



LUDWIG-
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insight LMU

The international edition of the LMU Munich newsletter

Looking at tomorrows (and tomorrows and tomorrows...)

by Susanne Wedlich

Professor Christoph Bode is looking at futures, in the plural – and not only in literature. He investigates ‘future narratives’ so as to design a conceptual framework for the analysis of this newly identified type of narration. Future narratives cannot only be found in fictional texts, they appear also in computer games and movies. What they have in common is that they are defined by multiple continuations and open-endedness. In the public sphere, they may well help to optimally communicate diverging scenarios of highly complex processes.



◀ Forerunner of ‘future narratives’: ‘Lola runs’ starring Franka Potente, a classic in contemporary German film history, presents the viewer with multiple continuations. But it has no nodal point, at which the viewer could decide how the story is to be continued.

LMU ensemble plays Carnegie Hall

by Elizabeth Willoughby

What happens when you combine medical study, classical music and charity? LMU got L’Ensemble Médical, a choir and orchestra raising money for groups such as Doctors Without Borders. Not yet two years old, February saw them perform at Carnegie Hall.

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LMU’s main building celebrates two anniversaries

by Clemens Grosse

LMU’s main building has two reasons to celebrate in 2011. The foundation for the original structure was laid some 175 years ago, and the Bestelmeyer Building with its atrium and main lecture hall, a later addition, was officially opened in 1911.

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Bridging gaps

by Julia Wunderlich

LMU was the first German university to sign a formal agreement with the China Scholarship Council in 2005. Thanks to the CSC’s Fellowship Program, over 100 Chinese doctoral students and researchers have since come to LMU. Junming Shao is one of them.

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For the complete article, see

www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2011/01_01.pdf

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LMU ensemble plays Carnegie Hall

by Elizabeth Willoughby

What happens when you combine medical study, classical music and charity? LMU got L'Ensemble Médical, a choir and orchestra raising money for groups such as Doctors Without Borders. Not yet two years old, February saw them perform at Carnegie Hall.

The musicians enter the stage in single files from both sides and take their seats. Then the choir streams in – over 100 men and women fill up the back stage in five ascending rows, sopranos to the left, basses to the right. The soloists enter, nod and are seated, and then the conductor takes her position at the center. She raises her arms, facing the ensemble. The hall falls silent. Her hands, still raised, connect with each pair of eyes. Then in one sudden swoop, a mighty chorus of angels and strings leap into Johann Sebastian Bach's *Mass in B minor*.

A Medical Faculty ensemble is born

L'Ensemble Médical, a choir and orchestra made up mostly of LMU and TUM medical students, professors and doctors, was founded by Gundi Gabrielle, a German American conductor with extensive experience throughout Europe, the US and South America. Unwilling to put aside music for the duration of her studies, Gabrielle put the group together in the spring of 2009, shortly after she was accepted into LMU's medical program.

The response to L'Ensemble was overwhelming. It rapidly grew into a company of nearly 200 members, and its track record speaks for itself – its six national and two to three international performances each year usually play to sold-out venues. "If the standards of the orchestra weren't so high," says violinist Katharina Fröhlich, L'Ensemble Médical's concert master, "it wouldn't be worth the drive to Munich for me." A 2010 graduate from FAU Erlangen, she has just started an anesthesiology internship. "I hope I will continue playing with this orchestra even while working as a doctor."

"There are many amateur ensembles," explains Gabrielle, "but few of really high standards. Plus, our concert venues and especially tours are absolutely unique, particularly for an ensemble this young." Unique indeed. Following performances in places such as Strasbourg Cathedral and Paris Eglise Saint-Eustache, last month the choir and orchestra gave its Carnegie Hall debut. It's the first German university ensemble ever to perform at the prestigious location.



▲ Conquering the hearts of the US audience: L'Ensemble Médical gave its debut at Carnegie Hall last February.

Profound ties between medicine and music

Besides the composition of the group, L'Ensemble Médical has another fundamental link to medicine. Part of the ticket proceeds from its performances are donated to charitable medical organizations. The New York and Washington, DC legs of the recent tour were dedicated to Doctors Without Borders in Haiti, one year after its devastating earthquake, and the Boston concert proceeds to Partners in Health, in Haiti as well.

But the music in medicine theme plays an even larger role for L'Ensemble Médical. As part of the US tour, they participated in the Music in Medicine symposium in collaboration with Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. The program included lectures on applications of music in medicine, the science of music in medicine, musical genius and psychiatric illness, and the music in medicine program at Cornell in collaboration with the Juilliard School for performing arts.

Eager to meet up with his scientist contacts in the US, the only LMU medical professor on the tour, violinist Dr Wolfgang Siess, has no doubts about the medicine and music connection phenomenon. The neurological healing effects of music are of growing interest in science. "As we see in music therapy, the art of music and medical science are a good match," says Patrick Peschke, a chorus bass in the ensemble and in his 5th semester in LMU's medical program.

For this group, the connections are undeniable. As for L'Ensemble Médical's future, it's hard to imagine what they should aspire to beyond the standing ovations they received at every performance and the praises of The New York Times' classical music editor – unless it's to perform for the Pope, which they will do in October.



For more information, see:

www.lensemblemedical.com/en



LMU's main building celebrates two anniversaries

by Clemens Grosse

In 1835, just over 175 years ago, King Ludwig I of Bavaria laid the foundation stone for the building complex that forms the nucleus of LMU's downtown campus. And 100 years ago, the Bestelmeyer Building with its atrium and main lecture hall was officially opened.

The main building at the center of LMU's downtown campus is located right in the heart of the Bavarian capital, and is easily accessible by public transport – or by bicycle. But that wasn't always so. When the main building was constructed, from 1835 onwards, it stood on the edge of the city, and open fields stretched away to the north. The first problem that professors and students faced was how to get there.

Educational reform under Ludwig I

But the institution's relative remoteness from the city center in 1835 was trivial compared to the distance it had already covered. The University was actually founded in Ingolstadt, 120 km north of Munich, in 1472. In 1800 the faculty withdrew to nearby Landshut as the armies of Napoleon advanced. Finally, in one of the first decrees he issued after his coronation in 1826, King Ludwig I ordered that it be transferred to his royal capital. This second move was tantamount to a new beginning.

"Bavaria might not be able to compete with Great Powers like Prussia and Austria in the political and economic spheres, but it should at least be able to equal them in the fields of education and science, become a great intellectual power, so to speak." This is how Dr. Wolfgang Smolka, Director of the LMU Archives and acknowledged expert on the history of LMU, characterizes the King's view. This of course meant that the leading university in the kingdom must relocate to his residential city, and be accommodated in correspondingly imposing buildings.

A special case among German universities

The early complaints about its location were soon silenced by Munich's rapid growth, and the main building itself was very favorably received. One reason was that it was unique. "That a central building should be erected specifically for a university was a novelty at the time, not only in Bavaria but also in a wider context," says Wolfgang Smolka. Berlin University may have served as a model for LMU, but even that institution made use of an existing town house that belonged to Prince Henry.



▲ The new University main building on the edge of the city (colored copperplate engraving, mid 19th century).

Splendor turned inward: the Bestelmeyer Building

The rapid growth of both the city and its University soon made it necessary to extend the original building. In the 1890s, the Adalbert Wing was built on the north side and, at the beginning of the 20th century, work commenced on the so-called Bestelmeyer Building with its atrium and main lecture hall, and renovation of the Grand Aula began.

Wolfgang Smolka finds the Bestelmeyer Building the more interesting of the two structures: "Bestelmeyer's architecture markedly enhanced the significance of the building's interior spaces," he says. Smolka has seen photographs of the interior of the Grand Aula before it was modified, and they reminded him more of the shadowy, awe-inspiring obscurity of an old church. The 'playfulness' of Bestelmeyer's conception, clearly influenced by art nouveau, makes a very different impression, although the architect also designed the Germanic Museum at Harvard University. The many busts, mosaics, marble reliefs, the allegorical representations of the Sciences, and the inscriptions – these are the features that catch the visitor's eye, and make the building so interesting.

Naturally, people who use the main building every day tend not to notice the many fascinating architectural details. Yet virtually every stone has a story to tell. Some of them will no doubt be told at a scholarly conference on the building and its history, organized by the University Archive, which will convene on the occasion of the double jubilee in October.

All those interested in the story of LMU from its beginnings in Ingolstadt are recommended to consult the illustrated history that appeared in 2010. An English translation of this latest (third) edition will be published shortly. For further information see: www.lmu-shop.de

 RESEARCH


◀ This dragon's head certainly looks frightening, but it's just a decorative element on a bronze clothes-pin. It was made in the 10th century and is one of the best known finds from the site of Haithabu.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Bone-hard evidence

by Susanne Wedlich

Raging marauders or heroic warriors? What were the Vikings really like? How did they master a demanding environment? How did they form trading networks and what did they use as trade goods? The anthropologist Gisela Grupe has been using chemical methods to tease clues to Viking lifestyles from skeletal remains and organic materials found at Haithabu, now a candidate for inclusion in the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. Her results challenge some cherished interpretations.



For the complete article, see

www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2011/01_02.pdf


◀ Supporters of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez gathered at the gates of the Mexican cement manufacturer Cemex plant in Puerto La Cruz to celebrate its nationalization as a triumph for the revolution.

ECONOMICS

A delicate balancing act

by Andreas Park

Multinational firms are the driving forces of economic globalization. They invest in emerging markets and establish subsidiaries far from their home bases. Where these subsidiaries are located and what form they take depends crucially on an assessment of the political risks that foreign firms may encounter. Professor Monika Schnitzer and Dr. Iris Kesternich of the Institute of Comparative Economics have studied how such risks may affect the financial structures of subsidiary companies in foreign countries.



For the complete article, see

www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2011/01_03.pdf


◀ Wild relatives: *Cucumis picrocarpus* (a) from Australia is the melon's closest living relative. *Cucumis hystrix* (c) from the Himalayas is the cucumber's closest kin.

NATURAL HISTORY

Hidden treasures

by Susanne Wedlich

The domestication of the donkey, the genetic diversity of the cheetah and the ancestry of the cucumber. A pretty heterogeneous list – but the projects being pursued by the palaeo-anatomist Professor Joris Peters and the botanist Professor Susanne Renner do have one thing in common. None of them would be possible without the many specimens in the Bavarian State Collections of Natural History. And there is little doubt that the keys to many other scientific mysteries are slumbering in the storerooms.



For the complete article, see

www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2011/01_04.pdf


◀ For young neurodermatitis patients, bakeries are generally not ideal places to work in, and the negative effects can make themselves felt within a relatively short time.

MEDICINE

Itchy arms, aching head

by Monika Gödde

Chronic illnesses often make their first appearance in early childhood. Recurring headaches and neurodermatitis are two of the most common. Both of these conditions are due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors, and the lifestyles of patients play a significant role in their development. Researchers at LMU are actively investigating these links – in the hope of identifying the underlying genetic causes.



For the complete article, see

www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2011/01_05.pdf



Bridging gaps

by Julia Wunderlich

The Great Wall, some 9,000 kilometers, and a significant cultural divide lie between China and Germany. Knowledge transfer helps to bridge the distance between the two nations, and one of the best ways to foster it is by the exchange of excellent students and academics. That is why the China Scholarship Council (CSC) enables outstanding Chinese doctoral students to pursue their research abroad. Junming Shao is one of them – the computer scientist is writing his doctoral thesis at LMU Munich.

“I don’t think I would have had the chance to come to Germany if it wasn’t for the scholarship program,” Shao says. He came to Munich in 2008 and hopes to finish his thesis on ‘Clustering Algorithms for the Analysis of Diffusion Tensor Images’ by the end of 2011. The doctoral project of the informatics specialist, who completed his MSc at Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University, Yangling, in the northwest of China, is focused on novel data mining. Shao develops computational techniques that enable researchers to identify functionally important bundles of nerve fibers. These bundles can be thought of as information highways connecting the different processing centers in the brain.

Shao’s supervisor, Professor Christian Böhm, head of the Database Systems Group at LMU’s Department of Computer Science, calls their joint efforts a “success story.” Just recently, Shao and his colleagues received the award for the best paper presented at the International Conference on Data Mining (ICDM) held in Sydney, Australia. “Also, Junming has published a large number of papers, most of them in highly cited journals in the field of data mining,” says Professor Böhm.

Overcoming difficulties

The considerable cultural differences between China and Germany can make even apparently simple problems quite difficult to solve. This is where the team at LMU’s International Office comes in. They provide an introduction to German language and culture, help to find housing and organize social events and day trips. “From setting up a bank account to establishing a social life in Munich they helped immensely,” says Shao.

“Communication was a bit difficult in the beginning,” remembers Professor Böhm. “But Junming was quickly integrated, and meanwhile I can truly say that among my 14 doctoral students, he is one of the most gifted, most creative, and most hard-working. From my experience with Junming, I can say that the com-



About the Chinese Scholarship Program

LMU was the first German university to enter into a formal cooperation with the CSC in 2005. Over the past six years, more than 100 Chinese doctoral students and researchers have been awarded CSC fellowships at LMU. The scholarships enable the completion of a full doctoral program abroad or may be designed as a ‘Sandwich Program’, allowing doctoral students to start and finish their doctoral theses at their home institutions and undergoing one or two years of high-quality research training abroad in between. The scholarships cover air fares and living costs for up to 4 years.

mon cliché that Chinese people are hard-working but not very creative, is disproved.” Looking back, Shao is grateful for every single challenge: “To have overcome all those difficulties feels great when I look back.”

Planning for the future

The CSC, which is sponsored by the Chinese Government, expects Scholars to return to China for at least two years after completing their doctorate, in order to contribute some of the experience they have gained abroad to their own country. But in the long term, Shao says that he might well consider a future in Germany. Nevertheless, after finishing his doctorate, he has one other priority apart from pursuing his scientific career. He wants to share a normal home life with his wife, who is engaged in environmental research and is currently working at the University of Edinburgh. “We got married a year ago,” Shao says. “Fortunately, the research groups we belong to collaborate on some projects, so she can sometimes come to Munich. But, of course, in the long run, we would prefer to live in the same country and, if possible, in the same city.”



LERU argues for investment in basic research

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) has issued a statement in response to the publication by the European Commission of 'Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union.' This white paper outlining research policy goals for the next 9 years was on the agenda of the meeting of the Heads of State or Government (the EU Council) held in Brussels on 4 February. In their statement, 22 European leading research universities that belong to LERU make the case for long-term and extensive investment in basic research. They argue that advances in basic research are a precondition for the innovative applied research required for the development of marketable products. LMU is a founding member of LERU. Since 2008, LMU President Bernd Huber has been the League's Chairman.

 www.leru.org

LMU is the German university with the most ERC grants

LMU can look back on another very successful year in the competition for the prestigious research grants awarded by the European Research Council (ERC). In 2010, proposals submitted by no less than seven LMU scientists were selected for funding. Advanced Investigator Grants went to four of them, the other three received Starting Grants. This brings to 17 the total number of ERC grants awarded to LMU investigators since the inception of the competition in 2007, and underlines LMU's leading position among the top universities in Germany. ERC grants are designed to enable outstanding independent researchers to carry out innovative and high-risk projects. In 2010, the ERC funded 266 Advanced Grants intended for established investigators with a total value of 590 million euros and 427 Starting Grants designed for younger scientists accounting for a total of 580 million euros.

A complete list of the recipients of ERC grants at LMU is available at:

 www.en.lmu.de/about_lmu/people/grants/erc_grants

LMU opens Center for Eastern European Studies

LMU's new Center for Eastern European Studies (ZfO), which will house interdisciplinary research and teaching programs dedicated to Eastern and Southeastern Europe, was officially opened on 27 January. The staff at the new center includes specialists in political and social sciences, theology and ethnology, as well as historians and literary scholars. The aim of the ZfO is to illuminate the process of social, political and cultural transformation that is in progress throughout the region by placing it in its historical context, and to study its long-term implications for the rest of Europe and the wider world. The ZfO participates in scientific collaborations with many universities and research establishments in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and also cooperates with the Centers for Eastern European Studies at the University of California in Berkeley and the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Gold medal for LMU student at Winter Universiade

Having turned in the fastest time in qualifying, Christina Manhard was the first off on the ski cross course at the 25th Winter Universiade in Erzurum, Turkey, and at the end of the day she was still in first place, by a comfortable margin. The LMU student was one of three members of the German team to bring home a gold medal from the World University Winter Games in Turkey. The 21-year-old, who is studying German language and literature, geography and education science, has been an active athlete for the past three years. Her long-term goal is to complete her studies successfully and to fulfil the qualifying norm for participation in the Winter Olympics in 2014 in Sochi. A total of 2,457 students from 52 countries made the trip to Eastern Anatolia, competing in 11 disciplines. The German team, fielded by the German University Sports Association, won seven medals in all, three gold, three silver and one bronze.

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