

STRATA

AMERICAN FRIENDS

OF THE **ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT FOUNDATION**



Six affinity groups (Business, Learning Across Contexts, Law, Arts, Sustainability, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) brought together an international group of German Chancellor Fellows at their virtual Alumni Meeting in October

Inside This Issue

Message from the Chair

Humboldtian Donor Stories –
Professor John Gilje

Alexander von Humboldt
Legacy Circle Donors

Featured Scholar –
Alan Organschi

Featured Scholar –
Melissa Panlasigui

Donor Honor Roll and
Financials

Upcoming Events in 2022

OUR MISSION -

To become a leading source in the United States for the promotion of national and international networking, exchange, and creative collaboration among scientists, scholars, artists, and other professionals, consistent with the goals of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation of Germany.

OUR VISION -

To mobilize the intellectual curiosity, creativity, experience, and passion of Humboldtians to shape research, higher education, and professional development in the United States and beyond.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Humboldtians and Friends,

2021 has been a year of great change and adaptation. American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has continued to adapt to the pandemic and is preparing for what will be the “next normal,” both in terms of our work and our lives in general. The pandemic has continued to demonstrate the vital importance of science and of international scholarly cooperation and exchange. We saw the development of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine—a transatlantic collaboration that has resulted in countless lives being saved. We also experienced first-hand the possibilities for virtual engagement and collaboration with one another across oceans and time zones.

Yet there have been many difficulties in dealing with the pandemic and other national and global challenges. Some of the problems have resulted from cultural and political divides in our societies that have called into question how much of the public is willing to listen to the best scientific evidence. While enormous challenges lie ahead, the contributions of science and scholarship to our understanding, response, and adaptation to the pandemic and to climate change have affirmed the principles that underpin the Humboldt Foundation’s mission—excellence in all disciplines and fields of scholarly endeavor, cooperation across international, disciplinary, and sectoral boundaries, and high standards that engender trust in scholarship.

Both American Friends of AvH and Germany experienced significant departures this year—with Angela Merkel stepping down as chancellor and AFAvH president Cathleen Fisher’s departure to take the leadership of the German-American Fulbright Commission in Berlin this fall. Cathleen leaves behind a well-functioning organization and her impact on American Friends of AvH and the transatlantic space will not be forgotten. We have engaged a search firm to find her successor and hope to make an announcement next spring. In the meantime, rest assured that American Friends is here to support the AvH and its US alumni.

American Friends of AvH welcomed two new staff members this year—Ms. Jessica Strattard Hamilton joined us in May as our new Director of Advancement and Ms. Hayeon Kim took over the Program Coordinator for Events and Communications position in September. We look forward to the expansion of our alumni engagement and outreach efforts in the coming months.

Together with the AvH we recently hosted a virtual meeting of the German Chancellor Fellows. The meeting was a great success, and I am pleased to share that this issue of *Strata* profiles two American “BUKAs” from the 1992 and 2019 classes. I hope you find the interviews about Alan’s and Melissa’s professional and personal journeys to be of interest.

American Friends of AvH is looking forward to a busy year ahead, with several additional sessions of the Humboldt Digital Dialogues planned for the winter and spring. The first series on “Society, Science, and Policy: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic” saw over forty participants for the inaugural sessions. We look forward to exploring themes such as trust and mistrust in science and science communication in the coming months. We are also excited to launch the second series on “Racism in Science and Scholarship,” which will be led by our Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair Dr. Andrea Stith. We also hope to resume our participation in in-person events and meetings, and look forward to speaking to Humboldtians around the country to hear about your unique experiences and accomplishments.

As we near the end of 2021, we wish our friends and alumni good health and resilience, but also hope—in the power of science and scholarship and in international cooperation to inform and shape the policies we must undertake to address our national and global challenges. We also look forward to contributing to a strong relationship between Germany and the United States by supporting the often overlooked, but essential, role of bottom-up scientific, scholarly, and professional collaboration to advance knowledge, build cross-cultural understanding, and benefit society.

E. William Colglazier

Chair

AFAvH Board of Directors

HUMBOLDTIAN DONOR STORIES

PROFESSOR JOHN GILJE

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY IN APPRECIATION OF THE HUMBOLDT EXPERIENCE (USS 1980–81; 1990)

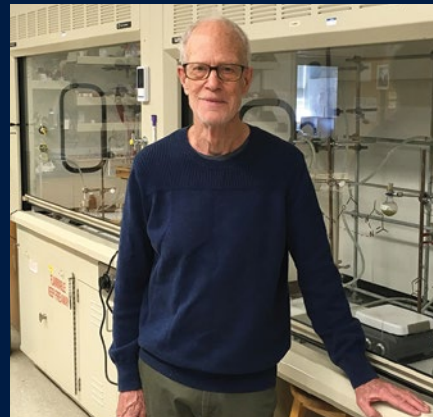
American Friends of AvH is grateful to individuals who have demonstrated their commitment to the Humboldt experience and ethos through major and planned gifts.

Professor John Gilje, Professor of Chemistry at James Madison University, and his wife Julia Gilje joined the Legacy Circle with their recent commitment of a major planned gift to American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Professor Gilje explains, “The AvH changed my life forever. The benefits of being a Humboldtian have been enormous because the award is highly respected. My career has been impacted—from being both an awardee and a Lynen Host—for the better from my Humboldtian experience. This gift is a way for me and my wife to give back in appreciation.”

The Giljes’ unrestricted planned gift will support our mission to sustain the US partnership with Germany and extend the benefits of the Humboldt experience to a new and inclusive generation of US scientists, scholars, and professionals.

“The Foundation has been so good to me and my wife. I was an associate professor with little international experience, and I was able to see the world from a different and enlightening perspective. The international collaborations I have fostered continue to this day. But more importantly, it deepened my experience as a human being. Despite our differences, I’ve learned that people tend to share the same values,” said Professor Gilje in a recent conversation.

American Friends of AvH is grateful for John and Julia Gilje’s generous donation and happy to hear of the many longstanding and fruitful collaborations and friendships.



ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT LEGACY CIRCLE DONORS

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American Friends of AvH invites you to celebrate the Humboldt ethos and experience by making a planned gift. Join us in investing in the next generation of scientists, scholars, and professionals to sustain US-German scientific and scholarly cooperation across national, generational, and disciplinary boundaries.

By giving back through your estate plan, you can leave a fully customizable legacy in a process that is simple to complete, takes little time, and costs nothing today. We honor

the intentions of our planned gift donors through special recognition in the Alexander von Humboldt Legacy Circle.

To learn more about giving options, including those that may benefit both future generations of Humboldtians along with your family, contact our office at giving@americanfriendsofah.org or browse the planned giving menu on our website.

FEATURED SCHOLAR

An Interview with Alan Organschi



Alan Organschi (BUKA 1992–93) is a principal and partner at Gray Organschi Architecture, an architectural practice in New Haven, Connecticut, recognized internationally for its integration of design, construction, and environmental research. He is also the founder of the fabrication workshop and construction management firm JIG Design Build, which in 2018 created the Ecological Living Module, a fully self-sustaining micro-house for the United Nations Environment Program.

In April 2021, Organschi was appointed Director of the Innovation Lab at the Bauhaus der Erde (Bauhaus Earth—www.bauhausdererde.org), a global interdisciplinary initiative that seeks to transform the building sector into a regenerative and ecologically sensitive means to meet the housing and infrastructural needs of an urbanizing global population. Additionally, Organschi is a senior member of the faculty at the Yale School of Architecture, where he has taught architectural design and building technology for the past two decades.

AFAvH: Tell us about your experience as a German Chancellor Fellow, a program that celebrated its 30th anniversary last year.

Alan Organschi: I've been thinking a lot recently about that very special time in Berlin, probably because a number of my former students have expressed interest in the BUKA program and one was lucky enough to spend a hugely productive and valuable year in Stuttgart under its auspices. And of course, now that I'll be returning to Berlin/Potsdam to work on the Bauhaus der Erde initiative, it's prompted a lot of reminiscence and reflection.

My experience in Germany was a rich and deeply rewarding one, cementing my relationship with a country that I had only visited previously as an architectural tourist. The BUKA program gave me the gift of nine colleagues, who over that special year became my close friends. It exposed us all to an incredible array of places and a diversity of people, offered us direct access to important thinkers, and celebrated Germany's achievements while laying bare its challenges.

It was a time of radical change. Reunification was still in its early days and Berlin was its epicenter—the social, political, and cultural confluence of East and West.

I was there to study the architectural manifestations of the differences of both cityscape and building culture that had evolved over the nearly half century of Germany's political division and thirty years of physical partition. Berliners and visitors alike could still feel at the time that, in spite of the dismantling of the Wall, the city remained two cities. Evolutionary biologists talk about sympatric speciation, in which two groups of an identical species evolve away from one another despite inhabiting the same geographic location. Berlin was undergoing a kind of sympatric urbanization (before that process was arrested by the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and steadily erased by the inexorable forces of advanced capitalism).

And it was a time of radical personal change for me. My wife Lisa gave birth to our first child, Hanna ("eine echte Berlinerin" as our German midwife proudly noted in the delivery room) at the hospital in Wilmersdorf and we experienced our first year of parenthood in our little apartment in Nikolassee, not far from where I'll be working on the new Bauhaus project.

AFAvH: How did you first become interested in architecture?

AO: The open curriculum at Brown University where I got my BA in

history allowed me to study my first great loves, biology and chemistry, but also set design in the theater department and, through its cross-registration program with the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), furniture design. RISD exposed me to the leading craftspeople and industrial designers who were my teachers. The technical skills gained there gave me a leg up in the construction world, where I worked as a finish carpenter to help pay my tuition. After college, I moonlighted for a construction company in New York doing high-end apartment renovations while studying architectural theory and history at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. I suppose some amount of middle-class guilt prompted me to suspend woodworking and leave the building industry, at least temporarily, for a master's degree program at the Yale School of Architecture. It was there that the passion of my teachers and classmates changed the course of my life. I suppose my year in Germany as a BUKA was really the first step in their orchestration. It took that very special opportunity to step out of the otherwise inevitable flow of my life and career in the United States to catalyze the process that would lead me, perhaps unsurprisingly, back to Germany today.

Continued on page 6

FEATURED SCHOLAR

An Interview with Melissa Panlasigui



Melissa Panlasigui (BUKA 2019–20) investigated gender equity in publicly funded professional German orchestras during her German Chancellor Fellowship. During her stay in Germany, she worked with the Rainbow Symphony Orchestra Cologne, the *Frauenorchesterprojekt* in Berlin, the Munich International Choir, the Rainbow Sound Orchestra, as well as the *Regenbogen Chor* Munich. She previously served as resident conductor for the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and music director of the UC Berkeley Chamber Orchestra and Summer Symphony in her home state of California.

Panlasigui earned her master's degree in orchestral conducting at the Manhattan School of Music, where she worked with the Contemporary Opera Ensemble and the Wind Ensemble and studied with George Manahan and David Gilbert. She holds a dual bachelor's degree in music and physics from the University of California, Berkeley.

AFAvH: Tell us about your experience as a German Chancellor Fellow.

Melissa Panlasigui: It has been an exceptional time for everyone, and of course, the year did not go as originally planned. Nonetheless, my time as a BUKA has been one of enrichment and growth. I enjoyed the academic freedom that is afforded to the fellows and felt I could really explore ideas to an extent that I had not before. It was also my first time living abroad for an extended period of time, and the experience has influenced my thinking on everything from policy to daily habits.

AFAvH: How did you first become interested in music?

MP: Music was always a part of my life growing up, and my siblings and I all began on the piano. As we grew older, we were lucky to learn other instruments through our public elementary school. The school band and orchestra programs were a huge part of our lives all the way through high school graduation. My high school orchestra director and violin coach held us to a high standard, even as teens, and they inspired me to pursue conducting.

AFAvH: Tell us about the intersection of equity and music and why you

chose Germany as a location to explore this intersection.

MP: Western classical music has historically been a male-dominated field. This is changing, but as in many sectors of society, women are not quickly accepted into leadership positions and other high-visibility roles such as conductors, composers, and principal players. Given the country's prominence as a center of classical music tradition, I wanted to investigate how the conversation regarding gender equity was developing in the orchestras there, and what strategies, if any, orchestras were using to promote gender equity in Germany. My final report, *Women in High-Visibility Roles in German Berufsorchester*, was published by my host organization *musica femina münchen*. It focused on the participation of women as composers, conductors, and artistic directors, and had two main findings. First, in comparison to the German national labor force, these groups lag behind in overall female participation and have a larger gap in female participation between ensemble members and leadership roles. Second, for conductors, education is not translating into opportunity in the professional world. Despite the growing percentage of women studying conducting, their

engagement as professionals has not increased at a commensurate rate. This is a sign that substantial barriers to professionalization continue to exist, which may include the family-incompatible nature of orchestra work and the implicit bias against female leaders.

AFAvH: What continued impact has your German Chancellor Fellowship had on you, both professionally and personally?

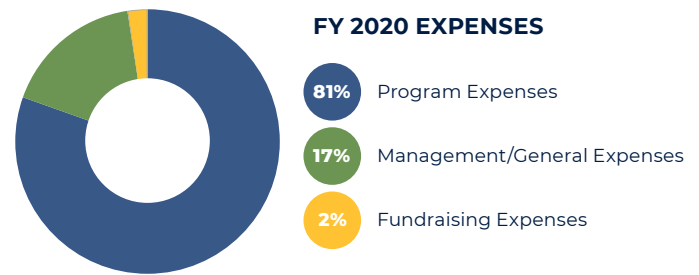
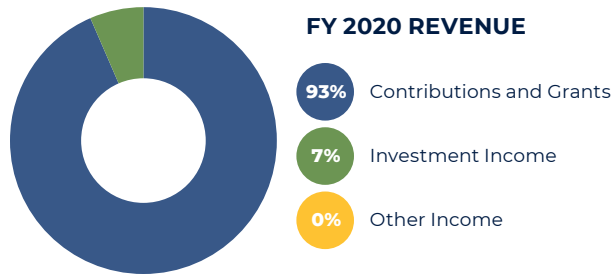
MP: The fellowship has given me the opportunity and freedom to explore the topics of equity and colonialism in Western classical music. It has also given me access to an expansive network for potential artistic collaboration. On a more personal note, I am truly inspired by the work done by my fellowship colleagues and I am privileged to count such a conscientious and passionate group of people as friends.

AFAvH: Could you share a few career highlights?

MP: While on tour with the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra in 2017, I was very lucky to conduct the European premieres of two brilliant new works by Amadeus Regucera and Scott Rubin. It is always such a

Continued on page 6

AUDITED REVENUE & EXPENSES | FY 2020 \$1.0 M BUDGET



Organschi from page 4

AFAvH: Please tell us more about the Bauhaus der Erde project. Have you remained engaged with Germany since your time there as a BUKA?

AO: My wife and partner Lisa Gray and I returned to Germany several times in the two decades following my BUKA year. We visited friends, reintroduced our daughter Hanna to her birthplace, and gave her “Ami” brother August a taste of German culture. In 2012, my connection to Germany shifted back to the academic and professional when I participated in a Cities and Climate Change Network conference that my friend, former BUKA and environmental policy expert Dale Medearis, co-convened at the Free University Berlin and the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK). At that time, I had no idea that nearly a decade later I would be working with PIK founder and leading climate scientist John Schellnhuber at the Bauhaus der Erde.

My involvement at the Bauhaus der Erde is an extension of my work with students at Yale in the pedagogy and practice of design/build and my ongoing research into the potential of the built environment to act as

a means to mitigate (rather than simply adapt to) climate change. One of the outcomes of that research was the paper, “Buildings as a Global Carbon Sink” (co-authored with John and an interdisciplinary team of industrial ecologists and climate-, forest-, and political scientists from PIK and Yale), that was published in *Nature Sustainability* last year. That work with John introduced me to his vision of re-founding a new Bauhaus on the one-hundredth anniversary of the inauguration of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Dessau. What John describes as the “elephant in the climate room” is the huge portion of anthropogenic impact that we can directly attribute to the production, operation, and ultimately demolition of buildings and urban infrastructure. From that initial collaboration, John invited me to direct the Innovation Lab, which, along with a Think Tank and Research Network, functions as one of three legs that underpin that Bauhaus der Erde’s ongoing efforts to transform our behaviors and habits as builders into a force for ecological restoration, climate stabilization, and social enfranchisement.

AFAvH: What continued impact has your German Chancellor Fellowship had on you, both professionally and personally?

AO: First and foremost, I will always feel a deep connection to Germany, its people, and its culture as well as a profound appreciation of its inspiring recovery from 20th century political crises. Today Germany is one of the world’s strongest proponents of democratic process and environmental action (as well as a global economic power). These are lessons that my own country can draw upon as we face growing racial, social, and economic inequality, a deepening political chasm that threatens to divide us permanently, and, most frighteningly, dangerous flirtations with authoritarianism.

My year in Berlin allowed me to search and inquire without having to directly instrumentalize the results. The many insights and lessons gleaned from that year have since emerged and mingled and taken a more meaningful shape than I might have predicted thirty years ago—a “gift that keeps on giving” and one that continually surprises and rewards. The rich intellectualism, cultural awareness, and collaborative spirit that is the foundation of the BUKA program feels like the key to transcultural, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral relationships that are the only means to save the planet as we know it (or at least adapt successfully to the changes our species has wrought). 🌐

Panlasigui from page 5

thrill to work with living composers and introduce their works to the public, especially abroad. I was incredibly proud and honored to be trusted to present these works, and the reception from the audiences was electric!

Another highlight was a collaboration I did in 2018 at SOMArts in San Francisco as part of a festival curated by Sarah Toshie Cargill. In it, my collaborators and I explored the tensions in our lives and bodies created by our participation in Western classical music as people of

color. It was intensely personal and probably the most vulnerable and exposed I have ever felt in front of an audience. 🌐

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*Denotes individuals who made multiple contributions in 2020

COMING UP IN 2022

American Friends of AvH will attend the following meetings in 2022.

Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence Meeting
Vancouver, Canada | February 22 – March 1, 2022

American Physical Society Meeting
Chicago | March 14-18, 2022

Southeast German Studies Consortium Workshop
Boone, NC | March 24-25, 2022

American Association for Cancer Research Conference
New Orleans | April 8-9, 2022

American Chemical Society Meeting
Chicago | August 21-25, 2022

German Studies Association Meeting
Houston | September 15-18, 2022

Society for Neuroscience Meeting
San Diego | November 11-15, 2022

