

Sturges Music Fellows to Perform at Star 2008

The Sturges Fellowship, established in honor of Philemon Sturges, will this summer be supporting the presence of two outstanding young musicians at Star. Jessica Goodenough Heuser, a frequent IRAS/Star attendee, is a soprano who majored in music at Washington University and has performed in numerous choral and solo capacities in the US and Europe. Julia West has studied and performed on the harpsichord for ten years and will be bringing her clear and sensitive music ability (and a harpsichord!) to the island for the first time. Julia and Jessica met when both were in graduate programs in music at the University of North Texas.

These musicians will collaborate on a repertoire that is well suited both to the chapel itself and to the conference topic. Their selections span the period from the earliest written music for multiple voices to the music behind the Age of Enlightenment. The changes in the perception of music over this time affect the sound and the expression of even the most longstanding themes, such as love of God and secular love. As specialists in this area, Julia and Jessica have the experience and understanding of this period of Western music to give us beautiful music every night, which they hope will deepen our reflections on what it means to be human.

We will also be trying out a new format for the candlelight service. At the usual time, we will walk up to the

chapel. Each evening, an old-shoaler attendee in the twenty-something age-range will lead the service with one or two short readings that have been particularly meaningful in her/his life and/or reflect some facet of our week together. This will be followed by about 15–20 minutes of music from Julia and Jessica. We think that this will be preferable to scheduling music in half-hour crevices between scheduled events, and we are very excited to be bringing in the spoken voices of this important part of our community.



Jessica Heuser (l) and Julia West (r)

Chautauqua Conference, July, 1957

Lyman Page, IRAS Historian

1957 was the first year that IRAS held off-island conferences. It's fitting that one of them should have been a very well received series of lectures at Chautauqua, delivered by Rev. Edwin Prince Booth and Dr. Harlow Shapley. The conference was ready to receive them having been "inspired," according to the Chautauqua Daily, by Rev. Booth's sermons during devotional hours the week before. Booth's first lecture was on "Man and his Environment" on Monday, July 22. He emphasized history and the making and extinction of cultures under the rules governing human life, among the strongest of which are those of "bread, blood, and honor," meaning nutrition, kinship, and ego. This led to his Wednesday lecture, "Man in History," expanding on the historical allusions in his first talk. "History is a constant cultural battle," Booth con-

cluded, discussing how the values of succeeding cultures evolve.

On Tuesday morning Dr. Shapley spoke on "Man's Response to Cosmic Facts." In it he presented a current view of the cosmos, but also alluded to a wide-ranging landscape of knowledge which needs to be assimilated in the human search for betterment of the world.

On Thursday Dr. Shapley used films as he described the latest astronomical research, particularly of solar flares, telescopic, and radio telescopic findings, which continue to change human perspective. He took up Booth's historical emphasis and followed human orientation in the universe through egocentric, geocentric, heliocentric, galactocentric, and "...a step beyond." He described the scientific method and ideals. Booth, sharing the stage with him answered a question regarding the

continuation of atomic research with: "I am of the opinion that the search for knowledge is one of the highest mandates under which man lives....The mind may not withhold itself from research, but it is under an equally high ethical command to honor and preserve human life." The two speakers differed on the ultimate capacity for comprehension by the human mind. Booth said, "The mind of man is more and more akin to the divine mind. By a principle of coherence around the sacredness of life itself, man may trust his knowledge." Shapley demurred that he did not share this confidence and pointed out that there are areas that human minds do not comprehend and perhaps never will. Booth agreed, but felt that man was "equipped" for comprehension, even though it came slowly. Later, he dealt directly with the complexities of the subject matter, pointing out that there were no absolutes to knowledge, especially since communicating it required language which was no absolute. Then, in response to Shapley's comment that the essence of science is integrity, he posited, "...integrity, I think, is the only absolute." Finally, Booth emphasized coherence: "Every new fact must be made coherent with the old so that it becomes harmonious."

On Friday the two discussed "Man and Religion." Shapley suggested that science must develop facts but that theologians, social scientists, and philosophers must analyze them. He described discovery in four stages: incredulity and rejection; curiosity; consideration and adjustment; persistent thought and growth through understanding. The last stage the scientist does in conjunction with others—merging of new knowledge and metaphysics. Booth opined, "Religion is the attitude we take toward the determiner of destiny..." that cause was the core of all historical religions. "God is in evolution, and it is in the concept of nature that the concept of God must change... must be responsive to the highest thing we know." The *Chautauqua Daily's* headline was, "Science Produces, Religion Analyzes, Is Panel Summation."

On the Monday starting this week of talks a letter in the *Chautauqua Daily* from Ralph McAllister, vice president in charge of program and Education, stated "The lectures by the Rev. Edward Prince Booth and Dr. Harlow Shapley this week recall vividly the important role Chautauqua Institution played in its earlier days in providing a platform from which leading religionists and scientists could discuss the nature of man without rancor and suspicion." He referred to the "conflict of science and religion" present ever since Darwin and 1859, and by implication at the Scientific Conference in 1876, Chautauqua's third year. He welcomed Booth and Shapley as "...seekers for the truth...participating in this week's program in the spirit of Chautauqua's great tradition."

Announcement of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, Inc. will be held in Elliot Hall, Oceanic Hotel, Star Island, Isles of Shoals, NH, on Thursday Afternoon, July 31, 2008, at the call of the President. In addition to the election of Council members for the terms indicated in the Nominating Committee Report set forth below, a proposal will be presented by the Council to amend the Institute's By-Laws in the manner shown on the included copy (with proposed new language underlined and proposed deletions shown as crossed out).

Ted Laurenson, Secretary

Report of the IRAS Nominating Committee

It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the IRAS Nominating Committee, to present the following slate:

President: Ted Laurenson

Vice President for Religion: Marj Davis

Vice President for Science: Sol Katz

Vice President for Interdisciplinary Affairs: Willem Drees

Vice President for Conferences: Karl Peters (already nominated for 2007–2010; needs official vote)

Vice President for Development: Ursula Goodenough (2008–2011)

Secretary: Michael Cavanaugh (2008–2011)

Treasurer: Robert Bercaw (2008–2011)

Conference Coordinator Nancy Anschuetz (2007–2010; needs re-election)

Council, first full term (2007–2010): Donald Braxton, Robert Bercaw, Sedev Kumar, Alton Jenkins (appointed to fill Carol Albright's unexpired term; nominated for elected term 2008–2011)

Council, second term (2007–2010): Jack Dennis, George Fisher

Note: All above council members need to be elected until 2010, since official elections were not held in 2007. They have already served one year of those terms by extension or appointment.

Council, second term (2008–2011): Muriel Blaisdell, Wim Drees, David Klotz, Lyman Page

Nominating Committee: Carolyn Cavanaugh, Chris Corbally

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Penfield, Chair

Michael Cavanaugh, Past President

Ruth Bercaw

Herb Fried

Chris Corbally

Edmund Robinson

Hope Renewed

John Teske, IRAS President

Dear Friends,

Like other sweet sorrows, the chance to write a last president's letter feels like a kind of gift. It has been quite a ride, over the swelling wave of our first Emergence conference in 2006, into the deep trough of the empty summer of 2007, and our cancelled conference, and now, again, with great excitement and hope, heartfully anticipating the *Human Dimension of Emergence: Nature's Mode of Creativity*. You cannot imagine my excitement. Not only for a long-awaited conference that is right up my personal intellectual alley, but an extension of some cutting-edge, important, and carefully articulated ideas about where we live as symbolic, social, and communal beings, and how nature's creativity brought us here. Oh, but to be back on Star Island, with many of you, some long-missed, just makes my heart sing. Presidents come and go, elected each year by Council, but traditionally serving no more than three years. IRAS is made up of a whole community of dedicated, loving, and thoughtful individuals, the real ballast on rough seas; how well I held the tiller is a judgment which, like being a good father, is yet to be seen. Happily, I expect, I help prepare the way for my betters. As my son says, when friends remark about the ways we are alike, "No, I'm the new, improved version."

Despite the sad and empty place at its center, the loss of our conference, and the deeper loss of members of our IRAS family, it has been a busy and tumultuous year. We responded to last summer's crisis with steadiness, compassion, and hope, followed major evaluations and revamping of the Star Island Corporation's structure and leadership, and watched the confident beginnings of their financial road back. We have done some of our own fundraising, drawing on the resources of our membership to raise some \$10,000 toward keeping our own house in order, and continuing to make our conference experiences affordable, without sacrificing the cutting-edge intellectual quality and excitement we have all come to expect. In full transparency and honesty with our Star Island colleagues, we have also taken this as an opportune time to do some serious thinking about whether or not the best future for IRAS is to continue to hold our conference on Star Island, our only home for over 50 years, or to take on the risks and difficulties of experimenting with another venue. This decision has not yet been made, but will need to be made over the course of this summer. It is probably one of the most important decisions we will ever make as an organization. There are risks and difficulties whichever

way we choose, and, for better or worse, we will set our future by it. I will leave the specifics to our ad hoc venue committee, chaired by the omniscient and indefatigable Michael Cavanaugh.

It may be that, although Star Island is our *mater*, the matrix from which IRAS has grown these fifty-odd years, it is time to leave home, and seek our own, independent way in a wider world; time to grow up. However, as the father of two children, each at their own stage of independence, a son about to embark on his collegiate journey and a daughter finishing hers, the situation looks (also happily) quite different. It is the bittersweet job of a parent to encourage beloved children to leave, something which they must do for their own flourishing. It is a sad task, but a necessary and inevitable one, with its own rewards of joy and pride. A departure of IRAS from Star Island is neither necessary nor inevitable. The Star Island Corporation is weathering this crisis, is likely to be much healthier in the future, and is moving forward with responsibility, wisdom, and confidence. They are also quite open about our value to their mission, and there are possibilities for thinking "outside the box" toward a more mutually advantageous relationship. We bring as much to the Island as the Island brings to us. This is hardly a relationship of dependency from which a maturing independence needs assertion. As much as the Island setting has great esthetic and even spiritual value for us, it is from the interchanges among us, the members of our community, our speakers and their audiences, our discussions in plenary sessions, workshops, and everywhere else, that this retreat affords and magnifies. Happily, we already are the adults, shouldering the responsibilities which also include the trust of our traditions, our relationships, and our community. Which is why this decision is hard.

I would submit that a more fitting analogy may be that of a midlife crisis (having a few of those under my belt). Yes, it is true that to redress imbalances of needs unmet, parts of the psyche left undeveloped, even of healthy flourishing, a change in career, of residence, or of partner may well be called for, whatever adjustments, tearings of fabric, or uprooting they may require. We may well be at this point, whether we want to consider this a change of residence, a change of career, or of marital partner. Or that we don't simply need to liven things up institutionally. Intellectually things are pretty alive already, and this summer's conference is going to make that even more obvious. It isn't about the quality of the setting itself;

In Memoriam

Because we did not meet last summer, our memorial service this summer (Friday August 1, 2 pm, Star Island chapel) will be celebrating an unusually rich collection of wonderful lives: Scout Fuller, Joan Goodwin, Donald Harrington, Louis Martin, Bill Orme-Johnson, Arthur Peacocke, and Bob Sorenson. If there are others that we missed, please contact Ursula at ursula@biology.wustl.edu and we will be sure to include them. And please remember to bring any photos or remembrances so we can fill the room with their presence.

IRAS Website Updated

January witnessed the launch of a new website for IRAS. It offers access to IRAS information, events, and archives in an updated style that we hope will better serve your interest in keeping up with happenings in our community. The pages include information about IRAS conferences, membership, publications, and affiliated organizations. There are also archival pages that provide access to information about past conferences and publications.

The new software base is able to support modern web-based services such as online registration and video content. In addition, popular new communication contrivances for blogging and podcasting could readily be added according to the interest of our community.

The web pages are a work in progress. We have attempted to retain all of the important content of the old web site while streamlining the delivery system. If you notice that something dear is missing, please let us know. We can change and add to the pages in many ways that could make them more useful for you. Just send your ideas and suggestions and I will try to incorporate them into the overall scheme.

Happy surfing!

Don Braxton, IRAS Webmaster

www.iras.org

I for one am going to be ecstatic to be back on Star Island after a two-year absence. It isn't about the people; I love our Star Island Community deeply, and miss many of you desperately.

Nevertheless, sometimes it is not changing the outside relationship that is needed to bridge a troubled time. Sometimes it isn't a change in career, or residence, or partner that is called for at all, but answers to questions better found by looking within, for us, by looking within IRAS, at our purposes, our development, and what we have become. I will not belabor the point about our visibility and role in the burgeoning dialogue between religion, science, and other aspects of our culture that has rapidly expanded since the turn of the millennium, but the happy sustenance of our small size may only make us more specialized and idiosyncratic than we can see. Is Star Island part of a comfortable corner we have painted ourselves into, or are we functioning perfectly adaptively in the niche we have made for ourselves? Welcome to our home; if you have not had a banquet like this before, you don't know what you are missing. This is what we do well.

No, the problem is in our marriage of religion and science, in the yoke that would keep these ambivalent partners working together toward common goals. The marriage is in trouble. The Purposes of IRAS, and our root and strength, includes, as stated formally in our Constitution, (1) promoting human welfare, and (3) stating human values in universal terms, but also (2) "to formulate dynamic

and positive relationships between the concepts developed by science and the goals and hopes of humanity expressed through religion." I do, as do many (but not all) of us, consider myself a *religious naturalist*. But this is not a religion. I also believe that religion can be understood naturalistically, but that does not and will not exhaust the meaning and value of religion. While science certainly helps us understand the goals and hopes of humanity far better than ever before, maybe even puts us in a position to better make progress toward them (I said *maybe*), but it does not provide them. Religion is a human universal and, among other things, does express these goals and hopes. We only pretend otherwise, deny or disattend to this most basic fact, at our peril, certainly as an organization which is *about* religion in an age of science, but probably also as a civilization.

When I helped author our Campion Statement (now included in the purposes of IRAS), I genuinely thought, and still think, that we took an important step forward as an organization. We *do* have a shared sense of values. We *do* take the natural world seriously as a primary source of meaning. But that doesn't entail that it is *the only* source of meaning, no less an article of irrational faith than otherwise. I do not see the second paragraph as a document of separation:

From here, our quests for meaning take us in divergent directions. For some, the natural world and its emergent manifestations in human experience and creativity are the focus of exploration. For some, understandings of the natural world are interwoven with understandings inherent in various religious traditions, generating additional paths of exploration and encounter. As a result, we articulate our emerging orientations with many voices, voices that are harmonious in that we share a common sense of place and gratitude.

We may still share a common sense of place and gratitude, but our voices are not harmonious. Or, to the extent that they are, it is because the voices of those representing "understandings inherent in various religious traditions," have declined to *sotto voce*, where they have not become silent. Perhaps this is temporary; these tensions have been endemic to IRAS since its inception, as tensions and differences between partners must be a part of any marriage. But to lose this other voice, our partners, would be to dissolve the marriage, and we would no longer be IRAS, we would no longer serve our Constitutional purposes. That we *do* need the "additional paths of exploration and encounter," became clear to me in a discussion, at our midwinter planning meeting, of the need for religious concepts, like that of *sacrifice*, if we are to cope with crises of natural resources. I do not think science itself means much without the larger frameworks of human meaning, religious or otherwise, in which it can be couched. Even for those of us for whom the natural world *is* the focus of exploration, do we not think that religion and its history *are* important *natural* "emergent manifestations in human experience and creativity"? And if so, how can they be excluded from attention? I suspect we dare not look away.

I *do not* think this means that we need to accept “on faith” propositional, paradigmatic assertions of any religion (though, where absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, we should better respect those who do). However, I also *do not think*, contra the attacks of contemporary antireligious polemicists, that this is mainly what religion is *about*, even if it is a fair empirical description of the majority of religious believers. Happily, neither do most of the liberal (or excuse me, *progressive*) religious practitioners that I know, be they Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Polytheist, Nontheist, Wiccan, Indigenous, or yes, even Christian. (Actually, one of our oddest tensions is that we seem least able to sustain the participation of liberal Christians, despite the likely truth that without understanding the history of Western Christianity, you cannot really understand Western civilization, even if *pace* Gandhi, it is no more than “a good idea.”) Without the involvement of same, we too often remain clueless, or worse, as one of my wiser counselors put it, “seem not to care about religious traditions, actually despise them in some cases, are ludicrously ignorant of those traditions, and in some cases exhibit the colossal hubris that comes from being unaware of their ignorance.” This is a dangerous and defensive ignorance indeed, as bad as refusing to study violence because you don’t like it. The nasty history of institutional Christianity certainly does not falsify its theological anthropology. In which case, we’d better know something about it.

We are constituted by what we imagine ourselves to be, whether fictional or prospective, as much as by what our science tells us we are. Possibilities *are* constrained by facts, and the more we know about the facts, the more realistic our projection of possibilities might be, but it takes imagination, not science, to invent those possibili-

Good News

The fall appeal to IRAS members and friends raised \$12,115! Thank you to every one of the 63 donors. IRAS plans to put the money to good use. While the dedicated people who plan our conferences and keep the organization running volunteer their time, there are some significant expenses. For example, the funds raised will allow IRAS to attract exciting speakers to our summer conference and gifted teachers for our children’s program, because we can cover their room and board costs. We can also pay modest out-of-pocket expenses for people who serve in less visible ways managing the business of IRAS. Your gifts will go a long way.

Carol Orme-Johnson

ties. Ted Laurenson recently wrote, “Religion is part of our dream of possibilities; its study provides a lens for the observation of many aspects of what the human enterprise is and can be about, of explorations of what it might mean to have different notions of ourselves, and why it might matter if we did.” So, what we are faced with, both in our important decisions this year, as we are always, in the “whither IRAS” discussions that ought be an ongoing part of our self-reflections, is what we can imagine ourselves to be, whether we can, or want, to cast a wider net, or whether our marriage, our Institute *on Religion* in an Age of Science, should be dissolved. But in that case, maybe it won’t matter much who keeps the house.

At the Judgment, God will not ask people what they know but, rather, how they have loved. – Johann Arndt, 17th century Lutheran pietist.

First Impressions from the Venue Survey

Michael Cavanaugh

The ad hoc Venue Committee was appointed to develop a “just in case” scenario of places we could hold our conference in case the hotel at Star Island were ever blown away in a storm or lost in a fire, or some other contingency forced us to leave the island. But after the “crisis of 2007,” the IRAS Council decided to expand its scope to cover more mundane possibilities, such as this past summer’s fire-regulation problems and other scenarios we could imagine. So we got busy and gave a preliminary report and recommendations to the Council at Portsmouth last summer, and asked for further instructions, which were forthcoming. Their instructions were that, in view of the corporation’s likely pulling out all stops to make the 2008 season work, our committee should not worry about that year, and should instead put our energies into looking for a venue for 2009. And since the Council believes we’ll be at Star that year too, they specified an important criterion in our search, namely that the venue needs to have good cancellation policies (though

the council was clear that we are willing to pay a reasonable deposit to secure a good backup venue for 2009).

We have identified 32 specific sites and have discovered several general websites (such as the YMCA Conference Centers website, the Episcopal Conference Centers website, and the websites for centers in some states). Of the 32 specific sites, we have eliminated about half and have put most of the other half on a list of sites “not yet adequately explored.” These are all venues which (at first blush anyway) appear to be too small or have some other significant disadvantage. That leaves four sites which we are actively investigating: one is in New Hampshire, one is in North Carolina, one is in southwest New York, and one is in Wisconsin.

Each of these four has problems. The one in Wisconsin won’t book us until after its 2008 season (since previous tenants have dibs); the one in North Carolina requires an exorbitant deposit and is hard to get to; the one in New York could only host us in the third week of June, which is a problem for European speakers or conferees because of

the academic calendar there; and the one in New Hampshire is very hard to get to. But we are still working on all of these, and exploring others as we can.

I am struck, as we go down our list of requirements and preferences with each site's salesperson, how much our traditions and programs have co-evolved with Star. In every case it would take some adjustment, and perhaps that is why the Council and most of the committee keeps saying, "Of course we will be at Star if they can accommodate us." On the other hand, some of our committee members think we ought to take this opportunity to consider expanding ourselves beyond the confines of Star. Personally I doubt we will do that if Star can accommodate us, but in any case that is a decision for the Council and not for our committee. Our duty is to explore concrete options; your duty is of course to give good feedback, both to our committee as to venues, and to council members on the broader implications of the eventual decision.

Finally and not entirely incidentally, one of our members insists that we ought to develop a "scramble plan" that could be used even in 2008, as well as for 2009 or any

year thereafter. And truth to tell, the long list of places, many of which would theoretically work if we significantly change some of our parameters, serves as a useful "last-minute list." But the really good places are booked well in advance, and it is clear that the Council would be wise to plan for reserving a place for 2009 about which we can feel some excitement, provided the cancellation policies are reasonable.

If YOU know of a possible venue please write me and tell us about it. I'll let you know if it is already on our list, and if it isn't, I'll put it there and we'll look into it.

Michael Cavanaugh: MichaelCav@aol.com

The ad hoc Venue Committee:

Stacey Ake	Carol Albright
Nancy Anschuetz	Chris Corbally
Jeff Dahms	Stanley Klein
Bob McCue	Karl Peters
President John Teske, ex officio	
Michael Cavanaugh, chair	

Ordman's Receive Interfaith Award

Chip and Eunice Ordman

On March 1 Eunice and I received the major annual award for interfaith activity from Muslims in Memphis (a/k/a Masjid As-Salaam, the mosque on Stratford Road). Our (Jewish) Congressman, Rep. Steve Cohen was there, at a major local auditorium, to hand us the award.

In making the award, Isam Abu-kharybeh (President of Muslims in Memphis) made particular reference to the parties we have held in our home inviting mixtures of Muslims, Christians, Jews, and U of M faculty, to our slide-show talks on the Israel-Palestine situation which have drawn Muslims to come talk with people at Temple Israel and Balmoral Presbyterian Church (we've talked elsewhere too, including at Christian Brothers Univ.), and to the fact that Eunice continued so active in this area even after being seriously injured when she was mugged in East Jerusalem last summer.

The event at GPAC included a lecture on "Family Values in Islam" by a quite conservative scholar, Dr. Ahmad Sakr. He was rather too conservative for many in the largely Muslim audience, who heckled a bit in the question session. He was anti-evolution, anti-big bang, anti-homosexual, etc. Let's say that if he were a Christian, he'd make quite a Southern Baptist. He actually gave a rather good lecture on traditional family values, differing from what a Catholic or Southern Baptist might have said only in being more permissive about divorce. Near the start, however, he turned one group of phrases so wonderful that I cannot resist passing it on; you may find a use for a version of it somewhere. Approximately, he said,

God, in his infinite wisdom, has performed many miraculous acts of creation. Among other miraculous creations, he has created mankind. He has in fact demonstrated to us four completely different methods of creating human beings. He has created human beings completely from scratch, when he made Adam. He has created a human being starting from a male, with no female; he did that when he created Eve. And he has created a human being starting from a female, with no male; he did that when Mary gave birth to Jesus." (Pause) "All the rest of us, however, have to bear the consequences of having two parents.

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Information on IRAS can be found at www.iras.org. Star Island is described at www.starisland.org. Information on conference fees, room and board, and registration can be found at www.iras.org/conference.html, or contact Bonnie Falla, IRAS Registrar, 810-1/2 N. Ninth St., Allentown, PA 18102.