

ISFAR EVENTS 2013

KERRY MULLAN

Monet's Garden: The Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris (July 2013)

In conjunction with the National Gallery of Victoria and the Melbourne Salon, ISFAR organised a special evening at the NGV. Attendees were treated to an informative and entertaining introductory lecture by Gina Panebianco, Head of Education and Public Programs at the NGV, before viewing the exhibition.

As part of the NGV's Melbourne Winter Masterpieces series, *Monet's Garden* was a stunning exhibition devoted to Claude Monet's iconic garden at Giverny. Renowned as the 'father of French Impressionism', Monet was inspired by his direct experiences of nature, culminating in the ravishing depictions of his lily and flower gardens in the rural property at Giverny that became his lifelong obsession. This exhibition was a rare opportunity to see these masterpieces in Australia and was the second-most popular Winter Masterpieces exhibition the NGV has staged in the ten-year history of the series with around 340,000 visitors. (The most popular was the first in the series, *Impressionists: Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay* in 2004.)

ISFAR looks forward to continuing collaboration with the NGV for future exhibitions with a French connection.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKER

Gina Panebianco has worked as an art educator and administrator for more than thirty years. As Head of Education at the National Gallery of Victoria she is responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating learning programs and resources for the pre-school, school and tertiary sectors, for which the NGV has received seven Arts Victoria Leadership Awards.

The Proust and Camus Centenaries and France's Wars, by Colin Nettelbeck, presented by ISFAR in conjunction with the EU Centre at RMIT (September 2013)

The year 1913 saw two events that would be of crucial importance to the literary history of twentieth century France. One was the publication of the first volume of Marcel Proust's masterwork *À la recherche du temps perdu*; the other was the birth of Albert Camus, whose novels and essays would become emblematic of the *Zeitgeist* of mid-century French culture. This presentation explored the timelines and relationship of the works of these key authors to the wars (Franco-Prussian, First and Second World Wars, Algerian War) so central to shaping French history.

NOTES ON THE SPEAKER

Colin Nettelbeck is Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Melbourne and President of ISFAR. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Officier des Palmes Académiques and a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. He has written extensively about twentieth century French literature and French cultural history and has a particular interest in the period surrounding the Second World War.

French Jazz Concert¹ (November 2013)

Members and friends were invited to a second evening of French jazz with musicians Colin Nettelbeck on piano, and Richard Miller on clarinet and saxophone. The evening was held at the Alliance Française de Melbourne and was a sequel to the first part of the story of jazz in France, held in November 2012.

The audience was again treated to some wonderful jazz pieces and a running commentary by Colin Nettelbeck on the second part of the story of jazz in France. Concentrating on questions of cultural exchange he explored how, through the medium of jazz, France, and especially Paris, has become a kind of ongoing romantic dream place for Americans, and how, for a whole range of

¹ My thanks to Colin Nettelbeck for his assistance with these notes.

French artists, in all kinds of media, jazz music became a potent stimulus for creativity.

The first section presented the music of two ‘Americans in Paris’—George Gershwin and Cole Porter—whose French experience generated many pieces that have become jazz standards. The examples played were *I got Rhythm*, *Our Love is Here to Stay* (Gershwin) and *I Love Paris* (Porter).

Next followed a section on Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, and their passion for jazz. For de Beauvoir, jazz was the symbol of her aspirations to free herself of her upbringing as the dutiful daughter of the bourgeoisie, and of the stiffness and formalisms of the majestic but stifling French cultural tradition. It was a call to rediscover life’s wildness and spontaneity. For Sartre, too, it was a symbol of freshness and freedom. Examples were *Old Man River* and *Some of These Days*, the ‘theme song’ of Sartre’s existentialist novel *La Nausée*.

A focus on contemporary novelist Jean Echenoz emphasised France’s literary debt to jazz, in this case to bebop and free jazz; the musicians played Ray Noble’s *Cherokee*, made famous by Charlie Parker, and the title of one of Echenoz’s early works.

A section on the impact of jazz on French cinema began with a discussion of two Louis Malle films, *Lacombe Lucien* and *Pretty Baby*, illustrated by Django Reinhardt’s *Minor Swing* and Jelly-Roll Morton’s *Doctor Jazz*. This was followed by *Body and Soul*, used by Bertrand Tavernier in his much celebrated homage to jazz—*Round Midnight*.

After a brief excursion into free form playing in memory of Jacques Derrida’s attempt to jam with Ornette Coleman, the duet closed on a nostalgic note with Sidney Bechet’s *Si tu vois ma mère*, featured by Woody Allen in his *Midnight in Paris*.

The well-attended evening was an appropriate conclusion to the ISFAR activities for 2013.

NOTES ON THE MUSICIANS

On Colin Nettelbeck, see above.

Richard Miller played with the very popular and legendary ‘Red Onions’ in the nineteen-sixties and early seventies, undertaking two successful European tours

including the Breda Jazz Festival with them. He performed with the modern jazz group 'Onaje' which has participated in the Montreal Jazz Festival, and in 'Blues Express'. An avid composer with eclectic taste, Richard writes most of the original material performed by 'Blues Express' and has been a member since 1984. He has played and recorded with Jimmy Witherspoon and Red Richards. He has also played with Kenny Davern, Art Hodes, James Morrison, Bob Barnard and Ralph Sutton amongst many others. He is currently Treasurer of ISFAR.

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