

UK COMMUNITY NEWS

BBC TV's Bā'ibā Bluff

For those who are unfamiliar with it, "Call My Bluff" is a quiz show on BBC TV in which a rare word is given, the various members of one team then explain what it means, but only one of them is telling the truth, and the other team have to try to work out which the correct meaning is.

On the lunchtime programme of Tuesday 6th September, one of the words was "farsang", which is of course an old Persian unit of distance. The team member giving the correct definition backed it up (the material for true and false meanings is given by the BBC researchers, though members will often put their own spin on) by a quotation, presumably accurate, from what he called "the Persian epic The Dawn Breakers" about the black standard being raised and taken a certain distance.

It would be nice had this meant something to the other team but they lost their chance of a point by going for one of the false meanings, thinking it was a Malaysian flying squirrel.

Bahā'Ā Writings on teletext

From Wednesday 23rd - Sunday 27th August, Channel 4's Scottish regional teletext featured five different Bahā'Ā contributions on "God lines", (p469). The pages were in the form of a "thought for the day" and all included a quote from the Bahā'Ā Writings.

Subscriptions

Brilliant Star

This is a magazine for Bahā'Ā children of all ages. It is full of articles, stories and activities designed to aid their development as Bahā'Ās in an enjoyable and purposeful way. It is also an excellent resource for parents and teachers, and all involved with Bahā'Ā schools.

Subscription cost Â£15 per year for 6 issues.

Herald of the South

This magazine is produced in Australia but contains articles on current issues of global concern and promotes the concepts of world citizenship and unity in diversity, with special attention to the celebration of cultural identity through the Arts. It maintains a high standard of design, style and presentation, with beautiful photographs. It is very suitable for non-Bahā'Ās.

Subscription cost - Â£15 per year for four issues /Â Â£24 for two years.

Payment can be made by cheque to: "National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'Ās of the UK". Send to Bahā'Ā-Subscription Service, c/o Parvin and Malcolm Lee, 6 Queen's Drive, Bedford MK41 9BG Tel: 01234 350829

The Bahā'Ā Academy for the Arts 2000



Sorting their heads out – participants in the Shiatzu massage course.

Rob Weinberg reports on an unforgettable week

None of us living as Bahá'ís today can afford to ignore the power and importance of the arts in the life of our community. The Universal House of Justice itself initiated a new era in Bahá'í artistic expression by encouraging the diverse cultural contributions during the Second World Congress in New York in 1992. Since that time, the arts have been mentioned many times in the House of Justice's messages, extolling the power of the arts in teaching, developing and consolidating community life, and assisting us to discover within ourselves, mines rich in gems of inestimable value.

Since its foundation a year after the World Congress, the Bahá'í Academy for the Arts has gradually created for itself a unique niche in the life of the community. The Academy has always aimed to provide a nurturing, empowering and challenging training environment for the spiritual, artistic and personal growth of its participants. This year saw the Academy take a quantum leap in its scope, management and success, building firmly on the insights gained and sacrifices of previous years, and leading many of its participants to note that it had really "come of age".



Scene from –The Language of the Heart– a musical life of Thomas Breakwell performed at the Academy

This summer's Academy - the eighth - held at Sidcot School from the 29th July - 5th August, welcomed a total of 157 participants - ranging in age from 9 months to over 80 years old - including almost 50 children and junior youth, in direct response to the emphasis being placed on this age group during the Twelve Month Plan and beyond. The growth of the Academy was apparent in the fact that this year there were 13 distinct courses, 4

independent projects happening on site, and the number of staff members had risen to 23.



The Academy attracted a record number of junior youth this year. Ladjamaya (sitting, left) and Sarah (back row, waving), two of the dance/drama teachers, are pictured here with the crowd of young friends.

The extraordinary thing about the Arts Academy is the diversity of work that is going on at any one time. After the daily Morning Focus of spiritual and creative inspiration, you can wander along a corridor and see a group of students spinning clay on a wheel, move upstairs and discover photographers analysing the slides they have just developed. Turn a corner and there is a choir learning an African chant, in the dance studio youth pull together a hugely energetic routine to the latest chart sound, while in a nearby classroom, a group of youngsters are composing some incidental music to conjure up the spirit of Paris at the turn of the century for a musical life of Thomas Breakwell. In another block, a group of women explore the experience of prayer through their responses to the colours in nature. Then there are the children journeying through the Valley of Love using puppetry, the hands-on experience of a Shiatsu massage workshop, the furrowed brows of students grappling with a range of new experiences from interior design to graphics, from creative writing to learning life management skills. Across the road, in the meeting hall, lighting is being set up for a play to be performed that evening while next door, a young rock band rehearse new material.

And each evening, the students get the chance to see Bahá'ís who are making their art their life - Beverley Evans' magnificent performance as Juliet Thompson, Conrad 'Merz' Lambert in a sublime unplugged set, dazzling bands Fuze and Kai, Tom Fox's majestic slide presentations, Ladjamaya's moving experience of being a black woman growing up in racist America. As one student complained, "I'm suffering from an overdose of excellence."



The Academy team and (most of) this year's staff members

As the week unfolds, transformation occurs. The outside world is left behind and the creativity flows. Careworn faces beam with unprovoked smiles, old world order behaviour begins to be discarded in favour of new models of respect, encouragement and participation. Then, all too quickly the week is over and it's time to see the fruit of everyone's efforts. All of it valid, and valuable, and valued. The high points, too many to mention, the low point - that it has to come to an end.

For anyone who doubts the value of such a week, let the participants speak for themselves. One junior youth wrote, "I think I am a more spiritual person and I feel closer to God!" A course facilitator identified, "...a spirit which permeates throughout every moment and conversation, hearts connecting with ease, fellowship, experiencing emotions of the Kingdom. To have lived through these moments is a blessing..." And an adult student reflected, "I have come away with a lifted spirit, a wonderful group of new friends, success in discovering a wonderful new art form in which to express myself to the Lord and my world...Truly, this has been my best 'residential school' experience during the past thirty years."



Children exploring the Seven Valleys through arts and drama

Plans are already underway for next year's Bahá'í Academy for the Arts where the Academy hopes to welcome painter Don Rogers from Canada and writer John Hatcher from Florida. Please contact Margaret Appa, Tel: 01903 771529 for further details.



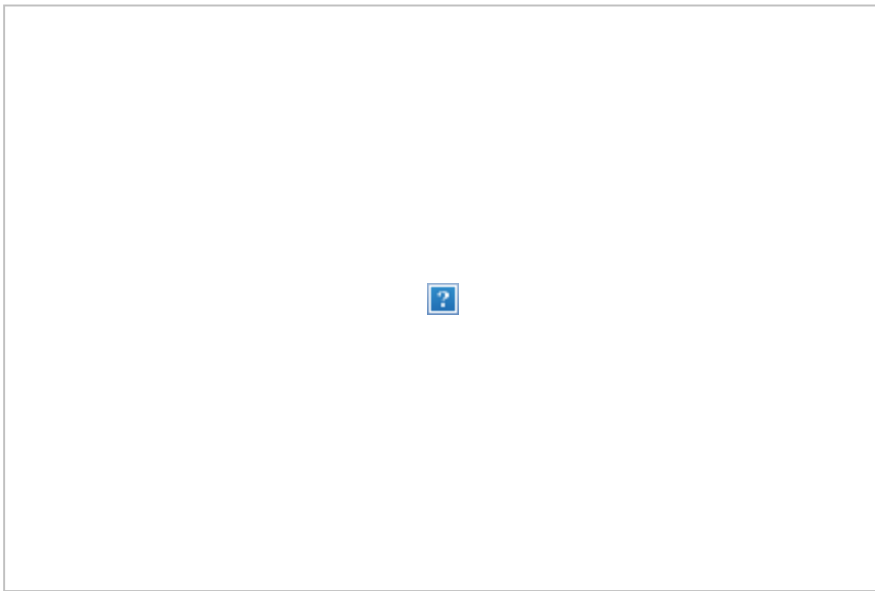
The cast and crew of "The Language of the Heart" a musical dramatisation of the life of Thomas Breakwell written by Rob Weinberg, directed by Simon Sharp and performed at the Bahá'í Academy for the Arts.

It's all singing and dancing in Northants

In July, Daventry Bahá'ís took part in the Millennium Carnival in Brixworth. A big group of Bahá'ís walked, sang, and played African drums behind a car draped in large banners proclaiming that the Bahá'í Faith united the world one heart at a time.

Sunday 13th August saw the ROOTS Culturefest 2000 at Irchester Country Park organised by the Northampton Council featuring Asian and West Indian music and the Northampton Bahá'í choir.

Richard Leigh the choir's leader, and Vicky Howarth, talked to a reporter from BBC radio Northampton. The interview finished with a live broadcast of a rousing chorus of the African song "We are walking in the light of God". The attractive Bahá'í stall was well noticed and gave support to the message that the Bahá'ís applaud the cultural diversity in our society.



Daventry Bahá'ís at the Millennium Carnival in Brixworth. They walked, sang, and played African drums behind a car draped in large banners.

Beyond syllables and sounds

A one day conference exploring the mystery of prayer with Kishan Manocha (National Assembly member) Farnaz Heidari (Auxiliary Board member) Fidelma Meehan and David Lewis Saturday 28th October, 10am - 6pm Winchester School of Art, Park Avenue, Winchester Evening programme open to the public, 8pm Followed by a day of teaching activities in Winchester Sunday 29th October Details, Tel: 01962 865924 or 01962 844997 e-mail <mailto:strazavi@compuserve.com>

Ridvan The New Dawn

You may now enjoy the oratorio of the Ridván Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh on CD £10 + £1 pp video - £12 + £1 pp book - £5 + £1 pp

Please make cheques payable to: Brangwyn Project and send to Joan Phillips, 11 Clos Penderrie, Penllergaer Swansea SA4 1BZ

Media skills training available

Communities wanting to expand their media skills might like to take part in a training course run by Corinne Podger. Corinne has been working as a journalist for many years and is currently a news reporter at the BBC World Service. The one-day course covers:

what makes your community "newsworthy"? working successfully with your local media writing press releases and preparing press kits being interviewed

The course takes a full day, and can be held on a Saturday or Sunday. Corinne is willing to travel anywhere in England and Wales, although assistance with travel costs would be helpful.

To arrange for a course with Corinne Podger in your community, please call her on Tel: 0207 557 2476 (work).

Birth of the Bábí celebration in the Millennium Dome Saturday 21st October

Yes it's true! The UK Bahá'í community will be guests and hosts at this all-day, all-welcome Unity Feast, 10am-6pm. £10 entrance fee for the Bahá'í celebration and to see all zones (under 5's free). 30-minute presentation shows with a Bahá'í theme will be staged throughout the day. Please come, bring some flowers and some friends with you.

Information from Jeremy Herbert, Tel: 01981 550176 e-mail: jch36@hotmail.com DECLARE INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS



"Who is Writing the Future?" exhibition at the Dagenham Town Show, a project run by the newly re-formed Spiritual Assembly of Barking and Dagenham.

The Bahá'í Society for Persian Arts and Letters Conference, 26-29 December 2000

