

# E T H I C A L O U T L O O K

TWO WEST 64TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10023 TEL. 212 874-5210 E-MAIL OFFICE@NYSEC.ORG

## Sunday Programs

December 1  
**"Season of Desire"**  
*Anne Klaeyen*  
Leader Intern  
Patricia Bruder Debrovner Presides

December 8  
**"On Not Looking the Other  
Way the Older We Get: The  
Next 30 Years"** (A Birthday  
Address)  
*Dr. Khoren Arisian*  
Senior Leader  
Joseph Marvel Presides

December 15  
**"American Morality and the  
Prophet Jonah"**  
*Dr. Khoren Arisian*  
Senior Leader  
Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh Presides

December 22  
**"A Solstice Festival of Lights"**  
*Jean Somerville Kotkin*  
Leader

December 29  
**"All Different/All Equal:  
Observations and Reflections  
from the 50th Humanist World  
Congress"**  
Panelists:  
Dr. Ruth Cohen & Carol Nadell  
Preside

WQXR-FM (96.3)  
Broadcasts  
1st and 3rd Sundays of  
the month at 7:30 am

December 1  
**"There Is Infamy in the Air: The  
Enemy Within and the Enemy  
Without"**  
*Dr. Khoren Arisian*

December 15  
**"How War Affects Thinking in a  
Thoughtless Time"**  
*Dr. Khoren Arisian*

## December Happenings

**B**irthday Concert and Reception for Khoren Arisian. Join Khoren's family and friends in celebration of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. There will be a concert and a dessert reception on December 13 at 7:00 pm. See page 13 for details.

**D**rama Production. On Sunday, Dec. 15, at 1:30 pm, our own Cathy Bagley Drama Group will present "Sojourner Truth and Margaret Sanger: Characterizations of Two Pioneering Women," an original production based on the actors' research. This will be a truly inspiring program about two great women. Reservations are not needed; just come.

**N**ew Year's Eve Concert and Party. Once again, the Strathmere Ensemble will provide us with a splendid holiday concert, to be followed by our traditional New Year's Eve gala. The concert is open to all; the party is for members and their friends. Details on page 10.

**A**dvance Alert! Reserve your tickets **NOW** for our January 9 theater party. We will join New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty in a showing of *The Exonerated*, the highly praised play about "the harrowing stories of a handful of souls who have spent up to 22 years on death row before walking free" (*New Yorker*). Tickets are \$75, of which \$25 will be a tax-exempt contribution to NYADP. There will be a reception for ticket holders at 6:30 pm at 55 Great Jones Street, two blocks from the theater, which is at 45 Bleecker Street. Call Ben Bean at the Society, (212) 874-5210 ext. 113 **by December 4** to reserve tickets. Please be aware that a reservation is a commitment.

Visit our Website for latest information and much more.

<http://www.nysec.org>

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 Curtis Borg, Religious Education  
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 Sari Gadlin, Events Coordinator  
 Gerald Ranck, Music Director

New York Society for Ethical Culture  
 2 West 64th St., New York, NY 10023  
 (212) 874-5210 Fax: (212) 595-7258  
 Email: office@nysec.org  
 Website: http://www.nysec.org

**Ethical Culture: Who We Are**

*Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh, President, September 22, 2002*

Ethical Culture is a humanist religious community. We believe that the key to a better friendship, a better family, a better community, a better city, a better country, and a better planet, lies in our relationship with each of these planes of our experience. We believe that we must continuously strive to act ethically on all of them. That is, that we must behave with as much respect for the dignity and potential of any living being or system as possible. In doing so, we do not rely on the guidance or intervention of a higher being, but rather, on as much understanding as possible, through continuing engagement in the world at large and through educating ourselves on ideas and ideals that can be substantiated by principles of scientific inquiry. It is the here and the now, the you and the me, the I and the we that are significant to the survival and progress of humanity on the planet and beyond.

In becoming ethical culturists, we embrace a view of the world and our interactions with it that places the responsibility squarely on our shoulders. By accepting that responsibility, we become obligated to strive for our highest expression as individuals, and to do so in a way that makes room for and encourages the same in others.

## Editorial

I cannot let this issue of *Ethical Outlook* leave my hands without noting our country's sad loss of Senator Paul Wellstone. He was a principled man who embodied a kind of integrity far too rare in our national politics. He stood—and stood up—for the poor, the powerless, and the environment. In 1997 we conferred our Ethical Humanist Award on Senator Wellstone for his opposition to the ill-conceived “welfare reform” bill. He did not hesitate to risk his political popularity in the fight for social justice. An outstanding humanist.

On a sunnier note, I think you will be impressed by the outstanding quality of this month's newsletter articles. We are grateful to our writers who keep bringing us their news and views. Note our president's superb depiction of the “web of complex relationships” within which the individual enacts his story, the direct warmth of our Leader's musings on reaching the “venerable” age of 70, our archivist's portrayal of the humanistic philosophy reflected in the work of three photographers who touched and were touched by the Ethical Culture School, Jon Liechty's sophisticated and literate review of the Strathmere Ensemble concert, Frank Susa's lively interview of our Society's vice president, Mae Dorfman's elegantly crafted review of our Community Service Award presentation, and Christine Swann's faithful rendering of board meetings. Our profound thanks to the many Society members and staff—and this includes

all those who keep us informed of personal and Society events, individuals who submit regular or occasional articles, and those who input, format, copy edit, proofread, and prepare for mailing the monthly issues of *Ethical Outlook*—for regularly providing our members, friends, and community with a thoughtful, lively, and informative Society newsletter.

## From the Leader's Desk



**Do Come, All Ye Faithful, You're Invited!**

*Dr. Khoren Arisian*

As of November 24, 2002, I will have reached the venerable age of 70. How I got this far with body and mind reasonably intact, I don't know! In any event, I'm relieved and grateful. Since Leigh and I have long since found that in this busy, bustling, boisterous town, restfulness is hard to come by even when one is at home, we decided earlier in the year to observe this occasion quietly and privately out of the country for a week's time, effectively November 25-December 2. I took three weeks' vacation this past summer (half the annual allotment); this will be the fourth week. We are scheduled to return Sunday evening, December 1.

So, where are we going? To Iles de Saintes, out-islands of Guadeloupe called Terre de Haute and Terre de Bas. After flying to Guadeloupe from JFK on November 23, we take a ferry

to Terre Haute, where we shall spend most of our time. The French have largely kept this little tropical paradise a secret, well off the usual American path of tourist destinations in the Caribbean. I first visited that entire colorful region of the world after completing graduate studies in 1957, but haven't been back since. Leigh has never been there and is eagerly looking forward to our visit. Thus, while every ten years we arrange a considerable though informal observance with family and friends, in the years between we simply acknowledge our birthdays in passing and spend the day together.

*Now the important part:* each and every one of you, be you members or friends or the staff of the Society, are most cordially invited to join us for a post-birthday get-together on Friday, *December 13, starting at 7:00 pm in Ceremonial Hall.* To my utter surprise, this little affair was generously conceived by Anne Klaeyesen and Gerry Ranck, to whom I extend my wholehearted thanks. Coffee and dessert will be provided, as well as a short musical program courtesy of Gerry and Anne. Because of my special love of the violin, which I studied from the age of 7 through my high school and early college years at the Boys' Club of Boston at the hands of a warm and caring teacher classically trained at the Russian Conservatory of Music in Odessa, violin music will be featured during our time together. If you plan to come and join us, which we hope many of you do, let us know so appropriate preparations can be made for food and seating.

Having attended the festivities at Society Leader Jean Kotkin's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on November 2, I can only say that such rare celebrations often turn out to be emotionally rich opportunities for purely social interaction for which we have inadequate time these days. What we also need is sheer physical space, at a premium owing to the peculiar configuration of our building; the auditorium alone takes up 4 floors!

For some time now I've wondered about what we're missing at the Society by not having a comfortably furnished and attractive room all to ourselves to which we could have casual access for informal socializing. In the vertical world of NYC, where living in an expensive shoebox is considered *de rigueur*, such a prospect seems an unlikely luxury. However, the Ethical Culture School, to which we are attached, has a large, inviting space just inside the front entrance facing Central Park where parents, teachers, children, and friends can congregate in a relaxed manner. Sitting in institutional-looking chairs outside our fifth-floor offices, as if we were waiting for a medical or dental appointment, can sometimes feel coldly impersonal. I make bold to suggest we consider completing the renovation of Room 514 by replacing its last remaining drawback—the carpet. Then let's get some top-notch but easily movable furniture so that the usual uses for which this outstanding space (Felix Adler's office) is set aside can continue.

Winston Churchill once famously commented that first we construct our buildings, only to have them subsequently shape us! What's ultimately at

stake here is the nature of our ethical humanist religious community, so these concerns should not be regarded as idle chatter. The ideal end toward which we might well aim, therefore, is ever more to anticipate being together as often as we can, not least of all on Sundays. The topic of the day should not be the sole determinant of why we choose to come, otherwise we shall remain an audience rather than a community of people who need and want to gather around an ethical philosophy as a living faith for times of unease as well as for times of joy. That's why we very much look forward to talking with and being with many of you on December 13, not merely because the evening will feature fine music, but also because we can have some unhurried time to take pleasure in one another's company. We are *all*, equally, stewards of this extraordinary Society for Ethical Culture.

Leigh and I extend to each of you our warmest good wishes for enjoyable and fulfilling days during the holiday season. Let us look forward to 2003 not with dread but with determination, hope, and more than a touch of humor.

## President's Notes

### The Chambered Nautilus

*Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh*



I have just returned from presenting a paper at the World Space Congress in Houston. While researching the paper, I uncovered some interesting facts about a 420

million-year-old relationship between the moon and one of earth's older creatures, the Chambered Nautilus. Most of you are familiar with the nautilus's beautiful spiral shell, and have seen images of the shell split in half revealing a beautifully geometric chambered structure with pearly iridescent interior laminations. The shell has become a ubiquitous symbol of the beauty and perfection of nature. Indeed, it has been so often used in this symbolic role that it seems to me to have become something of a cliché. In fact, I relegated this relationship to a footnote in my paper, not realizing just how profoundly it reflected the principles of which I was speaking.

It was some additional research I did to verify the facts of this improbable relationship that truly brought it home to me. I discovered that there have been Chambered Nautili for some 420 million years. Originally there were 10,000 varieties, compared to the five that persist today. I also discovered that the Chambered Nautilus alive today constructs a new chamber every lunar month and that for each day of the lunar month, it secretes a new lamination to the walls of its chamber. If you count the number of laminations in each chamber of the modern nautilus, you will get 29 to 30 laminations (the current lunar month is a little more than 29½ days long).

The truly amazing thing, though, is that it turns out that we can date fossilized Nautili in this way: 420 million years ago the moon was 60 percent closer to the earth (can you imagine a full moon 420 million years ago?) and the earth was turning faster. At that

time, a lunar month lasted just nine or ten days. The length of the lunar month has been slowly changing over time. This is because of the drag the moon puts on the earth's rotation through the tidal action of the seas. The earth slows down approximately two seconds every 50,000 years. Additionally, due to the law of conservation of momentum, the moon moves further away as the earth slows down. The combination accounts for the difference in lunar month length.

And, sure enough, when the lamination layers are checked in fossilized Nautilus shells that are 420 million years old, there are nine or ten. So, for some 420 million years the moon and the Chambered Nautilus have been engaged in a beautiful and subtle *pas de deux*.

I have made much of this relationship, both in my presentation at the World Space Congress and to friends and family members who still have the patience to listen to me. Remarkable about this relationship are its exquisite subtlety, its unimaginable longevity, and its absolute continuity. Although I have not read an explanation of the "mechanics" of this relationship, my presumption is that it has to do with the effects of the gravity of the moon on this creature, either directly or indirectly. If so, it is remarkable because the force of gravity is not strong. It is, in fact, a relatively weak force requiring massive bodies to propagate much effect at all. More remarkable still is the very nuanced effect this subtle pull has on the construction of the organism, which lays down incredibly thin laminations in precise and beautiful spiral form. It is a profound demonstration of the cosmic dance in which we

are all intimately engaged, whether we realize it or not.

Now, I am sure that the Nautiloid family has had its ups and downs over time. Members meet a violent end as food for other creatures. Massive destruction occurs from catastrophic events. Habitats change and are no longer friendly. Yet the creature and all its subtle arrangements persist over unimaginably long periods of time. The fundamental physical laws persist, as do the conditions for life. I am comforted by that.

The paper I delivered at the Space Congress reviewed work I did with my mentor 16 years ago on the design of the habitation module of the International Space Station. Our work was unique, both philosophically and creatively, and continues to be so. The approach we took viewed individual (humanity) and place (wherever humanity happens to dwell) as an intimately entwined and continuous set of relationships where the sum is very much greater than the parts. We argued that one could not be understood apart from the other and that there are basic "proportional" realities that govern this complex of relationships at every level and in every aspect. We further argued that individual's (humanity's) movement into space presented a new dynamic in the relationship between individual and place and was, in fact, an evolutionary step. Finally, we argued, to make this step in an appropriate and beneficial way, we had to understand it in relation to the story (vision) of earth and humanity we wished to enact.

Michael (my mentor's name was Michael too) developed a mythic story

of the seven stages of the unfolding of individual and place. The desire to know, he said, pushed the universe into vibration and manifestation. Out of this materialized all the stellar matter we are witnessing today. At some point individual came into being. At first, individual was barely separate from inanimate matter and nature, not even knowing a difference between itself and place. Then individual began to understand a difference, and geometry and direction were created. Civilizations grew, peoples and cultures clashed. Individual became capable of lifting off the face of the planet into an environment without gravity. Freedom from gravity is freedom from bodily constraints and Michael viewed this as humanity's initial step into pure consciousness.

Although I would argue that nature has an intelligence all its own, the critical difference between individual and all the rest of nature is that individual appears to have choice in the story it chooses to enact. And the stories we individuals choose to enact, whether conscious or not, inform all of our actions. Our actions inherit the expansiveness or the limitations of this story and the results we obtain proceed directly from our actions.

It occurs to me that western civilization has been acting out a restrictive and fragmented story for quite some time. Our actions have been based on limited or partial understandings of the full spectrum of relationships. The industrial and scientific revolution to which we are the heirs is one that has been built on separation and isolation of parts in order to understand and predict them. We

have gained mastery over many individual things and processes, but in our rush to exploit them, we have a limited understanding of the complex web of relationships in which they participate. Our creations can seem miraculous at times, but the progress we enjoy is one that gives and takes at the same time and in equal amounts at best.

This brings me back to the moon and the Nautilus. Thinking about them, I am reminded of the incredible subtlety and richness of life, and the incredible stretch of time and space across which it has acted. The point my mentor was making in starting with a story of the complete universe is that our designs (actions) in the here and now fare much better when tied to this huge and profound story of the unfolding of the cosmos and life within it. This is an understanding that ancient peoples had, and the creation myths of ancient civilizations demonstrate it.

I suspect that most of the stories that are being enacted today are way too limited. We have a responsibility to take a close look at the story (or stories) we are enacting and ask whether they are large enough. By refusing to have our stories bounded by race, belief, ideology, nationality, and even time, we choose to enact a larger, more hopeful and more positive story of humanity. And I suspect that if there isn't room in it for an appreciation of the dance of the moon and the Nautilus, it needs to be bigger still.

I will have more to say on this subject when I speak at the Sunday meeting on January 26th, 2003.

## Sunday Morning Meetings

### December 1 – “Season of Desire”

*Anne Klaeyesen*  
*Leader Intern*

Are we, in expanding our economy to a global consumerism, in effect shrinking our range of experience? Are we buying, in the form of goods and services, the experiences that we could be having ourselves? Leader Intern Anne Klaeyesen explores these, and other, questions with us as we enter another traditional holiday season and asks us to reflect upon what holds true meaning for us.

### December 8 – “On Not Looking the Other Way the Older We Get: The Next 30 Years” (A Birthday Address)

*Dr. Khoren Arisian*  
*Senior Leader*

Getting wise to ourselves is a life-long process. One might hope that we become more prudent, perceptive and courageous as we age despite getting longer in the tooth. If there is a single undeniable truth about human history, it is that each age ineluctably keeps getting faster, more demanding, more complex, and more dangerous for everyone. In a letter to the police, “Your children are not safe anywhere at any time,” said the Montgomery County/Washington area sniper, fortunately now caught and facing eventual conviction for 13 single-shot murders. We’ve suddenly been thrust into an era of extremes and of excess—excess of wealth, excess of poverty, excess of violence, excess of possibility both good and bad—sometimes summed up as part

of “the new normal.” To be constantly surprised or frightened by such developments is not a mark of maturity; in contrast, to be continually astonished by the world’s abundance of beauty, kindness and possibility—which are no less real—no matter how dire the times may seem, will assuredly keep us from growing old too quickly.

### December 15 – “American Morality and the Prophet Jonah”

*Dr. Khoren Arisian*  
*Senior Leader*

Unlike other books about the so-called “minor prophets” in the Old Testament, the parable of Jonah is an amazing short story, one that ranks among the noblest and most ethically forward-looking in the whole literature of antiquity. Composed in order to convey in gentle yet convincing terms a rebuke to Jewish nationalism, the book of Jonah endeavors to teach that the Hebrews’ god, Yahweh, embraces not just one people but all living creatures—be it the inhabitants of a despised foreign capital or even the beasts of the field. Today’s intolerance has burst its bounds once more, so the tale of Jonah is a welcome summons to moral universalism, calling us in this period of anxiety and strife to heed the demands of justice. Jonah is no less a reminder that the essential genius of Judaism is not Yahweh the invisible deity, but the ethical and spiritual nature of human community on earth.

### December 22 – “A Solstice Festival of Lights”

*Jean Somerville Kotkin*  
*Leader*

“What is the symbol to which all shall express the thoughts that we in Ethical

Culture would connect with the festival of the Winter Solstice? Is it the Christmas tree, or the old Yule tree which prior to the Christmas tree symbolized the rekindling of the darkened light of the sun? But it expresses only the physical side of the festival, the fact of the evergreen life of external nature.

For the higher, the spiritual nature, it does not stand. The only symbol that can be adequate for us is the child –the child not merely as it plays around the tree, not as it enjoys the gifts, not in relation to its parents who take great pleasure in its happiness, but the child apart from all these connections, the child as a vehicle of a new moral life, and therefore the type of the ever-recurring renewal of the moral life, the child as the promise and the pledge of the whole unspeakable future.”

*Felix Adler—1884*

**December 29—“All Different/All Equal: Observations and Reflections from the 50th Humanist World Congress”**

*Dr. Ruth Cohen, Carol Nadell, Ellen McBride, Margaretha Jones*

Several members from the Society for Ethical Culture attended the International Humanist Ethical Union (IHEU) 50th anniversary in Noordwijkerhout, Holland this past July.

At a time when there is so much conflict in the world, the Humanistic message is more crucial than ever. What did these members glean from attending the Congress?

Was it worth the trip? Are any of them planning to go to Paris for the next one?

**From the Board**

*Christine Swann*

**October 7 Meeting**

**The Endowment**—An investment report was given by Edith Wulach, the pro bono adviser for the Society, and Al Glazier of Morgan Stanley. In comparison with common indices both bond and stock portfolios are doing reasonably well. As in the rest of the market, bonds are in much better shape than stocks. The stock market is down and there is no light so far, but “it always turns around.” Our funds are constantly monitored and there is much diversification in both the bond and equity funds. Their recommendation is to “stay the course.” They will provide a quarterly report for constant updates.

**Leadership and Staff Reports**—Dr. Arisian gave a report on membership development. The new committee is chaired by Barbara Levenson and the first meeting went very well. Our efforts are beginning to pay off. We have a larger than usual list of new members and the number of new visitors is increasing, as is attendance at the orientations. Attendance at the Sunday meetings is also increasing. Encouraging the audience to use the center sections increases our sense of community.

The Sunday school is in need of attention so we can strengthen and expand it and bring the Society and Ethics to the center of the family. The Executive Committee will be addressing this issue soon. Anne Klaeyens has been very

helpful and a good support. We feel a mixture of emotions at her leaving us next year –much disappointment at losing her and happiness at her new role as Leader of the Long Island Society and the well-earned opportunities this will give her. The search for her replacement in is progress.

Dr Arisian is now getting more pastoral requests, which are very valuable. Overall he is very busy and under a lot of time pressure—but he “is having a ball!”

**Administration Report**—Paula Sheldon listed some of the rentals last month—five memorials, four weddings, other congregation events, EOS and Moscow Chamber orchestra rehearsals, a George Winston concert, a *Katy Couric Today* show recording session and some of the co-sponsored events—with New York City Opera, Tikkun, and WNYC. We are now working on debriefing and growing our relationships with some of these organizations so we can continue to co-sponsor more events with them. There will be a full rental report at the next Board meeting.

We have hired two new staff members, Sari Gadlin as Events Coordinator and Dale Zeidman as our Public Relations/Marketing specialist.

We have purchased Paradigm, a membership database management system, and our staff is now being trained on the system. It will be used for membership records and tracking, e-mails, and to support committee work, fundraising, and programs.

Construction goes on. We have new storage facilities, and we have permission from the Landmarks Commission

to work on the Social Hall; the work will be done at night and this will mean no disruption to weekend activities or the School. We will monitor any effects on the Shelter.

A proposal to install a new wheelchair climber for the Auditorium was approved. Although we have no obligation to do so under the regulations of the New York Commission on Human rights, we have an ethical duty to replace the current one, which is uncomfortable to use.

**Membership Report**—Ben Bean announced that we have nine new members, (including Paula Sheldon, Society Administrator). He also requested that a Board member attend the orientations. A section for Society Friends will now be added to the Membership report. Two recent member programs—dance lessons and the retreat—were popular and will be repeated.

**Treasurer's report**—Les Graifman compared the balance sheet to date with the same period last year. Expenses are higher and income a little lower this year, leading to a deficit of \$97,000. A deficit is usual this quarter of our year. The discussions with the school about a rent increase and their contribution to the roof repair are in progress and we expect to conclude them soon.

The audit is almost complete and is going at a record pace.

**Website Design**—The Board considered proposals of two web site designers, Canfield and Notlimited. Disability accessibility was discussed at length and we decided that our web site must

be accessible. The Board voted to use Canfield as the designer.

### November 4 Meeting

**Fund Raising**—The meeting started with the good news about fund-raising events. The dinner to celebrate Jean Kotkin's 80th birthday raised around \$7,000. The concert on November 3 that the Building Committee ran to raise money for the stained-glass windows brought in approximately \$700. Congratulations to everyone involved.

After a few corrections, the October minutes were approved unanimously.

**Leader's Report**—The Membership Development Committee had an excellent and active second meeting. The enthusiasm was so great that instead of meeting only monthly, the Committee agreed to an interim meeting after two weeks so as to keep the activity and energy going.

The Sunday School discussions have continued and have put the difficult issues of size and location onto the table. The next meeting will be a lunch with parents. We also raised the more general issue of how we can attract more families and how we can integrate those families into our Society. We need to look at what we do, including for the Sunday Meetings, and discuss how we can better gear ourselves towards the family units.

**Administrator's Report**—Sari Gadlin, our new Events Coordinator, was introduced and welcomed by the Board. The Society's name will be mentioned on the *Today* show with Kathy Couric that was recently recorded here, and we will get advance notice of the date it

will be aired. We received a complaint from the School about the noise of the air-conditioner in the auditorium. Their understanding was that it is a cold storage system that does not need to run during the day. There was no recollection of such an agreement or any written record of such agreement. However we do know that, due to misinstallation or malfunction, the system does not have this facility. The staff will investigate what can be done. The Board voted not to have the Society opened on Thanksgiving Day as a great deal of supervision and security would be required. There are issues of safety and liability.

The Citizens Committee on Health Care Decisions has now moved out. We can now continue with the expansion of our office and storage space. We are investigating leasing a new copier as our existing one is showing its age and if it breaks we will need to replace it quickly. We have discussed handicap accessibility with the Human Rights Committee. They see that installing a new Stair Climber as a good faith effort and a good starting point for increasing our accessibility. The Board decided to pay for this from the capital code compliance budget. The Board decided not to accept the co-sponsorship request for a program featuring Robert Fisk, as we have too little time to evaluate it. The Board, however, did agree to give the event free space. We will have a welcoming speaker and a membership table.

**Membership Director's Report**—Membership is growing although we do have some resignations, usually because people move. The

Board requested that Society Friends also be listed. Seven new members were accepted by unanimous vote.

**Social Service Board Report**—Maria Fridman showed a moving video of a workshop called Unforgotten Voices given by visual and performing artists who are or have been homeless. It clearly shows healing through the creative process. A discussion followed of how to interest more members in attending these events.

**Committee Reports**—The Nominating Committee for new board members headed by Frank Prescod needs three more members. Four names were suggested. They will be contacted soon to check their willingness to serve.

## From the Archives Black and White and Seen All Over

*Dr. Marc A. Bernsetin*

Does American photography know what it owes to the Ethical Culture School? ECS helped shape the careers of three distinguished photographers—Lewis Hine, Doris Ulmann, and Diane Arbus. Though each encountered the school in a different way, all drew from it something indispensable to their work. Hine mastered camera technique, Arbus developed her inchoate talent, and Ulmann learned to seek a hidden humanity in her subjects.

Lewis Hine was the most acclaimed of the three. Critic Irving Howe called him “a major American artist, worthy of comparison in his role as portraitist of native life with Edward Hopper,

Theodore Dreiser, William Carlos Williams.” Hines’s images of Ellis Island immigrants, sweat-shop workers, and, especially, laborers dangling from the girders of an emerging Empire State Building have become icons of 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

Hine was hired to teach nature study and geography at the Ethical Culture School in 1901. But at the request of the school principal, Frank Manny, Hine developed a photography program. It was in this program and in his work as school photographer that Hine developed his great documentary style.

At the school’s suggestion, Hine went to Ellis Island to record images of immigrants arriving daily by the thousands, so that he could share their story with his innocent, privileged students. Hine’s immigrants, though torn from their homelands, belong to their visual environment. Paperwork in their hands, numbers tied with string to their coats—they are, momentarily, creatures of Ellis Island’s labyrinthine way station.

In 1900, a year before Lewis Hine joined the faculty of the Ethical Culture School, Doris Ulmann enrolled in a teacher-training program at the school. Though she was not yet a photographer, writes curator David Featherstone, Ulmann was exposed to a philosophy “that accepted and championed the inherent worth of all individuals.” This philosophy, he argues, influenced her camera work.

During her lifetime, Ulmann won her reputation (“one of the foremost photographers in the United States,” said the *New York Times* in her 1934 obituary) as a portraitist. Her subjects

included Albert Einstein, Sinclair Lewis, Robert Frost, William Butler Yeats, Paul Robeson, Martha Graham, Helen Keller, John Dewey, President Coolidge, and Felix Adler. Today, however, a new generation of admirers has discovered Ulmann’s social photography, a body of work that more clearly reflects Ethical Culture values.

Here, her subjects were ordinary Southerners: a barefoot North Carolina boy in overalls and a cap straddling a log fence, a Georgia chair maker working wood on a sawhorse. Her soft focus gave these photos great warmth and a less documentary quality than Hine’s—she wanted to reveal the humanity of people of different cultures, not to expose social conditions. Ulmann shared with Hine, however, a gift for melding subject and setting. Her figures belong to their rural environment as much as weathered mailboxes and kudzu.

Diane Arbus handles the relationship between subject and setting in a different way. The celebrated photographer of freaks, misfits, and outcasts, Arbus either places her subjects squarely before the camera, giving us almost no setting at all, or she emphasizes the subject’s estrangement from his immediate environment, as in “A Jewish Giant at Home with His Parents” (1970).

Her art had a bizarre streak even at the Fieldston school, which she attended in the 1930s and where her talent was nurtured by her art teacher, Victor D’Amico. Algernon Black, another influential teacher, taught her the importance of myth, stimulating her artistic interest in pageantry and

ritual (her photos often capture people at circuses, weddings, and carnivals).

Although Arbus is best known for her photos of the bizarre, she took superb shots of ordinary Americans, particularly those in the working class. Her “Young Brooklyn Family Going for an Outing” (1966) shows a mother, heavily made up, in a beehive hairdo, holding a baby, while her husband holds his son’s hand, as the boy contorts his face. It is an off-putting depiction that makes us wonder what the American dream holds for them.

Arbus’s style and technique may differ from Hine’s and Ulmann’s, but she shares with them a keen social sensibility. The Ethical Culture School fostered such a sensibility by taking students to settlement houses and teaching them the dangers of prejudice. Had Hine, Ulmann, and Arbus never encountered ECS, American photography would be deprived of compelling social images, themselves now part of our visual culture.

## Building Committee

*Dr. Ruth Cohen*

The Building Committee is very proud to announce that the Fourth Annual Fund-raising Concert for the Stained Glass Windows was a wonderful success! An appreciative audience agreed that the performances were outstanding; they included a piano and flute duet, a piano and viola duet; a rousing four-hand piano performance, and a bravura Hindemith piano, viola, and tenor-saxophone trio. We raised \$700 from this event.

Again, our sincere thanks to the musicians, the audience, and our volunteers and staff, who all made this event run smoothly.

## Caring Committee

*Stephanie Rosenblatt*

The Caring Committee would like to wish a all our members and friends a peaceful, healthy, and happy Holiday Season.

## Ethical Action Committee

*Carol Rost*

The Ethical Action Committee meeting had a good turnout this month; some new people attended and Bert brought the popcorn, as usual.

We raised one third of the \$2,500 needed to pay for one convict to have DNA testing as a result of the excellent panel discussion on Sunday October 13. The EAC committee will have other fundraisers to reach our goal.

Other actions: To follow up on our issue of the death penalty, we will have petitions passed around at the Sunday lunches requesting a moratorium on the death penalty. The next EAC meeting will be held on December 21, from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. (Note that the meeting is one week earlier than usual due to the Thanksgiving holiday.)

## Membership Services Committee

*Barbara Levenson*

### New Year’s Eve Celebration

Get together with your friends to celebrate New Year’s Eve at our annual December 31 concert and party.

The festivities will begin at 8:00 pm with a concert by our own Strathmere Ensemble playing music by Telemann. The concert is open to the public and tickets for nonmembers are \$15; the concert is free to Society members and their guests. After the concert, the evening continues with a party for members and their guests at a cost of only \$30. Join us in Ceremonial Hall for champagne, food, music, favors, fireworks, and much more. Tickets are now on sale in the Sunday cafeteria and the Membership office, or call Ben Bean (212) 874-5210 ext. 113 to make an advance reservation. We need to plan how much food and beverages to order, so please let us know if you expect to attend. Everyone always has a good time for this event, so why not join us?

## A Wellness Course in T’ai Chi Qigong

Ken Moore, Senior Athletic Trainer for 14 years in the Hotel Park Meridian, and Fitness and Sport Specialist at the New York Friars Club, will lead this course, open to members and the public. Anyone, regardless of age, sex, or athletic ability, can learn this health-giving discipline, which emphasizes relaxation, balance, breathing and inner calm. The course will be given in January, on Mondays 6:00-7:00 pm and Saturdays 11:00-12:00 noon. Series of 4 class \$28 for members, \$60 for nonmembers; 8 classes \$56 for members, \$110 for nonmembers. Call Ben Bean, Membership Coordinator, at (212) 874-5210 ext. 113 for more information and to register.

## Film Forum

There will be no Film Forum in December. We will resume on Friday, January 17, 2003.

# To Members and Friends of the Ethical Community

*Valerie Leiman*

We would like to know which of our members are interested or involved in the world of the arts.

New projects (in art, music, drama, walks, and talks, etc.) are being formed at the Society, and we'd like to include you! Please let us know where your talents lie so that we can share them and encourage each other. As an ethical humanist Society, our contributions could add to our Society's growth through the arts.

If you'd like to be a part of this new activity, we'd like to meet you. Please contact Maria Fridman, Barbara Litke, or Valerie Leiman through Ben Bean in the Membership Office (212) 874-5201 ext.113. He will forward your information.

## Our Ethical Family

*Ben Bean and Members*

*New Members*

**Julian and Sylvia Ander.** Julian is retired from the retailing business and Sylvia is a retired music teacher.

They have known about the Society for some time and finally joined because they enjoyed the Sunday Meetings and agreed with our point of view.

**Richard Courtney** is a stationary engineer who found us through the Pro Logo No Logo debate and then attended our Sunday Meetings and our Foundations of Ethical Culture course. He is a cyclist and enjoys our outdoor activities.

**Abe Markman** is an activist and a retired social work administrator. Abe attended his first orientation in 1954 and his second last month! He also attended the Retreat, and he enjoys our philosophy.

**Joel Shapiro** is a medical editor and a former member and President of the Essex Society. He has now relocated to New York City.

**Dorothy Watson** attended the Phil Donahue presentation at the Society and started to attend the Sunday Meetings. Member Jim Speed told her about the Society, and she learned that our value system is in agreement with her own. (So it does pay to talk up the Society!)

**Marvin Wolfman**, is a physician and works at a bank. He was attracted to Ethical Culture after hearing David Kaczynski's talk, and by attending other meetings here at the Society and then coming to our Sunday Meetings.

*News of Members*

**Donna Fetonte** fractured her shoulder in a fall and was hospitalized for 1 ½ weeks. She is now home in recuperation

and receiving physical therapy. We wish Donna a swift recovery.

**George LaMothe** is now recovering from his fall at Trump Pavilion, Jamaica Hospital and Nursing Home. If you want to contact George, see Ben Bean, Membership Coordinator, for further information.

We were happy to see **Mona Roset** at Jean Kotkin's birthday party. Mona is still struggling with health problems, but she remains as active as possible and hopeful of a cure. Keep up the good work, Mona!

*Members Dropped*

**Arthur Kaufman** and **Elaine Miller** have left no forwarding address so they will be dropped.

**Aaron Alexander** has resigned.

## Interview with Barbara Levenson

*Frank Susa*

*Barbara Levenson is Chair of the Membership Services Committee, Society Vice-President and Secretary, and a retired sociology researcher. She has been a member of Ethical Culture for five years.*

*F.S.: Let me start by asking you about just some of the basics. How did you first hear of Ethical Culture?*

*B.L.: When I moved to New York, one of my first jobs was in graduate school as a research assistant. A professor of mine had been hired by Ethical Culture to do an evaluation of the Encampment for Citizenship program. Anytime you're evaluating something like that,*

you have to know what the organization's objectives are. So I read quite a bit about the Encampment and the Society and its leaders. At the time, I thought if I were to join any group that was what it would be.

*F.S.: How did you eventually get involved?*

B.L.: Over the years, my husband and I would occasionally go to Ethical Culture for something special. We never thought of it as something we would join. We didn't think of ourselves as "joiners." Shortly after my husband died, a friend suggested I join a temple. At the time, I thought, "Not for me, thanks," but I did think of Ethical Culture. I occasionally would hear the talks on the radio and so one Sunday morning when I didn't have anything to do I came and listened. Then I just slowly started coming a little more and more often.

*F.S.: Tell us a little about the Encampment for Citizenship, since you were part of the evaluation.*

B.L.: As you probably know, it was started by Al Black, the former leader of the New York society. And I know that Eleanor Roosevelt was involved at one time. They brought young people from all around the country for six weeks to a real sleepover camp for a kind of humanist leadership training. The kids would go back home and become leaders in their communities and among their own peers. We still get inquiries in the membership office sometimes from graduates of the Encampment.

*F.S.: When were you involved?*

B.L.: It was the second year of graduate school for me, 1958. I think they

only paid me \$1.50 an hour. Believe it or not, I lived on it. I didn't starve, that's for sure. I had an apartment that I shared with two other people and we each only paid \$33 per month.

*F.S.: Would you say were a humanist even back then, before you became a member?*

B.L.: I was raised in the tradition of Reform Judaism after World War II in the mid-west. So I was politically liberal and really didn't think much about the afterlife. In those ways I would say I was a concerned humanist. And, as far back as seventh grade, my greatest political ideal was World Federalism. I had a teacher who was a World Federalist and so I became a part of the student federalist movement.

Oh, I worked so hard for that, all through high school, I believed so much in that. When others would sing the Star Spangled Banner, I would sing a song about the United Nations. I also participated in some sit-ins during the civil rights movement. And I fought for the ERA amendment up in Albany later on. But I hadn't been part of a rally for a long time, until just a few years ago when I went back up to Albany for a Drop the Rock rally with a group of Ethical Culturists.

*F.S.: Why would you say you became a member of Ethical Culture?*

B.L.: For me, it has been very fulfilling to be a member. I did not know how important the principles of Ethical Culture, and what it stands for, would become to me. It has certainly given me a sense of community that I haven't had since I was a child. Before that I

think my sense of community, if I had any at all, was wrapped up in academic life. My husband was an academic and I was, but that's not the same thing. It's just a very nice feeling to be part of such a caring community.

## Strathmere Ensemble Concert Honors Felix Galimir

*Jon Liechty*

A musician, teacher, and coach, Felix Galimir trained and inspired hundreds of students during his career. Many members of the Philadelphia Orchestra were his students; he also taught at the Juilliard School, the Mannes College of Music, and the Curtis Institute. A passionate advocate of modern music, he championed Berg, Webern, and Schoenberg, among others. And, shortly before his death in 1999, he coached the Strathmere Ensemble in Schubert's "Trout" Quintet.

To honor his work and his legacy, the Ensemble presented its all-Mozart concert on Wednesday, October 23 at the Society in his memory. Felix Galimir would certainly have been proud to be remembered in connection with performances such as these!

The evening opened with a Mozart flute quartet: not four flutes, but a flute and three strings. The dynamic of the resulting ensemble is different from a string quartet, because the flute part and the violin part are more different than the two violin parts of a string quartet. The result is more colorful dialogue. Mozart's flute quartet, K. 285, fit that

description, and it was a joy to watch the performers responding to the music. Flutist Alan Cox performed with concentrated energy and a deft touch, contributing some of the sweetest sounds of the evening. Violinist Mitsuru Tsubota and cellist Ariane Lallemand took an evangelistic, outgoing approach to their parts; violist Louise Schulman contributed an easy-going sense of fun.

The quintet for piano and winds in E-flat major, *K. 452*, is a unique contribution to the repertoire. Among musicians two stereotypes about wind instruments are that it's difficult to make their timbres combine well, and it's difficult to play them in tune. When an ensemble succeeds as well as the Strathmere's players did, the result is beyond breathtaking. A perfectly-blended well-integrated sound coupled with elegant and refined execution made this the musical event of the season. Gerard Reuter's oboe, by turns frisky and soulful, the liquid gold from R. J. Kelley's horn, the silky, graceful tones of William Blount's clarinet, and the nimble lyricism of Martin Kuuskmann's bassoon combined with Gerald Ranck's light-fingered, sonorous piano playing to form a satisfying whole. It doesn't get any better than this!

A performance of *Ave Verum Corpus, K. 618*, in an arrangement for four horns, was a welcome addition to the program. R.J. Kelly, Angela Cordell, Brad Gemeinhardt, and Patrick Pride-more showed us the horn quartet at its most vocal and reverential.

The *Divertimento* in D major, *K. 131*, brought most of the evening's players back to the stage. It's no mean feat

to coordinate nine performers without a conductor, but the Strathmere Ensemble did it easily. Their accuracy, precision, and playfulness brought this lively, spirited work to life. Mayuki Fukuhara played the many violin solos with flair and élan. A notable feature of the work is its first minuet, which in multiple trios contrast the various sections of the ensemble: the strings alternate sections with the horns and woodwinds.

The sizeable crowd reacted enthusiastically to the superb music and expert playing. The Strathmere Ensemble's next performance will take place on December 31, presenting an all-Tele-mann concert for New Year's Eve.

**You are cordially invited to join  
family and friends of**

***Dr. Khoren Arisian***

***at a concert and dessert reception  
celebrating his 70th birthday***

**Friday, December 13, 2002**

**7:00 pm**

**The New York Society for Ethical  
Culture in the Ceremonial Hall**

**RSVP to the Membership Office  
(212) 874-5210 ext. 113.**

## My Impressions On CFE Award

*May Del Rio Dorfman, Former Society Member*

I walked into the Ethical Society auditorium after many years and looked

up to see the word "men" had been changed to the word "people" up above the stage. The last time I'd been here, it read, "The place where men meet to seek the highest is holy ground." That's how long I'd been gone. Dr. Khoren Arisian gave his introductory remarks in the direct, compassionate, articulate and caring manner I so well remembered. He quoted Felix Adler, "*At the very least a new religion must call for a new daily life.*" How appropriate, especially when one thinks about the sorry state of our public schools.

This led to the most wonderful part of this particular morning: the New York Society's recognition of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, through two of our City's most outstanding humanists, Michael A. Rebell, Esq., executive director and counsel for the Campaign, and Joseph F. Wayland, Esq., chairman of the Pro Bono Committee of Simpson, Thatcher & Bartlett, who provided the legal expertise. The Distinguished Community Service Award was then presented to each of them by the president of the Society, followed by two most engrossing acceptance talks no one who was there will soon forget.

Mr. Rebell spoke about the history of our public school system. He acknowledged the importance of the media's focus on the money differential among school districts and the need to level the playing field through fair funding. However, Mr. Rebell chose another path to enlighten the audience on the Campaign, the ethical/legal path. From the beginnings of our establishment as a nation, the purpose of a public school education was clear: to prepare students

**A C T I V I T I E S**

for citizenship as well as for economic self-sufficiency. What are we obligated, therefore, to do for our children so as to fulfill this goal? And how are we fulfilling it? Mr. Rebell sprinkled his talk with amazing information and fascinating anecdotes.

Mr. Wayland's acceptance took a different tack. He talked about how we, as citizens, have abdicated our responsibility to our children and their public schools to lawyers and judges. He named a myriad of people involved in this case, almost every one of them a lawyer or a judge, including the most recent Chancellors of the NYC schools. His passion about the case was crystal clear, yet his message was simple. We must understand that when we left the public schools unattended, the resultant gap was filled by the lawyers. Such gaps are always filled, and not always by the most appropriate persons. And therefore the greatest victims were the children. The genius of this Campaign is that it has not only brought a compelling and deserving case to the courts, it has functioned as an educational tool by holding hearings and forums all around the state. Thus it has created an educated populace poised and ready for advocacy and action.

The Society itself deserves an award for giving us this lovely and precious morning. It once again splendidly fulfilled one of its critical purposes: to demonstrate clearly how we can all participate in this democracy, and to remind us that to do so is a requirement of an ethical life. "At the very least, a new religion must call for a new daily life." Indeed.

**December Calendar**

- Ethics for Children*  
Sundays, 11:00 am (except Dec. 1 & 22)
- Morning Meetings*  
Sundays, 11:30 am (Dec. 29 in Ceremonial Hall)
- Shelter*  
Sundays – Thursdays, 7:30 pm
- Support Group*  
Fridays, 6:30 pm
- Supervised Visitation*  
Saturdays, 9:30 am & 1:30 pm (except Dec. 21 & 28)
- WQXR-FM (96.3)*  
Sundays, December 1, & 15, 7:30 am
- Community Meeting*  
Sunday, December 1, 2:00 pm
- Newsletter Deadline*  
Monday, December 2
- Men's Group*  
Wednesday, December 4, 6:00 pm
- Homeless Artists Workshop*  
Wednesday, December 4, 6:00 pm
- Board of Trustees*  
Monday, 9, 6:00 pm
- Women's Group*  
Tuesday, December 10, 6:00 pm
- Caring Committee*  
Wednesday, December 11, 4:00 pm
- Dr. Arisian Birthday Party*  
Friday, December 13, 7:00 pm
- Cathy Bagley Theatre Group*  
Sunday, December 15, 12:30 pm
- Social Service Board*  
Monday, December 16, 6:00 pm
- Membership Committee*

- Wednesday, December 18, 6:00 pm
- Ethical Action Committee*
- Thursday, December 19, 6:00 pm
- Society offices closed*
- Wednesday, December 25
- Strathmere Concert*
- Tuesday, December 31, 8:00 pm
- New Year's Eve Celebration*
- Tuesday, December 31, 9:45 pm

**Reading Programs**

- Great Books Discussion Series*
- Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 pm
- Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
- Ethical Culture Retirement Activities*
- Wednesday, December 11, 3:00 pm
- Dawn Powell, *The Wicked Pavilion*
- Great Books Discussion Series - Fiftieth Anniversary Series*
- The Evil and The Guilty*
- Wednesday, December 28, 7:30 pm
- Charles Johnson, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

**Sundays at the Society**

**Mornings**

- Dec. 1 Leaders' Writings 10:15 am
- Dec. 8 Colloquy 10:30 am
- Dec. 15 Classical Poetry 10:30 am
- Dec. 22 Yoga Meditation 10:30 am
- Dec. 29 Coffee Hour 10:30 am

**Afternoons**

- Dec. 1 Community Mtg 2:00 pm
- Dec. 8 Ethics Study 1:30 pm
- Dec. 15 Orientation 1:00 pm
- Drama Production 1:30 pm
- Dec 22 TBA
- Dec. 29 TBA

# December 2002

(Office hours for the month: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:15 am – Leaders' Writings 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 2:00 pm – Community	2 <b>January 2003 Newsletter Deadline</b>	3	4 6:00 pm – Men's Group 6:00 pm – Homeless Artists Workshop 7:30 pm – Great Books	5	6 6:30 pm – Support Group	7 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
8 10:00 am – Sunday Program Committee 10:30 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics Study 1:30 pm – Sunday School Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	9 5:00 pm – Caring Committee 5:00 pm – Executive Committee 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 7:30 pm – Shelter	10 6:00 pm – Women's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter	11 3:00 pm – ECRA 7:30 pm – Shelter	12 7:30 pm – Shelter	13 6:30 pm – Support Group 7:00 pm – Dr. Arisan's Birthday Party	14 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
15 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:30 am – Classical Poetry 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:30 pm – Cathy Bagley Theatre Group 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:00 pm – Orientation 1:30 pm – Drama Group	16 6:00 pm – Social Service Board	17 7:30 pm – Shelter	18 6:00 pm – Membership Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	19 6:00 pm – Ethical Action Committee	20 6:30 pm – Support Group	21 No Supervised Visitation <b>15</b>
22 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – TBA 7:30 pm – Shelter	23 7:30 pm – Shelter	24	25 <b>Society Offices Closed</b>	26 7:30 pm – Shelter	27 6:30 pm – Support Group	28 No Supervised Visitation
29 10:30 am – Coffee Hour 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – TBA 7:30 pm – Shelter	30 7:30 pm – Shelter	31 7:30 pm – Shelter 8:00 pm – Strathmore Concert 9:45 pm – New Year's Eve Celebration	<p align="center"><b>Great Books</b></p> <p>December 4 – Gibbon, <i>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i>  <b>ECRA: (Ethical Culture Retirement Activities)</b>            December 11 – Dawn Powell, <i>The Wicked Pavilion</i>  <b>The Evil And The Guilty</b>            December 18 – Charles Johnson, <i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i></p>			

**Ethical Culture** is a humanistic religious and philosophical movement in which people share a core of common values: the worth of each individual, ethics as central to our lives, eliciting the best from each other and doing good in the world.

We seek truth as a growing, changing body of knowledge based on experience, reason and scientific observation, and seek to use it in support of human well-being.

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