PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DISCUSSION GROUP

by Sandy Traiger

Earlier this year it became apparent that the 2008 Presidential Election would be one of the most momentous in U.S. history. Led by Harriet Starrett, BOLLI offered a free affinity discussion group on Tuesday afternoons that met for five weeks, with 30-50 participants each week. Harriet was well-suited as leader, having a degree in Economic History, an MBA, and a working background in marketing and strategy, besides having been a BOLLI SGL in economics and global economics.

Although BOLLI members lean to a “blue state” viewpoint, there were rousing discussions and support for varying opinions. The group enthusiastically evaluated the candidates’ plans for health care, education, and foreign policy.

What was the media’s impact on the race? We agreed that the press over-criticized Hillary, gave Obama wide latitude, and often favored McCain. What about YouTube, Tina Fey, Jon Stewart, and Stephen Colbert? Many felt that the younger audiences were particularly influenced by political satire.

What are polls and how are they measured? In answer, Harriet then turned the participants into a focus group. The lesson learned: don’t trust the polling numbers, they can be manipulated. Intense interest was expressed in the candidates’ strategies and tactics. As the debates and accusations mounted each week, the group evaluated their impact. There was great concern that the American people get a truthful and accurate picture of the candidates and their positions. They argued about America’s “culture wars” and the inherent strength of our democracy.

The major issue that unexpectedly arose was the volatile economic situation. What happened and why? What could or should the candidates’ programs do to ameliorate the situation?

At the last meeting, just before the election, the group discussed three major processes: registration, voting, and counting, raising much concern as problems in various states became evident. Harriet always made sure that everyone got a chance to express his or her point of view and ask questions.

On election evening, members of the group met at Harriet’s home to watch the returns as they came in. The United States now has a new President: Barack Obama. Thank you, Harriet, for the opportunity to be more informed. We had a grand old time.
A proposal to change the process for electing BOLLI Council members dominated the discussion at the Open Forum on October 29th.

“Three of the nine council positions are vacated each year,” explained Neil Bernstein, chair of an ad hoc committee that has studied election protocols at BOLLI and other LLI’s. He presented a recommendation that the Nominating Committee offer a slate of exactly three candidates rather than a ballot of six individuals to be voted on separately.

Neil and Len Aberbach, Council Chair, noted several problems with the current system. Foremost is the difficulty in finding willing candidates; many people have to be asked and often cajoled into agreeing to put their names on the ballot. Second, election outcomes may reflect who is best known rather than who is most qualified. Finally, losing candidates often experience post-election feelings of embarrassment and even ill will.

A slate would eliminate any divisiveness and discomfort as it would be approved in its entirety at the May annual meeting. The Nominating Committee would be enabled to select highly qualified individuals with broad perspectives, extensive knowledge of BOLLI, past service, and the potential to grow into executive positions on the Council.

Some attendees at the forum expressed a strong apprehension that under the new system BOLLI could become more insular and the Council would become a self-perpetuating in-group. Sharon Socoloff explained that the Nominating Committee comprises three non-Council members and two Council members and that BOLLI had a developmental task of increasing points of view across the whole organization.

One questioner wondered if the paucity of volunteers for Council seats results from amorphously-defined responsibilities. Sharon noted that there are job descriptions, but she acknowledged they could be improved. Following a question about the necessity for a three-year commitment, Len explained that at least a year is needed for “learning and listening” and the remaining two years for full service, possibly on the Executive Committee.

Acknowledging that the subcommittee’s recommendation is a significant change that needs unhurried consideration, Len expressed a desire to achieve “near unanimity” in the final decision.

In other business, Len explained that the national financial crisis is affecting Brandeis University and will have implications for BOLLI. Brandeis President Jehuda Reinharz has mandated reductions in operating costs of 3% to 7%. Although the exact figure for BOLLI is not yet known, Len predicted that “something will change,” although he was optimistic that changes will not be profound unless the bad investment climate continues for a long period.
NEW GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE GATHERING PLACE

by Sophie Freud

From time to time there are requests from affinity groups for space and time to meet during one of the two BOLLI days. These requests have raised the concern that such activities might interfere or compete with the regular courses that are proposed to, and approved by, the Curriculum Committee, the core of our program. The Council has addressed this issue over several months, and a motion was passed by unanimous vote regarding these requests. There are, at the moment, two affinity groups that have operated for 2 to 5 years and are very popular among members. These groups (grandfathered activities) may continue to meet, but only, as they do now, in the 3-4:30 P.M. time slots. Other potential affinity groups are not to meet in the Gathering Place except after 3:45 P.M. and only if the Gathering Place had not been previously scheduled. However, a current effort is under way for the planning of activities on non-BOLLI days, in spaces that are available in the University, called "white space." White space will also include activities on BOLLI days, after 4:30 P.M.

Any exceptions to this policy are expected to be rare and entirely within the purview of Council and the Director.

Sustaining a Learning Community
BOLLI Endowment Fund
[courtesy of Brandeis Office of Development]

Five Great Ways to Donate to the BOLLI Endowment Fund

- Purchase a charitable gift annuity
  Very High Annual Returns
- Write a one-time check
- Make a multi-year pledge
- Donate up to $100,000 from your IRA
  Must be 70 ½ or older
  Can donate in both 2008 and 2009
  No Tax Consequences
- Dedicate a program or space

Proclaim your affection for BOLLI and be a permanent part of our success

Donations forms are available at brandeis.edu/bolli/endowmentfund.html
For more information contact – Ron Levy –
617-964-6740 or RonLevy@comcast.net
Why Sing Plays?

by Naomi Schmidt

How does one write a musical based on a Shakespeare play? How can one take a critical period in American history and turn it into a musical theater piece? What happens when a collection of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm are combined into one story with undercurrents of loss and death? These are some of the questions that Art Finstein attempts to answer in his study group Why Sing Plays: An Exploration of the Craft of Musical Theater.

Using four successful Broadway musicals—West Side Story, 1776, Into the Woods, and She Loves Me—each based upon previous source material, Art utilizes DVDs, key-board, and his own voice to show how the addition of music, with its melody, harmony, meter, rhythm, and instrumental color, can enlarge on the text. The feelings of the characters can be made implicit by these musical characteristics, and because of this they don’t need to say everything explicitly. When a character will sing and how he will sing is the most important question that the author and composer need to decide. To add music to a play makes it longer, and so how it is done most economically is critical.

The four shows were chosen because each comes from a different type of source material and exhibits a different approach as it is converted to a musical theater piece:

• West Side Story is based on Romeo and Juliet, a pre-existing classic and yields a new play in a different historical period and setting.

• 1776 is a historical drama based on actual documents, which need to be edited and organized, with the dry historical material and characters being made more human.

• Into the Woods is a fantasy musical, using pre-existing short fairy tales as source material. The challenge here was to draw upon common icons (prince and princess, witch, magic, dangerous woods) to unite the various stories and bring them together into a new play.

• She Loves Me is a frothy, humorous, romantic love story, based on the Hungarian play Parfümerie, which had previously been adapted as the film The Shop Around the Corner and whose story line served as the basis for the film You’ve Got Mail. The show’s appeal derives from the fact that the audience knows what is going on, while the main characters do not.

Important questions upon adding music are: What is the song about? What generates the song? How and why is it sung? For example, Art points out to the class time and again, using specific examples, what he calls his first rule of musical theater: “When people sing together, it signifies that they agree. When they sing together in harmony, it means that they agree intensely.”

Music can also raise the importance of something to catch our attention without it being verbally stated. Musical analysis of the prologue sung by the Jets and the Sharks in West Side Story, the duet “Tonight” from that show, and the five-part ensemble reprising this song before the rumble scene, demonstrate how a composer uses musical characteristics and effects to add meaning, mood, and emotion to the text.

We look forward to a sequel to this course in another semester, once Art has been able to pick and choose a new collection from the wealth of wonderful musicals that are available.
Participation is a Precept
by Sharon Sokoloff

Membership in our learning community is based on the principle of participation. Contributing to our program’s well-being is a precept of membership in the program. While you may not sign a contract to do some kind of “work” when you become a member, you implicitly agree to contribute in one or more ways and to do so over time. It is an ethic of the BOLLI program.

There are many ways to participate in BOLLI:

- Become a member of one of the many BOLLI committees.
- Lead an affinity group; e.g., the New Yorker, the Yiddish Circle, or your own idea.
- Become a Council member and contribute to the leadership of the program.
- Write a poem, essay, or story, or contribute a photograph for the BOLLI Literary Journal.
- Lead a study group, serve as a classroom assistant, give a report in class, read assignments and be an active listener, and share your thoughts and questions in class.
- Suggest an idea for a new program that you would lead and participate in bringing to fruition. We are in a phase of BOLLI in which we are building new programs in the 30 weeks of the year when we haven’t ordinarily had offerings.
- Pick up the milk for coffee if you arrive early. Or, spend ten minutes hanging signs at the entrance to each classroom and others in the Gathering Place; e.g., the list of Lunch & Learn lecturers.
- Assist in the BOLLI kitchen and help put the snacks out. Bring in cookies, zucchini bread, chocolate chip cookies, or a basket of clementines. Shop for foods we set out in the Gathering Place.
- Take on a one-time job; e.g., check people in or register them at a special program.
- Respond to an email asking for help to stuff envelopes in the office for a special mailing or staff the welcome desk the first two weeks of each semester.
- Come up with an idea for a day trip, submit it to the “Adventurers” and perhaps provide leadership to bring that idea to fruition.
- Assist with moving chairs and tables in the quick changes between classes. If a class you’ve participated in has reconstructed the set-up of the room, move the chairs to their original position as a courtesy to the next class.

You may have an idea no one has ever thought of. Share it with us; it may be your unique way to contribute. At this historic moment in our country’s history: Ask not what BOLLI can do for you but what you can do for BOLLI.

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Looking Forward to Spring 2009 at BOLLI

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<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Adventurer’s trips will include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOLLI classes begin: February 24, 2009</td>
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<td>No classes April 7,8</td>
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<td>Final day of classes is: May 6, 2009</td>
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<td>Craft in America: expanding traditions at the Fuller Craft Museum—only local venue of a national tour of the exhibit based on the PBS series</td>
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<td>Genzyme Center—one of the most environmentally responsible and innovative office buildings in the world, receiving the highest ranking, Platinum, from the U.S. Green Building Council</td>
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<td>Harrison Gray Otis House on Boston Common—the third and grandest of the Otis Houses and now home to the American Meteorological Society</td>
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PINS AND PLASTER

by Tamara Chernow

Lenore and Irv Goldstein have been working hard for the last 20 years during their retirement, and thoroughly enjoying the labor born of the creative side of their personalities. They separately embarked on their artistic endeavors shortly after retiring in 1988—Irv in his basement studio and Lenore in her third floor studio in their home in Sudbury. They are producing wonderful art work in addition to being actively involved with BOLLI since its beginnings.

A school counselor for grades K to 6 in Acton, Lenore turned to art in her retirement but not, at first, as an artist. She volunteered as a docent at the Danforth Museum and the Codman House. Seeing an attractive pin in one museum gift shop, she thought, “I can do that.” She started to design and produce collage pins and she could indeed “do that”!

Lenore created three main types of pins: collage art pins, a Judaica line marked with uplifting Hebrew words and phrases, and belt buckle pins. Her work was in such demand that she formed a company, An Original by Lenore, and sold her work through museum shops, art shops, and craft fairs. The collages are made of colored paper, bits of photographs, pictures, and paint, while the belt buckle pins use wire, beads, napkin rings — and more. As Lenore states, “Each pin is a unique piece of art to wear and an expression of my joy in creating.”

Irv had a long career at Raytheon as a Program Manager for Electro-Optical Systems. Upon retiring he began exploring artistic options. He volunteered as a docent at the Worcester Art Museum, developing a good background in art. He took art courses at the Danforth Museum and the Worcester Art Museum, where his instructors encouraged him to pursue his inclination for sculpture. As he began working in clay, he continued studying art at Boston University, taking drawing and anatomy classes. Although his main focus is portraiture in clay, Irv also works in direct plaster—producing bas reliefs—and in stone. He is interested in the surface of the sculptures, giving his work an impressionistic feeling. His sculpture has been exhibited in the DeCordova Museum and in the homes of several BOLLI members whose likenesses he has captured.

In addition to the many hours Irv spends on his sculpture, he pursues other hobbies, especially horology, the study of timepieces. He repairs, collects, and researches the provenance of clocks and watches, some dating back to the 1700’s, and still finds time to publish papers in a journal for collectors.

Lenore and Irv are wonderful role models for the retirement years. They continue to learn at BOLLI and both have discovered and expanded their creative abilities—a terrific formula for a fulfilling life after work.
MENTORING THE UNDERGRADUATES
by Judy Cohen

A number of years ago, George Berkowitz brought to the BOLLI Council the idea of involving BOLLI members as mentors to Brandeis undergraduates. BOLLI members certainly have a wealth of work experience.

On November 4, the first mentor panel focusing on careers in law took place on campus. Our panelists and their areas of expertise were: Ellen Citron, non-profit law; Mort Brown, real estate law; Gerry Tishler, corporate law; and Arnold Messing, litigator. Nancy Waggoner, the pre-law advisor to the students, acted as moderator.

The meeting of the BOLLI panelists and the Brandeis students was extraordinary. The panelists shared their personal experiences in discussing such topics as: What was most satisfying to you in the practice of law? In hindsight would you have done anything different? What makes for a good lawyer? What were the “lessons” learned?

The students listened intently and asked serious questions. The personalities and the warmth of the BOLLI lawyers created a palpable connection between the generations. If the purpose of the meeting was to share lifetime career experiences with the undergraduates, our goals were met; the meeting was successful. We hope that this pilot program will lead to other programs in different career fields.

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BOLLI is Open for Learning During the Winter Intersession

New Yorker Fiction

This discussion group meets during intersession (1/13-2/17) on Tuesdays at 10:30 A.M. in the Old South St. bldg.

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<tr>
<th>Rapaporte Seminars</th>
<th>Brandeis Author Series</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 5-9, 2009 Five mornings, 9:30 - 12:30</td>
<td>February 11 “Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture” Prof. Tom Doherty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fee: $185</td>
<td>Each program meets 9:30-11:30 A.M. Fee: $20 each or $50 all three</td>
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SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER  
(Brandeis Tickets: 781-736-3400)

Dec. 6 (8 P.M.)  
**Brandeis University Jazz Ensemble**  
Bob Nieske, Director  
Jazz from the ‘20s to the 21st century.  
$5 for BOLLI members with i.d.

Dec. 7 (7 P.M.)  
**Brandeis University Chorus**  
James Olesen, Director  
Jayne West, soprano  
Pamela Dellal, mezzo-soprano  
Jason McStoota, tenor  
Panel discussion and performance of Bach’s  
*Cantata* BWV 21, “Ich hatte viel Bekummernis”  
$5 for BOLLI members with i.d.

Dec. 8 (7 P.M.)  
**Brandeis University Improvisation Ensemble**  
Tim Hall, director  
“The essentials of jazz are: melodic interpretation, melodic invention, and instrumental personality” – Mose Allison  
Free and open to the public

Dec. 9 (7 P.M.)  
**Chamber Music 116 Recital**  
Judith Eisenberg, conductor  
Students of MUS 116 Chamber Music Performance class perform chamber music works  
Free and open to the public

SPINGOLD THEATER

For tickets, click on go.brandeis.edu /BrandeisTickets or call (781-736-3400, option 5)  
Save $2 handling fee by buying tickets directly at the box office  
In addition, BOLLI members receive a $5 discount

**The Nutcracker**  
Dec. 5,6,12,13  (7:30 P.M.), Dec. 7,14  (6 P.M.), and Dec. 6,7,13,14  (2 P.M.)

- Performance by Ballet Theatre  
- Choreographed by José Mateo

No holiday season is complete without dancing snowflakes, battling mice and soldiers, and dazzling Sugar Plum Fairies. Inspired by Tchaikovsky’s glorious score, this Nutcracker brings the story to life through the dancing, not the usual mime and theatrics. See Ballet Theatre’s acclaimed company dancers and over 100 children as mice, soldiers, angels, and more at this beautiful, audience-friendly theater. Festive sets, sumptuous costumes, and spectacular dancing make this affordable Nutcracker a delight for young and old.

EPSTEIN BUILDING

Dec. 4 (12:30 P.M.)  
**Don’t Bite Your Tongue: How to foster rewarding relationships with your adult children**  
Ruth Nenzoff, faculty, Women’s Studies Research Center  
Miss her SRO talk at Lunch-and-Learn? This is a second chance to listen to her (and buy her book).!

ROSE ART MUSEUM

Dec. 14 (2 P.M.)  
**Tom Hall**  
Avant-garde jazz  
Free with BOLLI i.d.

GOSMAN FIELD HOUSE

Feb. 28  (10 A.M.)  
**International Fencing Association Championships** (men and women)