

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 37  
October 2, 2009

## AU Profiles

Jacqueline Chant

## The Haunted

A social history of ghosts

## Chris Smith

Neoclassical notes

*Plus:*

*The Mindful Bard, Dear Barb,  
From Where I Sit, and much more...*



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*The Voice* is published  
every Friday in HTML  
and PDF format

To subscribe for weekly  
email reminders as  
each issue is posted,  
see the 'subscribe' link  
on *The Voice* front  
page

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Special thanks to  
Athabasca University's  
*The Insider* for its  
frequent contributions

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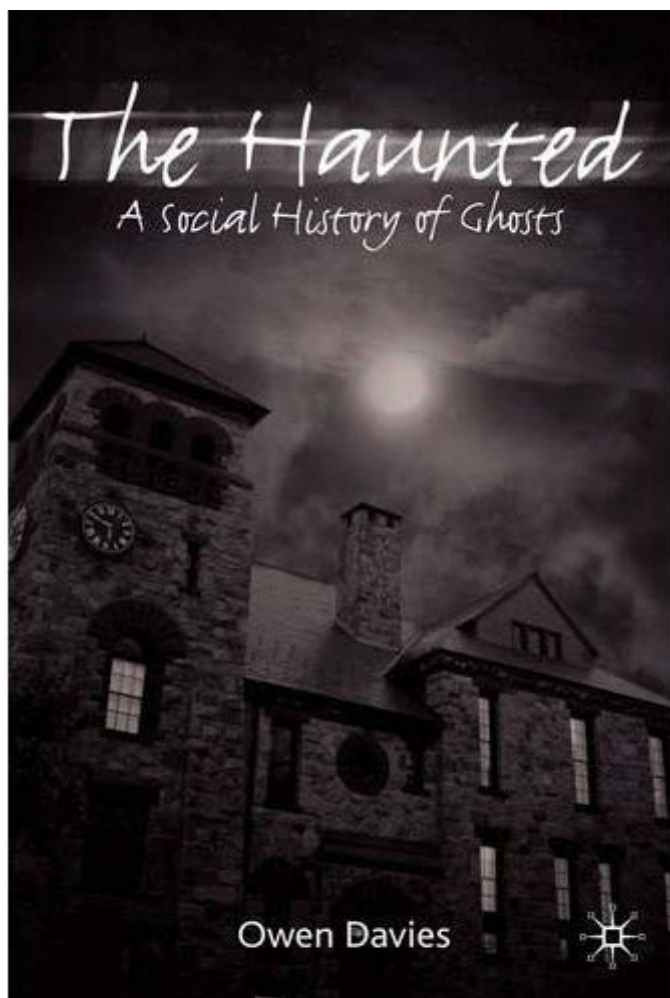
# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



## PAGES

John Buhler



## The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts

The days are growing shorter and shadows are growing longer. You feel a sudden and distinct chill in the air. Is it simply winter's approach that makes you shiver, or are the spirits of the dead looking over your shoulder? Is it the rustling of autumn's fallen leaves you hear, or the footsteps of the long-departed?

Why is the ancient and irrational fear that the dead return to haunt the living still part of our supposedly modern, scientific, and rational society? Perhaps the answer can be traced to our close ties with England, a "ghost ridden" nation that according to historian Owen Davies has a "love affair with ghosts."

In *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, Davies, a University of Hertfordshire historian, examines ghosts in English history from the Middle Ages up to and including the popular ghost investigations seen on television today. Davies has also written extensively about witches, another Halloween staple, but—with the exception of parents who shield their children from Harry Potter books and films—belief in their power belongs to an irrational and superstitious chapter in human history.

Ghosts, however, continue to haunt us. Ghost stories fill shelves in libraries and bookstores, and ghostly themes abound on television, from the fictional *Ghost Whisperer* to the reality-based *Medium* in the US and the popular paranormal investigators of *Most Haunted* in Britain. Even in the age of rationalism and science, ghosts are a subject that provides enduring fear and fascination. Rather than presenting readers with yet another collection of ghost stories, however, or attempting to determine whether or not ghosts actually exist, Davies examines the ways in which representations and explanations of ghostly phenomena have changed over time.

As Davies demonstrates, the notion that the spirits of the dead return to haunt the living is a belief that refuses to die. In the Reformation it was presumed that the Protestant rejection of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory would bring an end to ghost-belief. When Protestants continued to see ghosts, the ghostly apparitions were then ascribed to satanic deceptions. Not only religion, but the fields of philosophy, natural science, psychiatry, and physiology have all contributed to the debate over the existence of ghosts and the manner in which these sightings were understood. Nor have ghosts been left behind in the computer age: technology assists ghost hunters in their investigations while the Internet links ghost enthusiasts around the world.

Though we might assume that the spirits of the dead, operating outside the time constraints of the living, have always been consistent in their behaviours and manifestations, nothing could be further from the

truth. Stone-throwing, once a popular activity of English poltergeists, appears to have gone out of style, and white-sheeted apparitions—reflecting the burial practices of the day—now merely haunt doorsteps at Halloween.

And while some ghostly manifestations have fallen by the wayside, others have come into being. Ghosts of Roman soldiers are only a relatively recent phenomenon, likely the product of a century and a half of improved public knowledge of history and the popularity of films portraying historical subject matter.

Davies covers a great deal of ground, yet there are issues that would have been interesting to explore in more detail. Davies relates the frequent sightings of ghostly nuns and monks to the fact that they can easily be recognized by their attire. Given that religious controversy is a theme in Davies's book, however, it is surprising that he does not have more to say about the English preoccupation with such apparitions. It is clear that the Catholic clergy still haunt the English countryside. Do these frequent sightings suggest that English Protestants have some anxiety concerning their Catholic past? After all, the English Reformation was often a rather bloody affair.

Although ghost manifestations are often associated with sudden, violent, and horrific deaths, there must be cultural factors that determine which specific deaths will be memorialized in this way. In his examination of television's role in the debate over the reality of ghosts, for example, Davies refers to a 1967 BBC investigation of an alleged haunting stemming from a double murder that took place during the Second World War. Yet Davies makes no mention of any ghosts associated with the thousands of civilian deaths from the German bombing of English cities during the war. Does this mean that ghostly apparitions stemming from these larger-scale horrific events are excluded, so far, from popular English folklore?

Might ghost stories based upon modern catastrophes be seen as trivializing these events? Are these events, for which there are still living witnesses, simply too recent and too raw to be memorialized by ghost sightings? Does the

need to memorialize such events in the form of ghostly sightings become relevant only when there are no living witnesses left? Or do major tragedies tend to spawn ghost manifestations when society feels that the dead were not been properly mourned? Hopefully Davies and other social historians will, at some point in the future, cast some light into these dark corners.

Davies has written a highly readable and fascinating social-historical work on ghost phenomena. This is a balanced, sober, and analytical—though entertaining and at times even humorous—look at English ghosts from the medieval age up until the present. *The Haunted* will be available in paperback on October 27, just in time for Halloween.

*The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* is published by Palgrave Macmillan. Hardcover 299 pages ISBN-13: 978-1-4039-3924-1. Paperback 312 pages ISBN-13: 978-0230237100





## ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



## The More Things Change

On October 1, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff introduced a non-confidence motion in an effort to topple the Harper government. The motion was defeated, but it brings to mind that old saying about how the more things change the more they stay the same.

That's the situation Canadians face as the prospect of another federal election continues to loom. The Tories may fall in October or six months from now, but as the political rhetoric begins to fly there's

one important thing to keep in mind: it really doesn't matter.

That's not something any of the parties are likely to admit, but take a look at the polls. In the most recent EKOS poll Canadians were asked if the government was moving in the right direction or the wrong one. Slightly more than 46 per cent of respondents said the right direction; 41 per cent disagreed.

And when it comes to being decided on which party to vote for, the Conservatives have 36 per cent support and the Liberals have almost 30. The NDP, Greens, and Bloc come in at 13.9, 10.5, and 9.8 per cent respectively. If an election were held tomorrow, we'd likely end up with—you guessed it—a Conservative minority.

The numbers are important because they so closely mirror the last federal election: 37 per cent voted Conservative, 26 went Liberal. The October 2008 vote cost Canadians \$280 million and gave the Conservatives 143 seats. An election today would give them an ever so slightly smaller minority. Essentially, it would add up to a \$300 million exercise in futility.

Which makes it all the more puzzling that *any* of the parties would press for an election right now (the Bloc supported Ignatieff's non-confidence motion while the NDP abstained). Even if the tide shifted and the Liberals pulled ahead to form a minority, the government would still need the cooperation of the other parties—or at least enough of them to pass any important legislation. Which means that, red or blue, Canadians would not be seeing a significantly altered Parliament.

That's not to say that a minority government can't be effective. But why in the world should we spend hundreds of millions of dollars to get what we already have?

Instead, it would be refreshing to see the parties put away the election spat for now and get back to making progress on the issues—Afghanistan, employment insurance, and a hundred other things that election posturing (on all sides) is stealing valuable attention from.

It's one thing for political parties to be vocal about their differences with each other. It's something else to throw millions into a race that will see everybody right back where they started.

Sadly, it's a point that seems to be lost on the politicians who are spending our money.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



## Chris Smith, Part I

*Chris Smith is a Scottish neoclassical composer. His exquisite performances and the beautifully crafted music videos that accompany his music have appeared on a number of television networks. He recently put out his second album, Piano Passion and Middle Age Angst, reviewed in The Voice this issue.*

*Recently he took the time to answer some questions from Wanda Waterman St. Louis.*

## Musical Roots and Branches

I was brought up in a musical family and sang on stage from the age of five. My sister played piano and accordion (she was Scottish Champion at 13). My other sister sang and played guitar. Both of my parents were trained singers. I began dedicatedly playing drums at 14.

At 17 I was accepted for a fine art degree at Dundee University but declined in order to play drums for the then hugely famous Scottish rock band, Big Country. Over the next 10 years I went on to play, record, and tour on drums with many artists including Nazareth, Big Country, Dougie MacLean (the Scottish singer-songwriter who wrote a musical piece for *The Last of the Mohicans*), and David Allison (a guitar looper), among others.

## Early Years

I grew up in the small mining village Kelty, in Fife, Scotland. Kelty, then and for the most part now, is a village that suffers from social deprivation. Drug addiction is prevalent and unemployment is high. The decimation of the Scottish mining industry and the privatization of the dockyard nearby in Rosyth removed both major sources of employment for Fife in the '80s and '90s.

Kelty nestles on the edge of Blairadam Forest, which expands for a hundred square miles. On Kelty's northern edge is Maryburgh, an ancient and beautiful rural hamlet where in 1569 Mary Queen of Scots allegedly changed horses when fleeing from her imprisonment on the island fortress of Lochleven Castle some six miles north.

I attended Kelty's Catholic primary school, St. Joseph's, which housed 90 pupils. Corporal punishment was administered with a leather strap ("the belt," invented by a saddler in Lochgelly in the 1800s). The belt became a standard implement of punishment for children in Scotland until it was banned by the European Parliament in 1991.

My parents (in particular my mother) were very strict Catholics. We were regularly indoctrinated by the parish priest and were in constant fear of his considerable tyranny. I despised the philosophy and began challenging his doctrine at the age of eight. I was usually removed from the religious education class and sometimes beaten. I enjoyed teacher baiting into my teens.

I lived a mile from school and returned home each day for lunch. My daily journey took me past the Public School that housed over 500 Protestant children. As Catholics we were despised by those children, who

themselves had been subject to bigoted indoctrination by their parents. Each day, more often than not, I fought my way home.

At 13 I attended St. Columba's High School in Dunfermline (ancient capital of Scotland) and for the most part enjoyed it. My introduction to the school's music program was being belted by the music master for learning a recorder part by ear instead of reading it.

Scotland suffers from a working class ideology: "Aim low to avoid disappointment!" On leaving high school I had the following interview with my careers adviser:

CA: Well Christopher! What do you want to do with your life?

CS: I want to be a professional musician!

(Silence)

CA: Have you ever thought of retail?



### Landmark Reading, Film, Music

*The Alchemist*, a world bestseller by Paulo Coelho (a book about following your dream); *Shostakovich: A Life*, a biography by Laurel E. Fay; *Shine*, a multi-Oscar winning film depicting the life of concert pianist David Helfgott; the music of J.S. Bach, Shostakovich, Chopin, Mahler, Liszt, Debussy, Beethoven.

### DID YOU KNOW?



#### Convocation 2009 Photo Album Online!

Ever wonder what it's like to finally finish your degree and cross the stage to receive your parchment? Look no further than AU's Convocation 2009 [photo album](#).

The photo album captures the pride and excitement of this year's grads, along with their reflections on what made their education journeys special. And on the main convocation page, you'll find links to this year's honorary degree recipients and other special guests who attended the ceremony.

There's also a link to [previous convocation photo albums](#) (all the way back to 2002), so you never know who you might catch a glimpse of!



# AU Profiles:

## AU Profiles: Jacqueline Chant

Christina M. Frey



Jacqueline Chant's been in constant pain since she was nine years old, but she hasn't let it stop her from living her life. She's backpacked through Europe, climbed mountains, ridden horseback, been skiing, worked two jobs at once, and volunteered extensively. Now, she's overcoming another hurdle: completing her education.

A student for two years in Athabasca University's Bachelor of Management program, Jacqueline chose AU because its flexibility worked well with her medical conditions. Fifteen years ago, she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, a condition she says causes "widespread musculoskeletal pain and fatigue.

"The simplest way of thinking of it is an imbalance of brain chemicals," Jacqueline explains. "[It] means that I have pain in every part of my body, from my muscles to my ligaments to my tendons . . . I ache all over, 24 hours a day, seven days a week." She also has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which causes super-mobility of the joints in addition to pain.

"I have it under a bit better control now," she says. She credits her family for raising her to be strong. "My family has always had . . . the 'go-getter' sort of attitude," she says. "We were always busy with something—skiing, triathlons, volunteering, riding horses—and I wanted to be able to do all that."

She's carried that same attitude to her pain management. "The best method for treating it is what is called a multi-disciplinary approach . . . finding the right medication, ensuring you are taking care of your soul/spirit . . . eating healthy . . . and exercis[ing]," Jacqueline says. And she tries to stay active. "I bike . . . and am hoping to get back into cross-country skiing in the fall," she says. It's all a question of balance.

Part of the difficulty is her inability to predict when the pain will be so great as to interfere with her daily activities. This was particularly a problem when she moved from distance-based high school to traditional college several years ago.

"I wanted to be around people," she says. "I like meeting people, seeing things." She did two years there, but trying to do too much set her back. "I was working . . . at one or two places and . . . volunteering at one or two places," she explains. "I crashed pretty hard, so it took a while to get back up after that."

Because of her need to change her day-to-day routine according to how she's feeling, studying via distance has been a good fit for Jacqueline.

"If I have a rough night . . . I don't have to go to classes, get notes . . . or explain to people why I missed the group meeting," she says. "I [can] do my courses when I [feel] okay to do my courses." It's made working on her degree much easier. "Having the ability to contact my [professors and tutors] when I need to, or hand in assignments when I can handle it, makes a world of difference," she says.

***Not surprisingly, the uncertainty doesn't affect her as much as it might. "It's strange what the brain and body learn to adapt to when necessary," she points out.***

AU has also given her the ability to take school with her when she travels, something particularly important since she and her husband spent time in the United States for his work. "I [was there] on a dependent visa, so I [couldn't] go to school," she points out. She's now back in Alberta, and is grateful she didn't need to change schools in conjunction with the move.

Jacqueline does miss the social aspect of a bricks-and-mortar school, and the lack of socialization was especially difficult when she moved to a new city where she and her husband knew few people. But although distance learning can be isolating at times, it doesn't have to be, she says. "It [is] easy sometimes to just end up being in the apartment a lot," Jacqueline admits. "I work hard to make sure that I get socialization outside of home." Even something as simple as piano lessons or joining a meditation group has helped. "Sometimes it's about having acquaintances or being recognized," she says.

On the other hand, distance learning has allowed her to juggle school while still participating in activities that are important to her—like yoga, meditation, and volunteering. Her volunteer work as a tutor for disadvantaged kids has brought its own benefits. "[It] brought to light the fact that I was happiest working with kids," Jacqueline says.

She's planning to begin a degree in social work after her management degree is completed. In particular, she's interested in the University of Victoria's Bachelor of Social Work, which is a partially distance-based program. She's also considering similar programs at more local universities within Alberta.

In the meantime, Jacqueline's continuing to develop the skills she'll need for this sensitive field. "I have a long ways to go . . . and a lot to learn," she says. "I think . . . I wouldn't have been ready mentally or emotionally to do a social work degree prior to now."

Her volunteer work has given her some deep perspectives on what it means to work with disadvantaged children. "To work with kids . . . a person has to be able to know that . . . nothing is personal," she points out. "You have to be able to separate [your work] from your life . . . not take it home."

For example, Jacqueline says, "if you have a work period where it seems you are really advancing with the kid, and then the next time they don't talk to you, it's not about you." You also need a sense of empathy—"underprivileged kids can go through more in their childhood than anyone could imagine," she says—but an understanding that "they aren't meant to be fixed."

Although Jacqueline plans to graduate in December 2010, she's keeping an open mind. "If . . . life happens . . . then I [will still] have a bona fide degree, which might make it easier to find work," she says. "I can always work for a while then go back to school."

Not surprisingly, the uncertainty doesn't affect her as much as it might. "It's strange what the brain and body learn to adapt to when necessary," she points out. "Life is tough, but I'm tougher!"



*Dear  
Barb*

*Barbara Godin*

## Setting New Boundaries Will Take Patience

*Dear Barb:*

*I am 28 years old and have a successful career, my own place, and a great boyfriend. My problem is my mother. She calls daily to see what I'm doing and when she visits she criticizes my housekeeping, cooking, even my boyfriend.*

*My boyfriend says I should tell her how I feel, but I don't want to get into a fight with her. When mom gets angry she makes everyone's life miserable. My dad and sisters have all learned that the best way to keep the peace is to just go along with mom. Now that I'm living on my own I really don't want to do that anymore, but I don't know how to stop it without causing problems between me and my mom. Do you have any suggestions?*

*Joanne*

Hi, Joanne. Great question and an all-too-familiar scenario. One of the hardest things for a mother to do is to allow her children to live their own lives. You can't change your mom but there are ways you can help her to let go.

I agree with your boyfriend that you need to talk to your mom and explain how you feel. Tell her that you are capable of managing your own life. Give her credit for raising you to be a responsible, capable person.

You need to decide which areas of your life you want to share with your mom. When she crosses that line, point out nicely that you would rather not discuss these things with her. She may feel hurt initially, but eventually she will come to realize that you can still have a close loving relationship without knowing every single detail of each other's lives.

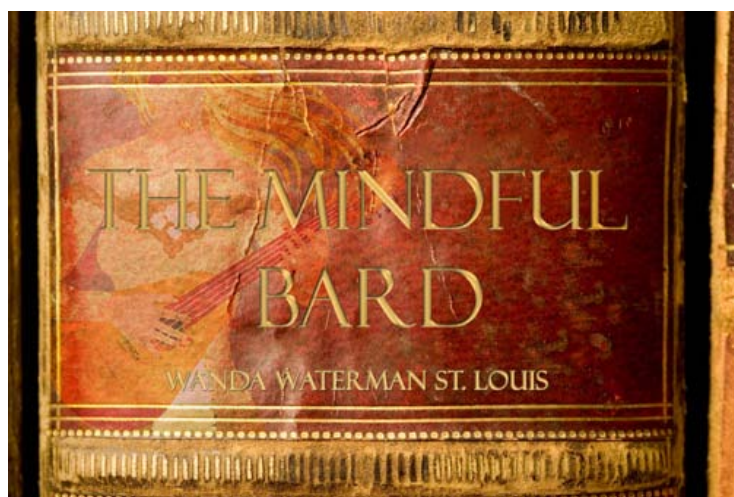
You can speed this process along by not seeking your mother's approval. Studies have shown that individuals who seek internal approval, rather than external approval, are happier and less prone to depression.

Prepare yourself for your mother's visits and try to appreciate the fact that she really does care and her intention is only to make things easier for you. Try not to be defensive. Your mother has lived longer than you and I'm sure she has some good advice to offer. When you are with your mother, try to pay attention to your physical reactions to her words. If you feel your body tensing up, try to change the subject to something more positive and lighthearted.

This may be a challenging feat, but if you are consistent your mother will definitely get the hint and your visits will be more pleasant and enjoyable.

Hope I was helpful. Good luck, Joanne.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.*



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

CD: Chris Smith, *Piano Passion and Middle Age Angst*

Release date: 2009

The Eloquent Shadow-Play of Light and Dark Neoclassical Sounds

*"Composing is usually a series of tragedies punctuated by the occasional success."*

Chris Smith

I remember steeping myself in modern poetry for years, both academically and in private. Eating, sleeping, breathing modern poetry. Eventually T.S. Eliot led me back to the French *symbolistes*, who led me back to Edgar Allan Poe, and it was among Poe's mesmerizing rhythms that I finally found my own voice.

After having had some success getting my extremely derivative poetry published (I sounded a lot like Pound) I submitted my new poems to a provincial competition. I didn't win any prizes, and the constructive criticism I was given was this: I had potential, but I should really try to read more modern poetry.

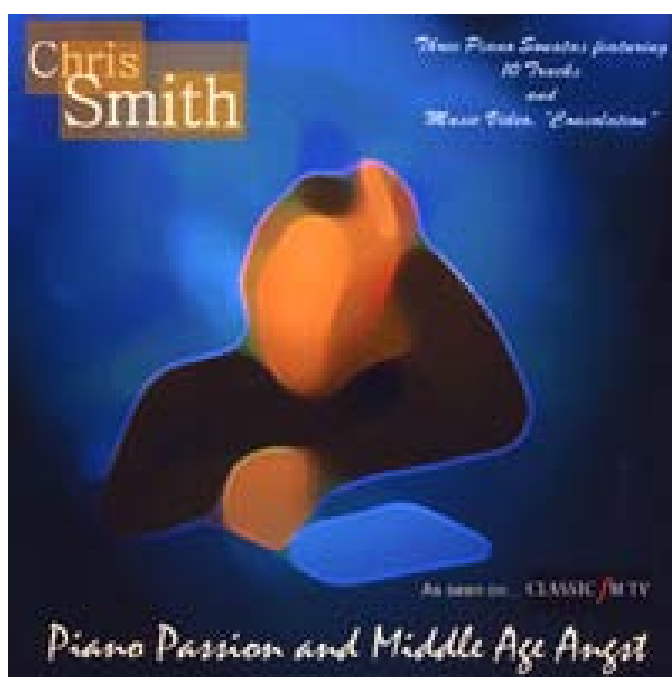
The irony was not lost.

In an experimental and avant-garde musical world Chris Smith has turned to traditional musical forms for the expression of a poignant and halcyon aesthetic. He has my full blessing.

*Piano Passion and Middle Age Angst* is a series of delicate and distinctive piano concertos recalling the French composers Debussy, Satie, and Ravel. Gallic culture has also inspired Smith's choice of titles—"Le Désir," "Mon Petit Chou," and "Doucement Comme je Dors" (among others).

The gorgeous music videos that accompany these pieces on UK television networks provide that salient visual dimension that the music calls for, but if you don't watch the videos you'll find your own visions welling up in response to the music alone.

The wonderful thing about art, one thing which I would even argue *makes* it art, is that there is no one way to interpret it. Art's meaning is polysemous; whereas we can disagree about what the words to "I Gotta Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas really *mean*, the song can only hold one meaning at a time, unlike "Summertime," which resonates with multiple meanings at once.





These concertos throb with meanings. They comprise a felicitous series of soundtracks for life changes, disappointments, the kind of melancholy that's delicious to wallow in for a spell (but not for the other kind, the downward-spiralling kind), nostalgic reveries, meditations, moments of personal illumination, and romantic interludes. And more artistic creation.

*Piano Passion and Middle Age Angst* manifests six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it makes me want to be a better artist; 3) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; and 6) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour.

*The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to [bard@voicemagazine.org](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

## CLICK OF THE WRIST – Bee-eautiful

We may not like their sting, but the loss of the world's honeybees would be catastrophic. Bees pollinate as many as 250,000 species of flowering plants, giving us everything from chocolate to cotton. This week, we take a look at the productive pollinators.

### Sniffer Bees

This falls into the category of things that seem so simple, it's amazing no one has thought of them before. In the wild, honeybees "are very effective at isolating and following [a] scent." So why not train them to detect explosives?

### Suit of Bees

Most people run at the sight of just a single bee. These folks, on the other hand, look perfectly comfortable with thousands of bees crawling on them. From bee beards to full-body suits, this is definitely not something to try at home.

### Silence of the Bees

This acclaimed PBS production documents how the sudden disappearance of millions of bees could have dangerous effects for humans: the tiny insects "account for one third of the food that's produced" in the US alone.

### Crime-Fighting Bees

Honeybees aren't usually associated with serial killers, but the bees' behaviour could offer police valuable help with something called geographic profiling. It's hoped that experiments with bees "will allow criminologists to perfect their technique, and predict a serial killer's location with more accuracy."

### Flight of the Bumblebee

It's one thing to *hear* Korsakov's feverish classic. It's quite another to watch the incredible precision of an orchestra as they bring the familiar favourite to life.





## Plans for Fall

The calendar assures us fall is here. With a bizarre summer, weather-wise, in many parts of Canada we need tangible proof the seasons are indeed changing. Edmonton had its hottest day of the year in early September and the forecast looks good for more above-average temperatures.

This is a good thing for the hundreds of thousands of farm families hoping to bring in the harvest. It is September 9 as I write this and we have yet to combine a bushel. The drought and crazy weather kept the seed from germinating when it should have and everything is running so much later because of it. No one knows what to expect quantity- or quality-wise. But in that brainless (or is it hopeful) way farmers have, the thinking is “next year will be better.” Yeah, if you don’t starve or go broke before then. We too will keep plugging along, I guess.

If your year’s income doesn’t depend on these few days/weeks in September chances are you are enjoying the season. There are the fall colours and the smell of autumn to look forward to. You may have a garden to harvest. Perhaps you’re still doing cartwheels because the kids are out of your hair and back in school where they belong.

Can I make some suggestions for fall activities? Enjoy your flower beds and pots until the first killing frost. Be ruthless with the perennials that may have overtaken an area and your patience. Dig ‘em up and haul ‘em out. If you can pay it forward by giving some to friends or neighbours go for it. Your conscience will thank you. Now is also the time to transplant the ones that need dividing. Trees especially will need many good soakings before the ground freezes. By the time you do all the necessary yardwork the first snowfall will seem like a blessing!

If you’re in the market for yard or patio stuff, now is the time to cash in on the deepest discounts. Half- price fountains and patio sets are there for the taking. In Alberta, September is also an ideal time to plant trees and nursery prices are discounted.

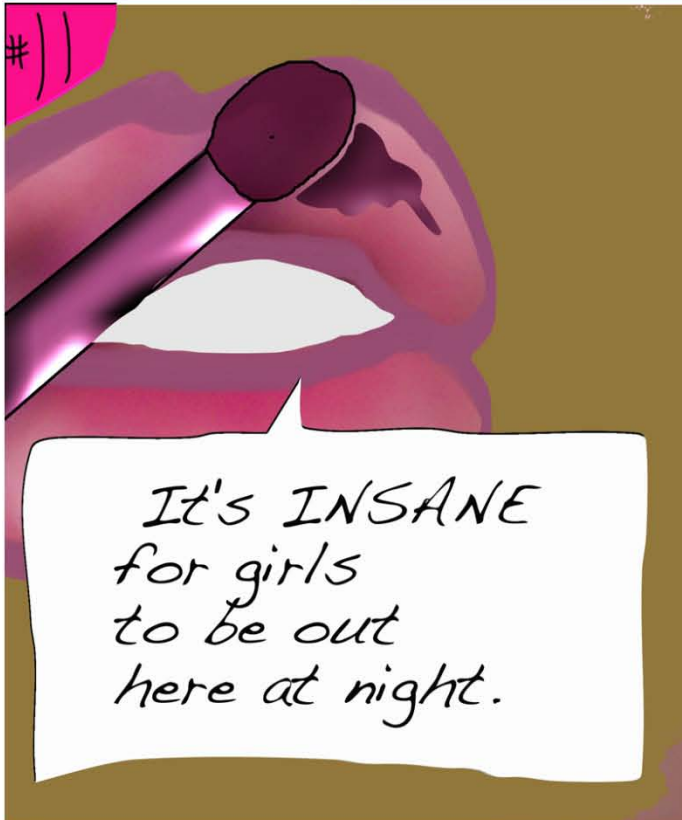
If you have time and money the fall is also an ideal time to travel. It’s considered shoulder season, which means prices are dropping from the summer peak. The crowds are smaller and the kids are all back in school. See cartwheel note above.

If you have more time and money left the fall is traditionally a good time for a big construction or renovation push. Now the race is against the calendar and the thermometer. If pouring concrete is part of your plan do it sooner rather than later so it has time to cure. If you’re building a deck or fence or garage and your neighbour isn’t away on said vacation maybe you can rope him into helping. Bonus: he’ll likely drink less beer because it’s cooler now.

Other than that you’re on your own. My focus has to be combining, from where I sit.

# Sister Aurora

*There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .*





## AUSU THIS MONTH



### Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

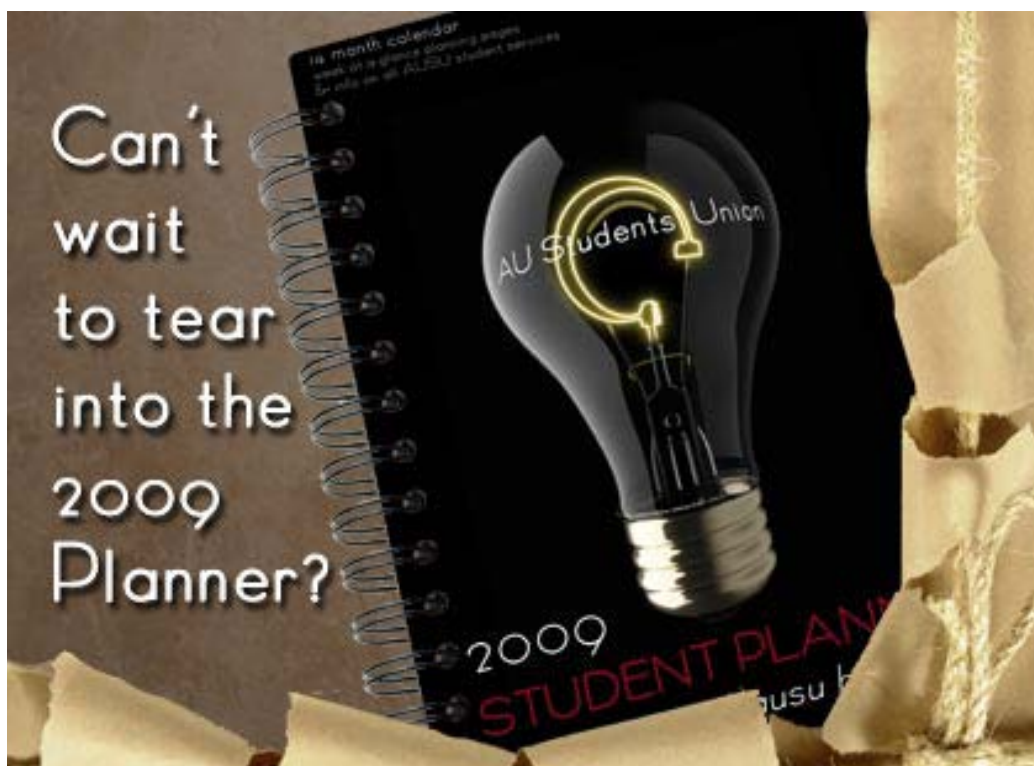
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

### Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



### AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted

concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

## au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

## 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



## SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo.

Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

## Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.

The *Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

## AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

## Employment Site is Here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.

Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!





## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Radio-Canada says farewell to *Bye Bye*

Comedians are expected to push boundaries, but the satirical show *Bye Bye* took things over the edge last New Year's Eve. And now, Radio-Canada has cut the traditional year-end comedy program.

The *National Post* reports that the French-language public broadcaster insists *Bye Bye* "was not cut as a result of the controversy" generated by last year's show. However, it's the only program from last year's lineup that won't be returning.

One of the controversial skits revolved around the possible assassination of President Barack Obama. It included offensive comments about how the colour of his skin would make an assassination easier.

In other sketches, violence against women was used as comic fodder lampooning Patrick Roy, the former hockey goaltender. Nathalie Simard, a Quebecois singer and child-abuse survivor, was also the target of jokes.

More than 250 complaints flowed into the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) following the broadcast. The show's host, as well as its producer, held a news conference to apologize. The matter was placed in the hands of the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council, which declared that Radio-Canada had breached Canadian broadcast standards.

*Bye Bye* first ran from 1968 to 1998, then hit the airwaves again beginning in 2007.

### In Foreign News: Hybrids not green enough to go solo in carpool lanes

In California, 85,000 hybrid-car owners have permits that allow their fuel-saving vehicles in carpool lanes. But those permits will expire on January 1, 2011 and many of them won't be renewed.

As the *LA Times* reports, the program was the result of a 2004 law that aimed to "encourage the purchase of advanced-technology vehicles that delivered better fuel economy and produced lower emissions." Vehicles such as the Honda Insight, Honda Civic hybrid, and the Toyota Prius were eligible for carpool access even if their owners were driving solo. A total of 85,000 yellow stickers were given out for cars with a "combined city-highway mileage of 45 miles per gallon or better."

Besides saving time commuting, the carpool-lane exemption gave hybrid owners the benefit of higher resale values on their cars; in some cases, as much as \$2,000. That perk will probably disappear if the vehicles no longer qualify.

In some ways, the success of the original program has led to the changes. It worked so well in encouraging hybrid sales that legislators now want to raise the bar. One new bill would limit the program to electric cars and those fuelled by natural gas or other alternatives. Another proposed bill would include hybrids, but only those with a "city-highway fuel economy of 65 mpg or better."

## EDUCATION NEWS

Kerri Breen

**NDP MP advocates axing loan interest**

**Jack Harris asks federal government to make post-secondary a priority**

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. (CUP) - A Newfoundland politician is calling on the federal government to follow his province's lead and remove the interest on student loans nationally.

Jack Harris, the NDP MP for St. John's East, announced that he will be putting forth a private member's resolution proposing that the federal government follow the precedent set by Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education.

The interest rate on Newfoundland and Labrador student loans, both past and present, has been

eliminated as of August 1.

"They can't say it can't be done because it's been done," Harris said. "It's been done here in Newfoundland and Labrador."

In a presentation to students and the media last week, Harris said he estimates the move would cost government about \$130 million a year per percentage of interest.

"In the grand scheme of things, with the budget of the government of Canada, this is not a huge amount of money."

Harris says the legislation, if passed, would be a step in the right direction, but not a solution to Canada's post-secondary funding problems. "I would call it one small step," Harris said. "It's something concrete the federal government can do very easily."

Canada also needs to develop a national post-secondary education strategy and dedicate transfer payments for post-secondary, he said. The Canadian Federation of Students estimates the national student debt to be \$13 billion, with \$500 million belonging to students from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Harris hears of working graduates whose loans are preventing them from making major life decisions like having children, getting married, or buying a home.

Loan debts, said Harris, "are very real barriers to people setting themselves up in life. A lot of public policy makers don't really realize that."

Harris is looking across the country for support. He wants to stimulate a national debate about who should bear the costs of post-secondary education. He said the federal government has a much larger role to play.

"Post-secondary education should and must be a greater national priority than it is. It cannot be left to the provinces."

# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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*The Voice* is published every Friday in html and pdf format

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Special thanks to Athabasca University's *The Insider* for its contributions