

# Var Village Voice

*THE Var's English Language Newsletter*

*AUTUMN IN THE VAR*

*OCTOBER 2016*

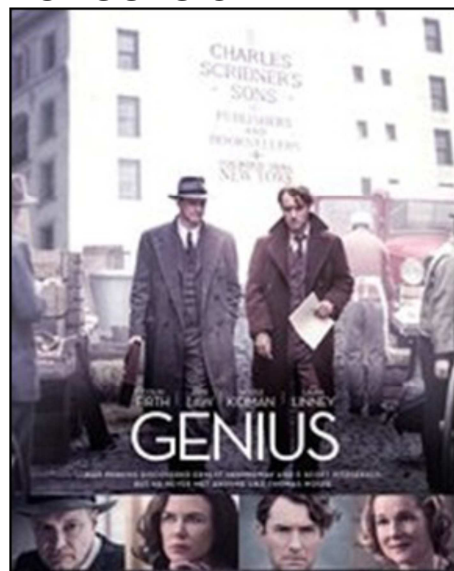




October and the Fetes de la Chataigne are round again. So trip up into the Maures Hills for all the fun and excitement of the October Chestnut Festivals. Fun for adults and children. Above a typical chestnut orchard. Dates. Collobrières: Sundays 16, 23 and 30 October. La Garde Freinet: 23 October



## FILMS IN VO – LORGUES CINEMA



### *Sunday 02 October: 19h 00* **Genius**

A chronicle of Max Perkins's time as the book editor at Scribner, where he oversaw works by Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and others.

**Director:** Michael Grandage  
**Writers:** A. Scott Berg (based on the book by), John Logan (screenplay)  
**Stars:** Colin Firth, Jude Law, Nicole Kidman



### *Sunday 09 October: 19 h 00* **Race - RACE**

Jesse Owens' quest to become the greatest track and field athlete in history thrusts him onto the world stage of the 1936 Olympics, where he faces off against Adolf Hitler's vision of Aryan supremacy.

**Director:** Stephen Hopkins  
**Writers:** Joe Shrapnel, Anna Waterhouse  
**Stars:** Stephan James, Jason Sudeikis, Eli Goree



## **OPERA DE TOULON CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA / PAGLIACCI 4, 7 & 9 October**

The tried and trusted opera duo of Cav & Pag, take the stage again. The one a story of Sicilian love, revenge and death, the other of the heartsick clown, all good opera themes, with great music and memorable arias.





The performance on the 4 October will be transmitted en direct by Radio Classique.



Performances by Metz Opera.

Tickets: 04 94 92 70 78 &

[www.operadetoulon.fr](http://www.operadetoulon.fr)



## CONCERTS – PIANO RECITALS

### MOULIN DES ARTS – ENTRECASTEAUX

With Costanza Principe - London.

Saturday 8 October 20h30

Sunday 9 October 16h

Programme : Beethoven, Schumann, Rachmaninov

Tickets €20 or €15 for members, including glass of wine. Reservations by phone on 04 94 69 58 07, and email: [mrkucko@yahoo.fr](mailto:mrkucko@yahoo.fr)



## OPERA DE TOULON – FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE DE TOULON

### PIANO RECITAL

Friday 14 October 20h

Russian Soloist Alexei Volodin with 'Grand Nord' works by Russian and Finnish composers,



Concerto pour piano N°2 Rachmaninov, Rautavaara, Isle of Bliss & 7<sup>e</sup>

Symphonie, Sibelius

L'Orchestre Symphonique de l'Opéra de Toulon by Robert Trevino

Tickets: 04 94 92 70 78 &

[www.operadetoulon.fr](http://www.operadetoulon.fr)



## OPERA RECITALS – MOULIN DES ARTS ENTRECASTEAUX, Saturday 29 October, 20h30

Sunday 30 October, 16h. With Fatma Said, soprano & Matthias Veit, piano

Piano and opera song recital featuring works by Debussy, Verdi, Massenet, Rossini & Donizetti.

Fatma Said is a world class opera singer from Milan's La Scala, where she sings Papageno in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte. Tickets €20 or €15 for members, including glass of wine. Reservations by phone on 04 94 69 58 07, and email: [mrkucko@yahoo.fr](mailto:mrkucko@yahoo.fr)



## ART CLASSES – SEILLANS

Seillans water colour artist Elisabeth Bouchard, who paints under the name

Mira, has just started giving water colour classes in September. The classes are for both beginners, and more advanced students are welcome, with or without previous experience. The classes take place either at her workshop/gallery, or in the open air, depending on the weather and the progress made by participants. Basic courses include sketching and pen and ink drawing as well as water colour on dry paper.

The classes will take place on Tuesday afternoons and/or other days by request. The cost will be 20€ per session.

The programme is discussed, along with your expectations and needs. Instruction can be given in English if there is a demand.

Atelier de Mira, 1bis place du Thouron  
83440 Seillans - 06 88 88 06 46 /  
atelierdemira@orange.fr/http://atelierdemiraetmichelsaez.jimdo.com



## SAN REMO COACH TRIP SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER Book Now!

Well the season is finally over (I hope it was a good one for you all – despite the heat!!!) and it's time to start thinking about our annual 'amicale' day out to San Remo which this year will be Saturday 19th November. This a week earlier than normal as last year most of us thought it was very busy round the market and at Eurodrink so we decided to try for a week earlier to see if we could beat the crowds!! As always we have an early start ensuring plenty of time to enjoy browsing round the market stalls, the fabulous covered market with all the wonderful and very reasonably priced Italian specialities and not forgetting the high street shops. There is time for a nice relaxing lunch in one of the many restaurants before we leave San Remo and head home via Ventimiglia and the Eurodrink supermarket where we stop for approximately 45 mins so you can stock up with supplies (alcohol and cigarettes still being slightly more reasonably priced in Italy than France).

The times of departure are as follows :

**07h20 - Les Arcs-sur-Argens**

**07h30 - Le Muy Peage (no. 36)**

**07h45 - Frejus Peage (no. 38)**

*(return times are between 18h and 19h depending on the time we leave and the traffic)*

**The cost of this trip is 27 € per person.**

Please email me and let me know **as early as possible** if you are interested in joining us so that I can add your name to the passenger list, confirm departure and payment details and answer any questions you might have.

I hope this email gets to everyone but if I've missed anybody or if you know of someone who has changed email addresses or might like to be added to the mailing list, please don't hesitate to pass on this message and information. Many thanks as always for your help and support - I look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you again soon.

Kindest regards CAROLYN

**CAROLYN MOULET  
RIVIERA TOURS**

Email : [carolyn@rivieratours.fr](mailto:carolyn@rivieratours.fr)

Mobile : 06 80 08 87 47 Tel : 04 94 73 69 02

Quartier Le Plan, 1018 Route des Arcs  
83460 TARADEAU



## FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS BY TRENCHERMAN

Some years ago I wrote a piece about an exceptional dinner I had eaten at the Vague d'Or restaurant at the Residence de la Pinede in St Tropez.

I waxed lyrical about the quality of the food, the inventiveness of the menu and the perfection of the service; after all this is a three Michelin Star restaurant, which probably has more people in the kitchen than in the restaurant. Skilled manpower is the only way to produce a large tasting menu with all the 'Amuses bouches' that accompany it. At the last count there were 22 chefs in the kitchen.

I compared the setting to the Villa Picolette which Scott Fitzgerald had used for his inspiration for 'Tender is the Night' his period evocation of everything that the Riviera once stood for.

I finished my piece by suggesting that the best way to go was to be the guest of a generous host. And thus it was that I had to wait for three years to get a return invitation from another generous host, so dressed in my nearly best bib and tucker I joined mine (generous) host on the terrace for cocktails and the 'amuses bouches', I assured the head waiter that apart from rice pudding there was nothing I could not or did not eat and then sat back while the play was put on.

I shall not take you through the whole menu but I offer you this one course as an example;

*Les Langoustines vivifiés au pamplemousse  
Broccoletti coupés du matin, basilica citruse et  
aloe vera au naturel, confection d'un jus  
"d'Hassaku" et huile d'olive infusé aux tetes  
grillés.*

I had to wonder as to how the chef (M. Arnaud) had arrived at this confection of delight, just as I wonder now at how I might describe the tastes and indeed how I could convey those tastes to you.

Well, it was delicious, absolutely delicious and utterly pretentious, I think that every three years is about the right time period to indulge in what verges on the ludicrous, however amazing it is.

The other seven courses brought the same quizzical smile to my lips as I licked them with greedy indulgent pleasure.

Of course it is difficult to follow a rare experience like that as I was reminded last week when I found myself in Toulon with the hour of lunch approaching.

Somewhere new, I thought, somewhere my readers will be pleased to know about, I thought, somewhere with freshly cooked local produce at a sensible price, I thought.

So with the help of the Michelin app on my 'much smarter than me' phone. I discovered a nearby venue called "La



Bouche à Oreille" in the Allée Auguste Picard in La Garde.

One of the reviews ended up saying it was *"an excellent restaurant which merited being known for the quality of its food and ambiance; I lift my hat to the proprietor."*

Even though I was hatless, I telephoned immediately, reserved for two and with the help of my GPS, I found the Allée and parked right outside.

Right outside a large block of flats that is, within which the restaurant resided!

Every well-tuned bone in my body said 'get back into the car'. She, who must be acknowledged, looked at me strangely. I ignored all the advice and marched straight in demanding my table.

There is a pleasant garden to the rear of the premises and it was full of full tables; I chose to sit inside in a large but completely empty salle, away from the burning rays and upon a comfortable chair.

Along one wall, writ large, was a list of the sixteen different menu options offered including a tasting menu at 125 Euros!

I asked for a menu and the wine list.

A charming young woman brought them both.

The menu was on a chalkboard, and the wine list with two thirds of it crossed out.

There were three items on the menu, Spaghetti Carbonara, some dodgy sounding fish and Lamb with garlic! Is there another way?

I regretted not having listened to all my well tuned bones, and even asking she who has opinions. My bed was made and now I had to try to crawl underneath it.

I ordered wine that I thought would be drinkable, a Bandol which I had never heard of. The young woman brought an already opened bottle of Cote de Provence to the table, which I explained to her was not what I ordered. She then brought the manager to whom I explained the problem, which he eventually understood and returned with a bottle of Bandol of a different vintage from another producer I had never heard of.

He then opened the bottle and left it on the table, presumably wanting to get clear space between him and me before I tasted it.

I had only enough time to pour the wine when our food arrived.

The Spaghetti Carbonara was quite good and disappointingly, the unspecified piece of lamb was perfectly cooked and very tasty.

I was now confused, but had eaten well enough, and she was making steady headway with the lamb.

Even the wine was not as bad as it could have been.

It turns out that this is a music and "Spectacle" venue and that 90 % of the clientele are students from the local Uni.

Should you wish to have dinner and watch the "Comedie Musicale" of "Le Comte de Monte Cristo" on a Saturday night, then this is the place and for only 99 Euros.

Unfortunately I am sorting out my sock drawer on the next available date.

So if you are in La Garde somewhere near the Allée Auguste Picard and you have no transport and you have not eaten in a week and you could eat a horse then this is not the place for you.

The stable door has been left open.

Pip, pip



## Brangelexit or How the fairytale is already just an old chestnut

**By Juliet Young**

B is for Break Up. And 2016 is the year when, it seems, breaking up's not so very hard to do. First there was BHS, then Brexit, Bake-Off and now it's Brangelina.

There were clues. Perhaps, knowing Brad Pitt was the star of films like *The Fight Club*, *Inglorious Basterds* (sic), and *The Departed* should have warned her about his possible anger management issues. And he might have

considered that Angelina Jolie's roles in *Lara Croft*, *Kung Fu Panda* and *Maleficent* have fully prepared her for mortal combat, should she feel her family under threat.

Ironically, it was in October, exactly 7 years ago, that I first wrote about them, in this very organ, when they bought Château Miraval, in Correns. I remember it was October, because I linked it with the famous *Var Fêtes de la Châtaigne*, which always take place, as you know, in October. I speculated on how the Pitt-Jolie family would enjoy an autumn helicopter day-out to Collobrières, and imagined the happy couple's subsequent evenings sitting around their baronial open fire, roasting forks in hand, chewing over warm sweet chestnuts and matters Miraval, and checking each other's diaries for evenings they would both be free to try out Trencherman's recommendations for romantic restaurants in the region.

In those days they were nuts about each other. Now it's just Brad's nuts that are being publically roasted.

What is it with our superstars in the Var?

First it was Johnny Depp dumping Vanessa Paradis in Plan de la Tour, and subsequently being divorced on grounds of brutality by Amber Heard, just a couple of months ago. Having walked the plank from playing the famous 'Pirate of the Caribbean', he has now emerged as the infamous 'Prize Rat of the Caribbean', skulking in the Bahamas, petrified of prying paparazzi.

And now, shortly after a widely reported incident on the plane back from Nice, Angie's lawyers are issuing Brad with divorce papers "for the health of the family", alleging violence, with all sorts of darker hints from her publicists swirling around social media. This October, as the ever-widening marital fissures crack wider apart, it's just too tempting to draw more chestnut analogies....

*...In a nutshell, when Brad met Angie he thought she was a real cracker. Now I reckon he's going to discover that in fact she's a real nutcracker. His law team claims she's an utter nutter. But (...wait for it...) did he stoop to conk her?!*

Celebrity sensation seekers are agog awaiting the ex-couple's inevitably very public battle for their 6 children and \$400m fortune (including who gets Château Miraval).

But, if, on the other hand, you seek distraction from the tittle-tattle of spoiled superstars and their fawning entourages, there could be nothing more simple, innocent or charming than a visit to one of the Chestnut Festivals of the Var this month.

Admire those tall, strong, centurion trees, and savour their sweet fruit, transformed into *bonbons*, paste, flour, soup, bread - pretty well everything that have succoured and supported the poor peasants of the countryside around the forests of Collobrières and La Garde Freinet for centuries. Just a few kilometres and a million miles away from flashy flimsy filmstar fantasies...

...It certainly makes for an enduring and very welcome contrast to here-today-gone-tomorrow Hollywood nutcases and their fickle, fleeting marriages.

*Collobrières: Sundays 16, 23 and 30*

*October. La Garde Freinet: 23 October.*

*For full details of the programmes consult their Tourist Offices.*



## VILLA RENTALS - OWNERS DIRECT

Holiday rental firm Owners Direct faces fury from customers after adding a £299 'hidden fee' to bills

- Homeowners who already pay £299 to advertise are furious about it. They say the 'service fee' for those booking online has caused a slump. 'It's a total disaster – enquiries and bookings have fallen off a cliff' said one

One of Britain's largest online holiday rental firms is facing an angry customer backlash after introducing new 'hidden' charges.

Owners Direct added a 'service fee' of up to £299 for holidaymakers who book through its website in June. The charge has sparked fury among home-owners, who already pay a £299 fee to advertise their properties.

They claim the tariff has led to a slump in bookings and accused the firm of 'corporate greed'.

The company has also been accused of hiding the charge, which works on a sliding scale of four to eight per cent depending on price – plus VAT – from holidaymakers.

While it is included in the advertised price of the rental, customers must navigate through two pop-up boxes for a costs breakdown which reveals the charge.

The change follows the buyout last year of Owners Direct's parent company, Texas-based HomeAway, by Expedia.

Sue Ayre, 56, advertised her cottage in Cyprus on the website for two years but has now withdrawn it. She said: 'It's a total disaster – enquiries and bookings have fallen off a cliff.'

'This is nothing more than a device to earn more money for the company. It's effectively hidden from guests who have to click through boxes to find out it is added to the price.'

Hundreds of owners have voiced their anger on reviews website Trust Pilot, giving Owners Direct an average 0.4 out of 10.

An Owners Direct spokeswoman said:

'The service fee is displayed in appropriate prominence and we do not have any records of any confusion with travellers in relation to this fee.'

'It was implemented to enable us to stay competitive. As competition continues to increase, Owners Direct must increase investment to ensure we bring travellers to the website and therefore drive more bookings to owners' properties.'

Rental Villa owners should consider their options, and advertising fees, before renewing, especially in view of the fall off of tourism in this region of France.

If you subscribe to VAR VILLAGE VOICE, make sure your rental villa is listed, the listing is FREE!

## BREXIT – EU WATCH

**I have been putting together material for the following article for weeks, and also keeping a weather eye on the Banking situation. I am no financial wizard, economically or otherwise, in fact quite the reverse, I barely understand GNP, but I do understand bad loans! And increasingly have been watching the situation initially concerning Italian banks, but latterly also re Deutsche Bank, and things really do not look good.**

**As I write this am 30 September, the headlines and articles re Deutsche Bank**

**continue to roll, it is an unfolding situation, with City Editors, Financial commentators all weighing in, the news, analysis comes in hour by hour! Read further. So hold on to your hats and the guardrail, it is possible that we shall all be in for a rocky ride.**

**Remainers, and critics of the UK will undoubtedly try and blame bank upheavals on Brexit, but it has nothing to do with it, only to do with European banks not putting their houses in order after the 2008 bank crisis!**

**Quote: ""So, as we asked over night, who blinks first? The IMF - "told you so" dance. The ECB - knowing the collateral chains that will snap. The Bundesbank - knowing their entire banking system is at risk. The German government - knowing it's over for them if DB depositors have to take a haircut... Or Brussels - who know the entire EU plan is teetering is done if anything but the 'rules' are applied to Deutsche. For now, there is one thing for sure - the market will press for one of these players to be forced to make decision.""**

## BREXIT – EU WATCH



## I'LL HUFF, & I'LL PUFF & I'LL BLOW YOUR HOUSE DOWN!

One can just imagine Jean-Claude Juncker oozing this sort of vengeful statement, as he appointed yet another arch enemy of the UK – Guy Verhofstadt – as Brexit negotiator on behalf of the EU Parliament. The only trouble is for him, and the EU, is that this UK piggies house is built of bricks - not straw or sticks.

For the past few weeks, ever since the most Powerful 3 of the EU – Merkel, Hollande and Renzi met in Italy – see last month's article EU Tango! - posing for lots of lovely photos ops, and loads of press releases, at the home of Federal Europe, off the coast of Italy, we had all



been bombarded with innumerable statements concerning the upcoming talks to be held in Bratislava, Slovakian capital, by the remaining EU 27 members, on how they were going to deal with the naughty, recalcitrant UK, that insisted on leaving the EU.

The only trouble is that it all seems to have been wind, and bluster, and splenetic threats, especially the threat that EU officials would make it so difficult for the UK to exit the EU, that the UK would give up the attempt.

Talk about blackmail.



## PRE - BRATISLAVIA

It started off with Angela Merkel refusing to let EU leaders describe the migrant situation as 'chaos' - instead insisting they refer to it as 'uncontrolled flows'!

As they gathered for group photos, backslapping, hugs etc, recalcitrant members like Hungary and Poland who were demanding that the Commission have its wings clipped in favour of a more inter-governmental approach, there was something of an olive branch. Recently both countries have made life difficult for Brussels as it prepared for the "unity" summit in Bratislava on Friday, but finally in his speech Mr Juncker accepted that taking refugees "must be voluntary, it must come from the heart, it cannot be imposed".

This was a big concession to the now so-called Visegrad states, including Hungary, which was holding a referendum to reject refugee quotas immediately after the Summit. It is also an admission of defeat after Europe tried last year to force countries to accept quotas with a majority vote that deeply angered the eastern EU countries.

The message was clear, everyone needed to be flexible to retain unity among the 27 in the face of the "existential" questions posed by Brexit, immigration and unaddressed flaws in the euro.

At the Bratislava summit, EU officials also said the solution to bloc's crisis was to 'stop criticising Brussels' - but Merkel admitted the EU is in a 'critical situation' Meantime the statements flowed and flowed.

Viktor Orban, Hungary's far-right Prime Minister, said he would submit his own proposals on behalf of eastern European countries such as Poland and Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic who were preparing a joint Visegrad Four proposal to the European Council.

The atmosphere was decidedly sober

after Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, warned that the EU needed a "brutally" honest assessment of what to do in the wake of the Brexit vote.

**"27 European leaders arrived in Bratislava for a "brutally honest" summit on the EU's future!"**

**What did they produce – Not too much!**

The ambitions of the Bratislava summit could have been summed up in three words: Unity, Unity and Unity. However Unity, as Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council discovered on his whistle stop tour of EU capitals prior to the summit, Unity was in short supply. The Visegrad four in particular wanted exceptions to migrant quotas, thus reneging on the basic EU hardline message, ex Berlin, Paris and Brussels, concerning the issues of Freedom of Movement, the very issue with which they want to bash the UK over the head.

In a further sign of dissent, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has said the summit has failed to change the bloc's "self-destructive and naive" immigration policy.

## POST BRATISLAVIA

When it comes to power dynamics, there was a curious paradox at the heart of this EU27 Summit. Everyone knew that the most powerful person in the room was Angela Merkel, for two obvious reasons. Germany is the country with the economic surpluses - the financial powerhouse of Europe.

The German Chancellor, for all her recent woes, is politically in a stronger position than either Matteo Renzi, who is facing a nasty referendum later this autumn, or

Francois Hollande, the lame-duck French president with subterranean poll numbers.

And yet despite this Mrs Merkel's position with the EU27 was tricky indeed, as the other 26 leaders in the room know her open-door migration policy is the absolute main cause of the European Union's recent woes.

And what's more they make little secret of this fact. As a senior EU official told a gaggle of international journalists "There is agreement that the thing that has helped most to undermine trust in the EU is uncontrolled migration, and that that must be the main thing to be addressed in the coming months."

The translation from the diplospeak: "we can't agree on much, but we can agree that Angela Merkel stuffed up spectacularly on migration, and we're all paying for it"..



## EU Junket up the Danube

What was striking apes the Bratislava one day conference with its one day lunch junket up the Danube, apart from the fact that the politicians floated up and down the Danube aimlessly on a super luxury boat, hosting these exclusive guests to a tasty lunch, but not much else – nasty commentators remarking that as the junket had been prevented from visiting a noble new museum by the lack of water in the Danube (in fact the trip barely got off at all for lack of height of water) – the whole thing reminded them of "up \*\*\*\* creek without a paddle, or slow boat to nowhere" - was the fact that after the event and Mutti Merkel and Francois Hollande summoned the press for a A Press Conference - apparently now in the EU circles it is called a Presser – Italian Prime Minister Renzi declined in very positive tones to join in, declaring as follows. .

"I don't think it would be right for Italy to pretend not to notice when things are not getting any better," he told a conference in Florence several hours after expressing

his dissatisfaction that so little had been achieved at the summit in Bratislava. As a mark of protest, he had refused to participate, saying he did not agree with them on key issues such as migration and the economy.



"I am not satisfied" with the conclusions of the summit, he later said, explaining his absence. "I cannot take part in a press conference with the German chancellor or the French president when I don't share their conclusions."

And later on, he insisted that Italy would not "serve as a fig leaf" for others, in an apparent allusion to France and Germany.

"At Bratislava we had a nice cruise on the Danube, but I hoped for answers to the crisis caused by Brexit (Britain's exit from the EU), not just to go on a boat trip," he said.

He was similarly belligerent about the budget to be presented next month, saying there would be "no negotiation" with Brussels, and money he planned to spend on tackling immigration and making Italy safer from earthquakes would be excluded from EU rules on deficit limits.

Other countries were more guilty than Italy of breaking budget rules and Italy had met its commitments on tackling the inflows of migrants crossing the Mediterranean, Renzi said.

"I'm not going to stay silent for the sake of a quiet life ... if someone wants to keep Italy quiet they have picked the wrong place, the wrong method and the wrong subject."

The Visegrad states – Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, released a statement dwelling on the key points of free movement, migration and clipping the wings of the EU Commission (and Juncker's), but nothing too radical, as the Commission softened its original hardline approach.



**J.C. Juncker – blocks his ears to the messages flowing in**

Key messages apparently were to give more power to National Parliaments (EU voters), and more voice to the smaller members of the EU. Relative to EU Defence co-operation, despite Juncker's fiery speeches pre Bratislava for a European Army, and creating opportunities for the unemployed youth in the EU to take part in social work, the attitude seemed to be that NATO should come first, before any other EU system was attempted. A rather striking difference from statements made before the Conference. But on freedom of movement they stood fast, despite the Visegrad statements.

Meantime the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria managed to ask for, and actually get, 160 million euros in aid from the EU Commission to strengthen/protect his borders and stem the flow of migration into the country. Now how contrary is that to the avowed aims?

So, all in all, was the Bratislava Summit a hollow photo-op on the banks of the Danube whose limited conclusions pointed out the deep divisions lurking behind all those fixed grins. While the EU toys with the idea of an EU Army that is unlikely to ever take the field, it faces a gathering storm.

Looming debt and banking crises down south, rising nationalism in the east and north and a refusal to accept that the lesson of Brexit is that Europe must chart a new direction to survive.



And most recently Angela Merkel, speaking in Vienna at a meeting with nine other heads of government, Merkel

proclaimed that "Germany has done enough" (re migration!) and called on the rest of the EU to do more saying "other EU countries will have to jump in." Let the band play on, the 'unsinkable' ship of the European superstate is heading for the rocks.

**"FOLLOW THE MONEY"**  
**"When it becomes serious, you have to lie"**

***Jean Claude Juncker, when accused of lying about crisis talks before the Greek bailout.***

What is far more interesting, and perilous for the EU, is what these leaders were NOT saying.

And here I would remind readers of the Raymond Chandler's detective, Philip Marlowe, who said **"Follow the Money – always Follow the Money!"**

And the money, or lack of it, I suspect is at the bottom of all this screaming, bluster, and temperamental hissie fits from Juncker et al. I quite expect the men in white coats to carry off J. C. Juncker, before the end of all this affair, it all rather reminds one of Gordon Brown and his phone throwing tempers.

Who is going to plug the 10 billion euro hole after the UK leaves. Yes, the UK got a rebate, but they still contributed 10 billion euros to the EU treasury, and Germany is determined they will not pick up the slack, and no other EU country is capable of so doing. Plus many of the Eastern European members profit enormously from remittances (plus child allowances) they receive back from the EU nationals working in the UK! See further.

**THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM – ITALIAN BANKING DEUTSCHE BANK**

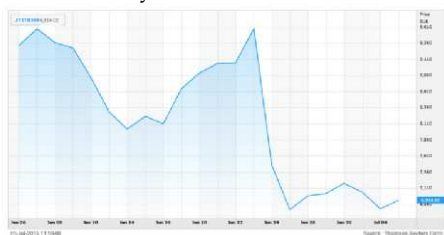
And the Elephant in the room, apart from the huge Elephant posed by wholesale migration across the continent – is the other even bigger Elephant posed by Italian Banking, and also the problems of German Deutsche Bank.

**Italy's banking sector is in dire trouble, and could imminently collapse, bringing down the Euro – but nobody – certainly Juncker and others in the EU - is talking about that.**

The main problem with Italy's banks is that they are swamped with what are known quaintly in banking circles NPL's, i.e., non-performing loans – how wonderfully euphemistic! These are



loans on which debtors have not made scheduled payments for at least 90 days. In other words, Italian banks are not getting back loads of the money they have lent out. According to data from the Bank of Italy, NPLs of Italian banks amounted to €360 billion in 2015, or 18.1% of all loans they made (see graph below). Of these loans, €210 billion are really bad and no longer collectable. The remaining €150 billion are of slightly higher quality. Italian banks are incredibly exposed to NPLs. They equal almost a quarter of Italy's GDP and a third of the total NPL exposure of EU members. Practically speaking, NPLs are a big drag on the ability of Italian banks to finance investments and growth in the real economy. Accordingly, it is a major threat to the stability of the entire EU.



At the forefront of this huge debt is the major Italian Bank of Banque Monte dei Paschi dei Siena, Italy's oldest bank founded in 1472, with gross bad loans amounting to €46.9 billion (\$52 billion). BMPS is at the forefront of concerns about the fragile balance sheets of Italian banks, which are weighed down by €360 billion in bad debt.



Italy has been in a crisis for at least eight months, the BMPS in particular, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, though mainstream media did not recognize it until July, when the bank stress tests were published and the latter bank failed them. This crisis had nothing to do with Brexit, although opponents of Brexit will claim it does. Even if Britain had voted to stay in the EU, the Italian crisis would still have been gathering speed. Banks were simply carrying loans as non-performing that were actually in default and discounting the NPLs rather than writing them off. But that only hid the obvious. As much as 17 percent of Italy's

loans will not be repaid. This will crush Italian banks' balance sheets. And this will not only be in Italy. Italian loans are packaged and resold, and Italian banks take loans from other European banks. These banks in turn have borrowed against Italian debt. Since Italy is the fourth largest economy in Europe, this is the mother of all systemic threats.



## BANK BAIL INS & BAIL OUTS

The only way to help is a government bailout. The problem is that Italy is not only part of the EU, but part of the eurozone. As such, its ability to print its way out of the crisis is limited. In addition, EU regulations make it difficult for governments to bail out banks.

The EU has a concept called a bail-in, which means the depositors and creditors to the bank will lose their money. This is what the EU imposed on Cyprus. In Cyprus, deposits greater than 100,000 euros (\$111,000) were seized to cover Cypriot bank debts. While some was returned, most was not. The bail-in is a formula for bank runs. The money seized in Cyprus came from retirement funds and payrolls. Rome wants to make sure depositors don't lose their deposits. A run on the banks would guarantee a meltdown. A meltdown would topple the government and allow the Five Star Movement, a Euroskeptic party, a good shot at governing. The bail-in rule exists because Berlin doesn't want to bail out banking systems using German money. Anti-European

sentiment in Germany is already growing, with the rising popularity of the nationalist Alternative for Germany party. The Germans feel that they are fiscally responsible, and they resent paying for others' irresponsibility. Nor can it permit overprinting of the euro. That would come out of the German hide as well.

And another European economic crisis is brewing. Germany derives nearly half of its GDP from exports. All the discipline and frugality of the Germans can't hide the fact that their prosperity depends on their ability to export. The ability to export depends on the demand of their customers. Germany exports heavily to the EU, and the Italian crisis could cause an EU-wide banking crisis. That would cut deeply into German exports, slashing GDP and driving up unemployment. Logically, the Germans should be desperately trying to head off an Italian default. But Chancellor Angela Merkel is not eager to announce to the German people that their economy depends on Italy's well-being.

**The Italian banking crisis is almost certain to come to a head soon, and an Italian referendum on the constitution now slated for 5 December (it seems to**



**have been postponed several times!) is also an important hurdle to be overcome.**

So the politicians are in panic mode, reassuring everyone there is nothing wrong more integration and a new army won't cure.



Meantime Germany's major Bank, Deutsche, has just been hit by a major fine by US authorities, something in the

nature of 15 billion, for mis-selling mortgages etc, a case dating from 2008! In addition Deutsche Bank is very heavily exposed on another front as Italian Prime Minister Renzi has pointed out, Deutsche Bank's **"hundreds and hundreds of hundreds of billions of euros of derivatives."** €42 trillion to be precise. As of just this week, the FTSE 100 slumped badly with this recent bad news re slump of Deutsche Bank shares.



Commentators have been drawing parallels all week with the demise in 2008 of Lehman Brothers, who went belly up, sparking the 2008 bank crisis.. Comments this week included:

**"if the German government does not stand behind the bank, then inevitably all its counter-parties – the other banks (coupled with the fact that another major, the German Commerz Bank is not in all that much better a situation and is laying off just under 10,00 staff plus cutting its dividends) and institutions it deals with – are going to start feeling very nervous about trading with it.** As we know from 2008, once confidence starts to evaporate, a bank is in big, big trouble. In fact, if Deutsche does go down, it is looking increasingly likely that it will take Merkel with it – and quite possibly the euro as well."

To be sure, the politics of a Deutsche rescue would be terrible. **Germany, with its Chancellor taking the lead, has set itself up as the guardian of financial responsibility within the euro-zone.** Two years ago, it casually let the Greek bank system go to the wall, allowing the cash machines to be closed down as a way of whipping the rebellious Syriza government back into line. This year, there has been an unfolding Italian crisis, as bad debts mount, and yet Germany has insisted on enforcing euro-zone rules that say depositors have to shoulder some of the losses when a bank is in trouble. And this is why Merkel is cornered: **"for Germany to then turn around and say, actually we are bailing out our own bank, while letting everyone else's fail, looks, to put it mildly, just a little**

**inconsistent.** Heck, a few people might even start to wonder if there was one rule for Germany, and another one for the rest. In truth, it would become impossible to maintain a hard-line in Italy, and probably in Greece as well."

The Columnist Lynn's conclusion this past week was spot on: Merkel is playing a very dangerous game with Deutsche – and one that could easily go badly wrong. **If her refusal to sanction a bail-out is responsible for a Deutsche collapse that could easily end her Chancellorship. But if she rescues it, the euro might start to unravel.** It is hardly surprising that the markets are watching the relentless decline in its share price with mounting horror.

In retrospect, the irony is delightful: for so many years the markets erroneously focusing only on the periphery as the source of potential banking contagion, **when the biggest ticking time bomb in Europe's banking sector was smack in the middle of what was considered the safest and most stable country,** until now.... or as one economic commentator put it in 2014: **"The Elephant In The Room: Deutsche Bank's \$75 Trillion In Derivatives Is 20 Times Greater Than German GDP**

Deutsche Bank is in high denial, no they did not ask Chancellor Merkel for a Bailout, statements which Merkel confirmed, still the market shuddered. Following these statements a City Editor commented as follows:

**"**"As a member of the Eurozone, Germany would have to seek permission from the European Central Bank in Frankfurt – which governs Europe's banks – to bail out Deutsche Bank. But for the past six years, Berlin has fought tooth and nail against the ECB writing off debt and bailing out banks in Greece and the weaker economies of Southern Europe.

So rigid has been the monetary orthodoxy in Berlin and Frankfurt that when banks in Cyprus were overwhelmed in 2012-13 as a result of the austerity in Greece, an EU bailout was not even considered. Instead, wealthy depositors in the Cypriot banks saw up to 10 per cent of their money seized and used to rebuild the capital of the banks.

Merkel is terrified that if Germany's banks were bailed out, then other countries – such as Italy – would demand similar bailouts.

For it is Italy's banking system – rotten to the core and with an astonishing level of €350 billion (£300 billion) of bad loans – that is one of the elephants in the room.

The Italian PM, Matteo Renzi, is desperate to rescue his banking system and restore the supply of credit to consumers and businesses in an effort to jump-start a stagnating economy which faces surging youth unemployment. But his efforts to put together a comprehensive bank rescue have largely been torpedoed by hardliners in Frankfurt, Berlin and Brussels who fear they will lose all control over bank regulation and credit control in the Eurozone if they go soft on Italy. How exquisitely ironic that Germany, having insisted that Greece, Italy and others should not be bailed out, finds itself (might be!) needing bailouts itself. If Merkel did try to pump billions of euros into her banking system to shore it up, there would be a tidal wave of requests for rescues which could bring the whole edifice of the Eurozone tumbling down.

But then Germany's banking predicament is surely proof that the one-size-fits-all Eurozone doesn't work.

No, the EU is facing a financial catastrophe of enormous proportions just at a time when the world is already facing huge uncertainty from the economic slowdown in China.

The UK should surely be thankful that, after the Brexit vote, it is preparing to jump clear of the clattering train as it heads for a ravine."

**"**"So who blinks first? The ECB - knowing the collateral chains that will snap. The Bundesbank - knowing their entire banking system is at risk. The German government - knowing it's over for them if DB depositors have to take a haircut... Or Brussels - who know the entire EU plan is teetering is done for if anything but the 'rules' are applied to Deutsche. For now, there is one thing for sure - the market will press for one of these players to be forced to make decision.

**"**"Whether or not Deutsche can survive without a bail-out by the German government is the only topic most other European bankers want to discuss. "

**"**"It may be that Deutsche can limp through this particular crisis, but this is a bank that is deeply troubled, and the



words of its executives, as so many before them, belie its balance sheet.””

## REMITTANCES FROM THE UK

And it is not just the hole in the EU budget. What also might be imperilled by Brexit is the remittances sent back home, most particularly from Eastern Europeans living and working in the UK, plus the child benefits of these workers, paid for Eastern European children, not living in the UK, but in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary etc.

I have done some research and you can see for yourself.

Recent figures show that 2.9 million (5%) of the UK population- are EU nationals. And just under 1.2 million UK nationals live elsewhere in the EU.

And in the year to March 2016, an estimated 270,000 citizens from other EU countries immigrated to the UK!

EU partners charge the NHS for the costs of treating British pensioners. In 2013/14 the UK paid £580 million to other EEA countries for the treatment of British pensioners resident in the EEA while it received just £12 million from other EEA countries in the same year for the treatment of EEA pensioners in the UK. It is often claimed that immigration is essential for Britain's economy as it needs the skills and innovation that immigration brings. Yet fiscal calculations of immigrants' contribution to the UK show that between 1995 and 2011 all migrants (regardless of the year that they arrived) cost the UK between £115 billion and £160 billion, or about £20 million a day. Some have claimed that recent EU workers have contributed more than they have received however this relies on some wholly unrealistic assumptions about company, share and home ownership which, when adjusted for, reduce the contribution to a neutral one – neither costing nor benefiting the exchequer. Therefore, there seems to be a discrepancy between the narrative of immigration bringing much sought after skills to the UK and their net contribution in fiscal terms.

**However Slovak President Fico – in Juncker mode, waving the EU stick at the UK - made a statement saying there were 70,000 Slovaks in the UK, who together with many more Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians had contributed to the wealth of Britain, and that the EU wouldn't allow the creation of "second-rate citizens".**

Ironical, isn't it, Slovaks, Poles etc.all happily resident in the UK, using the UK National Health systems, schools, public facilities, getting child allowances, job seekers allowance, earning lots of money in the UK, and sending much of it home to support their home nation, can hardly be regarded as being treated as second class, but then what do I know?

Remittances are now presently flowing out to Poland from over 830,000 Poles presently living and working in the UK, from the 266,00 Romanians and Bulgarians, and from the just over 1 million EU residents from Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia living and working in the UK, and all sending money back home.

**A new report shows that the UK topped the list of EU nations in terms of how much migrant cash is sent to home countries rather than being spent to boost the economy where it is earned.**

Germany, which has 17 million more people than Britain, sent back £9bn during the same period while in France the figure was £6.6bn.

A Conservative MP warned that the astounding figure “drained away from our economy” **showed that increasing migration is a “net cost and not an asset” to Britain.**

**In total, migrants from across Europe transferred £69bn in remittances last year, said the International Fund for Agricultural Development.**

**A third, £23bn, was sent back to Eastern Europe . In Britain, around £2bn went to Eastern Europe!. £2 billion, earned in the UK, but not spent in the UK.**

UKIP migration spokesman Steven Woolfe said: “The total amount of money UK immigrants send back to their home countries is now equivalent to the total UK aid budget which we believe should be cut in order to finance home grown infrastructure projects.

“These remittance numbers rarely feature in the assessments by those who favour mass immigration and too often claim that it has a positive economic effect on Britain's economy. In fact, once this money leaves these shores it's often gone for good or used to attract even more migrants.”

The World Bank estimates migrant workers sent back about \$24.9bn last year, making Britain the fourth-largest source of remittances in the world. The sharp fall in the value of sterling since the Brexit

vote (down 14.6 per cent and 13.2 per cent against the dollar and euro respectively) means those remittances are worth less now to the people back home who receive them.



**Romania - 3 billion lei house built with money sent back from the UK**

The money Tibor, a 32-year-old Slovak architect, sends home from London each month not only supports his disabled mother and elderly grandmother, it is also building his family a house in the small village of Belanad Cirochou in the east of his native country.

Karolis Rudys has been working as an automotive engineer in the UK for two years, saving up to buy a house in his native Lithuania. He estimates his savings are now worth thousands of euros less than they were before the Brexit vote.

The European economies to make the top 10 recipients of UK remittances are Poland and Hungary. Nevertheless, it is an increasingly important source of income in the “EU8” eastern European countries since they joined the EU in 2004.

The UK is the second-biggest source of remittances to the EU 8 countries after Germany. For example, they are now worth between 3 and 6 per cent of GDP for Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary.

The UK pays child benefit and child tax credits to almost 50,000 children who live in another EU country. The most common country of residence is Poland, where claims are made for almost 30,000 children. British rates are about four times those in Poland. The cost to the British taxpayer is just over £1 million per week. Only in four other EU countries do the rules allow for such payments to be made to non-resident children.

Most countries do not pay child benefit in respect of children living outside of their territory. According to the EU's Mutual Information System on Social Protection, in order to claim child benefit in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and

Sweden the child must be resident in the territory.

In Ireland the rules stipulate that the child must be normally living with and being supported by the recipient however in practice this is not the case. Only in the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, and the Netherlands can child benefit be claimed for children who live in another EU state.

Child benefit paid to 40,171 children living overseas costs the taxpayer UK £36.6 million per year and child tax credit costs £18.6 million per year.

**Therefore the combined child payments amount to over £55 million per year or £1 million per week.**

**In all other EU countries except the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands the child must be resident in that country in order to qualify for child allowances.**

Now compare that with the fact that of the 1.2 million UK citizens resident in other parts of the EU, the vast majority are retired and spending their pensions where they live, rather than remitting back to the UK.

The vast majority are not employed, NOT taking local jobs, and are supporting their local economy.

VVV readers know only too well that their pensions are spent locally, in bars, restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, you name it, paying local taxes, supporting the local economy, whereas the vast majority of EU nationals living and working in the UK, are sending their money home, and not supporting the UK economy.

And I'll bet my bippy that the now around half a million French living and working in the UK are also sending money back to France, to support their second homes, and a great many will have second homes, in Brittany, Normandy, the Loire etc., to pay their local bills etc. however no figures are available on that.



**Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban (centre left) and his Bulgarian counterpart Boiko Borisov (centre right) inspect the barbed wire fence constructed on the Bulgarian-Turkish border**

## **BORDERS**

So whilst other EU nations are hastily erecting more and more fences, and border controls – the Austrians at the Brenner Pass, the Swiss at Como, the Hungarians all along their borders, with razor wire, closing the Balkan route, the UK is denied the same privileges – Juncker, Draghi et al saying the freedom of movement throughout the EU is sacrosanct. But this apparently is only for some, not for all.

In March, under pressure from Austria, Balkan countries closed their borders, and Victor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary, who has been scathing about Merkel's "open-door" policy and which he has called immigration "poison", has refused to take in a single migrant under the EU relocation scheme – as have also Poland, and Slovakia – so much for EU Unity!

Meanwhile the Swiss have just recently voted in a referendum to limit cross border employment in the Ticino, voting to give Swiss nationals job preference, much to the fury of the Italians, and Prime Minister Renzi, who have been working for years in Switzerland, but have been prevented from taking this further to implementation, as it would imperil their bi-lateral agreements with the EU. They very much much want to do it, but are teetering on the side lines, saying they will wait to see the results of Brexit negotiations, hoping the UK will do the difficult stuff, as they very much want to eat their cake and have it!

Speaking after very recent talks in Vienna with leaders along the Balkan migrants trail into Europe, Merkel said – backtracking considerably on statements of the previous year, very possibly in the face of her upcoming potential election defeat - the continent must "stop illegal immigration while living up to our humanitarian responsibilities". To this end "it is necessary to get agreements with third countries, especially in Africa but also Pakistan and Afghanistan... so that it becomes clear that those with no right to stay in Europe can go back to their home countries," she told reporters. So although some states seem to be allowed to cherry pick what they want from the EU, closing their borders,

refusing refugee quotas, Juncker et al all are adamant that the UK cannot cherry pick at all.

Merkel now seems to be echoing statements made recently by Prime Minister May, that distinctions should be made between genuine refugees, asylum seekers, and Economic Migrants., and how long has it taken Merkel and others to come to this conclusion, far too long. For far too long the European Union has failed to respond adequately to the mass migration that is a feature of 21st-century life: Europe's porous external borders encourage illegal migrants; its non-existent internal frontiers facilitate their movement after arrival; and the failure to implement a system for sharing the burdens imposed by migrants put some countries under intolerable strain, which for far too long the EU has ignored, and totally failed to deal with adequately. Financial and technical assistance has long been promised to both Italy and Greece, bearing the huge burden of mass migrant arrivals, but very little of that promised assistance has arrived. Spain made ready to welcome several thousand Syrian refugees, but to date, very few have arrived, is this due to bureaucratic incompetence on the part of the EU, or what? One wonders.



## **CONCLUSIONS**

So, no matter how much Juncker, et al huff and puff, waving their maraccas in the air and their fists, and making vicious threats about the UK's exit from the EU, and the forthcoming negotiations, "We'll make you sorry, we'll make it so difficult you will find it impossible to leave"", rather like a cabal of Mafia nasties "You'll be sorry you did that!" and most particularly considering that up until recently when the UK voted Brexit, the UK was not a full member, constantly being vetoed on all and any legislation, and was outside the Euro – the more one reflects upon it, the more one wonders why Brexit is having this catastrophic



effect. Much of the posturing gives one the impression they will do anything, including cutting off their nose to spite their face, to prove their point, and their point is what?

That the EU Commission, under the splenetic leadership of Juncker, are going to chastise the UK so badly, that nobody else dares to try to leave the EU, and quite a few EU members, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, seemingly would like to make a run for it, and are showing signs of very, very itchy feet, could that be the reason? This would cause a huge North South divide.

After all if the EU is all that it is cracked up to be, why are all these EU leaders in such a panic – given that, **the more one wonders about the stability of the EU, and above all of the Euro!**

As far as I can see UK Prime Minister May has some trump cards in her hand, very low unemployment, the lowest in the EU, - Office for National Statistics earlier this month revealed UK unemployment stands at 4.9 per cent, down from 5.5 per cent a year earlier. The facts are that UK unemployment at 4.9 per cent of the workforce is half that of the eurozone at 10.2 per cent. Youth unemployment in Britain at 13.6 per cent is too high but a fraction of the 50 per cent in Spain and Greece (and 28% in France) - good job creation, booming economy, and quite a few countries lining up to get trade agreements signed up, despite EU threats. I get the impression she is a good poker player, unwilling to divulge what cards she has, until the time is right. She certainly played her cards right politically, cannily coming out on top of a heap of a great many other experienced politicians.

Meantime back in the EU, trade negotiations - the TTIP and CETA talks with both the USA and Canada, after several years of talks, plus an Asian agreement, are totally dead in the water, as critics have pointed out, due **to rising protectionism everywhere, led by the US and EU.**

Back in Europe France's – where unemployment figures have slipped downwards yet again, making the likelihood of Hollande entering the Presidential race, pretty impossible - slow recovery has caused diplomatic problems with other members of the Eurozone: its budget deficit is 3.5 per cent of GDP, breaking through the European Commission's preferred ceiling of three

per cent; its ratio of public debt to GDP is 96 per cent, and still growing, whereas the Commission requires public debt to fall.

The Commission has given France leeway – “because it is France,” said Jean-Claude Juncker – but this has come at a cost of resentment from all sides. The more frugal Eurozone members, like Germany, argue that France should live within its means; and those with weaker economies, like Spain, Portugal and Ireland, are jealous of France's special treatment.

Meantime ECB chief Mario Draghi said, apparently referring to Brexit:

**“It's very hard to imagine that any agreement that would be perceived as discriminatory against some subjects in favour of others would be a source of stability for our European Union.”**

**Or not as the case might be!**

So as Mario Draghi, of the ECB points the finger at the UK, just in case they try to win special terms for their exit from the EU, perhaps his statement could also apply to several EU states for their demands to cherry pick their terms of membership,

It behoves the EU and all of its members to remember that the money they so freely throw around, the promises they make, dependent on financial undertakings, all flow from you, me, your neighbours, we European citizens. The EU money, its budget comes from us, we, the EU taxpayers, and the EU bureaucracy flings it around like water, safeguarding their huge salaries, and gold plated pensions at our expense.

*Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Albert Einstein*

Sources for this article: Daily Telegraph, Financial Times, Daily Mail, World Bank, Taxpayers Alliance, [www.thelocal.it](http://www.thelocal.it), [www.zerohedge.com](http://www.zerohedge.com) and others.



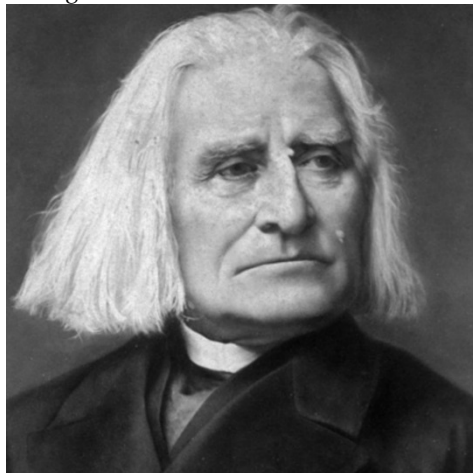
## MUSIC COLUMN By ROBERT TURNBULL

A week ago I was invited to attend the Franz Liszt Piano competition in the very same Budapest musical academy that the Hungarian composer founded back in 1875. The event is one of a handful of Liszt-only competitions around the world and takes place every five years in the institution's spectacular Georg Solti Hall. As always it was a pleasure to be in this beautiful if somewhat troubled European city.

Created in 1933 under the direction of the famous Hungarian composer and pianist Erno Dohnanyi, the competition's first winner was the great Annie Fischer, a local virtuoso who many Hungarians still consider to be their finest pianist ever. Fischer possessed a fiery temperament which she was able to harness with a formidable technical exactitude.

For contestants today the requirement is to play a selection of Liszt's most difficult etudes and transcriptions, not to mention the two piano concertos and the famous B minor Sonata. It's a tall order which automatically disqualifies those short of technical fluency. Just getting through these pieces requires incredible stamina, not to mention a stash of tissues to mop one's brow when the occasion allows. With two of the four Hungarians backing out, there were only three Europeans contestants, so it was young and ambitious Asians who completely dominated. This has become the norm. Students based in Paris or London might view these events as essentially unnatural forms of music-making and give them a wide berth, but for the young prodigies of Singapore, Seoul or Shenzhen the competition route is the preferred method of advancement as well as an opportunity to make important contacts this side of the world. At this competition the 20 Japanese made up around 65% of competitors, many of them sported boyband-style spikey haircuts. In Japan it's cool to play classical piano.

Having been there the best part of a week I can report that there were some great moments but, as Rossini famously said of Wagner, also one or two 'mauvaises quarts d'heures'. There was a marked difference, for instance, between those who could sail through the difficult passages with ease and still manage to be 'expressive' and those who succumbed to nerves and stumbled embarrassingly through the difficult bits.



What was interesting was how these pianists approached the question of showmanship, something that Liszt really invented. With no photos to capture concerts in his heyday, we can only imagine the composer's extravagant body language and how he would succeed in getting his adoring fans to hang on every note. Liszt was, after all, the first musical superstar, with the possible exception of the violinist Nicolo Paganini. He was a man of immense charisma, who charmed his way into the salons - and bedrooms ! - of his aristocratic hosts. But besides being a heart-breaker, he was also a kind and caring man, with an essentially humble and God-fearing soul.

For centuries Liszt's pupils and their pupils have tried their best to keep as much of his legacy alive as possible. Some of the Asians felt the need to be cute by leaning unctuously towards the audience or gesturing heavily at dramatic moments - as if it would bring them extra points. But their flashiness was really in a style less associated with Liszt than their compatriot Chinese-American virtuoso Lang Lang. Lang Lang is a televisual pianist who pulls faces for the camera and loves to bestow heavenly smiles on his audiences. One young Chinese lad clearly Lang Lang in mind while brandishing his index finger at the audience after a fast flourish up to the heights of the keyboard. He didn't get past the first round.

In contrast, most of the Japanese contestants sailed comfortably through the early rounds, including the eventual winner Sakata Tomoki. Their playing was dazzling, accomplished technically but mature and personally-felt, belying the commonly-held prejudice that Asian pianists learn things by rote. On the contrary I suppose it was only a matter of time before the Asians take their place even in the hallowed world of classical music. Those moody Russians may soon have to move over.



## DES HAUTS ET DES BAS

By SIMON EVELEIGH

Toulon's mixed start to the season has continued through the month of September and, once again, there has been as much going on off the pitch as there has been on it.

With building work being done at Stade Mayol, four of the first five fixtures of the season were away from home, including trips to Racing and Toulouse. As away wins are so hard to come by, it should not have come as a complete surprise that Toulon only won two of their first five fixtures. Indeed managing to pick up losing bonus points in two of their three defeats could be viewed as a positive. However, closer inspection tells us that Toulon's start to the season has been a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly. A shock home defeat by Brive, was followed by a morale-boosting victory at Toulouse, with a bonus point to boot. But just as it seemed that things were up and running, Toulon were completely outplayed by Racing, with an imperious Dan Carter pulling the strings. The 41-30 scoreline flattered Toulon and the manner of the defeat resurrected the questions that had been raised over Diego Dominguez's position as head coach, questions that had, seemingly, been answered only a week earlier at Toulouse. When life is tough, you need a break. In a sporting context, something like an easy home match against weak opposition, would fit the bill nicely. What you do not want is a match against the best team in the country! However, the

fixture computer has a wicked, warped sense of humour and Toulon's next opponents were early season pace-setters Clermont.

Not only were Clermont top of the table, but they were also playing some great rugby. Add in a Toulon injury list that read like a who's who of international rugby (Giteau, Nonu, Vermeulen, Mitchell, Habana, Bastareaud, Clerc, Smith) and there was the very real risk of the wheels coming off the Toulon wagon before even a quarter of the season was over.

However, even without those listed above, Toulon can still put out a strong team and professional sportsmen are often at their best when their backs are to the wall. In an excellent first half, Toulon hammered away at Clermont and went in 16-3 up.

Good sides do not become bad ones in the space of 40 minutes and the right words were obviously said in the Clermont dressing room during the break. The visitors nibbled away at the Toulon lead and then, in the space of two minutes, their talented Argentinian Patricio Fernandez scored two tries, giving Clermont a 21-16 lead.

Having conceded 18 points in the first 15 minutes of the second half, Toulon were staring down the barrel. They turned down opportunities to kick penalties in the search for a try that would bring the scores level, but time was running out when the giant Georgian Gorgodze picked the ball up at the base of a ruck and drove over the line. A simple conversion for Leigh Halfpenny gave Toulon a two point lead with 6 minutes to play. There was still enough time for Clermont to narrowly miss with a drop goal attempt and when the final whistle finally went, the relief around Stade Mayol was palpable.

So, with six games played, Toulon are in fifth place, six points behind surprise leaders La Rochelle. However, so tight are things at the moment, that they are only four points ahead of twelfth-placed Lyon. After the false dawn of the Toulouse match, Toulon supporters will be hopeful that momentum continues into the next match, which is against another form side, Montpellier. As that game is being played on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, by the time you read this, we will probably already know if Toulon have turned a corner or if the topsy turvy nature of their season has continued.



As far as off the field activity is concerned, as is usual, the sports pages have been full of Toulon related stories. In the days before the Clermont match, it was announced that former Bath coach,



Mike Ford, would be joining the Toulon coaching staff. Ford will be taking over as backs coach from Steve Meehan, another former Bath coach, who will stay with the club, in a role that has yet to be clearly defined.

Ford was England's defence coach at one time and he puts his success as an attack coach down to the fact that when you are developing defensive strategies you need to analyse how teams attack. At Bath he said that he wanted the team to play in a way that made it difficult for the opposition to defend against.



Reportedly, Toulon president Mourad Boudjellal likes the way Bath played under Ford and this is what caused him to add him to his staff. However, if he liked their style that much, it begs the question why he waited until six games into the new season before bringing Ford in. One suspects that the influence of a certain Jonny Wilkinson may also have been important in getting the deal done. At the press conference to introduce him, Ford said that the Top 14 is slower than the English Premiership and the ball is in play less and his role is to get Toulon to develop a style of play that keeps the ball alive and in movement more than is the norm in the French league.

We all want our team to play beautifully, but ultimately professional sport comes down to wins and losses and Boudjellal is not the sort of man to be happy watching a losing team that plays open, attractive rugby.

On the subject of the Toulon president, in the press conference after the Clermont match he intimated that he would step down at the end of the season. Boudjellal has been the man in charge since 2006 and has spent a lot of his personal fortune on making Toulon the force they are and his will be very big boots to fill, as and when he does go. Whether that day will really be at the end of this season remains to be seen.

October sees the return of European rugby, with Toulon opening their campaign with the toughest of assignments against last year's champions Saracens. The television schedules have yet to be released, so we do not know when that match will be played, but it is some time over the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> October. The following weekend, Toulon travel to Sale.

The week before the Saracens match, Toulon travel to the current Top 14 leaders La Rochelle and the month concludes with a home game against Grenoble.

Quite how quickly Mike Ford's influence will take effect remains to be seen, but let us hope that the Clermont win marks the start of better things for Toulon.

#### THE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK OF THE VAR (BSN)

This organisation exists to support not only the bereaved, but also those who are terminally ill, & their families/friends. If you, or someone you know, could benefit from our confidential support, then please contact Sandra- 04 94 84 64 89 / 06 32 35 31 24 - email [info@bsnvar.org](mailto:info@bsnvar.org) or go to our web site [www.bsnvar.org](http://www.bsnvar.org) for further information.

#### L'Oasis Christian Fellowship LORGUES

Part of the Anglican Church  
of Lorgues with Fayence  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday at "Arc-en-Provence"  
1801 Chemin des Pailles Lorgues  
4th Sunday at Notre Dames des Anges  
17 Avenue des Quatre Pierres - Lorgues followed by  
bring & share lunch.  
Contact Rev Peter or Shirley Massey  
04 94 73 93 37 or 06 87 94 04 83  
Website [www.lorgueswithfayence.org](http://www.lorgueswithfayence.org)

#### Fellowship of the Ascension

##### MONTAUXOUX

Part of the Anglican Church  
of Lorgues with Fayence

1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays 11 am at The Presbytery Montauxoux  
37 Rue St Brigitte, followed by bring and share  
lunch

Contact Rev Peter Massey 0494 739337  
or Hilary Rost at 0494 477067

Website [www.lorgueswithfayence.org](http://www.lorgueswithfayence.org)

#### St. John the Evangelist –

Ave Paul Doumer - St Raphaël

Holy Communion every Sunday at 10.30

a.m. followed by refreshments.

Details Andrew Hayward

Andrew.hayward@sfr.fr 04 94 60 88 07

Or: 04 94 60 87 05

Grimaud Village Church

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday each month 11am

Ring 04 94 60 87 05 for details

[www.sjevar.com](http://www.sjevar.com)

Is ALCOHOL a problem for you?

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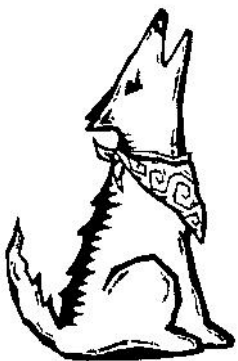
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