

California Classical Association—Northern Section

Report on the Spring 2021 Conference:

ARISTOS: The Musical

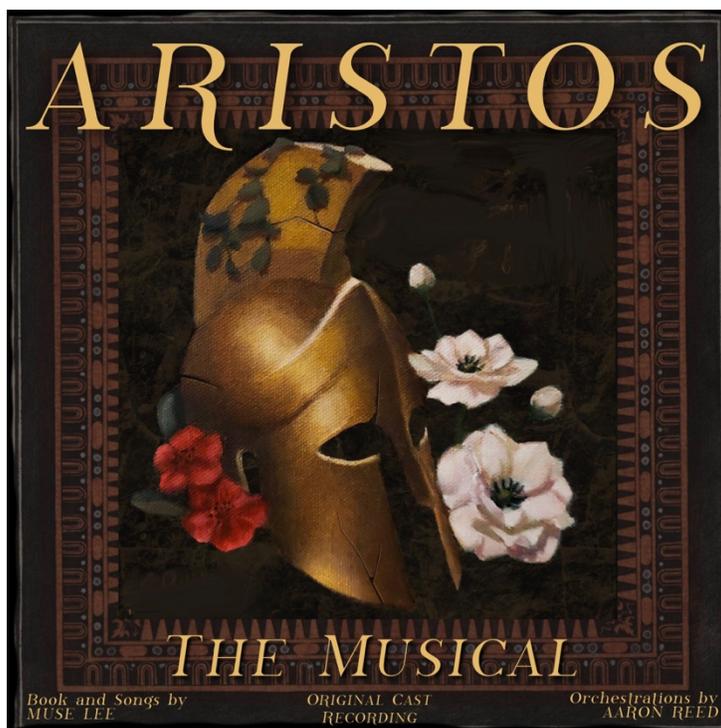
by Mary Blum, CCA-North Board Member-at-Large

On Saturday, April 17, California Classical Association - North had the honor of hosting ARISTOS for our Spring 2021 Conference. *ARISTOS: the Musical* is a work that began as an idea in the mind of Muse Lee, one that might trace its earliest seeds back to his self-described obsession with mythology. Lee confesses that, as a child, he once begged his parents to drive him to a library three hours away so that he could hear a talk on Achilles. Fast forward some years, and we find him in the fall of 2018 taking Professor Richard Martin's "Epic!" class at Stanford University, closely reading the text of the *Iliad* and finding inspiration to begin his own epic journey into the creation of *ARISTOS: The Musical*.

While the *Odyssey* is perhaps better known in popular culture and more widely ranging over time and space than the *Iliad*, *ARISTOS* has created a rendering of the latter that will leave no listener, no viewer untouched by its intense and nuanced unfolding of the love shared by Achilles and Patroclus. Lee, who wrote the book and songs, and Aaron Reed, a friend and fellow Stanford student, who created the orchestrations, arrangements, instrumental and choral compositions, have created an epic in its own right with *ARISTOS: the Musical*.

What is almost as wondrous to tell is that this magic happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. ARISTOS was literally one day

away from its first dress rehearsal when the shelter-in-place order came down in California. Shortly thereafter, the world stepped into parentheses to endure the pandemic. Rather than allow that to stop the project, Lee, Reed and the entire cast nimbly adapted and continued their work as virtual rather than live theatre. With the technology available via Zoom and other platforms, the artists, directors, creators, and actors from across the world were able to breathe life into this amazing production. The talent in the group ranges across age, gender, race, nationality, and time zone. It gives voice to people in seven countries, from ages 13 to 70, in professions varying from retired opera singer to high school student.



Beyond bringing the story of the deep and abiding love between Patroclus and Achilles out of the shadow of *The Odyssey*, *ARISTOS* also makes that story relevant to our 21st century world. With its brilliant casting, score and libretto, *ARISTOS* cuts through preconceptions about an old, seemingly well-known piece of literature and gives new voice and face to each character, from Briseis to Agamemnon. This is not some rehashing of a—dare I say the C word? —“classic”. Rather, this is a newly conceived and newly born telling of truths as old as human companionship: the joy that is love found and the abiding grief that is love lost. At once ancient and new, it

will wring your soul to witness it.

Scene XV: “The Slave Women’s Lament,” is particularly haunting. Comprising voices from Sunnyvale and Sydney to Southport and Saint Petersburg, it is both lament for Patroclus and scathing indictment of Achilles. Through word and score, this threnody builds inexorably into a painfully beautiful keening,

as “grief gives way to / grief gives way to / grief gives way to grief”. A musical ouroboros, it devours itself and its audience even as it renews, line after inexorable line, just as human grief does. And perhaps that is exactly what sets us apart from and beyond Homer’s gods: in the end, they cannot burn as brightly precisely because they do not experience sorrow. In that way, we exceed and ironically outlive them.

There is beauty here, and pain, the great pain inherent to every person graced to love or be loved by another. And it’s damned magical theatre as well. It is strangely fitting, then, to end this review as Homer began the *Iliad*, with an invocation to the muse, to the Muse Lee, whose love of story has gifted us *ARISTOS: the Musical*. Streaming of the production is set for August. ✨

ARISTOS Links

<https://aristosmusical.com/>
<https://www.instagram.com/aristosmusical/>
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnaZ7yd9X6DZcU8QtG3D8JvnFPsrdJwo>



The cast of ARISTOS



Orchestrator Aaron Reed



Songwriter Muse Lee



Armand Akbari as Patroclus

WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT AND FOLLOW US

We are the regional association for Northern California classicists. We hold conferences, produce a newsletter, and maintain close relations with the California Classical Association — Southern Section, the Junior Classical League, the American Classical League, the Society for Classical Studies, the National Committee for Latin and Greek, and the Foreign Language Association of Northern California. In addition, we support the field through scholarships and grants.

website: www.ccanorth.org
 Facebook: [tinyurl.com/ccanorthfacebook](https://www.facebook.com/tinyurl.com/ccanorthfacebook)
 email: ccanorth@gmail.com
 Twitter: [@cca_north](https://twitter.com/@cca_north)



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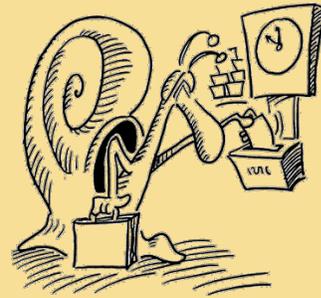
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Contact us at our website: ccanorth.org

APOLOGIES

The exigencies of the global pandemic have caused this newsletter to be several months late. Please forgive. And let us all hope for a rapid end to this tribulation.



Treasurer’s Report

by David Jacobson, CCA-North President



For the six-month period (10 January 2021 - 12 June 2021) the total assets of CCA- North were **\$11,338.93** (\$513.13 in Wells Fargo Checking, \$5,265.33 in Wells Fargo Savings, and \$5,560.47 in PayPal). **Gross Inflows** during this period totaled **\$606.40** in new or renewed Membership dues (\$287.08), tickets to the Spring Conference (\$319.10), donations to the general fund by Mary Blum (\$500), and interest gain in the Savings account (\$0.22). **Gross Outflows** during the same period totaled **\$500.00** in honoraria paid for invited speakers (\$500.00). For this period Inflows exceeded Outflows by **\$106.40**.

Special thanks go those who made special donations:

- Robert Knapp
- Carolyn Fank
- Mary Blum
- John Rundin
- Dobbie Vasquez



Last Supper in Pompeii: An Exhibit at the San Francisco Legion of Honor through August 29

by Sarah Harrell, CCA—North President

Last Supper in Pompeii: *From the Table to the Grave* is an exhibit that was scheduled to open at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco in Spring 2020, but which was postponed due to the pandemic. Ultimately, the Legion opened the exhibition in spring of 2021, and it will remain open till August 29, 2021. The museum is committed to the health and safety of its visitors and thus redesigned the installation for social distancing. Those who have seen the exhibit vouch that it is spectacular.

Visitors to “Last Supper in Pompeii” can expect to see the largest exhibition on Pompeii to travel to the US in 40 years. The exhibition contains roughly 300 objects focusing on the Romans’ love of food and drink; many of the objects have never travelled to the US before. These rarely seen objects include frescoes that covered the wall of a summer dining

room and a carbonized loaf of bread excavated from a baker’s oven. The exhibit takes the visitor on a tour of a typical Pompeiian home, focusing on the role of food and drink in all aspects of life. For example, there will be special look at the worship of Bacchus as god of wine and fertility. A notable element in the exhibit is the “Lady of Oplontis,” the cast in wax and resin of a body of a woman who perished at Oplontis (a town near Pompeii). The exhibit promises to offer a unique perspective on life in Pompeii at the moment of its destruction.

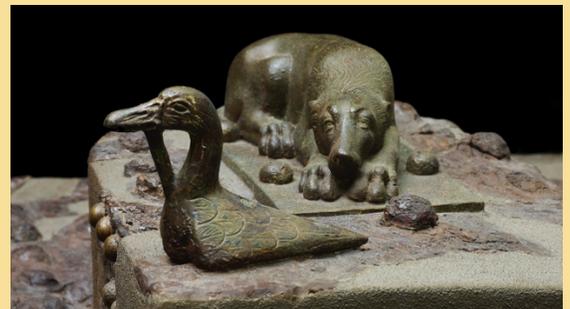
The Legion of Honor’s presentation of this exhibit is organized by Renée Dreyfus, Curator in Charge of Ancient Art and Interpretation at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



Images from *Last Supper in Pompeii*



Carbonized bread from the exhibit (Photo by Gary Sexton)



Decorations on a strongbox on exhibit in Last Supper in Pompeii (Image courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.)



Renée Dreyfus, Distinguished Curator and Curator in Charge of Ancient Art at the Fine Arts museums of San Francisco and San Francisco Curator of “Last Supper in Pompeii” (photo by Gary Sexton)

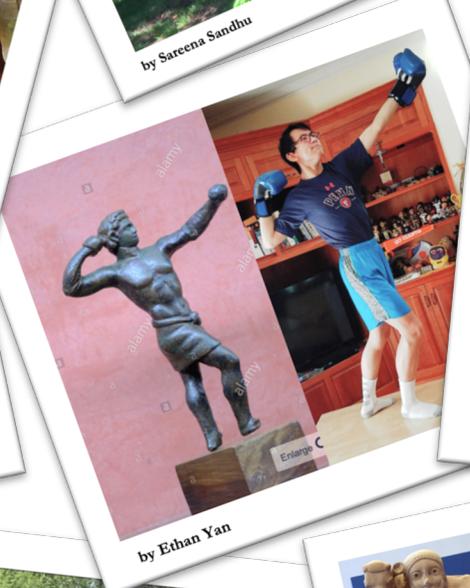
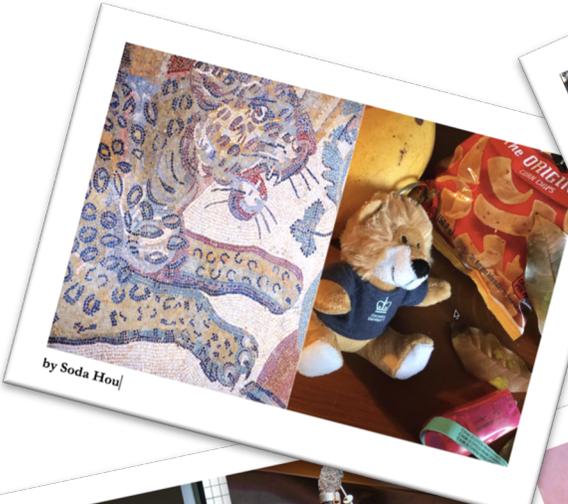
How we Spent the Pandemic: Part IV

(Parts I, II, and III were in the previous newsletter)

**Quarantine and Creativity:
A Celebration of Student Work
in the Time of COVID**

by John Rundin, CCA-North Newsletter Editor

When museums closed down in the spring of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Getty Museum challenged its social media followers to recreate great works of art with ordinary things around the house, including family and friends. Menlo School Latin teacher Jude Morris's students were up for the challenge. And here are the results! 🌸



 **How we Spent the Pandemic: Part V**

Creative Translations

by Gillian McIntosh, CCA-North President

In the Spring Semester of 2020, at San Francisco State University, I facilitated a Classics graduate seminar on “Translation and Translation Theory”. As part of that course, students were tasked with producing “creative translations”; that is, translations that were not literal. The idea here was for students to connect with the texts at a deeper level, to bring themselves to the texts, and engage with the translation process in mindful ways. Here is one sample of the work by Eric Baldwin. I hope you enjoy it. ☼

Creative Translations

Catullus 63
by Eric Baldwin

Carried quickly upon the deep sea,
Eager Attis touched the Phrygian grove with a fleet
foot

and went to the shady place of the goddess,
fanned by forests.

And ‘roused there by
raging madness rambling in his mind,
he with a sharp stone
removes the burden of his bulge.

When she felt limbs left without a manhood,
still staining the soil with sparkling sanguis,
the swift she with snowy hand seized the
tambourine,
your tambourine
your mysteries
Cybele
Mother.

And while shaking a bull’s hollow hide
she shaking too started to sing to her sisters:

“Go on, go, Gallae, go to Cybele’s grand groves
together, together go,
you heedless herds of mistress Dindymene,
who, while seeking lost lands as exiles,
followers of my madness me as your leader you my
companions,
suffered the stings and slings of the sea.

continued...

And from your hallowed hatred of Venus
you emasculated yourselves-

Now cheer your mistress’s mind
and hurry in haste!
Toss tardiness and together go,
follow
to Cybele’s Phrygian home and Phrygian groves,
where Cymbals sound, tambourines ting,
the Phrygian flutist flouts a noisy note
on his curved calamus,
where ivied Maenads mosh their heads,
where the goddess’s troop, while wandering,
was wont to fly,
to whom ‘tis fitting to run in daring dances.”

After Attis, the fake female, sang this to her
sisters,
suddenly the chorus shrieks with trembling
tongues,
the tambourine bellows back, hollow cymbals
ring,
the quick chorus heads to green Ida on a fast
foot.

Just then the petulant panting wandering
blowing breath Attis comes,
accompanied by a tambourine, through the
shaded groves
as their leader,
just like an untamed heifer shunning
the shame of the yoke:
the quick Gallae follow their leader,
fleet of foot.

And so, when the Gallae got to Cybele’s grove,
tired by toil, they went to bed
without food. A slow sleep covers their eyes
with a waning weakness:

The rabid madness of mind passes in the
pleasant peace.
But when the golden faced Sun with shinning
eye
lit up the snow-white sky
the tough terrain the wild waters,
and drove off night’s shadows with spry steeds,
there Sleep, fleeing an awakened Attis, fled:
Then the good goddess Pasithea took Attis
in her trembling bosom.
And so, after a pleasant peace without
maddening madness,

continued...

right then Attis herself reflected upon her deeds
down in her heart, and with a mellow mind saw
without what and where
she was.

And with mind aflame again she suffered
a return to the sea. There, gazing upon
the desolate deep, with weeping eyes
she spoke to her fatherland, sadly, with
a sorrowful sound:

“Fatherland, O Creatrix of me,
fatherland, O my Mother,
whom wretchedly leaving behind, like
‘scaped slaves are forced to flee their masters,
I have born my boot to Ida’s groves,
to be among snow and wild beasts’
cold climes and to visit all their refuges,
raging.

For where or in which places
should I reckon you’ve been placed, patria?
My pupil itself desires to direct its gaze to you,
while, for a brief bit, my mind is
free from maddening madness.
Or shall I be brought to these groves,
removed from my remote home?

Fatherland, shall I leave my goods my friends my
parents?
Shall I leave the forum the wrestling place the
stadium
the gymnasiums?
Ah wretched wretched soul,
you must lament again and again.
For what wight is there
which I have not undertaken?
A woman a young man an ephebus a boy am I?
I was the flower of the gymnasium,
I used to be the glory of the grease:
my doors crowded my thresholds warm
my house was crowned with glowing garlands
when I had to leave my bedroom by sunrise.

Shall I now be known as the gods’ maid and
Cybele’s servant?
Shall I be a Maenad a man barren but a bit of
myself?
Shall I inhabit green Ida’s places cold and covered
with snow?
Shall I spend my life under Phrygia’s fine peaks,
where the deer is wood-dwelling, and the boar is
wood-wandering?

continued...

Right now what I did pains me, right now I am
sorry.”

As the swift sound left his little lips, rosy,
bringing
new messages to divine double ears,
there Cybele, while freeing yokes fastened
to her lions and inciting the enemy of the herd
on its
left, speaks so:

“Come on, come, fierce one go, make it that
madness menaces him, make it that he endures
a return into my groves by blow of madness,
she who desires too freely to flee my fiefdom.
come, strike your side with your tail,
withstand your own whippings,
make it that all places bring back a
bellowing roar.
Fierce one, shake your golden mane
with your knotted neck.”

Scary Cybele so speaks and unyokes
the yokes with her hand.
The wild one himself rousing himself incites
himself to madness in mind,
rushes roars ruptures thickets with a
prowling paw.
But when he came to the wet places of the
soapy shore
and saw tender Attis near the marble sea,
he attacks:
Attis out of her mind
flees into the feral groves:
Forevermore
there
for all her long life,
she was a servant.
Great goddess goddess Cybele goddess
my mistress of Dindymus,
may your all madness be far from my home,
my mistress:

Drive others to rage
others to madness.





In Memoriam

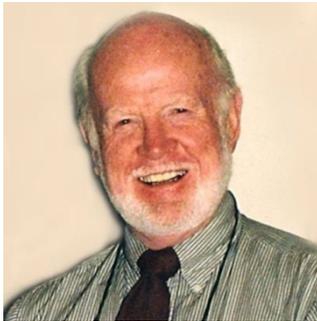
Michael Collins

August 4, 1933 - December 20, 2020

by Dobbie Vasquez, CCA—North Secretary

Although born in New York, Michael lived 83 of his 87 years in northern California. He attended St. Teresa's School in San Francisco and St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park for both high school and college. Ultimately opting not to enter the priesthood for which he had prepared, he earned his teaching credential and began his amazing 53-year teaching career.

Latin was his passion, but he taught whatever was needed:



Michael Collins

English, French, night school, math, social studies, work experience, and even baseball. He also became an administrator for a while, but his heart was in the classroom.

When mandatory retirement closed that door in the public sector, he taught at Stuart Hall in San Francisco and then at the Bentley School in Oakland. He also

served for a number of years as the CCA-North Treasurer and was always available for consultation and advice for any colleague who asked, young or old.

Music was Michael's other great love. He joined and eventually led the *Schola Gregoriana* for over 40 years and sang in barbershop and classical choruses as well. He also performed in over 15 musical theater productions with the Mountain Theater and the Revels. JCLers knew him for the many Gregorian Chant workshops he gave at *Ludi* and State Conventions throughout the years. He and his wife Laura loved jazz and dancing. In his many travels with Laura both here and abroad, he could never resist chanting the *Ave Maria* in every local church they encountered.

Michael was kind, talented, and an excellent listener. His broad grin invited conversation. He and Laura came to CCA

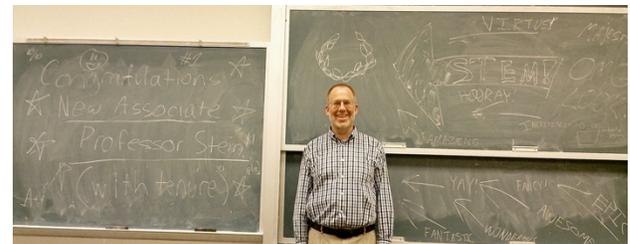
conferences long after he retired from the board. He will be missed. *Avē atque valē, amice cāre!* 🌟

Rex Stem

July 25, 1969 - October 20, 2020

by John Rundin, CCA—North Newsletter Editor

On October 20, 2020, Rex Stem, a revered professor in the University of California, Davis, Classics Program, passed away from



Rex Stem honored by his students in class when he got tenure

complications associated with cancer. He leaves behind a beloved and loving wife, Melissa Stem, and two wonderful teenage children, Henry and Nathalie Stem, as well as his father and his brother.

Rex was an amazing colleague. He combined great erudition and talent with a profound kindness and gentle humility; and his record as a scholar speaks for itself in his numerous publications, including his book *The Political Biographies of Cornelius Nepos*. He was an amazing teacher as well. Of no one could it be better said that *miscuit utile dulci*. He had the ability to excite students' imaginations and bring out the best in them. He was constantly in his office with them, engaging their hearts and minds in long, wide-ranging conversations on the ancient world. They came out of his classes transformed in their knowledge of and enthusiasm for the classics. And he was tireless in his support for them. Not long before his passing, he was still helping a former undergraduate student of his with his dissertation.

I broke the news that Rex had passed away to students in my Latin Prose Composition course. Almost all had been his students. After a moment of stunned disbelief, they poured out their deep grief in touching testimonials. Finally, I asked if we should cancel class that day. There was silence for a moment. Then one student said, “No. Professor Stem would want us to do our work,” and all agreed, so we began to talk about indirect statement.

When he was chair of the UC Davis Classics Program, he was a powerful and effective advocate for both the Program itself and all those who were involved in it—faculty,



Rex with his wife Melissa and two children, Nathalie and Henry, in Roman costumes at UC Davis Picnic Day

students, and staff. Everyone in the UC Davis Classics Program is eternally grateful for his service.

Finally, Rex was a great colleague, friend, father, husband, brother, and son. Affable, funny, wise, and kind, he was always there for those around him. We are so sad to have lost such a wonderful person. ☀

Leslie Threatte

February 1, 1943 - March 25, 2021

by John Rundin, CCA—North Newsletter Editor

On March 25, 2021, Leslie Threatte, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, Classics Department passed away in his beloved adopted hometown of Athens, Greece. Leslie was a long-time member of the CCA—North and, on several occasions, recalled to me how, when he first came to Berkeley in 1970, his new colleague, Professor W. Kendrick Pritchett, had told him that he should join and support the CCA—North.

Leslie’s scholarly reputation is secured through his monumental two-volume *Grammar of Attic Inscriptions*. He got his undergraduate degree at Oberlin College, where he had considered becoming a pianist, and he continued to play the piano for the rest of his life to the delight of guests at the sumptuous dinners he liked to prepare. He went on to get a

Ph.D. at Harvard and settled in as a professor at Berkeley in 1970, where he taught till 2002. He always loved Greece and



Leslie Threatte

became fluent in Modern Greek in the time he spent there. After retirement, he spent much of his time in Greece, where he socialized avidly with expatriates and visiting scholars. Leslie had a wonderful sense of humor and was a great conversationalist.

He is survived by his companion, Prakash, and is mourned by people the world over, who came to enjoy his intelligence and his wit. ☀

Grants, Scholarships, Awards from the CCA—North

by John Rundin, CCA—North Newsletter Editor

Did you know that the CCA—North awards several cash benefits to classicists? There are travel grants, scholarships for high school students who intend to study classics in college. Learn more about these opportunities at our website: ccanorth.org. ☀



NOTA BENE:

We are always delighted to receive submissions for future newsletters!

Please send articles, photographs, and announcements to ccanorth@gmail.com





California Classical Association—Northern Section

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TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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