Rentrée kick-off

ESC at the Salon des Associations:
22nd - 23rd September

Once again the ESC will present a stall at the annual Rentrée des Associations, an opportunity to advertise our existence and activities. The event (link) will take place at the Parc de la Citadelle on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd September and we are looking for volunteers to host the stall for an hour or so on either day.

Please contact: Mike Wraith
mike.wraith@wanadoo.fr - tel: 06 29 25 21 55

2018 photo competition closing date: September 30th!

Let’s see your favourite shot!
It is still time to enter: just send your photo taken around Alsace by email with a short text to esc.photo.gallery@gmail.com.

There are two classes one for adults and the other for the under 15 years. The judging will take place during the first week of October. Then they will be on show at the October Coffee Morning (18/10).
Monthly Coffee morning: Thursday 20th September - 9h30 to 11h30

Come and catch up with ESC members and visitors at our monthly coffee mornings at l’Escale! (upcoming dates appear on front page).

The Escale community centre (L’Escale, centre socio-culturel de la Robertsau, 78 rue du Docteur François) is our regular home and has good parking facilities whilst it is within a five-minute walk of bus routes 6, 15A and 30.

The coffee morning is always held on a Thursday morning between 9.30 and 11.30 and is free. We are always pleased to see friends, visitors and potential new members. For further information, e-mail: contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com

Monthly after-work apéro at hotel Hannong Black & Wine bar:
Friday, 12th Octobre - 18h30

Our next monthly after-work apéro will take place at: 9, rue Hannong / 15 rue du 22 Novembre, Strasbourg on Friday, 12th Octobre from 6.30pm onwards.
http://www.blackandwinebar.com/#bar-a-vins-section

The usual formula: everybody pays for his/her drinks and the ESC offers the appetizers. No need to register.

Film club: Let’s have some fun and see movies in English!

This autumn the film club will meet monthly on Sunday afternoons/evenings. See below the selected upcoming films. The times will be confirmed by email the previous Wednesday, once the film is actually on screen. Each viewing is followed by a debate around a drink.

For questions, suggestions and reservations, contact Malika at esc.film.club@gmail.com

Week of 26 September: “The house with a clock in its wall”
click here to watch the trailer

Week of the 10th October: “Johnny English strikes again”
click here to watch the trailer

Week of the 7th November: “The Bookshop”
click here to watch the trailer

December: “Christmas Surprise”!
Autumn walk on the Bastberg: Sunday, 23rd September - 10h30

Come and join Monique and Polly for a walk around the limestone hill of the Bastberg above Bouxwiller. Here you will see vines, orchards, organic crops, chortens, Goethe’s tree all combined with panoramic views of the Vosges. We will finish the walk with a short stroll round the historic centre of Bouxwiller and a cup of tea.

Walking: 3h including picnic, little gradient

Meeting Point: 10.30am, Car Park Bastberg (Bouxwiller side)

Directions: From Strasbourg take A4 to exit 46 (Schwindratzheim) or Hochfelden (no toll). Then follow D7 to Bouxwiller. Follow signs D6, then take sharp left onto D133 to Dossenheim. Turn immediately left again on to rue du Bastberg. At the top you will find the car park area on your right.

Contact: Please e-mail or phone Monique: monique.doute@laposte.net / 09.64.37.16.66

Conversation groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Conversation</th>
<th>French Conversation</th>
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| chez Frederick & Maryline William-Smith  
7 rue des Ducs, Vieux-Cronenbourg, Strasbourg  
(trams A/D station Ducs d'Alsace)  
on alternative Fridays from 2 to 4pm  
contact: Nigel  
nigelpermaul@gmail.com  
Phone 06 75 63 89 98 | The group meets twice a month,  
on Thursdays from 2 to 4 pm,  
for details of the next meeting,  
contact: Colette Jandrok  
fredericka06@yahoo.fr  
Phone 03 88 20 21 17 |

<table>
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<th>German Conversation</th>
<th>Spanish Conversation</th>
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| The group meets fortnightly,  
on Tuesdays from 1.30 to 3.30 pm,  
in Café Rapp, Haupstr. 104, Kehl.  
Contact: Bernard Greiner  
bernard.greiner@numericable.fr  
Phone 03 88 66 32 06 | Colette is trying to organise a new Spanish conversation group.  
If you are interested,  
please get in touch with her:  
Colette Jandrok on 03 88 20 21 17 or  
fredericka06@yahoo.fr |
My first potluck lunch-picnic

My first potluck lunch-picnic was held June 7th. I would have thought that the idea of being in a garden by the Bruche river would be enticing. But of course on a week day it’s impossible when you have to work. Only 6 (lovely) people came, and the food and wine were delicious.

As you can see on the pictures on the ESC website (Past Event albums): http://esc-alsace.org/past-events/ the river was still high after the heavy rains and the sky looked a bit threatening, in fact at one point it started to rain a little and we had to go inside, but that was also fun, and my veranda was just big enough for the 7 of us.

2 weeks after that, something very sad happened: one evening the lovely cat you can see in the pictures insisted terribly on going out. Reluctantly I let him. He never returned: the next day I got a call from the Fourrière (animal pound) saying he’d been found dead on a neighbouring street. Someone in that street had been charitable enough to pick him up and lay him by the pavement, to avoid him being run over some more, and notified the Fourrière, who came to collect him. Exactly 2 months before I had him neutered, chipped and I officially adopted him. That’s how he was identified as mine. I went to see him one last time and said goodbye.

That beautiful little creature had been a delight for the short time he was with me and my 3 other cats and I miss him very much.

Christine Secouet, 6th September 2018

Of roses and man - a long standing love story...

Roses are certainly the most cherished flowers, and for centuries man has striven to improve naturally occurring botanical species to introduce new colours and flower structures, fragrances, repeat blooming and pest resistance. Among the vast range of roses available today, you’ll certainly find your favourite that will suit your purposes, guided by your preferences in habit, flower structure and colour, fragrance and... love at first sight!

I had the pleasure of welcoming Pierre Pfeiffer in my house for a friendly gathering where he shared his expert experience in the form of an illustrated talk.
Pierre spent his career in microbiology and virology for CNRS but his spare time was spent creating gardens and playing with roses. There is nothing he doesn’t know about them!

With a powerpoint presentation, we learnt that roses decorated gardens outside and murals inside of Cretan homes as early as 2000 B.C; that a yield of 1 kg of rose essence takes 3.5 tons of flowers; how Pierre judges newly-created roses (photo) and much more.

Some of us subsequently accepted Pierre and Gaby’s invitation to visit their garden to see Pierre’s passion in action.

**Tea and Roses**

It was on a glorious June afternoon that Gaby and Pierre Pfeiffer welcomed ESC members to their Eckwersheim home and garden. We had just missed the main flush of the season’s roses and yet the garden abounded with joyous colour linked by Pierre’s remarkable landscaping.

There are several extraordinary aspects to the garden: yes, there is a fabulous range of roses that Pierre has propagated – ‘That’s a rambling rose grafted as a standard…!’ – and knows all the names and history of; the paths, the arches, gateways and indeed buildings that Pierre has designed and installed, predominantly using red sandstone and materials that he has acquired on *Le Bon Coin*; the charming vistas and arbours and plant combinations, not to mention the tea and cakes at the end of the tour served in pretty tea cups.

After tea, we took the opportunity to admire and buy the jewellery, tea and clothes that Gaby has brought back from India to fundraise for her pet project, an orphanage in Pondicherry, India (*see ESC Newsletter February 2017 issue 430)*.

The only sadness is that Gaby and Pierre work so hard that they rarely get to sit and stare at the wonders of their own creation. Hopefully Gaby and Pierre will have us back to revel in the abundance, the man and woman hours and the unlikely location of this garden delight.

**A glorious summer**

*If those lyrics ring a pleasant bell, do not hesitate to dig into your memories and send a feedback. Any other suggestion song or poem to illustrate this year’s blazing sunny summer?*

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*THE SOUND OF MUSIC (1965)*

Youtube link

☀ ☀ ☀
Walking up to Wangenbourg castle

It was a shiny Sunday! The perfect occasion to go out and visit the Wangenbourg castle. Fortunately, the way to access the castle was both beautiful and fresh. It has been a gorgeous promenade in the woods and a great opportunity to connect with nature. On our way up we took a few minutes to look at the historical heritage of the villages we crossed. As well as admiring Gallic druidic remains.

After a few hours chatting with ESC members and enjoying the landscape we arrived at the castle. The bravest of us climbed to the top of the remaining tower to admire the beauty of “La Suisse d’Alsace”.

As customary, we ended this peaceful moment by enjoying a beverage and a piece of pie together.

A warm thank you to Polly for organising this walk!

Carla Manini

Summer Barbecue

One of our main concerns for the barbecue on July 1st was that, given the scorching summer we were having, it would simply be too hot. In the event, judicious use of shade and copious liquid refreshment meant that it all passed off smoothly and most enjoyably.

The scene was set by Martyn Symons’ gorgeous, fruity Pimms while the Chantal Stewart trio serenaded the eighty-or-so revellers with its melodic repertoire. Meanwhile, the barbecue team of Tony, Henri and Benoît performed heroically to cook the large piles of meat put in their charge.

There were brief moments of excitement when gusts of wind sent our lightweight tents soaring into the air and, despite our best efforts, several were irrevocably damaged. Otherwise, all was serenity and the gentle buzz of conversation on this splendid afternoon.

Our thanks are due to the large team of people who worked hard to ensure the success of the event.

Mike Wraith
Exhibition Hélène de Beauvoir

First of all, a special thank you to Véronique Heller-Clauss, who organised for the ESC a guided tour at the museum Würth in Erstein for the exhibition on Hélène de Beauvoir!

I cannot describe my feelings when I discovered the first paintings of Hélène. I was magnetised and so surprised to be introduced with such a great, talented painter, artist and woman. I knew nothing about her. I knew of course about her older sister Simone, who did an incredible work for women.

Their father said to them : “We haven’t got any money, so you both have to work!” This was the key to freedom for Hélène and Simone. We know about Simone’s story but let’s have a look at Hélène. She was only two years younger than Simone, and like her sister, she didn’t want to live the same life as her mother, being a woman just living at home looking after the kitchen and raising the children.

Hélène took private painting classes and discovered her own purpose: painting. She painted over many years every day. For example, she felt the urge to paint with the help of a photographic portrait of Simone, when she died. Within hours, she had finished. It was her way to say goodbye to Simone.

As our guide said, Hélène was a painter on the edge of the abstract and realism! All her technique was absolutely meticulous. In the Venice series, she developed a pictographic technique (photo).

Hélène de Beauvoir is perhaps a sister in the shadow of Simone, but I want you to know that she was as feminist as her sister, through her paintings and through her actions in her life. When Hélène de Beauvoir lived in Goxwiller, a village near Strasbourg, she became president of the center for battered women.

She was married to Lionel Roulet, who was a diplomat. She lived 40 years long in Alsace, because her husband worked for the Council of Europe.

Because of his work, she had the opportunity to see different countries (Japan, Portugal, Morocco etc). She died here in Alsace on the 1st of July 2001 at the age of 91.

Malika Radünz
In 1923 an Anglo-American woman, Iris, and her husband, the Marchese Antonio Origo, purchased a large tract of land in Tuscany and a sprawling manor, La Foce. As enlightened and benevolent landowners, Iris and Antonio transformed the poverty-stricken valley into a fruitful agricultural land and provided for the needs of their tenant farmers.

Then, war came to the valley.

Iris kept a diary, a risky business, burying the pages. It begins in early 1943 when the Origos took in 23 small British refugee children from cities in Italy that were being bombed. It goes on to tell an amazing tale of acts of courage and villainy. The valley became a crossroads of warring armies, of released British prisoners of war heading south to join the advancing Allies, of retreating German troops, of deserters, of partisans camped out in the woods, of courageous farmers who take in refugees, of nuns and priests who hide Jews, of die-hard fascists, and ordinary men and women who are called on to make terrible choices.

The Origos provide aid and refuge to all: Antonio is the diplomat and manages to keep on good terms with all parties, negotiating with the fascists, Germans, and partisans. Iris responds to everyone’s requests for help, refuge, food, clothing, medical aid.

All of us were amazed by this diary. It recounts a part of history that we did not know. It is a story not found in textbooks or in the big screen films about WWII.

Iris Origo writes in a very under-stated style. No histrionics here. At first her account seemed to many of us to be rather humdrum. But as the diary goes on, one becomes drawn in by Iris’s nerves of steel and energy: in the morning she may be directing the children in a rehearsal of Sleeping Beauty, in the afternoon, walling up food and other provisions, in the evening digging trenches for the children in case of bombing, at night taking provisions to the partisans. At one point, there are German officers occupying part of their large sprawling house, a sick partisan being nursed in another part.

As the war intensifies La Foce becomes a battlefield. The Origos manage to lead some sixty persons, including the refugee children and babies in arms on an hours-long march to safety in Montepulciano, through land strewn with mines and with bombers flying overhead.

All these events led to an animated discussion and general agreement that this is a fascinating book.

Today the Val d’Orcia is a Unesco world heritage site. La Foce is still a working farm. The Origos sold off much of the land, but much remains. I had the pleasure of visiting Montepulciano and the valley, the gardens and villa where the events took place. Well worth a detour off the beaten tourist track next time you are in Tuscany.

Marilee Karl
‘A Girls’ Guide to Hunting and Fishing ’ by Melissa Bank

The last Book Club meeting before the summer break was packed to the rafters and it was a pleasure to welcome several new members to join in the discussion.

The title of this book is a bit of a tease: the prey in question is actually the human male and the action mainly takes place in middle-class urban New York and New England. Successive chapters document different phases in the growing pains of our protagonist from J.D. Salingeresque teenager on the cusp of meeting ‘the right man’ via an on/off relationship with an older man who seems part father figure, part child.

From what Internet tells us about the writer, there is a good deal of autobiography here and it is interesting to note that the author, a copy editor like her fictional heroine, took 9 years of constant rewriting to achieve a result she was happy with. Her efforts were rewarded when the book became a best seller on release in the late 1990s – the theme clearly hitting a chord with a wide audience and the writing being sharp and frequently hilariously funny.

The first book for discussion after the summer break will be ‘The Human Stain’ by Phillip Roth – marking the recent death of this celebrated author.

Mike Wraith

Four days in Strasbourg
Patrick Sandford, a British theatre director, drinks it all in.

There are two clichés of how to show drunkenness on stage: either you act trying very hard not to be drunk, or you act as though you are wearing magnetic-soled shoes on a metal floor. I don't know whether Louise Palmer is aware of these tricks but her beer-tipping “Dame” in Rattigan's quaint but deadly accurate picture of the English theatre, HARLEQUINADE, had the spot-on comedy skill of an old pro - surely the best compliment one can pay a mature performer. Afterwards, with a glass of the real stuff in her hand, she spoke of her own early days as a professional with an ironic self-deprecation that is heart-warming and very witty.

Alcohol also played its part in the opening short Rattigan play of the evening - ALL ON HER OWN. Julia Whitham gave a quietly superb solo performance as the wife grieving her husband while attempting to numb with whisky the gnawing guilt that she may have provoked his suicide. What most impressed me was the searing honesty and courage with which Julia opened up her own vulnerability, taking the risk, as any good actor must, of showing us how she herself might behave in this situation. In fact she “acted” nothing; she
lived inside the ever-changing consciousness of the character and with impeccable judgement showed us the painful result. Wonderful to watch. My only frustration was not being able to come back the next night to see the other actress who was alternating the role. That would have been fascinating, and what an enterprising move by TAGORA - the English-speaking theatre company in Strasbourg.

I am primarily a director and I am struck by how little one can know, when watching a terrific performance, just how much influence the director has had. This is as it should be - theatre is collaborative. After the show I had a long and fascinating conversation with Veronique Zentz, the director in question. Rather unexpectedly we spoke a bit about the relevance of sexuality in directing. Then Veronique talked with serious enthusiasm and admirable modesty of her own learning process and I told her that after 35 years I am still gaining insights. More important, we discussed how good it is to work with performers who stretch you, and how the task of the director is to hold the rehearsal securely enough to allow the actors to explore their parts, but not so tightly that you stifle their imagination.

This was my very enjoyable night off. My main business in Strasbourg was the presentation of Mike Maran’s latest production at the Cabaret Onirique. It is a fabulous venue - a floating barge complete with new industrial steel roof and clanging metal staircase, and then the magic begins... You find yourself in a red plush and black lacquer cabaret theatre, crammed ingeniously onto upper and lower decks, complete with cocktails at the bar, gilded chandelier, mirror ball and scarlet velvet curtains. It is thrilling just to be there even before the performance. Conceived with real flair, it is also a business, and seems to be seriously well run by Oceane - the elegant Master of the vessel, in jaunty Captain’s peaked cap and shining-medalled white jacket over a full length shimmering black gown and an endearing pregnancy bump. Her First Mate is Patrick (French rather than Irish), whose matelot hunkiness is matched by his prodigious creative and technical skill - a brilliant showman and shrewd manager. The crew are numerous - led by the magnificent Joe. You may think he is the barman but he is so much more - technician, furniture mover, cook, diplomat, crisis manager. I would give him a job in any theatre in the world.

And so down the stairs we rattle - eccentrics come to strut our stuff in the shape of A FUNNY VALENTINE, an exploration of the personal, musical and narcotic life of the American jazz legend Chet Baker. The three performers - all from Scotland - are so skilled that despite being the director I feel slightly detached and in awe of them.

Colin Steele, award winning trumpeter, is playing with a panache more dazzling than ever, joined by the ridiculously young and gifted pianist Alan Benzie, under whose fingers the notes float like eddying currents on the Rhine, or any other superlative cliché you may choose. Between them is Mike Maran himself, hypnotic writer and story teller, veteran of more festivals than he cares to count. Several people remark how Mike's severely arthritic knee appears not to trouble him at all while he is performing. Is this the glorious Doctor Theatre working
his age-old magic? Or is it in fact evidence of a Mike consciously negotiating his own ageing process through the ever-energising exercise of creativity? Chet Baker needed his music and he needed his deadly “medicine”. Mike needs creativity. We are the beneficiaries.

I feel a little superfluous, but a director is always useful if only to position the furniture, and to suggest on this tiny stage that Mike sometimes move to the side for the audience to see the musicians. This time I am also to operate the lighting (brilliantly rigged by the other, French, Patrick). The audiences seem to enjoy the show. Oceane declares she is “ravie” and French Patrick says his 17 year old daughter has understood the English perfectly, because Mike (in pronounced Edinburgh tones) has spoken so clearly.

And of course there is the Food! No tour is complete without it. There is lunch one day in the restaurant of the Council of Europe - a room lime green with elegance and huge circular ceiling shades. Is this late 60s or early 70s chic? Whichever, it is stunning, and so is the food - the simple plat du jour is some kind of seafood risotto. We are joined by Juliana Benedetti, an opera singer now working in the EDQM of the Council. I say that I hope she is still singing, and try helplessly to remember the composer of a wonderful small cast opera, RITA, and another, THE BEAR. When I get home I check - Donizetti and William Walton respectively. Maybe the ever-enterprising Sue Moller, our host for the four days, can help a production happen. Juliana has such vivacity I can only foresee success.

On the last evening there is supper at a proper Alsatian restaurant (thick slices of beef steak, or pork, and rich sauces) for us to go some way to thanking Sue and her fellow host Katarina Bikard who have opened their homes and their hearts to us. Both these women have a generosity of spirit and energy of caring that are truly joyous. I am struck of course by the realisation that they must use these vibrant qualities also in their important work for the Council.

In one of those unexpected ‘gaps’ in the working day another Catherine (Manini) takes me on an unforgettable short walk along the river and through the cathedral quarter. I now live mostly in Ulster, that little province pulled historically between England and Ireland, so the stories Catherine tells me of Strasbourg oscillating between France and Germany are especially
meaningful to me. The agonies of the “malgré nous”, forced into violence against their will have echoes, not remotely the same, but somehow similar, to the paramilitary factions of the “troubles”. We pause at the statue of Gutenberg and I am aware of just how many different nationalities are represented in the crowd shading their eyes as they gaze up at this first inventor of mass communication, and how wonderful are the modern transport systems that have brought us here together, and how glorious the Council of Europe is, and how magnificent it will be when it becomes the Council of the World...? But maybe I’m just an idealistic softie who’s drunk in far too much Strasbourg sun and Riesling?

Patrick Sandford

In January 2019, Strasbourg’s multi-national amateur theatre will be performing a play for our times called Alice in Brexitland. It is a commentary on the strange language and thinking behind the departure of Britain from the EU, cloaked in one of Britain’s favourite fantasies, Alice in Wonderland.

Your editor thought it would be interesting to hear about the building bricks that create a performance, from the original conception to treading the boards and so, this month we bring you the first insight, from Tagora’s doyenne, Louise Palmer, who is the show’s director.

Alice in Brexitland

An original play with music, created by Tagora
To be performed at the Cube Noir, Koenigshoffen
from 31 January to 5 February 2019

I know it sounds trite but Tagora really is one big multi-national happy (most of the time) family. Since it’s been over six years since we did a really big show, we felt it was time to do another.

We had discussed the idea of creating something around Lewis Carroll’s tales several years ago but, after the result of UK referendum, Alice’s adventures in that fantasy world didn’t seem so far divorced from our own.

Thus, we writers (David Adamson & Hazel Breslin, Martyn and Janis Symons, Elena Malagoni, Richard Thayer, Jenny Griffith, David Crowe, Simon Palmer and Liam Wright) got together. Each of us chose an excerpt from the original and then added an extra touch of topical magic. So by the end of May, we had a working script.

(...)
Casting is always a nightmare for a director especially in a close-knit group like ours.

Who to choose - who to refuse? Not this time. Anyone who wanted to perform was welcome, we just added another character! At the present count, we have over 40 performers – French, Italian, Spanish, Estonian, Macedonian, Irish, German, British – not to mention the children!

We did our first casted reading at the beginning of July with an attendance rate of more than 90%, which is amazing as the holidays had already begun.

Now it’s eyes down and into serious rehearsal where the first task is to “block in” the entrances/exits and moves that every actor makes on stage.

At this time the actors will still have their scripts in their hand but before November the text must be cast aside and everyone should be “off the book”. Characterisation and interpretation develop slowly over the rehearsal period often with the addition of a small prop – a handkerchief, spectacles, a walking stick etc – a useful aid to finding the part.

Directors are very possessive of the work in hand. They guide every move, every line their actors make and in the best of circumstances they are proud to claim it as their own. However there comes a moment, usually during final rehearsals, when suddenly and unexpectedly the balance between actor and direction changes. Nothing is said but they know and you know that they, the actors, have seized possession and now the fruit of all that work belongs to them alone. From experience I can tell you, it’s humbling!

Next month Simon will be filling you in on the musical aspects of our production.

Louise Palmer, Director

For more information have a look at www.tagora.eu
Sasho Somov was four and a half years old when he woke to find a cello perched on the end of his bed. His parents had decided this was the instrument for him to focus on, so that is what he did. Several decades later, Sasho is extremely grateful for that decision. Not only has it opened up the world to him but he finds the instrument physically less demanding than many – the violin, for example – and producing a rich and varied musical range that he thoroughly enjoys.

You may have enjoyed a performance of Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra or you may have spent a summer’s evening at the Lieu de Europe listening to the Strasbuskers informally sharing their talents. Sasho is right at the front. There is so much a cello can do - in good hands!

Sasho (this name is a diminutive of Alexander) was born in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1975 to a professional pianist mother and an architect father with artistic leanings – enjoying painting and playing the violin. Father died when he was 11 but Sasho’s mother continued to perform all over Europe, Britain and the US, and today is a professor at the National Music Academy in Sofia and trains opera singers. In one significant memory from his early days of cello playing, Sasho found the fingering difficult to master: his mother produced the required sound on the piano and told him it was his problem to work out how to translate that into cello fingering!

When he was born, Bulgaria was under Socialist rule and his father enjoyed satirising the system, because it was not possible to criticise it openly, although he would sometimes spit at politicians, as he became so angry with the bureaucratic ridiculousness surrounding his life. Had he lived longer, Sasho believes he might have started a political party. His parents were surrounded by the local intelligentsia and talented thinkers: their home was often busy with guests and sometimes they produced performances such as Tartuffe in private gatherings. By Sasho’s teens, Perestroika had changed the political landscape and he says he was never affected by the darker side of the Soviet system. He had a very free childhood, with no locked doors, and playing with friends in the street.

One of the benefits of the Soviet system was that Sasho could attend the state-sponsored Sofia Music School from the age of five. Pupils were encouraged to explore the world and bring back their findings for discussion. Throughout his 12 years at the school, Sasho had a great teacher, Stefan Runevski, who ingrained in him good technical skills and performing awareness, even though Sasho was not a hard practiser!

Sasho is aware that, in spite of having been enabled to perfect his talent in his country, Bulgaria does not have the means to employ artists such as him and he reports...
that a serious number of educated, skilled people are leaving to make livings elsewhere. In 1995, Bulgaria’s population was about 9.5m; today it is under 7m. He is a case in point, having lived abroad for 22 years now.

Stage 1 of Sasho’s taste for departure started when he performed in Italy at the age of 11. Then in 1994 he took a masterclass in Sofia with Stefan Popov, the Bulgarian professor of cello who taught at the world-class Guildhall School of Music and Drama, based at the Barbican Centre in the City of London. Popov proposed Sasho consider applying for a scholarship there, whereas he had previously been interested in applying for Stuttgart. He sent a recording of his performance and was accepted. My notes then record that Sasho performed in 12 consecutive Proms*, so he seems to have been a successful student!

In 1998, at the age of 22, Sasho was awarded the Gold Medal of the Guildhall School of Music: previous winners are the acclaimed Jacqueline Dupré and Bryn Terfel: he was the first Eastern European to win. As a scholarship student, Sasho was greatly helped by his teacher Stefan Popov, who also introduced him to some of the City's livery companies** who generously supported selected Guildhall musicians. Then, as a post-graduate, he continued performing as soloist and chamber musician in the UK, Poland and Bulgaria and as guest co-principal cello with the London Symphony Orchestra.

I asked Sasho whether he felt nervous playing with such respected orchestras and he replied that he never loses his nervousness, but it helps his performance.

Sasho took up his first job working for the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra in Newcastle and in his third year there he met violinist Lucy Jeal, whom many ESC members know well and whose route to the orchestra from the GSMD (Guildhall School of Music and Drama*** ) had taken her to study in the US and freelancing in London. They became an item and their first daughter Nadia was born in 2005, by which time they felt their time at Northern Sinfonia was up and were ready to move on. Sasho applied for the post of "Violoncelle Super Soliste" at the Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra and was selected from the 40 auditionees. The position gives Sasho freedom to perform elsewhere and bookings have included touring as guest Principal cellist with the London Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra; London Philharmonic Orchestra; the Hallé; Scottish Chamber Orchestra; Scottish Opera; concerts in Bulgaria and, most recently, a European tour with his Macedonian-Balkan group with fellow founder, world-class pianist Simon Trpceski. It is an impressive list, added to which he has taught at the Strasbourg Conservatoire for seven years, training students with technical and psychological skills for succeeding in auditions.

The family’s base is now in London where Sasho and Lucy’s daughters Nadia and Maria go to school and this autumn Sasho will be taking a 3-month sabbatical to look after the children whilst Lucy tours Europe and the US with the English Baroque Soloists. Nadia sings and plays the guitar and has her eyes set on performing for the X Factor whilst Maria is more cerebral and analytical and makes wonderful drawings.
* **The Proms** is a British eight-week summer season of daily orchestral classical music concerts and other events held annually, predominantly in the Royal Albert Hall in London. It was founded in 1895 by Sir Henry Wood.

**The livery companies** of the City of London, currently 110 in number, comprise London’s ancient and modern trade associations and guilds of a craft, trade or profession.

***The Guildhall School of Music and Drama*** is an independent music and dramatic arts school which was founded in 1880 in London, England. Students can pursue courses in music, opera, drama and technical theatre arts.

*Interview by Sue Moller*

See Sasho at the 2018 Strasbuskers performance: [https://tinyurl.com/Strasbuskers-play-Bulgarian](https://tinyurl.com/Strasbuskers-play-Bulgarian)

For Sasho at work, check out the Orchestra’s programme: [www.philharmonique-strasbourg.com](http://www.philharmonique-strasbourg.com)

### General Information

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<tr>
<th>The Anglican (Episcopal) Church in Strasbourg</th>
<th>Trinity International Church of Strasbourg</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Communion each Sunday, 10:30 am at the</td>
<td>Sunday service at 10:00 at the Foyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eglise des Pères Dominicains.</td>
<td>Fellowship Hall) of the Eglise St. Louis,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the Chaplaincy on</td>
<td>12 rue du Cygne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 69 57 40 03</td>
<td><a href="http://www.trinitystrasbourg.org">www.trinitystrasbourg.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:anglican.chaplaincy.strasbourg@gmail.com">anglican.chaplaincy.strasbourg@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>or visit website, <a href="http://www.saintalbans.fr">www.saintalbans.fr</a></td>
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<th>Bilingual International School of Strasbourg (BISS)</th>
<th>ESC Email contacts:</th>
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<tr>
<td>For full information, please contact the school at</td>
<td><a href="mailto:contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com">contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 03 88 15 28 00 - Fax: 03 88 15 28 09</td>
<td><a href="mailto:contact.esc.events.67@gmail.com">contact.esc.events.67@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:contact-lucieberger@legymnase.eu">contact-lucieberger@legymnase.eu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:contact.esc.newsletter.67@gmail.com">contact.esc.newsletter.67@gmail.com</a></td>
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*Please forward items by e-mail to Catherine Manini at esc.newsletter.67@gmail.com*