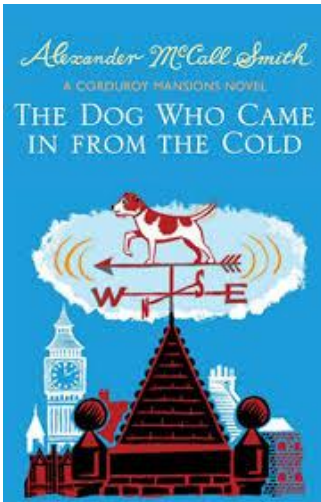


SUMMER READING GUIDE

10 NEW BOOKS TO READ DURING SUMMER 2018

FICTION



THE DOG WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD by Alexander McCall Smith

This comprises 78 short chapters telling the amusing and sometimes suspenseful stories of William French and his MI 6 spy dog, Freddie de la Hay, and a large cast of diverse characters, some living in Corduroy Mansions, Pimlico, London (no, not Edinburgh).

We can follow Freddie's adventures scattered throughout the book, and at the end there is a pleasant, poetic conclusion quoted below.

The reader may have trouble remembering names and plots – We have, for instance, Errol Creatorex, claiming to be writing the autobiography of a Himalayan Yeti, Bertha Snark visiting her brother Terence Moongrove who believes in green men, and Barbara Ragg travelling to the Great Glen, Scotland, with her beloved, Hugh Macpherson, to meet his parents: they swim together at the waterfall, after dramatically rescuing Freddie from the clutches of MI 6 (including Tilly Curtain and Sebastian Duck).

William decided to be content with a quiet life:

“No man is so poor that he can have no home,

No man so lonely that there is none at all

To love him, to listen to his heart,

To hold him, cherish him, and make him whole.”

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

FICTION



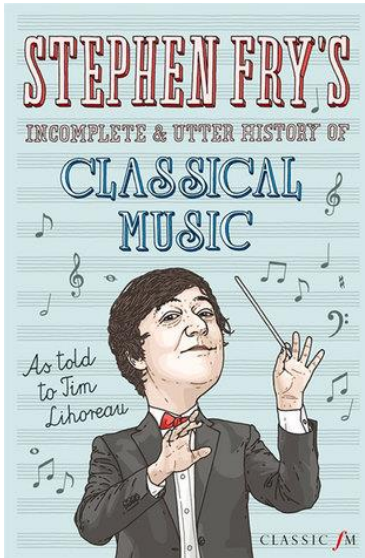
THE VINTAGE SPRINGTIME CLUB by Beatrice Meier

The author is a resident of Strasbourg and winner of a best screenplay award in 2013.

Here, in her first novel, she focuses on the adjustments five ordinary people have to make when they move into accommodation together in Cologne, Germany. I first thought this might not be exciting reading, but the ups and downs, of the plot keep one reading to find out what happens next. Philip and Ricarda continue a love affair which started in their student days. Uschi, purveyor of fine meats, suffers a stroke, but her flatmates insist on caring for her. Rough Harry offends everyone, but has his uses and is forgiven in the end. Eckart, a quiet vegetarian, appears to act as a helpful peacemaker. There is also a small dachshund, Ralf, and thankfully, a happy ending.

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

NON-FICTION



STEPHEN FRY'S INCOMPLETE and UTTER HISTORY of CLASSICAL MUSIC as told to Tim Lihoreau

Although this book contains large doses of Fry's mischievous humour, it provides much interesting historical detail of classical music and its composers, interlaced with other world events (including the arts) as background, e.g. "In 1967, 5.3 billion cans of soft drinks were sold in the US alone".

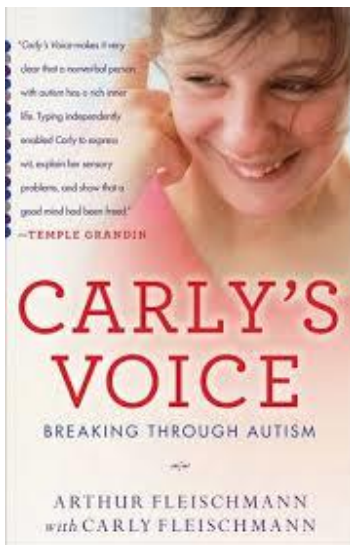
History starts with reference to a cave painting in France, of a possible musical instrument dated at about '3500 BC', and then ranges through evidence from Egypt, Sumeria, China and Greece – an organ at Delphi was a 'big hit'.

More culturally familiar is the great contribution of the church, with its Ambrosian and Gregorian chants and creation of the staff about 1000 AD as a basis for written music. Then follow the major periods of classical music: Renaissance, (with Monteverdi), Baroque, Classical and Romantic. After an imaginary bus tour through modern music, 'Fry's Tours', we are set the essay question, 'Movie music – is it the

new classical music?' and on the final page (304): 'And that more or less gets us up to date'. Great stuff!

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes.

NON - FICTION



CARLY'S VOICE by Arthur Fleischmann with Carly Fleischmann

This book is sub-titled "Breaking through Autism", and it is the fascinating account of how a breakthrough was achieved with Arthur's daughter Carly, who was diagnosed with severe autism at the age of two. Doctors predicted that she would never intellectually develop beyond the abilities of a small child.

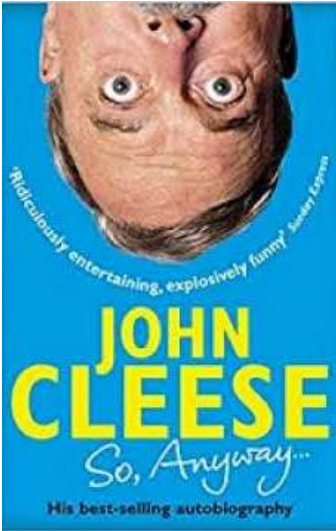
The family and helpers went through years of intense effort and stress trying to help her, with intensive behavioural and communication therapy. Carly did not speak, and remained largely unreachable.

Then, at the age of 10, there was a remarkable breakthrough....(no spoiler here!....), which marked the beginning of Carly's journey towards self-realization.

This account openly explores the challenges of living with autism, and is a wonderful and uplifting story of a very special girl, and the advocate that is Carly today.

Reviewed by Jill Kerr

BIOGRAPHY



SO ANYWAY... by John Cleese

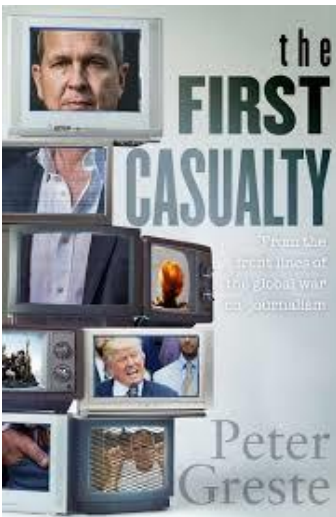
This is an in-depth, funny and well-written account of the life of John Cleese. Famous British entertainer and humourist who had a key role in such TV series as Monty Python, Fawlty towers and many others, and rubbed shoulders with the like of Peter Sellers, Ronnie Barker, The goons, Marty Feldman and Michael Palin. Cleese was born in Weston-Super-Mare in 1939 into a family that had earlier changed its name from Cheese to Cleese to avoid annoyances. He studied law at Cambridge when his dramatic talents were recognized and he was consequently recruited by the BBC. This later involved touring North America and New Zealand before he started work about 1966 on 'The Frost Report', leading to his main career.

The first Python stage shows were in the 1970's.

Quoting one reviewer: 'So, Anyway...glows with fairness, kindness, gentleness and loyalty.'

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

BIOGRAPHY



THE FIRST CASUALTY by Peter Greste

This is an eagerly – awaited account of Greste's unjust imprisonment for 400 days by The Egyptian Government, in 2013 to 2015.

After studying Journalism in Queensland Greste was a foreign correspondent for Reuters, the BBC and al Jazeera. He draws on his international experience to comment generally on the responsibilities and dangers, for anyone trying to speak the truth in a troubled world. Special areas include Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, France and the US.

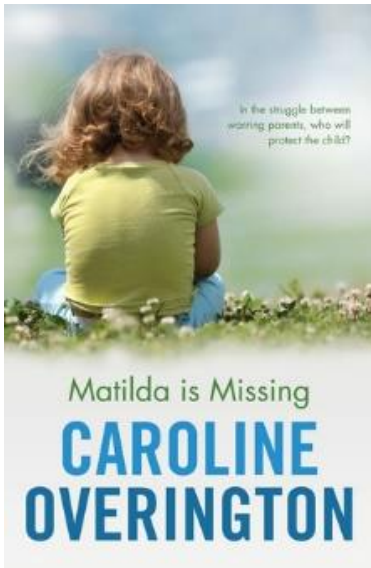
To survive his long prison experience in Cairo he resorted to a daily routine of exercise and meditation.

The "Fearful Country" is one of a number of philosophical chapters where he concludes that Australia is giving up cherished freedoms for the sake of 'national security', discouraging Journalists from revealing the truth.

The book gives an invaluable independent view of current affairs.

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes

FICTION



MATILDA IS MISSING by Caroline Overington

This book is written as a novel, but could well be non-fiction. Barry and Pat's son is going through a divorce, with all the family tensions that go with it – particularly for the grandparents, being denied access to their beloved grandchildren.

In the middle of all this, Barry's old friend Frank, a judge of the Family Court, dies, and leaves him files about another marriage breakup, that of Softie and Garry. They are in the centre of a bitter custody battle over their daughter, Matilda, only 2 years old.

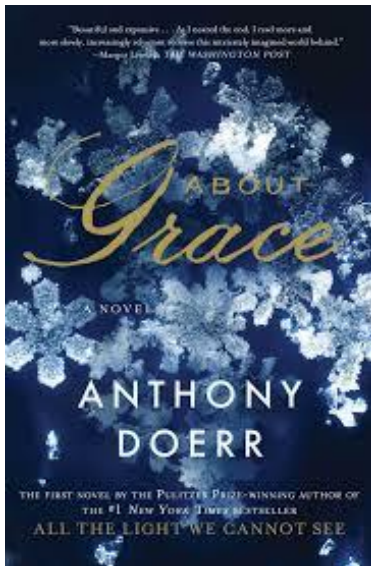
They both attend a series of separate counselling sessions with Dr Bell, and the conversations of these sessions are recounted by Barry as he privately works his way through the tapes.

The story goes into many aspects of a break up of a relationship, particularly about what is best for little Matilda, and the role of the Family Court.

Complex issues are raised, and the final outcome is heartbreaking.

Reviewed by Jill Kerr

FICTION



ABOUT GRACE by Anthony Doerr

This is the debut novel of Anthony doerr, who later won the Pulitzer Prize in 2015 for his book "All the light We Cannot See"

The central character, David Winkler, begins life in Anchorage, Alaska. He is an unusual boy, fascinated by the weather and obsessed with snow, and sho also sleepwalks and experiences vivid dreams that forsee events and his own and other people's lives.

After running away from his wife, Sandy and baby daughter Grace, following the premonition that little Grace will come to harm him in a flood, he spends 20 years on a Caribbean island, too afraid to face reality if he returns.

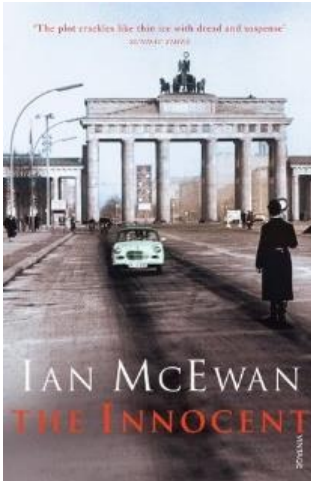
Twenty five years later he finally musters the strength to return to Alaska to out what happened to his family.

This is a compelling story, beautifully written and crafted....it will linger in your mind long after you have finished reading it.

Reviewed by Jill Kerr

PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

THE INNOCENT by Ian McEwan



This psychological thriller is based on a true story but imbued with the kind of drama that only a writer of McEwan's calibre can create.

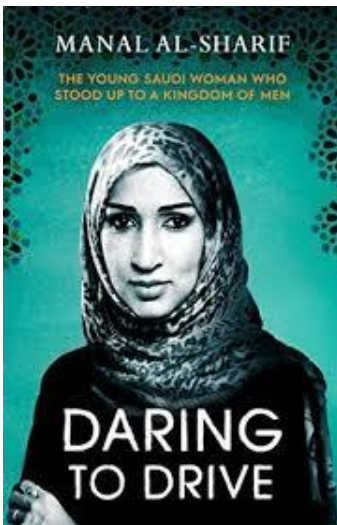
In 1954 a secret tunnel was built by the British and Americans in a joint effort to tap into Russian communications. This was called 'Operation Gold' and operated for only about a year, but is the basis for this tale of love, innocence, political games, sexual awakening and intrigue.

Nevertheless, this is more than just your average spy novel with a token love story, and will keep the reader spell-bound right up to the denouement.

This book may be hard to initially get into, but I would urge you to stick with it. If you enjoy twists, turns and hypnotic writing, creating a finely drawn Cold War atmosphere, you will not be disappointed. McEwan is the writer of some compelling books, and this darkly intriguing tale is undoubtedly one of them.

Reviewed by Jan Thornton

NON-FICTION: MEMOIR



DARING TO DRIVE by Manal Al – Sharif

In the month I put on make-up; wore a short sleeved blouse; talked to a man to whom I was not related; wore trousers; parted my hair on the side; put on nail polish; drank coffee in a café that did not have a 'gender wall' to separate males and females; and even had my hair cut without asking my husband for permission. All of these things could have put my life in danger if I were a woman living in the patriarchy called Saudi Arabia. When Manal al-Sharif wrote this book it was also unlawful, under Saudi Arabian rule, for a woman to drive a car.

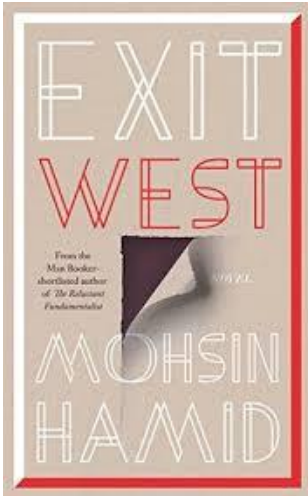
In 2011 Manal was a 32 year old divorcee who could no longer afford to pay for a man to drive her, so she bravely, and deliberately, had a friend video her driving her car, and posted this on the internet. The inevitable happened (as she knew it would) and Manal was imprisoned, but by the time she was released every newspaper had written about her story. Publicity was what she had hoped for.

This book is Manal's narrative about what happened next and makes compelling reading. The role of women in Saudi Arabia is changing but the world cannot be complacent about the progress being made. Since the publication of this book the right of women to drive in Saudi Arabia has been decreed to be 'harmless' and not 'haram'. But the ban on them driving has yet to be lifted by a democratic choice. Despite everything, Manal stays optimistic and the last words in this publication are straight from her heart.

"The rain begins with a single drop." We can only hope that the shower begins soon.

Reviewed by Jan Thornton

FICTION



EXIT WEST by Mohsin Hamid

This is a love story with a supernatural flavour, set in an even more troubled world than ours, but hopefully predicting humanity's innate ability to set itself right. The lover's tale begins in an unnamed nation, probably in the Middle East (the author came from Pakistan) where war is being waged by religious extremists. The lovers manage to escape with the aid of a mysterious black door which allows them to quickly emerge on a Greek island overrun by refugees. Another black door allows entry to London UK, which is also being occupied by migrants. The UK authorities attempt to dislodge their visitors by force, but fortunately find more constructive ways of solving the problem.

The lovers next, magically hop to California and later, home, by which time they have peacefully wound up their long relationship.

Reviewed by Bryan Forbes