deny the fact that I was thrilled to go back, though I enjoyed my first real beer in over two years immensely. But never in my life would I have expected to be surrounded by Georgia the way it happened to me once I made my way back to the mother country.

Thanks to a brief introduction a year before, I was aware of the State of Georgia Europe Office, which located in the heart of Munich, is part of the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Its aim is to promote economic development in Georgia by attracting new European corporate investment to the state and supporting existing European investors in Georgia with their expansion plans. It also oversees trade and investment initiatives between Georgia and Europe. Following an interview with the managing director of the office, Dr. Martin Kigel (head of GDE), I was offered the opportunity to work for them as an intern for 4 months.

So, as soon as I got back to Germany, I started working for Georgia on a full time basis. It was nice to stay in touch with people and to return to the place I had grown to love so much.

DURING MY FIRST SEMESTER IN MUNICH, IT WAS QUITE COZY TO BE AROUND SO MANY UGA ALUMNI. IT WAS GREAT TO MEET SO MANY ALUMNI; SOME, LIKE ME, HAD JUST RETURNED FROM UGA. OTHERS HAD LIVED IN ATHENS 20 OR EVEN 30 YEARS AGO. AFTER A WONDERFUL NIGHT WITH SO MANY SPECIAL GUESTS AND INTERESTING TALKS, IT WAS AGREED UPON BY EVERYONE THAT UGA IN GERMANY SHALL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT EVENTS ON A REGULAR BASIS. AS FOR ME, I WILL LEAVE THE STATE OF GEORGIA EUROPE OFFICE THIS SPRING, MOVING ON TO YET ANOTHER CHAPTER OF MY LIFE THAT WILL TAKE ME TO STUTTGART.

Georgia on my Mind
all day, every day

continued from pg. 1

MARIEL MOATS was pictured (far left) with her host family in Azerbaijan. She earned her degree in German in 2009.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO A RECEPTION AND PROGRAM FEATURING AN UPDATE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA. IN OUR QUEST FOR FOOD AND SPIRITS, MEET UGA FACULTY AND FELLOW UGA ALUMNI IN GERMANY.

UGA REPRESENTATIVES INCLUDE

TOM LANDRUM
Senior Vice President for External Affairs
DEBORAH DIETERL
Associate Director
UGA Alumni Association
MARITHE KIGEL
Department Head
Germand and Slavic Studies

DATE
December 17, 2012
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION
Amalienstrasse, Munich

DESSERT
Food and beverages included in program. For more information, contact Dr. Martin Kigel at drmartinkigel@muenchen.uga.edu

MURAL
JULIANE MEYEN
graduated with a Master’s Degree in German in 2012.
Meet the Department’s New Lecturer

Dr. Olga Thomason

SANDRA MCGURY

Is a German Teaching Assistant and a Ph.D. student in Linguistics.

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The Right Kind of Spirit

“...it is that she never feels “overlooked.” She feels that she and the other members of the Slavic faculty have just as many opportunities and possibilities for academic development and growth as members in other departments. Additionally, Olga admires the department’s diversity: “On both the research and the personal level, there is so much interaction. And while we all come from different backgrounds e.g. historical linguistics, literature etc., there are several links connecting us. Our discussions always lead to new ideas. Everyone is very helpful and open-minded which is rare to find.” Olga values the spirit of collaboration on the UGA campus, an example of which is a new project she is a part of, involving several different departments on campus. In this project, native speakers and second language learners are examined with regard to their use of languages such as Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and Chinese, using new eye-tracking techniques. And Olga does not only praise the departments, the faculty and staff, she also speaks very highly of the students here at the University of Georgia. Her experience with many college students through out the country allows her to draw the conclusion that UGA’s students are in many ways superior to others she has worked with in the past. She admires the students’ genuine interest in the Russian language and culture, and mentions several times during our interview that her students constantly push her to go further. And Olga clearly likes this challenge! “The students’ enthusiasm ignites everybody around them. By the third year, the students from one unified group, which I see rarely happening in other departments. I think the atmosphere is to blame for it!”

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BABU CHALAM
A.B. German 2007

While an undergraduate at UGA, Babu received a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship and was the department's first exchange student at Heidelberg (2001-2002). In 2003, he received the Wilcoxon award for Outstanding German Major. He writes, “I graduated in 2003 with a double major, International Affairs as well as a BA in German. Both have served me well as the shipping community is very international and has strong roots in Germany.”

ANDY HOLLUMS
A.B. German 2007

Andy met his wife while on a study abroad program in Germany. He is currently a library associate in the Hall County Library System, and writing a children’s book. After living in Colorado, he and Cassi are back in Georgia and have just bought a home in Flowery Branch.

DREW HUMPHREYS
A.B. Russian 2003

Drew writes, “I’ve spent the last four years as a logistics officer in the Marine Corps. During this time, I was fortunate to complete two tours to Afghanistan where I managed logistical support for ground combat troops. I am a prospec-tive student of both business and law and hope to return to UGA in the Fall of 2013.”

AILSA VON DOBENECK
A.B. German 2007

“I am currently working for a large shipping company, BW Group. In communications for their new green energy section, BW Ventures. BW Ventures is involved in businesses providing marine-based solutions to energy challenges, including clean-tech investments and offshore projects focusing primarily on gas & power. I am based in Singapore but rotate through the Bermuda and Panama City offices. I graduated from UGA, with a BA in International Affairs as well as a BA in German. Both have served me well as the shipping community is very international and has strong roots in Germany.”

ZACH FOX
A.B. German 2009

Zach is a graduate student at Peabody College at Vanderbilt University, where he is completing his M.Ed. in secondary social studies education this summer. By the end of the summer, he will have also earned his teaching license in Tennessee. At this point, he has already accept- ed a position teaching history and government at Antioch High School, a local comprehensive school in Metro Nashville. He says he is thrilled to be staying in the city, of which he has grown very fond, and is looking forward to teaching at Antioch, a school whose population is diverse and German, much like larger Nashville and which is in the early stages of gaining authorization as an International Baccalaureate World School.” Zach returned to the U.S. in June 2012 after 28 inspiring months working in Germany, first as a volunteer teacher employed by the Rwandan Ministry of Education, and later as a private school teacher in Kuwait. There, he discovered his passion for classroom teaching.

KYLE SIMMONS
A.B. German 2006

Kyle Simmons is a graduate student at the University of Georgia, where he is completing his M.Ed. in special education. He writes, “I am currently working with German clients. "I enjoy working with German clients. ‘The German tradition of work is simple and has been practiced from the beginning of time. It is a way to kick off the Christmas season, and knowing German makes the experience all the richer. I also enjoy attending international art fairs, especially Art Basel, where there is always a large German and Swiss presence. Being able to speak German with the art dealers and other patrons is a great ice breaker and social lubricant. It’s fun to surprise them, breaking the stereotype that Americans are largely ignorant of other languages.”

ZACHARY SIMMONS
2011 M.A. Exchange Student

A.B. German 2006

"Studying at the University of Georgia has opened many doors for me. I graduated in 2006 with a double major in German and Russian and then took part in a year long stay at the University of Rostock. Apart from taking courses and working at the university, traveling through Europe and making friends from all over the globe, I also met my future wife, Antje Simon (née Lohrer), during my exchange year. She struck up a conversation with me at a mutual friend’s birthday party, the topic of our conversation being our experience abroad. Both were German in her and in the USA as a high school student. 2010-2011, Antje had the chance to spend two semesters at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at UGA, where she took graduate-level courses and also taught German-language courses. We married in August 2013 in her hometown in the Vogtland region of Saxony and both currently reside in Berlin. I am a graduate student at the Free University of Berlin, studying Eastern European Studies (political science and history) and am about to take part in an internship at the U.S. embassy in Riga, Latvia, whereas Antje is currently taking her final exams before becoming a high school teacher of English and philosophy."

Monica Munn-Schreml (MA German 1999) is looking for freelance German to English translations! Her current occupation is Freelance Translator/Advertising Quality Examiner for Google (for German Markets). She and her daughter Charlotte moved from Germany to the US, and are living in North Carolina where her daughter attends an international language academy where she speaks German all day!"

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M.A. German 1995

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Jeffrey “Jeff” Y. Lewis is a partner in the Business Litigation Practice of Arnall Golden Gregory LLP of Atlanta. Mr. Lewis practices in both state and federal courts, doing both trial and appellate work. He practices complex resolution for large and small companies and individuals, both in the United States and abroad, in widely diverse industries — occasion-ally working with German clients. “The German tradition is simple and has been practiced from the beginning of time. It is a way to kick off the Christmas season, and knowing German makes the experience all the richer. I also enjoy attending international art fairs, especially Art Basel, where there is always a large German and Swiss presence. Being able to speak German with the art dealers and other patrons is a great ice breaker and social lubricant. It’s fun to surprise them, breaking the stereotype that Americans are largely ignorant of other languages.”

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A.B. German 1997

Jeffrey “Jeff” Y. Lewis is a partner in the Business Litigation Practice of Arnall Golden Gregory LLP of Atlanta. Mr. Lewis practices in both state and federal courts, doing both trial and appellate work. He practices complex resolution for large and small companies and individu-als, both in the United States and abroad, in widely diverse industries — occasion-ally working with German clients. “The German tradition is simple and has been practiced from the beginning of time. It is a way to kick off the Christmas season, and knowing German makes the experience all the richer. I also enjoy attending international art fairs, especially Art Basel, where there is always a large German and Swiss presence. Being able to speak German with the art dealers and other patrons is a great ice breaker and social lubricant. It’s fun to surprise them, breaking the stereotype that Americans are largely ignorant of other languages.”
The main purpose of the organization is to provide an opportunity for students to learn more about the Russian culture. The club hosts a movie night every month and a picnic once a semester. The movie nights include a tea-drinking period, during which students are able to meet and interact with other members, and have a chance to taste various Russian foods and deserts. The semi-annual picnics are the biggest events of the semester and are open to all members of the Russian community to come together and spend a wonderful day in the park enjoying plenty of food and conversing with one another. Overall, Russian club is an excellent organization for natives to learn more about their heritage and also provides non-native students an opportunity to learn more about another culture.

To stay informed of GSO and Russian Club events, contact the Department office or look them up on Facebook!
My nine-year experience in Romania as a simultaneous interpreter for people that I would usually meet just minutes before an event was also coming in handy. Two readings and the two dinners with Herta Müller, my hope was that she and I would get a chance to get to know each other a little more.

I am an atypical Romanian because age six I was raised and educated in German-language schools in Sibiu (Germ. Hermannstadt), a town in Transylvania, which, like the Banat, a region in the southwestern part of Romania where Müller was born and raised, is an area where German-language culture was thriving following its colonization by ethnic Germans in the 12th and 17th centuries, respectively. During communist rule, some of the Romanians who spoke German spied on ethnic Germans as informers and collaborators of the Securitate (the Romanian Secret Police), the instrument of Romania’s totalitarian regime. The tyrannical schemes of the Securitate were part and parcel of the terror and trauma while Müller was growing up, as she reflects in her works. My nine-year experience in Romania as a simultaneous interpreter for people that I would usually meet just minutes before an event was also coming in handy.

Afterwards, the public reading event began. Following my introduction of Herta Müller, she and Philip Boehm took turns reading excerpts from Atmenschaukel and The Hunger Angel, respectively. Published to resounding literary success, Atmenschaukel is the first text for Müller in which she departs from autobiographically tinged topics. The novel presents the fictionalized story of German–Romanian poet, Oskar Pastior (1927–2004), the 2006 recipient of the Georg-Büchner-Preis, who, along with many ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe was deported in 1945 to Soviet labor camps. While focusing on depicting the horrors of the Soviet gulag, the novel presents episodes set in my hometown, Sibiu, which happened to be also Pastor’s hometown. Hearing Müller read passages in an accentuated German, which resembles my German, describing places in Sibiu that are familiar to me, briefly transfixed me, bringing back memories of my childhood and adolescence. Sitting in the front row, I felt as if the audience was staring right at me. When Müller interrupted her reading and curtly asked that no more pictures of her be taken, because, as she later explained when she apologized to the audience, this makes her feel as if she is being watched, I understood, at least in part, where Müller was coming from: taking pictures was something that triggered anxiety for her.

During dinner, Müller talked about a variety of topics like the air conditioner in her hotel room that gave her headaches and her disappointment over the 1996 Romanian film Fox-Hunter, for which she and Harry Merkle co-wrote the screenplay. What struck a chord with me, however, was her description of the big toll that writing takes on her body and health. When she works on a project, Müller explained, she feels as if she is possessed by the project; she cannot eat and sleep well, until she finishes it. Two evenings later, during the question period of the Goethe Institute, Müller explained that she feels attracted to Romanian because it is a language that is far more sensuous than German.

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At the end of my brief account, she said: “I’m glad to hear this,” and smiled with a twinkle in her eyes. Speaking to her in Romanian, I made some comments about her 2005 collection of collage poems, Este sau nu esteIon (Is it or is it not John), the only work she has published in Romanian so far. While she recalled the genesis of these collage poems, Müller explained that she feels attracted to Romanian because it is a language that is far more sensuous than German. I felt that this would be a good moment to tell her that her works enabled my mother to share with me some of her traumatic encounters with the Securitate. Müller smoked and listened without asking questions or making comments. At the end of my brief account, she said: “I’m glad to hear this,” and smiled with a twinkle in her eyes. Over dinner, Müller talked about a variety of topics like the air conditioner in her hotel room that gave her headaches and her disappointment over the 1996 Romanian film Fox-Hunter, for which she and Harry Merkle co-wrote the screenplay. What struck a chord with me, however, was her description of the big toll that writing takes on her body and health. When she works on a project, Müller explained, she feels as if she is possessed by the project; she cannot eat and sleep well, until she finishes it. Two evenings later, during the question period of the Goethe Institute, Müller explained that she feels attracted to Romanian because it is a language that is far more sensuous than German.

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As a recipient of the Germanic and Slavic Department’s 2012 Kicklighter Travel Grant, I spent the summer in Novosibirsk, Russia studying the Russian language while also interning with YouthReach International in their summer camps at city orphanages and kid’s clubs. Although this was my fifth time in Novosibirsk, this experience was very different. Never before had I been so intensely focused on studying Russian for four hours per day, while also working in orphanages and English camps. I navigated the city’s intricate network of metro lines, buses and trolleys alone as I sought to have a greater understanding of the culture and the people in a place that has become a second home for me. The intensive language courses were challenging, but fueled my desire to perfect my ability to read and speak Russian. I learned early on how much is lost in translation, not only in words but also in trust. In working with orphans and at-risk youth, trust is the thing that is necessary to gain and it was frustrating to lose it in having to be translated for. I have spent the last two semesters studying Russian and two weeks this February in Russia and Belarus at leadership conferences for those that are working in orphanages across Russia. This summer I will once again be studying in Russia, but this time as a recipient of the U.S. State Department’s Critical Language Scholarship.

Dr. Haase’s Senior Seminar took us on an adventurous journey through the history of German film. From classics such as the German expressionist science-fiction film Metropolis to the recent romantic comedy Keinohrhasen, we were exposed to as many genres of German film as possible and studied the historical and cultural contexts of the representative examples from German cinema. There were comedies, dramas, horror films, post-war and post-wall films, and even a musical. To this day, we still have “Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht” echoing through our minds.

One important insight the class provided was that Hollywood was not always the main hub of film-making that it is today and that Germany was an innovative power-house which helped lead the rest of the world into a new era of film.

We also learned that class projects are not always a bore, but can be enjoyable and gratifying for the whole class. Accordingly, the highlight of the semester was filming the class movie. This truly was a student production. The script was written and edited by our class and Dr. Haase. Students provided costumes, props, makeup, and electronics. As some students were filming and acting, other students were editing the completed scenes. Filming was a hectic process filled with laughter and exhaustion.

We used every minute we had trying to make the film the best it could be. Sitting in conference room 217, waiting for the film to finish processing, there were ten very tense minutes before the department graduation ceremony was supposed to begin; and when the video finally flashed onto the screen, there was an audible sigh of relief. Our class hurried to the Miller Learning Center to present the film to our audience of faculty, students, parents, and relatives.

Making the film was an amazing opportunity and experience which none of us will soon forget. If you would like to see the movie, it is on YouTube and titled “The Good, the Bad, and the Obscure: A Century of German Film.” Make sure you watch the outtakes!
This summer the Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies is launching a new study abroad program in Freiburg, Germany. When I initially proposed this program, I chose Freiburg as the location for 2 reasons: 1) I know Freiburg and the surrounding area in the Black Forest very well, because I lived there with my family and went to school there for 6 years in the 1980s; and, 2) Freiburg is more than just another German city—it is a “Green City.” Freiburg has been practicing sustainable urban design for decades. I have a secondary academic interest in environmental studies and I am familiar with the area, so Freiburg seemed like a good choice for these reasons.

Of course, this program will appeal to German minors and majors, but it is also open to students of Environmental Sciences and related fields who have no prior experience learning German. Students are enrolled in intensive German language courses taught by local instructors at the internationally known Goethe Institute in Freiburg. In addition to directing this program, I will teach a course on Contemporary Issues in German Culture, Society, and Literature, which has the theme “Freiburg: Green City.”

But students won’t just be in classes the whole time! We have a full program of unique cultural excursions, including trips to sustainable living communities, solar tech companies based near Freiburg, an autonomous energy community and a day trip to the village where I lived when I was a teenager—Sulzburg! In Sulzburg we will tour a church from the 10th century, the synagogue and a mining museum. My mother’s cousin, Heinz Baum, has been a hunter for most of his life and he will take us on a hike in the forest around Sulzburg to tell students about the sustainable and conservationist tradition of the hunt in Germany. I’m sure we’ll have a great time!

“I just finished my first semester studying abroad at the University of Heidelberg, and there have been a lot of times I felt lonely or just tired of studying abroad at the University of Heidelberg, but one of the best experiences of my life—one that I recommend anyone take advantage of—has been exploring and trying to find my place in a city so different from what I’m used to. Getting to travel around Germany has been great, both formal excursions for exchange students or trips on my own with friends, but most of my favorite memories here have been with German students I met in Heidelberg: simply cooking dinner several nights a week with my roommates, hiking up the Philosopher’s Walk, and seeing Feuerzangenbowle for the first time and drinking Glühwein the entire Advent season, experiencing a traditional German Christmas in Lower Saxony with friends, have made this such a rich experience. In a city so full of history and interesting people, I find that simply walking the cobblestone streets, sharing a beer with friends, or sitting a cafe can be a wonderful adventure. And for that we offer a sincere THANK YOU! Some of the programs we sponsor are covered in this newsletter, however, all of the following are essential to the success of our students. We ask for your help to:

- sponsor undergraduate and graduate student research in the United States or abroad;
- offer undergraduate and graduate students study abroad scholarships;
- provide additional internship opportunities, such as the summer internships we already sponsor with the German-American Chamber of Commerce in Atlanta;
- support additional forms of qualification, such as internationally recognized examinations offered by the Goethe Institute;
- invite visiting speakers and authors to enhance the academic curriculum;
- offer department-sponsored events such as the annual public presentation of the Senior Project in the spring;
- provide graduate student fellowships that would allow us to attract the best students to our program.

Depending on your method of payment, simply mail in the appropriate section located at the bottom of this page.

Again, we thank you for your contributions of the past and present, and would appreciate your continued support of Germanic & Slavic Studies in 2013 and beyond!

-Chad L. Platt
Business Manager

The Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, University of Georgia
In January of this year, Dr. Charles Byrd received official notification of his promotion to Senior Lecturer. “This is wonderful news and a richly deserved recognition of Dr. Byrd’s outstanding teaching and the many other contributions he has made to the department and the university as a whole,” wrote Martin Kagel, head of Germanic & Slavic Studies, upon learning of the final approval of the promotion. Promotion to Senior Lecturer from the rank of Lecturer requires at least six years at that level and evidence of demonstrated exceptional teaching ability and extraordinary value to the university. Dr. Byrd teaches beginning Russian language courses, as well as Russian film and literature courses.

This spring, Dr. Byrd was also awarded an Innovative Instruction Grant for a project entitled “Integrating Student Videography and eLC-New in Elementary Russian I and II.” Innovative instruction grants provide funding to faculty to improve teaching and learning, especially in high-demand courses. Dr. Byrd plans to have students film one another speaking Russian in a variety of situations on and off campus. These video clips will subsequently be uploaded into eLC-New, a website supporting the course, so that they can be viewed and discussed in class.

Dr. Vera Lee-Schoenfeld’s proposal was selected for a Franklin International Faculty Exchange Grant, which she hannover in support of her current research collaboration with Dr. Gabriele Diedwald from Leibniz Universität Hannover. Dr. Diedwald came to UGA in March to lecture, teach and meet with students. This summer, Dr. Lee-Schoenfeld will be in hannover to do the same there. Throughout the summer, the two scholars will also continue to work on their collaborative research project on “dative versus accusative-marked possessors in German inalienable possession constructions.” Additional support for this research was provided by a Sarah H. Mass Fellowship, which Dr. Lee-Schoenfeld received this spring. This fellowship provides funds for travel and related expenses for faculty pursuing advanced study in institutions of higher learning abroad and in the United States.

Dr. Martin Kagel was awarded the M. G. Michael Award in 2012. This award was established in 1944 to stimulate new initiatives in scholarship in all areas of the Arts and Sciences. Its primary purpose is to encourage the development of a new idea or project during the coming year. Dr. Kagel received the award in support of his current research, a book-length study on the question of influence in the relationship between German playwright Bertolt Brecht and Hungarian-German-Jewish author George Tabori. The last time the Michael Award was given to a faculty member in Germanic & Slavic Studies was in 1978.

In 2012, Dr. Brigitte Rossbacher received an Innovative Instruction Grant for a project entitled “Articulating the German Language Course Sequence: Materials and Teaching Models for a New Second Year.” Innovative instruction grants provide funding to faculty to improve teaching and learning, especially in high-demand courses. Dr. Rossbacher used the grant to redesign the second year sequence of German language classes, placing stronger emphasis on intercultural and interactive approaches to language learning by introducing, among other, a new textbook with high quality and engaging interactive software.

In fall 2012, Dr. Rossbacher was also selected as an Online Learning Fellow at UGA. In the context of this new program, she designed and will teach the department’s first ever web-based language course, an online version of GRMN 2001 Intermediate German I. The course will be offered in Summer Semester 2013.

Farewell reception for Dr. Christine Haase who resigned from her position in 2012 to join her husband Peter Murray in England. Pictured are friends and colleagues Aidan Wasley, Antje Ascheid, Martin Kagel, Andrea Stepen, Brigitte Rossbacher, Christine Haase, Peter Murray, Chris Steving, Charles Byrd and Keith Langston.
Field Trip to Vladimir Kaminer lecture
Nikolay Koposov (John’s Hopkins) lecture on memory laws in Europe
Michael Jennings (Princeton) seminar on modernism
Lecture by Norbert Friedman, Holocaust survivor
Gabriele Diewald (Leibniz Universität Hannover) lecture on German linguistics and free datives
Chamblee High School German class visit
Master’s Student Colloquium

Recent Department Sponsored Events

Spring Awards Ceremonies 2012 - 2013

Each year the Department of Germanic & Slavic studies honors their graduating seniors with a celebratory reception and awards ceremony. Proud parents and family members fill a room in the MLC and pay tribute to the German and Russian majors and German graduate students who have successfully completed all requirements for graduation from the University of Georgia. Several awards are given for academic excellence and to support research and study abroad.

Cecil Willcox Award for Outstanding German Major
Patrick Najjar (2012)
Gina Torcivia (2013)
Scott Sikes Award for Outstanding Russian Major
John Alexander (2012)
Ana Kabakova (2013)
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award
Juliane Meyen (2012)
Carlos Burse (2013)
Ludwig Uhlig Award for Research in German Studies
Beth Morgan (2012)
Sandra McGury (2013)
Igor levitzky Award for Research in Russian Studies
Brandi King (2012)
German Special Merit Award
Xieran Li (2013)
Russian Special Merit Award
Ana Plagova (2013)
Kicklighter Chamber of Commerce Scholarship
Erik Harkness (2012)
Thomas Huelsnitz (2012)
Erin Mcgonigle (2012)
Vanessa Trawicky (2012)
Megan White (2012)
Chad Wisinger (2012)
Micah Christensen (2013)
Trent Conn (2013)
Samantha Harris (2013)
Joseph Hopkins (2013)
Jessica Hormann (2013)
Joel Howell (2013)
Joshua Hutto (2013)
John Irwin (2013)
Yueting Luo (2013)
Corbin Norton (2013)
Melissa Rary (2013)
Aepril Smith (2013)
Lisa Traore (2013)

Kicklighter Summer Study Fellowship
Travis Schneider (2012)
Emily Gauld (2013)
Helen Schmehl (2013)
Kicklighter Study Abroad Travel Grants
Victoria Barker (2012)
DeAnne Cantrell (2012)
Loren Crawford (2012)
Jessica Crowell (2012)
Adrianna Gregory (2012)
Erik Harkness (2012)
Thomas Huelsnitz (2012)
Erin Mcgonigle (2012)
Vanessa Trawicky (2012)
Megan White (2012)
Chad Wisinger (2012)
Micah Christensen (2013)
Trent Conn (2013)
Samantha Harris (2013)
Joseph Hopkins (2013)
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