

NOTIS NEWS

VOLUME 14, No. 4, WINTER 2001

NORTHWEST TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS SOCIETY

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International Translators Day Celebration with Seattle Opera Surtitler “If I translate word for word...”

by Nina Gettler

On Saturday, September 29th, more than 50 members of NOTIS and WITS (Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society) and their guests gathered at the Lake Union Crew House to celebrate International Translators and Interpreters Day with an event designed to satisfy the most discriminating of tastes—in more ways than one.

After welcoming words from WITS President **Emma Garkavi**, ATA President **Ann G. Macfarlane** greeted the attendees (see her remarks on page 5), reminding them that this day is the feast of St. Jerome, who had translated the Christian scriptures into the language of ordinary people. She admitted to a sneaking affection for the misogynistic saint, who had agonized over his translations in a way that anyone practicing this craft today can easily relate to:

If I translate word for word I produce nonsense, but if I have to change something in the order of the words or their sound I could be accused of failing in my duties as a translator.

Referring to the tragic events of September 11th, Macfarlane reminded the attendees that, while acknowledging the difficult times, they should “also rejoice in the fact that as translators and interpreters, we work in a long tradition of those who are helping to heal the world.”

After a luscious lunch, the audience settled in to listen to Jonathan Dean, who has been preparing and cueing the English surtitles, which are projected above the stage for all productions of the Seattle Opera, since 1997.

Dean’s lively talk, peppered with anecdotes and musical examples, began with a few remarks on the history of opera, which dates back to Florence in the 1590’s. From there, the operatic tradition spread to other European countries. Opera was introduced to America by none other than Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart’s librettist for some of his best-loved operas, such as *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Da Ponte took refuge in the U.S. from his checkered life in Europe in 1805 and spent his last 30-odd years mostly in New York City, teaching and importing Italian singers and musicians to convince Americans of the delights of opera. However, opera did not really catch on until the Metropolitan Opera House was built in 1883.

For a long time, opera was relegated to New York City and the Metropolitan Opera. But through the Met’s radio broadcasts, which began in the 1930’s, interest in opera gradually started to broaden. More and more companies were founded (Seattle’s own opera dates back to the 60’s), and today, there are more than 150 opera companies in the U.S.

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**Northwest Translators
and Interpreters Society**

A chapter of
the American Translators Association

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NOTIS NOTES

**Welcome to
New Members**

Daisy Sánchez Sylvan [Spanish], Takayuki Yamamoto [Japanese], Tanya Yoshida-Rude [Japanese], Jeremy Simer [Spanish], Victor Wright [Thai], Radosveta Hall [Bulgarian], Christine Johnson [German], Carlos Marapodi [Spanish], Renee Palermo [Spanish], Israel Garcia [Spanish], Mechtild Cremer [German], Kasha Litynska [Polish], Ruediger Erbrich [German], Jose Fernando Mayorga [Spanish], Kirsten Andrews [German], Jessica Bolding [Mandarin Chinese], Yoko Roberts [Japanese], Catalina Willburn [Spanish], Felipe Gonzales [Spanish], Julia Gardner [German, French], Yuki Hiramitsu [Japanese], Xavier Pujol I Berlanga [Spanish], Britt-Mari Lord [Swedish], Christel Wan-Del-Jonge Vos [German], José Ignacio Hulse [Spanish], Martina Rutledge [German], Katharina Jensen [German]

**Welcome to
New Corporate
Member**

Shunra LLC

**Directory Proof
Sheets**

This month you will receive a proof sheet for your directory listing in the 2002 *NOTIS Directory of Translators and Interpreters* (if you were a member on record as of June 30, 2001 and we received listing information from you). If you have any changes or corrections to make, please use this sheet to make them. You must return the sheet no later than November 16, 2001, if you wish to make any changes to your listing. If we do not receive a proof sheet from you, we will assume you accept your listing as is and that it is free of errors.

Think Renewal!

We'll be sending out reminders for membership renewal at the end of the year, but you can save us postage and time by renewing early. Membership rates remain the same for 2002: \$35/yr. for individual and institutional members, and \$50/yr. for corporate members. Please be sure to let us know of any changes in your postal or email address and phone number when you renew.

UPCOMING EVENTS

New NIB

The Autumn update to the NOTIS InfoBase is now on our home page (<http://www.NOTISnet.org>). The deadline for changes to information for the next update is the 15th of December. Thank you for your patience as we struggled to get this one out!

Directory Advertising Thanks

The 2002 NOTIS *Directory of Translators and Interpreters* will soon go to press and will be distributed to over 600 users of language services across the country. The advertising revenues will make a substantial contribution to the cost of publication. Many thanks to all who advertised for supporting NOTIS in this vital aspect of our member services.

Searchable Online Directory

In 2002, we would like to get a searchable NOTIS *Directory* online and we have everything we need, except time. If you have some free time to volunteer to NOTIS and some experience with Microsoft Access and Front Page, or if you would like to learn about them, please contact NOTIS at info@notisnet.org and we will get you in touch with our webmistress!

Electronic Distribution of NOTIS News

We will start implementing the electronic distribution of *NOTIS News* and send out email reminders when the new issue of *NOTIS News* is posted on the NOTIS Web Site (www.notisnet.org) in PDF. Ideally, we will phase out sending hardcopies altogether and electronic notification will become our standard method of delivery. Please let us know if you wish to continue receiving a hardcopy by filling out the form below and sending it to *NOTIS News*, P.O. Box 25301, Seattle, WA 98125.

ATA Accreditation Workshop

NOTIS will again offer an Accreditation Workshop in preparation for the American Translators Association Examination scheduled for April 27 in Seattle. The workshop will be held **Saturday, January 26, 2002, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.** Please arrive by 12:45 p.m., if possible. Presented by NOTIS, the workshop will help you prepare for all the “major and minor do’s and don’ts” of the exam. **Registration deadline is Monday, January 14.** Cost before deadline: \$20 for members of NOTIS, SOMI, WITS; \$25 for non-members. You may join NOTIS at registration. After the deadline, if places are available: \$25 for all. To register and for other information, including advance handouts, call Jean Leblon at (425) 778-9889. If there is no answer on the phone, please leave a message with a clear mention of your name, spelled out, and the telephone number(s) where and when you can be reached.

ATA Accreditation Workshop, Saturday, January 26, 2002, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. at University of Washington campus, Denny Hall 216. Pre-registration is required.

Holiday Festivities

Please plan on joining members of NOTIS and WITS for a festive Holiday Potluck on Saturday, December 8 at the UW Waterfront Activities Center. Network and renew ties with colleagues in an informal setting and enjoy delicious food. Coordinators from translation & interpretation agencies are also invited to come and mingle. Please bring a dish to share, beverages will be provided.

Saturday, December 8, 2001, 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., University of Washington Waterfront Activities Center. For more information go to www.notisnet.org.

Yes, I would like to continue receiving a hardcopy of *NOTIS News* in the mail.

NAME (Please print): _____
ADDRESS: _____

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When the Met broadcasts first began, it was clear that the American audience needed information to be able to give opera a fair hearing. The commentator (to this day) summarizes the action in the scene to come (after an early misguided attempt to simultaneously interpret the text).

The history of surtitles began when the famed coloratura soprano, Beverly Sills, brought the idea back from China and hired film subtitler Sonya Friedman to do surtitles for televised opera productions. The first surtitles as we know them were introduced in 1983 at the Toronto Opera by Lofti Mansouri in a performance of *Elektra* by Richard Strauss. The technique spread quickly, and the Seattle Opera jumped on board early on with a subtitled performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in 1984.

In the early days of surtitles, the text was on slides so that one needed a battle plan to keep track of them all and advance the carousel. Even a comparatively short opera like *Elektra* needed 550 slides. Wagner's *Ring*, for instance, would have needed more than 4000 slides, truly a logistical nightmare.

With modern technology, surtitling has become relatively easy. Using PowerPoint, the computer is wired into the projector, and one person can easily accomplish the entire task.

The surtitles are usually projected above the proscenium arch. The other method, which is used at the Met because its construction makes projection above the stage awkward, consists of installing a small calculator-size screen on the back of each chair.

As far as the translation itself is concerned, Dean, whose working languages are Italian, French and German, quoted the French saying "*traduire, c'est trahir*" - "to translate is to betray", reminding the audience of the complexity of literary translation, which must fulfill a number of other criteria.

One of the most stringent criteria is length. At 2 lines of about 40 characters each, space is at a premium, forcing the translator to look for concise means of expression.

"If I translate word for word..."

Another criterion is tone. Opera, being what it is, is full of melodramatic moments that can make modern audiences, especially in countries where melodrama is not part of everyday life, uncomfortable. This becomes particularly important when the singer is not experienced enough to carry off such a moment without occasioning inappropriate merriment in the audience. Cultural differences, too, must be handled responsibly, and the translator must be sensitive to possible politically incorrect nuances and deal with them accordingly.

Antiquated or bombastic language (Richard Wagner is a prime example here) presents a special challenge. When translating the text, Dean said that he takes care to bring the meaning across while, at the same time, paring down Wagner's hypertrophic language. The handout showed a perfect example from Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

In addition to all the tricky linguistic problems, there's the music. In the ideal case, the cadence of the words will match the music. Dean gave a particularly vivid example of this with a brief excerpt from the feverish second act duet between Violetta and Alfredo from Verdi's *La Traviata*. Another problem that he has to deal with is laughter. In the case of a comic opera or the occasional comic line, the words need to be carefully calibrated so that laughter does not obscure the music or upstage the singer.

When asked how long it takes him to translate an opera, Dean said that normally it takes a couple of months. However, he is currently behind schedule and is still working on the operas that will be presented this season because it took him a full 9 months to translate the 4 operas of Wagner's *Ring*, which were performed this past August.

A lively Q and A session ended the event, and the attendees thanked Jonathan Dean for this entertaining talk with a round of enthusiastic applause.

NOTIS member Nina Gettler is an German>English>German translator and can be reached at ninagettler@home.com

NOTIS and WITS Joint Holiday Party
Saturday, December 8, 2001, UW Waterfront Activities Center

Remarks On INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS DAY September 29, 2001

*by Ann G. Macfarlane
President, American Translators Association*

Dear friends, dear colleagues –

It is an honor to be able to address you on the occasion of International Translators and Interpreters Day. Tomorrow, September 30, is the actual festival, but we are gathered here today thanks to the diligent and constructive efforts of our colleagues in the Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society, and the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society. Many thanks to all of you who worked so hard to make this day possible, and to all of you who have come to join us in celebration.

September has been for us all a challenging and in many ways a despairing month. We witnessed terrible events on Tuesday, September 11. We have all been working, ever since, to try to make sense of them and to try to find a pathway through the rubble left by terrorists on that day. So it is good for us to meet on this day, to reflect on our profession and the work we do, and to try to take a longer perspective.

You may know that September 30 began its festival life as the feast of St. Jerome. Jerome lived in the fourth and fifth centuries of our era, and translated the Christian scriptures into the language of ordinary people so that all could read them. In his day the language of ordinary people was Latin.

Jerome was diligent in pursuing his studies of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages of his source texts. Jerome has a bad rap today in some circles as a misogynist, and if you read his letters, you can see why. He was a product of his times. 1700 years later, some of his views would curl your hair. But I always have had a sneaking affection for the old curmudgeon, since I read his comment about the challenges he faced as a translator:

If I translate word for word I produce nonsense, but if I have to change something in the order of the words or their sound I could be accused of failing in my duties as a translator.

Does that sound familiar?! How modern his comment, and how often we all have felt that same frustration as we translate or interpret.

Jerome is claimed as a saint by the Christian tradition, but I believe that his dedication, and his willingness to admit the difficulties he faced in his work, qualify him well as patron for all of us who translate or interpret, whatever our religious or spiritual views. One of the interesting and heartening results of these terrible weeks has been the realization, the affirmation, that in fact there are such things as universal values. In every one of the world's great religions, as in the atheist, agnostic and humanist traditions, it is recognized and has been affirmed that the terrorist acts committed on September 11 were wrong.

Grand Sheik Mohammed Sayyid Tantawi of al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the highest religious authorities in Sunni Islam, had this to say: "The killing of innocent people is a despicable and heinous act that is not accepted by religion or human sensibility. Such terrorism should be condemned, whatever the source."

We know that those acts were wrong. We know that our nation faces a long and difficult struggle to respond appropriately to those acts, to protect our own people, and to prevent the infliction of such evil on the rest of the world in future.

But what is our role? What are we as individuals called to do?

The Saturday after these events, my husband and I had some old friends come by for dinner. We got ourselves something to drink, and moved outside to talk. The two men plunged immediately into an animated discussion on the diplomatic and military options, the makeup of the President's foreign policy advisors, and the history and geography of Afghanistan. The wife and I didn't have the stomach for geopolitics at

**ATA Accreditation
Examination**
Saturday, April 27, 2002
UW Architecture Hall 019

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“Remarks On ...”

that moment—despite having been a diplomat with the U.S. Foreign Service I find that I have a limited stomach for geopolitics in these times—so we moved inside. I could see that my friend was deeply troubled and finding it difficult to keep her balance after the week of horror. Finally she said to me, “Ann, how are we ever going to solve these problems?”

In response, I told her a story that has been my reference point for many years when faced with challenges that seem to be more than I can handle. In the first century A.D., a student of the Torah was overwhelmed when he realized what a task he had taken on. Study of the Torah requires careful, detailed application, day after day, and has almost infinite ramifications. He said to his teacher, “Rabbi, what shall I do? The Torah is so long, and so difficult to read, and I only have one life in which to study it.” Rabbi Tarfon replied, “It is not yours to finish this task, but you are not free to desist from it.”

“It is not yours to finish this task, but you are not free to desist from it.” This is my motto, in these troubled times, and I offer

it to you also. We are not called upon *to solve* the problems of evil, of violence, of hatred and injustice that face us. But we are not free to desist from them. And we have the great privilege, the great joy, of knowing that in the very work we do, we are working on the side of good, and not evil. Every time we insure that a defendant in a courtroom understands the charges and can make an honest response—every time we translate pharmaceutical specifications so that a drug will be properly and correctly made—every time we prepare a notarized copy of a marriage certificate—every time we sit in a counselor’s office and help a student’s parents to understand what she must do to graduate—we are performing an act of goodness. So let us acknowledge the difficult times in which we find ourselves, but let us also rejoice in the fact that as translators and interpreters, we work in a long tradition of those who are helping to heal the world.

Ann G. Macfarlane can be reached at president@atanet.org.

NOTIS Annual Meeting Board of Directors Election 2001

At the Annual Meeting on November 17, NOTIS members will elect six candidates to the Board of Directors. The Nomination Committee, consisting of Sara Koopman, Chair, Emma Garkavi, and Caitilin Walsh, has proposed these following candidates: Laura Cooper and Olivier Fabris (first-time candidates), and Jean Leblon, Ann Macfarlane, Deya Jorda Nolan and Michelle Privat Obermeyer (incumbents). Voting members of NOTIS have received ballots in the mail. The candidate statements, included in this issue, will give a feel for the range of interests and backgrounds that candidates bring to their positions.

This year members are also being asked to amend the NOTIS Bylaws to increase the potential number of directors from 12 to 14. The NOTIS Board is a “working board” and all the members take an active part in running the Society. The Board recommends this change in order to allow for more members to take part in directing and carrying out NOTIS activities. It is hoped that the membership will support this proposal in the two-thirds majority needed to amend our bylaws.

Although these elections are “uncontested”—there is only one candidate for each vacant position—nevertheless the Board hopes that every eligible member will vote, either by mail or at the meeting. By voting you demonstrate your support and encouragement to those volunteers who dedicate time, thought and energy to our society. Under the United States constitution, we have the right of free association. Active involvement in NOTIS is one small but significant way to exercise that right.

Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2002

Laura Cooper

I was born in Argentina and raised in Puerto Rico. At eighteen I decided I'd had enough of wonderful beaches and weather, and moved to Kansas to pursue a degree in Electrical Engineering. At this time I discovered the joys of interpretation and translation while working for the Kansas State University Grain Science department during the summer. They offered a series of courses to Latin American farmers for which they needed interpretation and translation. After graduation, I moved to Wichita, KS; then to Washington state. After many years of not doing any translation, I have picked it up again when time permits and work comes my way. I am now a member of NOTIS and ATA. I believe serving on the board of NOTIS will be a fun way to get better acquainted with the members and the profession.

Olivier Fabris

I received my diploma in English and Russian to French translation in 1994 from the Institut Supérieur de Traducteurs et Interprètes in Brussels, Belgium. After studying a year abroad in Russia, I went back to school to obtain a Bachelor's degree in Slavic Studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium (1998). I relocated to the US in December 1998 to marry and live with my wife. Since October 1999, I have been employed at the Academy of Languages as a Project Coordinator and Project Manager, while freelancing as a French to English translator. I have a continued interest in exploring and promoting the translation profession and I sincerely hope I can contribute my experience, time and enthusiasm to help with NOTIS administrative tasks.

Michelle Privat Obermeyer (incumbent)

NOTIS is an organization that brings together such a variety of cultures and perspectives. Being a member has been a personally enriching extension of the project management positions I have held in the local translation industry since 1995 (Academy of Languages 1995-1999, Microsoft 2000-present) and the teaching I have done at the Translation & Interpretation Institute at BCC. I became involved in NOTIS upon returning to Seattle from French translation studies in Belgium and Monterey and have been on the Board of Directors since 1999 as the Program Co-Chair and the Publications Chair. Looking into the crystal ball, I see NOTIS offering programs in other locations throughout the Northwest where member interest and enthusiasm can aid our volunteer effort to bring relevant and interesting programs to our membership.

Jean Leblon (incumbent)

French-speaking native of Belgium. Ph.D. in French Literature and Linguistics at Yale University. Taught in several American institutions, served as chairman of a department for nine years. After retirement, joined Microsoft (1987-1995) as translator, editor and French terminology specialist. Member of NOTIS since its incorporation (1988), served as director, secretary, treasurer, and president. Member of ATA, accredited in E > F. Now active in freelance translation, interpretation, narration, and voice-over.

I have served on the board of several organizations. Few of them have given me as much satisfaction as the NOTIS board. I have admired the dedication, efficiency, and enthusiasm of its members. I am certain that the good health of NOTIS will be assured if we continue to attract and retain translators and interpreters who bring to us their imagination, talent, professionalism, and willingness to serve their fellow members. In the last ten years, our profession has come a long way in making itself understood and appreciated by the community at large. In this region, NOTIS has been outstandingly successful in that endeavor; I am confident that it will continue to be so in the future.

Ann G. Macfarlane (incumbent)

It is a privilege to run for another term as a Director of NOTIS. I have been on the Board since 1993 and served as President from 1994-1997. In NOTIS I am active on the Program Committee, assist with publications, and advise on governance issues. I am also just finishing up my term as president of our national association, the American Translators Association. Our marvelous profession still needs to be better recognized by our society as a whole. As translators and interpreters continue to strive to meet the challenges of our economy, mutating with many different events both good and bad, I would like to continue to assist NOTIS to grow and change with the times.

Deya Jorda Nolan (incumbent)

I have been a Board member for the last 2 years and Co-Chair of the Program Committee. I have enjoyed working with my colleagues and I believe I have made contributions to the enhancement of our organization. I am looking forward to continue our work in the Program Committee to provide our members with more lectures and workshops. I have worked in the translation field for the last 10 years and currently I am a freelance Spanish translator.

CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS	TIME & PLACE
Saturday, November 17, 2001	ATA Recap and NOTIS Annual Meeting	Go to www.notisnet.org	Kirkland Public Library
Saturday, December 8, 2001	NOTIS and WITS Joint Holiday Party	Go to www.notisnet.org	UW Waterfront Activities Center
Saturday, January 26, 2002	ATA Accreditation Workshop	To prepare for the ATA examination. See page 3	University of Washington, Denny Hall 216
Saturday, April 27, 2002	ATA Accreditation Examination	Contact ATA to register before March 30	University of Washington, Architecture Hall 019
August 7 – 10, 2002	XVI. World Congress of the International Federation of Translators	Translation: New Ideas for a New Century. Go to www.stibc.org for details.	Vancouver, Canada

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