

# THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

On April 17, 2018, Shults piloted the crippled Southwest Flight 1380 to safety and helped save 148 lives.

**FLATTERING FASHION TO HIDE FIGURE FLAWS**

Page 10

**HOW TRAINING THESE SERVICE DOGS HELPS VETERANS HEAL**

Page 6

**HOW TO FOSTER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS WITH 5 SIMPLE ACTIVITIES**

Page 2

## **Tammie Jo Shults**

*On What Makes a Hero*

Page 3

# Better Days: Finding Your Rhythm

BARBARA DANZA

Hi. How's your day going? Rather, how's each day going?

When your head hits the pillow each night, do you tend to feel satisfied that you did your best or are you disappointed with how you spent your time and energy?

When there's a disconnect between how we wish to be spending our days and the reality of how our days play out, it's tempting to buckle down, write up rigid schedules, set the alarm even earlier, and push hard, aiming for drastic changes. The white knuckle, all-at-once approach never lasts very long.

A gentler approach is to consider the rhythm of your day.

A lovely daily rhythm can be both comforting and motivational, offering a sense of familiarity and alignment as well as carrying us through to the next moment.

To find your rhythm, consider the innate rhythms of nature.

In kindergarten classrooms, for example, Waldorf school teachers employ a philosophy of daily rhythm that mirrors breathing. Students alternate between activities like free play and rest (exhaling) and creativity and learning (inhaling).

As adults primed for productivity and checking boxes, our days can easily feel like one big breath in—through which we push ourselves

to do "all the things" until we're turning blue. When we finally exhale, we're spent and it's only lunchtime.

Our days, our weeks, our seasons, and our lives have a rhythm to them. We can either fight against it or work with it.

As Waldorf philosophy draws inspiration from the ebbs and flows of breathing, so too we can consider patterns in our energy, our sleep cycles, and even the seasons of the year to inspire the rhythms we maintain each day.

## Know Thyself

The first step to finding your rhythm is to notice some things about yourself and your energy and understand your inner clock, also known as your circadian rhythm.

When do you experience the most mental energy in the day? When do you feel the most depleted during the day? When do you prefer to exercise? How much sleep do you feel is ideal for you? When do you feel most creative? When are you craving rest and nourishment?

Understanding the natural highs and lows of your energy levels throughout the day can help you manage your time to align your actions with what your body is telling you. If you're a morning person like me, slate your mental work in the morning when your mind is

**When do you experience the most mental energy in the day? When do you feel the most depleted during the day?**

sharpest. Reserving less mentally stimulating activities, like laundry and cleaning for example, to the afternoon makes good use of your time while allowing your brain to switch to autopilot for a while. Can't handle laundry? Perhaps you need a nap instead.

Objectively observing your body's natural rhythm can make your days run much more smoothly.

## Adjust Your Expectations

Something that trips us up when our time management doesn't align with our vision is that our hopes are too unreasonable. We tend to overestimate what we can do in a day, but underestimate what we can do in a year.

As you adjust your daily activities to align with your daily rhythm, adjust your expectations as well. A 10-minute walk every day is actually better than a 45-minute walk once a week. Writing one page a day will result in 365 pages by the end of the year.

Give yourself a break and appreciate even the smallest accomplishment. Aim for consistency, not volume, on a day-to-day basis.

## The Flow of the Week

You can also consider how your week tends to flow.

A typical week may see Monday as a ramping up sort of day, reentering work-mode. Tuesday may be super productive after hav-

ing readied yourself on Monday. Wednesday and Thursday hum along and you begin to feel motivated to wrap things up by Friday. Friday you start off-ramping to the weekend. The weekend is focused on family, friends, fun, and rejuvenation.

Your week may look significantly different from that stereotypical week, but whatever it looks like, notice it and work with it.

## Change With the Seasons

Each season of the year can inspire different levels of energy as well. In winter, we tend to want to stay home more, hunker down by the fire, sip tea, and replenish ourselves. This may be a great time to read those books you've been meaning to read or take an online class you've been considering.

In contrast, summertime is a time of fun, sunshine, and activity. Perhaps you can up your fitness game, bring a project to fruition, or reconnect with loved ones.

In spring, we're sowing seeds, making plans, setting ourselves up for future success. In fall, we're gathering and wrapping things up, harvesting the fruits of our labors.

The seasons give us hints as to how to use our time and energy well.

The next time you feel like your days aren't that they could be, look to nature and see if you can better align your rhythm.

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In winter, we tend to want to stay home more, hunker down by the fire, sip tea, and replenish ourselves.

## How to Foster Family Relationships With 5 Simple Activities

BARBARA DANZA

Few aspects of life are as important as the strength of our family relationships. Yet, day to day it's all too easy to live within our individual bubbles, existing together but separately within our individual responsibilities and spheres. The modern technology that purports to connect us actually further exacerbates disconnection—even within our own homes.

Fostering strong family relationships these days calls for a certain amount of intention. Here are five simple activities you can intentionally incorporate into your family life to strengthen those relationships. The benefits of making your family relationships a top priority can last for a lifetime.

### Rituals

Whether it's the regular routine at breakfast where the whole fam-

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ily connects and checks in, the bedtime routine at night with lots of snuggles, storybooks, and chitchat, or the ways in which you mark special occasions and holidays, rituals bond comfort every member of the family.

The details of these precious moments, many of which may seem ordinary and forgettable at the time, make lasting memories about the essence of your family's character.

Rituals are predictable, comforting, and full of love and warmth. They can be simple or extravagant, but they'll always be special to precisely your family and will always be something you share.

### Reading Aloud

No matter how old your children get, share stories together with them. Whether you read aloud to them or you all enjoy an audiobook together, diving into a

wonderfully told story can lead to interesting conversations and certain delight. Make this part of who your family is—a family that reads together. You'll bond over some of the best gifts life has to offer.

### Family Projects

Take on a challenging project together. Whether it's a giant jigsaw puzzle on the dining room table, a charity endeavor with a goal in mind, or cooking a nice dinner, dive in and work together on a project. You'll remember it forever and the singular focus will foster a deeper connection.

### Board Game Night

Playing board games together is one of the easiest ways to connect with your family. It's difficult to multitask when you're playing a board game. Everyone is focused on the same activity. Phones are put away, perhaps nice music

plays in the background, a few choice snacks keep everyone going, and it's just plain fun.

### Family Adventures

My favorite way to deepen family connection is through family adventures. Whether you're camping in the backyard, taking a day trip to a new museum, or venturing out to explore a different corner of the world, embarking on an adventure as a family is one of the most enriching and connecting things you could possibly do together.

Adventures force you to put aside all of the things that call for your attention day-to-day. The change in scenery, routine, and experience—coupled with the unknown, the sense of wonder, and excitement, and the surprises and delights shared along the way—make family adventures totally worthwhile and valuable, especially in today's day and age.

# Tammie Jo Shults

## On What Makes a Hero

CHANNALY PHILIPP

On April 17, 2018, Capt. Tammie Jo Shults headed to LaGuardia Airport in New York to pilot Southwest Airlines Flight 1380, bound for Dallas. That flight, as it turned out, wouldn't be routine.

The plane had only been in the air for 20 minutes and had reached an altitude of 32,500 feet when it was rocked by an explosion. Shults would describe it later, "like a Mack truck hit the side of my aircraft."

The plane shook violently, rolled, and started to dive toward the ground.

Data shows that the plane lost 2,700 feet in the first minute, 4,300 feet in the second minute—it was descending faster than the normal rate of 2,500 feet per minute, though it was nowhere near a free fall. Within five minutes, they dropped 18,000 feet.

Shults and her first officer Darren Ellis found themselves facing not one type of emergency, but several at once.

A turbine fan blade had broken in the left engine, creating an explosion, so the plane was now running on a single engine; in addition, shrapnel had cut hydraulic and fuel lines and broken a window at row 14, causing sudden decompression inside the plane.

It all hit at once: the roar of the plane traveling at 500 miles per hour, the piercing ear pain, the feeling of being unable to breathe, debris flying around in the cabin. Through it all, the plane continued to shudder violently.

The first few minutes proved critical. Shults and Ellis regained some control of the aircraft with delicate maneuvering. Shults explained that guiding a plane with a single engine and a punctured cabin was like "driving on black ice." You couldn't force the plane to go your way, you had to work with it. Every time they tried to turn the plane left, it felt like the plane wanted to roll onto its left side.

Upon Ellis's suggestion, the pilots decided to head to the Philadelphia airport, which had long runways, and they were familiar with it.

The fate of Flight 1380 was a fortunate one. Though it was reported in the news, Shults has written a new book, "Nerves of Steel: How I Followed My Dreams, Earned My Wings, and Faced My Greatest Challenge," released in December 2019. It gives insight not only into that day, but into the events in her life that, in a way, prepared her to play her role and save the lives of so many.

Touching Down Flight 1380 touched down at the Philadelphia airport 20 minutes after the explosion. There were 144 passengers, and five crew. All but one passenger survived—a woman seated by the window at row 14.

Shults wasn't immediately identified by Southwest—but she was hailed a hero. On social media, gratitude poured in: "The day of that fateful flight, Shults started the day as she did



The crew from flight 1380: (L-R) flight attendants Kathryn Sandoval, Seanique Mallory, Rachel Fernheimer, First Officer Darren Ellis, and Capt. Tammie Jo Shults.



Shults in her "corner office."

pilot, Tammy Jo was so amazing! She landed us safely in Philly. God sent his angels to watch over us. I actually heard someone say, there is a God!" wrote one passenger on Instagram.

**Many attributed her 'nerves of steel' to the training she got in the military. There's much more to it.**

On the ground, the EMT who would take Shults's pulse and do an EKG—as standard procedure required—was amazed: She didn't even have an elevated heart rate.

Before her career at Southwest, Shults was a naval aviator—one of the first women in the U.S. Navy who got to fly an F/A-18 Hornet.

Many attributed her "nerves of steel" to the training she got in the military. There's that, of course, but according to Shults, there's much more to it. Shults wrote: "I believe my calm voice and pulse rate that day were the product of more than my training and demeanor. They didn't magically appear in a sudden moment of need. They'd developed over the years, nurtured through each life experience by my faith and confidence in God's goodness."

The day of that fateful flight, Shults started the day as she did

any other day—with her Bible and a cup of tea.

Even in the last moments of the descent, as she was piecing together how to get the plane to do a final right turn when it wouldn't, she was talking to God.

### Hope

Looking back on the day, Shults noted that when Philadelphia was announced as the destination, it didn't change a thing about the circumstances, but it gave everyone hope—a powerful gift.

"Hope is the glue that holds us together when facts and circumstances could easily tear us apart," she wrote.

When she was young, Shults grew up on a ranch in New Mexico next to the White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base, and she would watch military jets dogfighting in the sky. Her dream was to fly, but she would face many obstacles along the way, whether in the U.S. Navy or in her early days at Southwest. Many would try to smear her reputation, throw her under the bus, and make it clear she was unwelcome.

Despite all this, she never adopted a victim mentality. She knew that life would hold hardships and that there were individuals who wished her ill, but it wasn't that whole organizations were against her.

When the going got tough, her mother would always tell her, "Tomorrow morning, the sun will rise and the birds will sing."

Once, while having a difficult time with an instructor, she told

herself, "My worth was determined by my Maker, not my instructor."

Despite her encounters with difficult people, she also met kind and caring individuals. And so Shults advocates focusing not on the villains but on the heroes.

"Heroes do not require a title or equipment. They don't need to land a crippled plane. A hero is someone who takes the time to see and makes the effort to act on behalf of someone else. In a word, they care," she wrote.

After Shults landed the plane, she made it a point to walk through the cabin and make eye contact with everyone. She took the time to check on the children, including a baby girl who had fallen asleep.

The loss of the passenger in row 14 weighed heavily on her. But at the same time, she was incredibly touched by the display of heroism all around her—from her first officer, the flight attendants, the first responders, the ground team, to the passengers.

When she stepped into the cabin, what she found was not a crowd of anxious, terrified passengers but people who were calm and composed. They had looked out for each other, and some had taken great risks to help one another.

"These people didn't suddenly become compassionate or courageous. They had a history—they had a longstanding habit of loving others and acting unselfishly," she wrote.

One thing is certain: It takes a hero to know one.



The damaged engine from Flight 1380.

Shults on her first flight after Flight 1380, with First Officer Chris Hall on May 16, 2018.

Tammie Jo Shults (L), with Sue Hart and Linda Heid Maloney on detachment in Puerto Rico, 1992.

**To adjust to our therapeutic culture we have, replaced the classical virtues with the virtues of the social justice set.**

We feel free to dump our misfortunes on others without considering that we are spreading our misery.



SHANE ROUNCE/UNSPLASH

## ‘Let It All Hang Out’: Let’s Try a Little Self-Restraint

JEFF MINICK

About 15 years ago, I was shopping in my local grocery store in Waynesville, North Carolina, when a man who once owned an antique store near my bookshop on Main Street offered me condolences about my wife’s recent death. Within two minutes, he changed direction and launched into an account of a sexual encounter he’d had in his store after hours. I will spare you the details, but about halfway through his narrative, he stopped, looking puzzled, and said, “I don’t know why I’m telling you this story,” and then resumed his narrative. I was too polite, and too stunned, to intervene and tell him to cease work.

While he was speaking, however, I was pondering the same question he had raised: Why was this guy telling me these things?

Maybe we can attribute it to these five words: “Let it all hang out.”

### All Heart, No Head

Here’s the definition of this phrase from the online Collins Dictionary: “If you let it all hang out, you relax completely and enjoy yourself without worrying about hiding your emotions or behaving politely.”

I nominate “Let it all hang out” with its rather sloppy definition as the byword of our culture and the wrecking ball of civility, disinterested discourse, and truth.

From television talk shows to the vulgarities employed by politicians and protesters, from the rude talk of radio “shock jocks” to the confessions of acquaintances barely known to us, we find ourselves deluged by the unfettered emotions of others. Ours is now a culture powered by sentiment and passion rather than by thought and introspection. As a



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The flinty missionary played by Katherine Hepburn in “The African Queen” doesn’t feel compelled to share her every thought and feeling with Humphrey Bogart’s Charlie Allnut.

result, our public dialogue and behavior have grown more and more adolescent and immature.

Even complete strangers sometimes bare their souls to us. Once in my bookshop, a customer entered, and within minutes was telling me

authorities had recently accused him of child abuse. He denied the charges, proclaimed his innocence,

and then left the store, never to be seen on the premises again. Perhaps, like a priest or a bartender, owners of small bookshops are regarded as confessors.

### Moans and Groans

A handmaid to this desire to unload our every thought and indulge in our feelings is complaint. We feel free to dump our misfortunes on others without considering that we are spreading our misery. Here’s a trivial example. I have several acquaintances who respond to “How’s it going?” with long, involved recitations of their latest health or family issues: back problems, arthritis, child care, engine troubles with the car. Whatever happened to the perfunctory “I’m fine, thanks. How about you?”

Recently, a good friend, a man in his late 50s, was describing some health issues. He then stopped and mentioned that his father, a veteran of

World War II and an accountant who had died years ago, had major health problems the last few years of his life. “But you know what?” my friend said. “I never heard my father complain. Not once. And yet here I sit going on and on about my cholesterol, and my diet, and my aching back.”

### Once Upon a Time

There was a time when we admired restraint in our fellow human beings. If we visit Hollywood back in the day, we don’t find John Wayne crying into his whiskey because Jimmy Stewart married his sweetheart in the film “The Man Who Killed Liberty Valance.”

The flinty missionary played by Katherine Hepburn in “The African Queen” doesn’t feel compelled to share her every thought and feeling with Humphrey Bogart’s Charlie Allnut.

Even recent movies celebrate restraint and a stoic attitude toward pain missing in society today. When German soldiers shoot Sgt. Horvath twice through the chest in “Saving Private Ryan,” and his captain asks him if he’s all right, Horvath replies,

“Just winded,” before he dies.

Such reticence was once particularly admired in men, but that is no longer the case. In the last 30 years, many in our culture have denigrated male taciturnity, and have encouraged boys and men to acquire skill sets once traditionally associated with women: sensitivity, openness, and greater emotional awareness.

### Death of the Grownup

“Let it all hang out” and its general acceptance have brought profound and often unrecognized changes in politics and culture. To adjust to our therapeutic culture we have, for example, replaced the classical virtues—justice, prudence, temperance, and courage—with the virtues of the social justice set: acceptance of various lifestyles, diversity, equality, and “rights.”

These “virtues” prevail in our universities, our government, and our corporations, where they are enforced by fear, by the quelling of freedom of expression, by the unspoken threats of what happens to those who cross the boundaries of the politically correct.

In her book “The Death of the Grownup,” Diana West writes, “Chuckling maturity for eternal youth may have created the culture of permanent adolescence, but it should now become apparent that this isn’t the same thing as achieving cultural longevity. The question is, what if it turns out that forever young is fatal?”

Maybe it’s time for a sea change.

### Holding Back

Maybe it’s time to hang up on “Let it all hang out” and take up reticence and restraint.

The next time the bank teller asks how we’re doing today, we can say, “Fine. And you?” instead of describing our sleepless night. The next time we want to unload our troubles on someone, even a friend, we might pause a moment and ask ourselves what is the good in sharing that information. We may feel better after the conversation, but our friend may feel terrible. The next time we want to criticize a spouse over failure to perform some household chore, we may decide to bite our tongue and try to find some humor in the situation.

In the movie “Finding Forrester,” an elderly writer says to his young protégé, “You could learn a little something about holding back.”

I suspect most of us could do the same.

*Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.*

## Winning Back a Defiant Toddler

MICHAEL COURTER

Dear Michael, my beloved 3-year-old is getting more defiant and aggressive. She takes away almost all of the toys her younger brother tries to play with, refuses to do what I ask, and she is even aggressive with me. I love her so much and she can be so sweet sometimes, but I am getting more and more frustrated with her behavior. How can I get my sweet little girl back?

Sincerely,  
Growing Frustration  
\*\*\*

Dear Growing Frustration,

The first step to taming toddler defiance and getting toddlers’ behavior under control is to work on your relationship and your bond with them. Since toddlers can’t necessarily express their feelings and needs directly, they might express them indirectly through their behavior. You need to establish a strong bond with them, which is different from the bond you have with a baby. Then you can start to work on setting and enforcing rules.

Many parents make the mistake of tightening discipline when they encounter defiance without focusing on the closeness of the bond first. This can increase defiant behaviors



FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

from the child, cause escalating power struggles and result in retaliatory, anger-based punishments from parents.

When I work with parents on relationship skills with their child, often, 80 percent of the negative behaviors go away before we move into the phase of setting rules and consequences. Having rules and consequences is also necessary.

But a positive relationship creates the foundation for your child to cooperate with the rules, rather than

battling against them.

### Creating Quality Time With Your Child

How exactly do you improve your relationship and bond with a 3-year-old? Just like with other people, you need to spend consistent, focused time with your toddler, and she needs to feel heard and understood.

Since children of this age don’t typically have the verbal communication skills necessary to communicate effectively, art and dramatic

play are important forms of expression they can use to tell you what is important to them. I teach parents to use the following format to get the most connection possible from the quality time they spend with their toddlers.

Set aside specific focused time to play with your toddler and let them know that this is your special time together. If you can do this for at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week, you will get the best results. Make it part of a regular schedule with your child, such as after dinner or before bath time. Buy or set aside specific toys that she only plays with during her special time with you.

All of this establishes the structure and routine that let your child know that this is her special time with you. If you don’t have this much time to spend with your child, it will still help to follow the rest of the steps. However, the less time you put into it, the less of an impact it will make.

### Unstructured Play Is a Toddler’s Love Language

Engage in unstructured play activities with your child and allow her to be in the lead. How do you conduct unstructured play? I like to use either art activities or some type of toy figures that the child can use to tell a story. A variety of toy figures can be used for this purpose, including miniature toy people or animals, puppets, dolls, or stuffed animals.

The parent allows the child to determine what she will make or what the story will be, and simply describes and reflects back to her what she is doing or making. The parent also participates, but lets the child set the lead for what she will create or what the plot of the story is.

Let your child know that you are interested and enthusiastic about what she is doing. This is all you need to do to establish a strong bond with your child. Parents often feel the need to teach, read, or engage their child in a type of game or structured activity. There are times and places for those activities, but they are not as effective for creating a bond with your child.

Allowing the child to lead unstructured activities has several benefits. Children are often being told what to do all day and don’t get to make a lot of choices. This increases defiance. More importantly, your child will use the format of art or storytelling to express her feelings to you.

When you reflect back to her what she is saying or making, that is an equivalent of you deeply listening, validating, and communicating an understanding about her feelings. Having someone feel heard, listened to, and understood is one of the most bonding activities you can do with anyone. When you do this through art and play, you are doing it in the toddler’s language.

After you do this activity with your toddler a few times, you will be in a much better position to create rules, consequences, and order in your house.

### A Strong Relationship Is the Key to Parenting a Child of Any Age

It is important to continue spending quality time with your children in ways that allow them to communicate and feel heard and understood. This is the basis of a strong relationship and will make them feel closer and more connected with you. This will naturally make them more cooperative, and allow you to enforce rules and consequences with less resistance.

It will also establish a strong foundation for continuing a strong parent-child bond into the school-age and teen years, where this bond remains crucial for the next set of parenting challenges you will face with them.

*Michael Courter is a therapist and counselor who believes in the power of personal growth, repairing relationships, and following your dreams. His website is CourtierCounsel.com*

*Do you have questions about relationships or personal growth that you would like Michael to address? Send them to mc@CourtierCounsel.com*



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He knows what he doesn’t know, a recognition that, if remembered and practiced, sometimes leads him to consider the behavior and opinions of others with greater charity.

## Calculus, Mauritania, and Tiramisu: A Man and His Ignorance

JEFF MINICK

Ignorant.

My online dictionary gives several definitions for this word. Here is the second: “lacking knowledge, information, or awareness about a particular thing.”

That’s the one we’ll go with here.

Most of us know people we regard as ignorant. They may lack table manners, having never been taught. They may take all of their news at face value from one television station. They may believe the world is flat, men have never set foot on the moon, or health care should be “free.”

Naturally, few of us wish to be labeled as ignorant. A stigma attaches itself to the word, though surely ignorance trumps stupidity. The former can be altered through education, the latter, at least to me, means making a decision that flies in the face of all reason. Better ignorant than stupid.

Nevertheless, no one wants to be considered ignorant, and yet all of us, in some way or the other, fit the definition.

Because I have no wish to cast aspersions on anyone else, I will take for my example JM. He is someone I know well, and good sport that he is, my comments will bother him no more than a summer shower.

### The Boundless Ignorance of JM

JM is a man of average intelligence, but he is sometimes stupid. He does things he knows are bad for his health or his bank account. Sometimes he acts like a complete idiot. Once, for example, with four grandchildren in his car, he pretended to drive from a parking lot into an open field and instead drove straight into a small ditch he hadn’t noticed at the edge of the field. Fortunately, a good man with a pickup and a chain pulled JM back onto the asphalt. He was ignorant of the ditch, but stupid to be showing off.

Rest assured, however, that JM is an ignorant man. He sees himself, in fact, as a sort of King of Ignorance, an Emperor of Unenlightenment. Here is a short list of what he doesn’t know.

If a Martian visited JM and asked him to explain how his microwave worked, JM would be baffled. The same holds true for his laptop computer, his phone, his car, the alarm on his old clock radio, and the tablet he never uses. He has some foggy idea of the way these machines operate, but could not explain them to anyone in detail.

His ignorance extends to academic subjects. Though he minored in math in college, and took courses in astronomy, physics, and chemistry in high school and college, today JM is unable to solve the simplest problem in calculus. He still doesn’t understand the idea of a “mole” in chemistry, can only marvel at the stars, and retains only a few concepts from physics.

In the realm of finance—banking, stocks, and so on—JM is again an ignorant man, largely from a lack of interest. Talk to him of insurance or investment matters, and a curtain descends in his brain. Tell him he should open a CD, and he thinks you mean a disc that conveys songs and stories. While you’re describing ways to do online brokering, he’s trying to remember the name of the author of “1,000 Books to Read Before You Die.”

In certain areas of the arts, his ignorance is equally rotund. Of ballet, he is familiar only with “The Nutcracker.” While he enjoys the music of Brahms, Mozart, and Bach, his knowledge of classical music is abysmal. He has read widely in history and literature, yet can’t find Mauritania on a map or remember Muhammad’s successor.

Ask JM to name three fine wines from California, and he will simply stare at you. Ask him to name the ingredients in tiramisù, and he will scratch his head. Ask him to tell you the time in Moscow when it’s 2 p.m. in Front Royal, and silence will be your answer.

### Current Affairs

Turn to the burning issues of the day, and JM will express his opinions, but these are thoughts based on feeling and instinct, not always on knowledge. Climate change? He will tell you he is unqualified to answer, as he is not a scientist, but that he believes the issue is politicized. Tell him there are more than two sexes, and he will disagree, basing his response on the biology courses he took in high school and college, and on that neglected tool, observation and commonsense. Tell him that transgenders should be allowed to participate in women’s sports, and he will again disagree, pointing back to biology and to the rights of women athletes.

The Old Dog has learned one new trick: Questions are superior to contentious arguments. Mention that you wish America to become socialist, and he will ask you which socialist country you most admire and why. Tell him that America is racist, and he will ask you to provide current examples of institutionalized racism in the United States.

Of Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson once said, “His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge.”

Of JM, we might safely say, and JM would agree, “His ignorance far exceeded his knowledge.”

### Too Soon Old, but Not Too Late Smart

There is one silver lining in JM’s realization and acceptance of his ignorance.

When JM was a boy, his mother, who hailed from Pennsylvania, kept this Pennsylvania Dutch aphorism on a plaque in the kitchen: “Ve get too soon oldt undt too late schmart.”

Now that he is “oldt,” JM remains ignorant, but he has gotten “schmart” in that he acknowledges in himself an ignorance as vast as the Sahara. He knows what he doesn’t know, a recognition that, if remembered and practiced, sometimes leads him to consider the behavior and opinions of others with greater charity.

At any rate, his ignorance did lead JM to look up Mauritania on a map—West Africa on the coast—and to learn that tiramisù contains, among other ingredients, ladyfingers and brandy.

*Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.*

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(Right)  
Golden retriever puppies  
at Warrior Canine  
Connection.  
(Far right)  
A service dog in training.



## How Training These Service Dogs Helps Veterans Heal

“That veteran who is dealing with emotional numbness all of a sudden has to use positive affect to be successful in carrying out this mission of training the dog.”

Rick Yount, executive director, Warrior Canine Connection

ANDREW THOMAS

Service dogs can be excellent companions for veterans with both physical and psychological wounds. One organization has taken the concept a step further with a pay-it-forward approach. At Warrior Canine Connection, veterans are helping themselves heal by training service dogs, and helping other veterans by providing these dogs to those who need them most.

Rick Yount, the executive director of Maryland-based Warrior Canine Connection, has been working in the field of social services for over 30 years. On Christmas of 1995, he was gifted a golden retriever puppy. At the time, he was working with children in the foster care system.

One morning as Yount was heading out to work, the puppy looked into his eyes and guilted him into taking him along. When he arrived at work, he received a call from Child



BONNIE GROVER



(Above) Rick Yount with a service dog named Jessie.

(Right) A veteran bonds with a service dog from Warrior Canine Connection.

Protective Services informing him that there was an 11-year-old boy who needed to be picked up from his mother's house.

“When we arrived at this home neither one of us had met this young man, and we were there to take him from his mom and put him in a foster home in another county. So he was going to live with a family he had never met in another county, and that in itself was extremely traumatizing to this boy. He was immediately sobbing. He thought his world was falling apart,” Yount recalled.

### Canine Connections

While Yount was driving the boy to the foster home, the sobs faded away into silence. He looked in his rearview mirror and saw his four-month-old golden retriever with his head in the boy's lap. In that moment he saw the comfort the puppy was able to provide that he had been unable to give. It was this experience that motivated him to incorporate animal-assisted therapy into his work, and over time, Yount discovered how powerfully effective animal-assisted therapy would become.

Yount has always been inspired by the warrior ethos and the brotherhood that exists between veterans and thought that if he could combine the power of the human-dog connection with this warrior ethos,

it would be highly effective in the healing process for veterans struggling with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and PTSD.

“Frankly, I didn't think that anyone would take it more to heart in training service dogs for veterans than fellow veterans,” Yount said.

After developing the idea through a pilot program at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs hospital in 2008 called Paws for Purple Hearts, Yount founded Warrior Canine Connection in 2011.

At Warrior Canine Connection, veterans who are contending with TBI and PTSD have to motivate the dog to learn the tasks required to become a service dog. Training a service dog also requires patience, which helps veterans regulate their

emotions. However, in order to do that, veterans have to develop a bond with the dog.

Incidentally, there is a biological component that suggests the relationship between humans and social animals such as dogs can be beneficial for veterans dealing with PTSD and TBI.

According to Megan Daley Olmert, the director of research at Warrior Canine Connection, who has worked in the field of the biology of the human-animal bond for over 30 years, oxytocin plays a crucial role in social bonding and brain function.

“We now know when you look at your dog, when you talk to your dog in a high-pitched, positive way, when you pet your dog, when you brush your dog, when you are involved in a



loving and social way with your dog, you're releasing oxytocin,” Olmert explained.

### Training

The training process starts with basic commands and teaching the dog to be fun to be around. The more advanced tasks that the veterans train the dogs to do include retrieving items, turning on lights, opening doors, helping people up and down the stairs, and pulling wheelchairs. The veterans also train the dogs to respond to stress cues such as nightmares.

Furthermore, veterans develop communication skills while training the dogs. They learn how to command a dog in an authoritative voice, followed by a praising tone once the command is completed.

“That veteran who is dealing with emotional numbness all of a sudden has to use positive affect to be successful in carrying out this mission of training the dog,” Yount explained.

Training service dogs also requires taking them out in public, which helps veterans who are struggling with isolation. When a veteran takes a dog out to a public setting, people are going to come up and speak with the veteran about the dog.

“They discover after many, many encounters with strangers walking up to them that stranger does not equal danger. Really all those people

want to do is talk about the dog,” Olmert said.

The veterans also teach the service dogs and themselves that the world is a safe place. For instance, the dog has to learn not to be scared by a loud noise, and in effect, the veteran becomes less apprehensive about loud sounds. A veteran who may have struggled with noises that sound like gunfire or explosions becomes less and less affected by them.

### Family Life

Training the dogs translates to the veterans' home lives, as they learn patience, communication skills, and feel a sense of purpose.

“When they're going home and they have a 13-year-old boy, and they're trying to get [him] to take out the trash and [he doesn't] do it right away, rather than becoming really upset, this patience they've been practicing with the dog helps them get into the timing of the family, just slowing down,” Yount said.

Once that boy takes out the trash, the veteran praises the child, just as he praises the service dog he's been training, which creates an effective, positive reinforcement.

One of the veterans Yount has worked with was a Marine Corps drill instructor who was dealing with PTSD. One of his issues was that he was being too harsh with his 3-year-old son, and his wife had filed divorce

papers as a result. However, the patience and praiseful voice he had been practicing with the service dog he was training helped him connect with his son and saved his marriage.

In another instance, Yount was using dog training as a model while teaching a parenting class. A Navy SEAL in the class stopped him while he was speaking, and told him how his father would knock him out of a tree with baseballs if he didn't come down within two seconds. So when his father would tell him to come down from the tree, he learned to obey very quickly.

Just then a pin fell off the SEAL's hat, and the service dog Yount had brought heard the pin drop. He asked the SEAL to hold his hand out, and without further instruction, the dog retrieved the pin and spit it into his palm.

“Do you think he did that because he's afraid not to, or because he likes to retrieve?” Yount asked the SEAL.

“Now my second question is, do you want your kids to do the right thing because they're afraid not to when you're around, or do you want them to do the right thing because it's the right thing?” Through this demonstration, Yount was able to reach the SEAL.

### The Impact

Close to 5,000 veterans have participated in Warrior Canine Connection's program, and 70 service dogs

have been placed with veterans who need them. One veteran who has received a service dog is David Rabb, a retired United States Army colonel who did tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rabb contended with what is called a moral injury after suffering a stroke in 2015. He felt betrayed by the leadership in the military after they accused him of causing his own stroke, and as a result, developed significant trust issues, particularly within his own family. He also struggled—and continues to struggle—with hypervigilance as a result of post-traumatic stress.

In 2007, while working at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Palo Alto, he met Yount and found out about Paws for Purple Hearts. After Rabb returned from his deployment from Afghanistan, he reconnected with Yount and was able to receive a service dog named Gunny Quail from Warrior Canine Connection.

Gunny Quail has helped Rabb deal with his psychological wounds immensely. When he goes outside his home, the labrador makes him feel safe. If he starts feeling emotional, Gunny Quail can sense it and will give him a nudge, which helps Rabb regulate his feelings. For Rabb, the dog has been life-changing.

“Gunny is a stable force. He brings me peace. I'm at peace just looking at him,” Rabb said.

Training the dogs translates to the veterans' home lives, as they learn patience, communication skills, and feel a sense of purpose.

## Helping At-Risk Youth: ‘You Can't Teach a Kid Until You Can Reach a Kid’

ANDREW THOMAS

Raised by his grandmother and an alcoholic uncle just outside of Wilson, North Carolina, Sean Ingram grew up in abject poverty. His mother was in the throes of substance abuse at the time, and he didn't meet his father until age 8, after his father was released from prison.

And yet, growing up in an environment of poverty and crime, Ingram found an outlet through the creative arts—specifically creative writing. He had been diagnosed as manic depressive and discovered that creative writing balanced him.

“I found writing as a gift. A lot of the times when I didn't understand how to cry, I would just write out my pain, and unbeknownst to me that it would actually be a blessing one day, and actually be my career,”

said Ingram, 42, who now runs an academy to help at-risk youth and nurture their talents.

### Falling Into Crime

Ingram's talent for creative writing wasn't discovered until a teacher caught him writing prose and poetry while he sat in the back row of a social studies class. Word quickly spread among the teachers that Ingram had a talent for the written word, and an English teacher named Mr. Clarke quickly took an interest in him.

At first, Ingram kept his passion to himself because it wasn't socially popular at the time to be a writer or a poet. However, after his fellow students discovered that he was a writer, it was, in fact, cool. He was a popular kid, and got along with everyone.



Sean Ingram (R) works with young people at the Sean Ingram Arts Academy.

Despite his talent, Ingram grew up in an environment surrounded by crime. However, Ingram didn't view crime as out of the ordinary, particularly because the people involved in it were close to him.

“These were good people. These were uncles, these were cousins,

and friends of the family, and well-respected men. They chose another side of life, which was crime, so in a sense, I guess I grew up thinking this was a way that you support your family if you don't have a job,” Ingram said.

By age 14, Ingram found himself selling drugs and engaging in street robberies. Ultimately, Ingram's criminal activity would escalate, and become a major turning point in his life.

Ingram's cousin had been scrambling for money to pay back drug dealers in the neighborhood and hatched a plan to rob a bank. Ingram and other cousins didn't want to let him go through with the robbery by himself and decided to help him.

“Of course, now, 15 years later, you're thinking there were a lot of

other options,” Ingram said with a chuckle.

### Incarceration and Creativity

Ingram and his cousins were arrested a couple of days later, and the 22-year-old was ultimately sentenced to five years for robbery in 2003 at Butner Federal Prison. While incarcerated, he returned to his writing, which kept him focused. During that time, he wrote “The Passion of the Pen,” a collection of essays and short stories.

“My goal for that book was to be very creative. To push myself creatively also, but I wanted to start writing things that make people think, that would be thought-provoking,” Ingram explained.

He also went to trade school for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning while in prison, and found a job at a refrigeration company after his release in 2007. After working for the company for eight years, Ingram started the Sean Ingram



COURTESY OF SEAN INGRAM

Creative Arts Academy in Raleigh, North Carolina, for at-risk youth in an effort to nurture their skills and interests.

“I wanted to create an academy [where] creative minds could come together and say, ‘You know what? I'm not an outsider. I'm not a loner. I'm not by myself because I choose to draw all day’ or ‘I've got this dream of being a painter’ when everybody else doesn't,” Ingram said.

Sean Ingram (C) had a passion for creative writing, but grew up in an impoverished neighborhood where crime was viewed as a way to support one's family.

The organization's mission is to transform at-risk youth and those in juvenile detention into productive citizens. Young people are referred to him by parents, the Raleigh Police Department, the Wake County Public School system, the Department of Public Safety, and the juvenile court system.

### Mentorship

Ingram and his organization focus on participants' passions and help them develop their skills. Ingram also helps the young people he works with turn their passion into a marketable profession so they can make a living doing what they love. For example, the organization may advise a young person who is interested in the visual arts to go to art school to sharpen their skills. Ingram also brings in speakers from a variety of creative professions to help mentor and teach those who may want to pursue a similar career.

Ingram also provides trade skills

so the young people in his program can find gainful employment, and make them less likely to become incarcerated or return to prison. He refers young people to trade schools in industries such as cosmetology, construction, trucking, and HVAC.

“Once a kid can actually financially succeed on their own, then they don't have that big stress or need to be in a situation that's going to lead them back into prison,” Ingram explained. Ingram and his academy have made an incredible impact on the young people they work with. One participant has gone on to college and plays NCAA football. Another young person in the program has gone on to play in the NFL.

In addition to the practical aspects of the program, Ingram always takes a personal mentorship approach to the kids he works with and instills the values of integrity and respect in them.

“You can't teach a kid until you can reach a kid,” Ingram said.



REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

## Cleansing Our Temples

ERIC BESS

The Italian painter Luca Giordano working in the late 17th century was misunderstood in his time.

Initially, he was influenced by the Spanish Baroque painter José de Ribera. Later, Giordano discarded the dark and somber look of Ribera's paintings for the more colorful style of Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese.

Giordano became a very successful court painter for the Spanish king Charles

(Above) "Expulsion of the Money-Changers from the Temple," circa 1675, Luca Giordano. Oil on Canvas, 78 inches by 103 inches. Hermitage Museum.

II. He was known for painting very quickly and was able to complete large frescoes in a short period of time.

According to the Prado Museum, Giordano's ability to imitate styles and finish paintings quickly resulted in two prejudices toward his paintings:

"The first was an association of his surprising speed as a painter with the idea that his work was somehow superficial ... The second stemmed from his striking capacity to imitate other artists' styles, which led him to be considered a mere copyist of famous painters."

It wasn't until the 20th century that Giordano was again appreciated as an accomplished painter worthy of praise.

**Jesus and the Money-Changers**

One of Giordano's well-known paintings is "Expulsion of the Money-Changers From the Temple." This painting represents the moment in the Bible in which Jesus expels business transactions from the temple during Passover. Matthew 21:12-13 NIV tells the story as Jesus entered the temple courts and driving out all

who were transacting business there. He turned over the money-changers' tables, and "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."

Jesus behaved harshly, John 2:13-15 NIV tells the sets the story right before Jewish Passover, when Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts, some were selling animals, and others were exchanging at money at tables. Jesus made a whip out of cords, and "drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

Here, Jesus reacts in an aggressive way toward the buyers and sellers, certainly uncharacteristic of how Jesus is typically portrayed.

**Giordano's Representation**

Giordano depicted the very moment that Jesus drove out the money-changers. He holds the whip made of cords in his right hand and appears to lunge toward the money-changers. The money-changers flee while their tables overturn. Figures

in the background appear to watch. The sun is on the horizon and dark clouds are at the top of the picture plane. Giordano chooses to depict the scene outside, instead of inside of the temple.

Giordano uses compositional elements to make Jesus the focal point of this painting. First is contrast: Jesus is the figure with the highest contrast between dark and light, which draws our eye back to Jesus despite other items in the painting that may grab our attention.

Next are diagonals: The edge of the cast shadow on the wall behind Jesus is a diagonal that leads to the back of Jesus's neck. The diagonal of the side of the overturned table at the bottom right of the picture plane points toward Jesus's face.

The last element that draws our eyes to Jesus is the lines of sight: The figures surrounding Jesus turn and look at him. Giordano frames the picture plane with figures that look at Jesus, and this helps us to return to Jesus no matter what element may catch our eye.

**Cleansing Our Temple**

Why did Jesus chase the money-changers from the temple? Why did Giordano depict the scene outside instead of inside the temple? And why did Giordano use compositional elements to maintain Jesus as the focal point?

There may not be absolute answers to these questions, but allow me to offer an interpretation. It is necessary to first ask: What is God's temple?

1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 NIV states: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred and you together are that temple."

We, human beings, are God's temple. As temples, God's Spirit "dwells" in our midst. As temples of God in which God's Spirit dwells, we human beings are sacred. In other words, our existence is sacred because God's Spirit is with us.

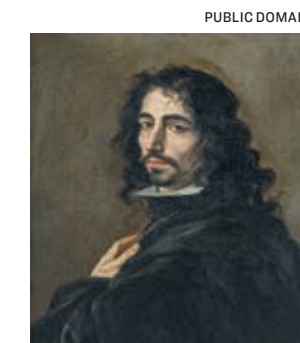
Jesus expelled the buyers and sellers and overturned the tables that held their wares. Buying and selling desecrated the temple. The money-changers misused Passover and turned it into an event from which they could profit instead of recognizing it as a sacred event. Commanding the celebration of God's Spirit for personal gain was going too far for Jesus.

We can be tempted by worldly goods and material possessions. If we become too concerned with material things, we too can forget that our existence is sacred—sacred because of what dwells within our temple: God's Spirit.

Sometimes, we have to be able to say when enough is enough. We have to rid ourselves of those things that prevent us from being worthy of being a place where God's Spirit can dwell and be welcomed.

Preparing our temple to be worthy of God's Spirit may take a certain degree of aggressiveness on our part. This aggressiveness need not be directed toward other human beings but toward the selfish states and destructive attitudes that prevent us from recognizing our own sacredness. In the process, what we over-

**Why did Giordano depict the scene outside instead of inside the temple?**



Luca Giordano (1634-1705) was one of the most celebrated and prolific Neapolitan painters of the late 17th century.

turn and expel is our selfishness so that our temple is a "house of prayer" instead of a "den of robbers."

**Interpreting Giordano**

Did Giordano depict Jesus expelling the money-changers from outside the temple instead of from inside to reinforce the idea that the money-changers should not be doing business in the temple in the first place? Would it be respectful to depict the actual violation of God's Spirit in the temple? As I see it, the inside of the temple, as a dwelling for God's Spirit, should always be separated—even in a depiction—from that which would desecrate it. By painting the scene outside instead of inside the temple, Giordano is reinforcing the temple as a space without selfishness.

But why does Giordano make Jesus such a strong focal point? Is he telling us that only Jesus matters over material temptations? Then what does Jesus embody?

Perhaps Matthew gives us a hint. Matthew 22: 36-39 NIV states: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

If we are using our temple to selfishly acquire worldly goods, it becomes difficult to claim we are loving God with all of our heart, soul, and mind; it is difficult to recognize the holiness of our existence. We are instead disrespecting ourselves by mistaking our self-worth for worldly goods. What can be further from loving ourselves?

To love oneself requires loving God with all one's heart, soul, and mind. How else can one be a temple in which God's Spirit dwells? How else is one welcoming to God's Spirit? By doing so, we recognize not only that our own existence is sacred but also that our neighbor is a temple in which God's Spirit dwells. To love one's neighbor is to also love the temple of God and thus to love God. This is why the second great commandment is "like" the first.

Giordano's painting reminds me to keep selfishness away from my temple, so that I come to gather a deeper understanding of my own sacrality in my ever-constant proximity to God's Spirit. It reminds me to make my temple welcoming and hospitable to that Spirit and to expel anything that would make my temple otherwise; it reminds me to love not only my temple but the temples of others.

*Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I explore in my series Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart.*

*Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSA).*

Was the film designed strictly to snag awards, instead of just delivering a genuinely intriguing film?

**'Just Mercy'**

**Director**  
Destin Daniel Cretton

**Starring**  
Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx, Brie Larson

**Running Time**  
2 hours, 16 minutes

**Rated**  
PG-13

**Release Date**  
Jan. 10

★★★★★

However, she is barely seen during the film's rather lengthy 136 minutes.

Almost immediately, it becomes evident to Stevenson that McMillian's case is going to be an arduous, uphill battle. He fires off appeal after appeal to get McMillian freed, but both the local community and the courts are full of racists and corrupt governmental officials.

The real-life story is a supremely compelling one, a David versus Goliath narrative that would seem tailor-made for a film. Unfortunately, although guided by a decent script and some great acting, in Cretton's hands, the experience plays out in a hackneyed manner.

**Not for Lack of Talent**

Michael B. Jordan is one of the more versatile actors in Hollywood these days. He's thrilled us with the electricity of Adonis Johnson in the "Creed" series and has also played one of the best supervillains in some time: Erik Killmonger in "Black Panther."

Here, he changes faces again and disappears into his role as the righteous

and noble Stevenson, trying his best to free an innocent man. There are some disturbing scenes where the attorney gets trounced by the system and Jordan portrays Stevenson's quiet despair; you can see and feel the anguish reflected in his eyes.

But all of Jordan's gravitas seems wasted here, as this film is too straightforward. There's no nuance to engage the mind. You know right from the outset that McMillian is innocent and good and that the local police and courts are all devious and bad. There's even an ardently evil district attorney named Tommy Champan (Rafe Spall) whose over-the-top sneering and posturing verges into cartoonish.

Like Jordan, Foxx is believable as McMillian, and there are some heart-rending scenes he pulls off that seem natural and organic. He also has more to work with since his role is multifaceted. His performance as an innocent man with a limited amount of time left in his life oscillates between quiet rage, a sorrowful sense of despair and anguish,

## SHEN YUN PERFORMING ARTS

### Audience Reactions

*The Epoch Times considers Shen Yun Performing Arts the significant cultural event of our time and has covered audience reactions since the company's inception in 2006.*

*The Epoch Times is a media sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts, and believes its mission to revive the 5,000-year civilization of China is history in the making, and in line with our mission of covering and preserving traditional arts and culture.*



"You can't help but get swept up with it all.

It kind of brings all that pureness. You get so caught up in your busy lives, and it just kind of brings an air of grace to everyone in the audience. So I think everyone is going to leave feeling empowered and at peace maybe, when they go. It's a lovely experience. We're loving it.

I think [it's] just a real powerful, moving, colorful, spectacular performance. You'll have never seen anything like it. It's something extraordinary."

**PIPPA TAYLOR** producer and co-presenter, *The Chris Moyles Show on Radio X, at the Hammersmith Apollo in London on Jan. 17, 2020*



"From the moment it started, I was so alert. I was just listening to everything and I wanted to observe everything, just take everything in.

That beauty ... was really carried on through the dancing and the music was coming out of the dancing and music altogether.

This message was very much like the old days when, organically, everyone lived together and they contributed so much to their environment ... The tolerance that today needs, for modern life. Definitely you are reminded [of that] in this performance and it makes a difference. It makes you think.

To be a better person, a better human."

**FARNOOSH BEHZAD** composer, conductor, and pianist, at the Eventim Apollo in London on Jan. 18, 2020



"Honestly, it was a dream come true to see.

I'm not Chinese ... but I still found it very inspiring, and very beautiful, and something I will cherish forever because it was something that I've always wanted to see, and it was everything and more that I could ever hope for in a performance."

**KAT CARDENAS-CRUZ** professional musical theater performer, at the George Mason Center for the Arts in Fairfax, Va., on Jan. 18, 2020



"There is a fantastic energy! You can see that they want to pass on a message, and this message is very important."

**H.R.H. PRINCESS BEATRICE MARIE CAROLINE LOUISE FRANCOISE OF BOURBON-TWO SICILIES** at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy, on Jan. 10, 2020

FILM REVIEW: 'JUST MERCY'

## A True Story Let Down by Predictable Tropes

IAN KANE

What if your freedom is taken away for a crime you didn't commit? That's a powerful and frightening thing to ponder, isn't it? So, it's not surprising that it makes for great movie plots, especially for courtroom dramas that play with the heart-strings while offering food for thought.

Director Destin Daniel Cretton's ("Short Term 12," "The Glass Castle") new biographical sketch "Just Mercy" opens with the soon-to-be inmate Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx) looking into the sky appreciatively. Soon, the African-American lumber worker from Monroeville, Alabama, is arrested for the murder of a young white lady. From the outset, it's painfully clear that McMillian is innocent. This all really took place in 1987.

After these events, we're introduced to a newly minted attorney named Bryan Stevenson (Michael B. Jordan), who up and moves to Alabama with one noble mission in mind: to defend death-row prison inmates whom he feels have been wrongly convicted of capital crimes.

**The David versus Goliath narrative that would seem tailor-made for a film.**

"Just Mercy" is the story about a lawyer (Michael B. Jordan) defending an innocent man (Jamie Foxx).



Soon, Stevenson becomes involved in McMillian's case, which seems to be egregiously in error; circumstances surrounding the case are specious at best.

We're also introduced to a local advocate named Eva Ansley (Brie Larson), who is supposedly there to assist Stevenson in his righteous defense of McMillian.

and everything in-between. McMillian's flashbacks of looking up into the sky as a former free man are dreadfully sobering.

Having said that, the film lacks authenticity in many areas. It's as if the filmmakers shot a bunch of compelling scenes and then stitched them all together. It leads us by the nose from one dramatic scene to the next, each reaching an emotional crescendo, but ultimately these rarely impact the overarching narrative. Some of these even register as emotionally manipulative: Was the film designed strictly to snag awards, instead of just delivering a genuinely intriguing film?

By the time "Just Mercy" arrives at its melodramatic, predictable ending, we feel that we've seen all of this before. Although punctuated by great acting performances, these alone can't elevate this film from its all-too-pedestrian moorings.

*Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com*

STYLE

# Flattering Fashion to Hide Figure Flaws

MANY NGOM

Let's create new habits when we get dressed. How can we embrace our body flaws by dressing smart? Here are a few tips on how to hide the most common figure imperfections.



SPLURGE



STEAL

To hide your tummy and be comfortable, invest in a shirt dress. The shirt dress is usually in woven cotton, with small vertical stripes and worn with a belt. The combination does a good job of hiding the tummy well—especially if you have the option of tying the belt loosely at the waist or above the waist. The woven fabric helps to hide any bulges as well.

**SPLURGE**  
Queen's Consort Striped-Cotton Shirt Dress Romance Was Born, \$525.

**STEAL**  
Striped Shirt Dress by Polo Ralph Lauren, \$188.



SPLURGE



STEAL

**Our arms! Don't we love them?** But they are difficult to get toned, and for some reason, we always find them too big. Give them some love; opt for 3/4-wide sleeves or simply long sleeves but not tight ones.

The tops can be in stretch cotton or woven but the key is how roomy the sleeves are. Choose fabrics like silk or sateen. These are fluid and drape over your arms, giving them a slimmer shape.

**SPLURGE**  
Floral Print Silk Blouse by Zac Posen, \$950.

**STEAL**  
Stretched Jersey Wrap Top by Ralph Lauren, \$90.



SPLURGE



STEAL

**And the magic scarf comes to save the day!** I prefer long scarves because they help to hide my tummy. If you choose a cashmere scarf, you can easily wear it on your shoulder and it will cover your arms as well. A colorful scarf will bring attention to your neck instead of your hips or tummy. It's a versatile accessory to invest in.

**SPLURGE**  
Belt-Print Silk-twill Scarf by Burberry, \$490.

**STEAL**  
Super-fine Cashmere Scarf by Raey, \$109.

Let's not forget the most important thing is to love ourselves the way we are. A small tummy is feminine, we just have to know how to dress smart, and not to be too hard on ourselves. Let's be proud of our femininity!



SPLURGE



STEAL

**Because most clothes are designed to fit the waist and hips at a specific ratio, many women find this area the most difficult to deal with.** An A-line skirt will save the day, and a wrap-up style with a button closure can be adjusted. The same goes for a belted A-Line skirt. For pants, try not to wear skinny pants; opt for straight fit or boot cut, as these shapes will balance the hip area with the rest of your body.

**SPLURGE**  
Diana Belted Linen Midi Skirt by Lisa Marie Fernandez, \$564.

**STEAL**  
Saia Dijon Lisa by Egrey, \$106.



SPLURGE



STEAL

**To give the appearance of slimmer legs, go with nude pumps with pointy heels.** Not only do they give the illusion of elongating your legs, but you will also feel taller and slimmer when you walk. But the nude color is the key. No colored shoes as the difference in color will just accentuate the flaws. Avoid flats—if high heels are too difficult to wear, try a mid-heel; as long as you are comfortable you will feel taller.

**SPLURGE**  
Marion 85 Pumps by Malone Souliers, \$563.

**STEAL**  
Hazel Stiletto Pumps by Sam Edelman, \$139.



# FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 5, 2020

**I**  
*By Rudyard Kipling*

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

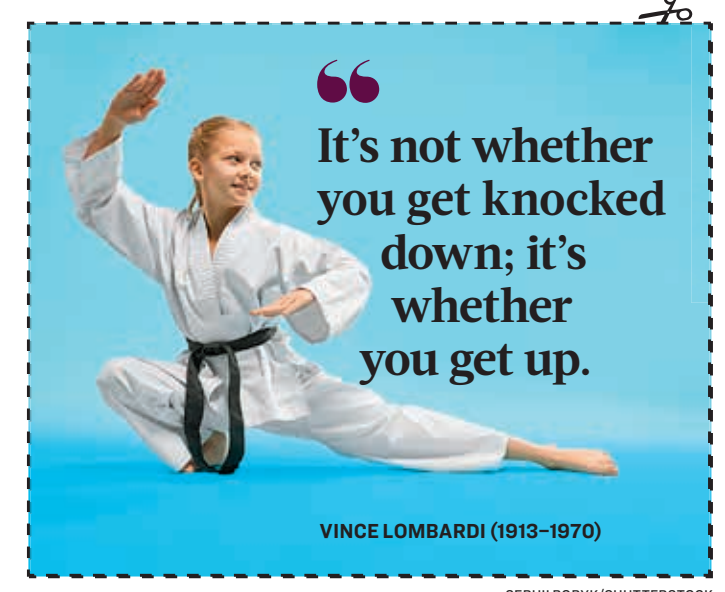
If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforfeiting minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!



**WHY WAS THE HOCKEY PLAYER ARRESTED?**

HE SHOT THE PUCK.



**It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up.**

VINCE LOMBARDI (1913-1970)

# This Week in History

## THE WINTER OLYMPICS DEBUT



On Jan. 25, 1924, the first Winter Olympic Games opened in Chamonix, France. The original five sports were bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, Nordic skiing, and skating. The modern Olympics

are modeled after the Olympic Games of ancient Greece, held from the 8th century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. The modern winter games followed the lead of the Summer Olympic Games that began in Athens in 1894.

By Aidan Danza, age 13

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

# LESSER KNOWN ANIMALS OF ANTARCTICA



**P**enguins are the most famous animal in Antarctica. However, they are certainly not the only residents there. The thinly spread population of animals includes skuas, albatrosses, petrels, seals, krill, and small invertebrates.

## SOUTH POLAR SKUA

South polar skuas are large, gull-like, brown birds. Their build is stocky but very imposing. South polar skuas are extremely wide-ranging. All of them nest on Antarctic coasts, feeding on penguin eggs and chicks.

Outside of the breeding season, they fly across the world and often turn up in the Atlantic Ocean, where they eat mostly fish. Sometimes, they steal food from other seabirds, even forcing them to regurgitate their catch.

They usually nest near their prey, penguins, and they normally raise two chicks. Typically, only one chick survives up to their first flight, which occurs when they are around seven to eight weeks old.



## ANTARCTIC KRILL

Antarctic krill represents a significant link in the Antarctic food chain—almost every animal in the sea eats it or eats something else that eats it. They feed on phytoplankton—microscopic marine plants—which is the base of the whole Antarctic ecosystem.

Even though krill are so important, they are only about two inches long, about the size of a large paper clip. Krill are arguably the only reason that anything survives in Antarctica, be they a land or a sea animal.

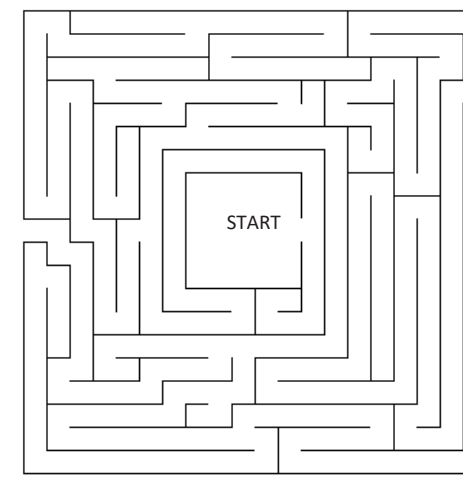
## LEOPARD SEAL

Leopard seals are one of the largest seals, second only to the southern elephant seal. The only thing leopard-like about them is the spotting on their belly, and the rest of the seal is all gray. They can weigh up to 1,300 pounds and grow to 11 feet long.

Leopard seals eat fish and krill, just like other Antarctic sea predators, but they also eat smaller species of seals and penguins. Leopard seals are known to be very aggressive, and since they live in such a cold, barren, desolate place where no human lives permanently, not much is yet known about them.



# AMAZING ESCAPES!



**USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, -, AND X)** to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

5	8
3	6

98

+ - x ÷

Solution For Easy 1

8 + 6 + 5 + 9

Medium puzzle 1

6	18
1	10

34

+ - x ÷

Solution for Medium 1

1 x (8 + 0) + 8)

Hard puzzle 1

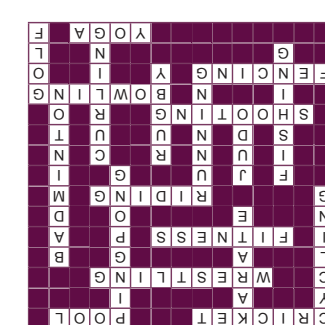
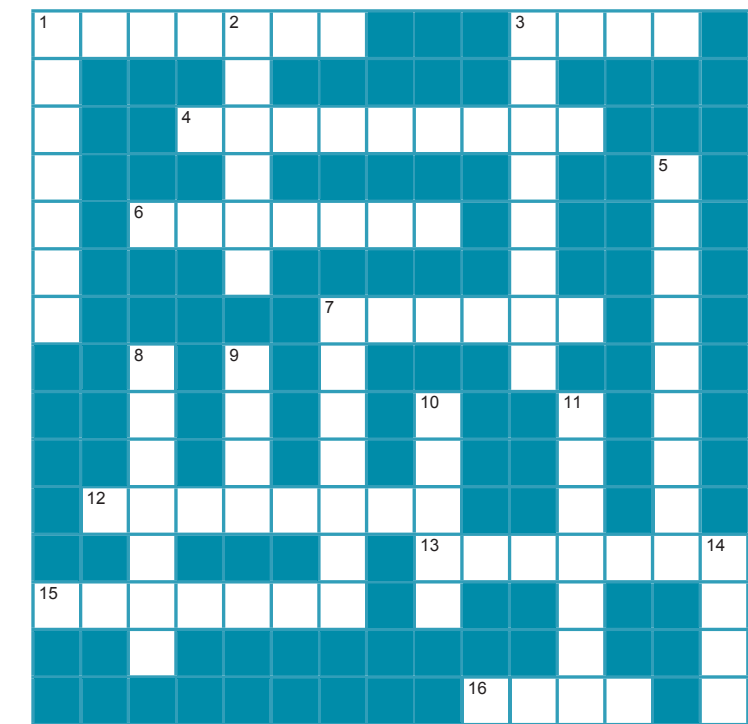
3	23
3	21

44

+ - x ÷

Solution for Hard 1

6 - 6 + 12 + 62



## Across

- 1 English game like baseball (7)
- 3 You can shoot it or swim in it (4)
- 4 Greco-Roman style is most known (9)
- 6 Exerciser's goal (7)
- 7 Equestrian pastime (6)
- 12 Sport that tests marksmanship (8)
- 13 In this sport, getting a strike is good! (7)
- 15 This sport uses a sword called an foil (7)
- 16 Activity on a mat (4)

## Down

- 1 Riding a two-wheeler (7)
- 2 Sport where you can earn a blackbelt (6)
- 3 Table tennis (8)
- 5 Game where you serve a birdie (9)
- 7 Marathoner's sport (7)
- 8 Sport where you can eat your winnings (7)
- 9 A martial art (4)
- 10 British football (5)
- 11 Game with brushes (7)
- 14 18-hole game (4)



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**THE  
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Two works by Taki Katei: "Deer," paper, pigment, and ink, 65 9/16 inches by 21 7/8 inches; and "Receiving Heaven and One Hundred Rewards," paper, pigment, and ink, 62 7/8 inches by 24 inches.

FINE ARTS

## Taki Katei: A Champion of Tradition in a Time of Immense Change

*The drawings of a Japanese master*

LORRAINE FERRIER

In the 1890s, Japanese artist Taki Katei (1830–1901) was at the height of his career, honored with professional accolades and inundated with commissions. In 1893, he was honored as "Imperial Household Artist," an accolade awarded for his work for Japan's imperial court.

Despite Katei's fame, you've probably never heard of him.

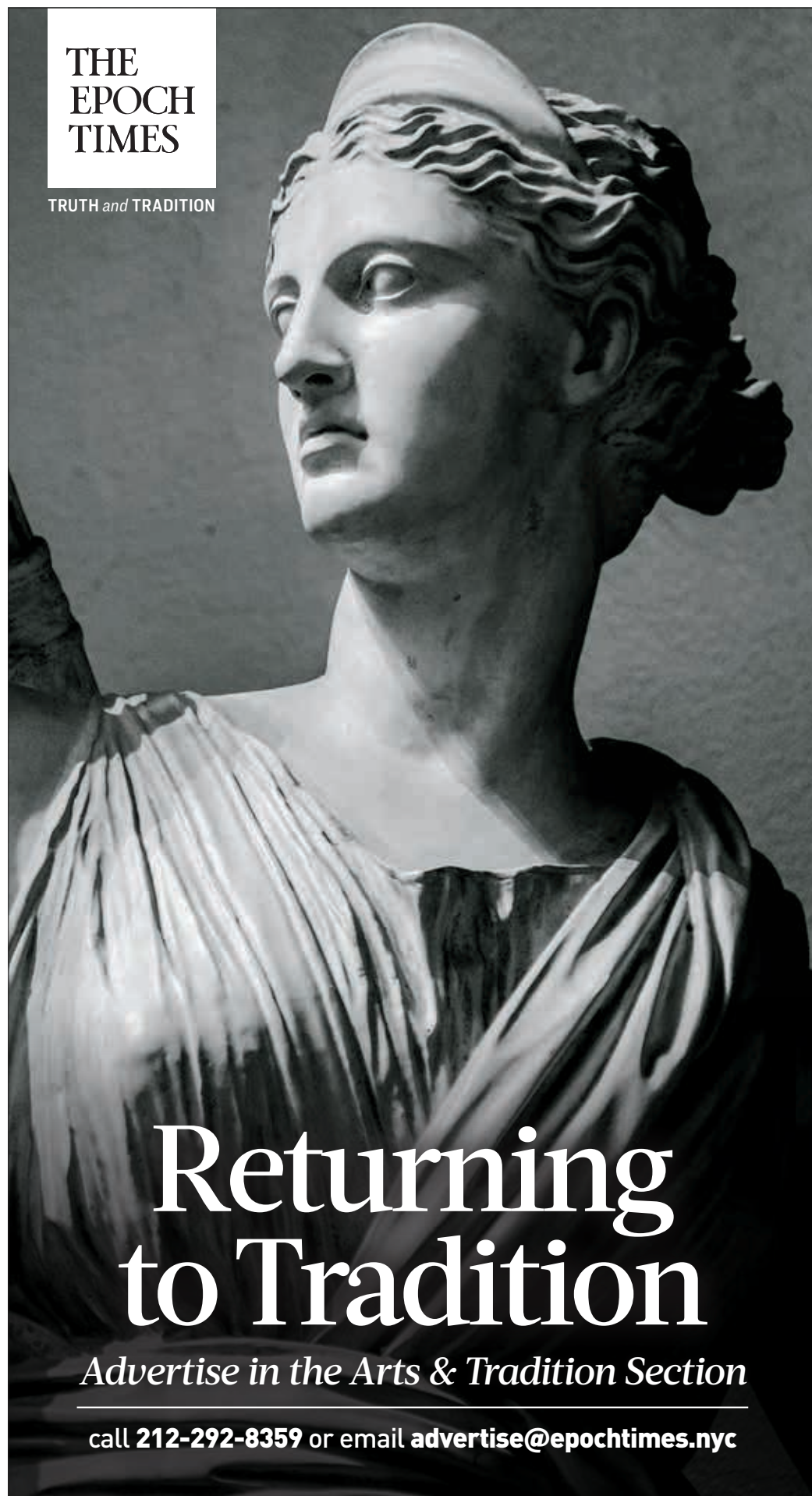
The reason Katei is "not famous now, even in Japan," is because in the early 20th century, Katei's style of painting was seen as out-of-date, wrote curator Rosina Buckland in an email. Buckland, who authored "Painting Nature for the Nation: Taki Katei and the Challenges to Sinophile Culture in Meiji Japan"

in 2012, said that artists associated with the government-sponsored Toyko School of Fine Arts "were regarded as innovative and more worthy of attention."

Buckland also acted as a guest curator, alongside curator Alex Blakeborough, for the exhibition "Drawing on Nature: Taki Katei's Japan" at the World Museum in Liverpool, England. Blakeborough is the World Mu-

seum's assistant curator of ethnology. A total of 82 drawings, consisting of preparatory works for commissions, studies of paintings, and teaching aids for Katei's students, are on show from the collection of the National Museums Liverpool, a group of museums and galleries that includes the World Museum.

*Continued on Page 16*



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LITERATURE

## A MIRROR FROM LONG AGO: THE PILGRIMS OF 'THE CANTERBURY TALES'

JEFF MINICK

On New Year's Eve, four of my five siblings, their spouses, and I gathered to ring in 2020. At one point, our conversation turned to long-ago college classes, and my sister, who is a wife, mother, grandmother, and a banker, suddenly said: "When that April, with his shoures soote, The droghte of March hath perced to the roote." Our talk of college had brought back her memories of English literature, when her professor had made her class memorize the first 18 lines of the Prologue to "The Canterbury Tales." Here are those 18 lines in full and in the original Middle English:

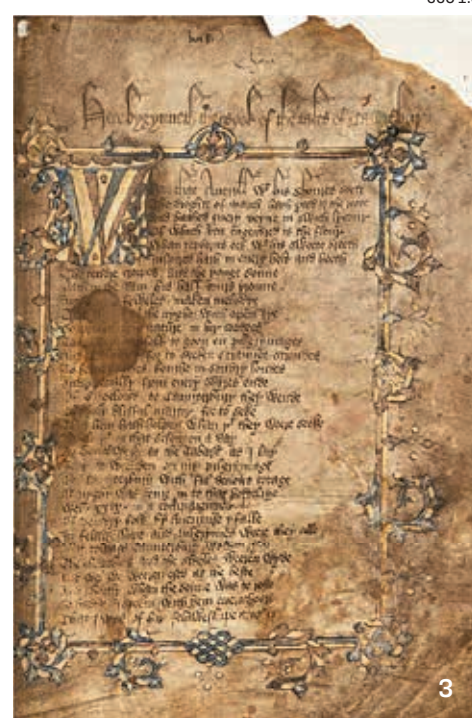
Whan that April, with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eke with his sweete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open eye—  
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages;  
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes  
To ferne halwes kouthe in sondry londes;  
And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
The holy blisful martir for to seke  
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.

Sounds like a foreign language, yes? Here are the lines rendered in modern English:

When in April the sweet showers fall  
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all  
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power  
As brings about the engendering of the flower.  
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath  
Exhales an air in every grove and heath  
Upon tender shoots, and the young sun  
His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run.  
And the small fowl are making melody  
That sleep away the night with open eye  
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)  
Then pilgrims long to go on pilgrimages  
And palmeres long to seek the stranger stands  
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands.  
And specially, from every shire's end  
In England, down to Canterbury they wend  
To seek the holy blissful martyr, quick to give  
His help to them when they were sick.

**Strange Strondes**  
Written some 600 years ago, these lines remain some of the most famous in English literature. And like my sister's professor, I required the homeschooling students who took my English History and Literature class to memorize these lines. I wanted them to taste Middle English, to understand that our language changes, that 600 years from now we might have the same difficulty understanding what today passes for English as we do understanding Chaucer, and that we too should seek "straunge strondes," or foreign shores, in our study of literature.

I would explain to them that English is always in a state of swirl and flux; our invention of new words and our adoption of words from around the globe are one of the glories of our language. I would explain that when I was a child, had someone told me that I would one day "homeschool" my children or operate a "bed-and-breakfast," both of which I



have done, the terms would have been incomprehensible to me. I pointed out words and concepts that didn't exist in the 1960s but which we use all the time today: blog, cellphone, speed dating, email, cybersafety, Facebook, chai latte, and many more.

**To Caunterbury, They Wende**  
The textbook we used for this course was the splendid "Prentice Hall Literature: The English Tradition" (Second Edition), which included the complete Prologue in modern English—that is the modernization used above—and two of the stories, "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and "The Pardoner's Tale."

Because of its brilliant thumbnail depictions of a wide array of English men and women of the time, ranging from a knight to a prioress, from a miller to the Wife of Bath, we focused our attention on the Prologue.

Here were the pilgrims, among whom Chaucer counted himself, who were bound on a spring journey to Canterbury Cathedral, the site where four knights of Henry II had two centuries earlier martyred Thomas à Becket.

The landlord of the Tabard Inn suggests to this company that they all tell tales both going and coming on the pilgrimage, and though Chaucer never completed all the tales, we find in his Prologue a cross-section of English society and culture that tells us much about 14th-century England.

Let's look at just a few of these characters.

**From Every Shires Ende**  
First up is the Knight, a "true, a perfect gentle-knight." Here is a warrior worthy of the Round Table, a man who "had followed chivalry" and who was "ever honored for his noble graces."

Here is the Nun, a Prioress, who "would wipe her upper lip so clean that not a trace of grease was to be seen." We soon meet the Monk, who fits the caricature of the day, "a fat and personable priest" who loves hunting and luxury.

We meet the Merchant, an "expert at currency exchange"; the Oxford Cleric, a student who spends his money on books and who "would gladly learn, and gladly teach"; the Reeve, a subordinate estate manager whom "no one had ever caught in arrears" and "a better hand at bargains than his lord."

The Wife of Bath provides an excellent example of Chaucer's descriptive powers. She's all decked out, from the handkerchiefs she wore on Sunday to her fine scarlet hose and soft new shoes. She's buried five husbands, growing wealthier with each marriage, and has traveled three times to Jerusalem, and also to Rome, Boulogne, Compostella, and Cologne. She sits "easy on an ambling horse," "had a flowing mantle that concealed large hips," and "in company she liked to laugh and chat, and knew the remedies for love's mischances, an art



Written some 600 years ago, these lines remain some of the most famous in English literature.

in which she knew the oldest dances."

**Reflections in a Looking-Glass**

When we meet these people from so long ago, we notice how different they are from us. On their pilgrimage, for example, the tales they tell often derive from mythology, folk wisdom, or religion. Were we moderns on a similar trek, we would probably talk politics and culture. Yet if we examine them more closely, we find in these pilgrims people very much like us, human beings who possess traits and emotions in common with us, who seek the good life, and who work hard, for the most part, at what they do.

Chaucer knew well those of whom he wrote. His father was a wealthy wine merchant, and as a youth Chaucer served as a page at the court of King Edward III. In addition to writing other poetry, the best known of which is "Troilus and Criseyde," he served as a justice of the peace, a controller of customs, a one-time

member of Parliament, and a supervisor of construction and repair over such buildings as the Tower of London and Westminster Abby. At his death, he was buried in the Abby in what is now known as "Poet's Corner."

In his novel "The Go-Between," L.P. Hartley wrote the famous line, "The past is a foreign country: They do things differently there." True enough. Few of us go on pilgrimages, and many of the professions found in Chaucer's company of travelers disappeared long ago. But in Chaucer's vivid portraits of these men and women, we can easily find reflections of our own humanity.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.



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## FINE ARTS

## Taki Katei: A Champion of Tradition in a Time of Immense Change

*The drawings of a Japanese master*

*Continued from Page 13*

The exhibits include works by Katei and his student Kazunori Ishibashi.

The works are in the museum's permanent collection due to one of Katei's students, Ishibashi (1876–1928), who studied at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Rather surprisingly, it's the first time Katei's work has been shown outside of Japan.

### Taki Katei Championed Tradition

Born in 1830, Taki Katei grew up in a time when Japan's art was rich with traditions. Artists borrowed particularly from the traditions of classical Chinese painting, but also followed the tradition of studying from life (people and animals) and botany. Artists started teaching Katei these traditions when he was just 6 years old. At 20 years old, he traveled to Nagasaki to be closer to Chinese culture. At that time,



A finished work: "Prosperity and Fragrance" by Taki Katei. Paper, pigment, and ink; 15 1/2 inches by 44 1/4 inches.

Nagasaki was the only port open in Japan and trade was restricted to the Netherlands, Korea, and China. Here, Katei could mix with Chinese artists and literati who taught him about their culture firsthand.

Over the next 15 or 16 years, Katei traveled around Japan, learning from teachers and by imitating great works; he worked on com-

missions as he went. In this way, he built up his reputation as well as an archive of works. These enabled him to open an art school in his home when he returned to Tokyo in 1866, Blakeborough said in a phone interview.

By 1868, Japan was in turmoil. The Tokugawa shogun "great general" of the Edo period (1603–1867) was overthrown, ending Japan's

feudal system. Japan's emperor replaced the shogun, becoming Japan's supreme ruler, and reigned as the Meiji emperor of "enlightened rule." Thus began a time of immense transition for Japan, when tradition largely came second to Westernization. Japan welcomed steam locomotives and Western styles of architecture and dress, for example.

The government formed an art school and museum and ran regular public exhibitions. Artists were encouraged to integrate Western styles into their art and adapt works for exhibition halls, glazing and framing paintings rather than creating the traditional silk hanging scrolls.

"Katei did not integrate any stylistic elements from Western painting into his work," Buckland said. He belonged to the Japan Art Association, a group of artists who "sought to re-energize the established form of Japanese painting," she said.

The association promoted Japanese traditional art overseas and submitted art at international exhibitions in Chicago in 1893, and Paris in 1900. They held two annual exhibitions in Tokyo and submitted work to government-sponsored exhibitions.

The group exhibited art that specifically showcased powerful

and eye-catching motifs or themes that represented Japanese culture, Buckland explained.

**'Drawing on Nature: Taki Katei's Japan'** Katei's drawings in the exhibition show just how artists studying with Katei would've been taught these traditional art practices. The drawings could be for folding screens, sliding doors, fans, albums, handscrolls, and of course, hanging scrolls, according to the exhibition audio guide.

They were "functional pieces used in teaching his students how to paint certain motifs, instructing them in the subject matter of traditional East Asian painting (most of this derived from China) and the whole language of set themes for paintings, some dating back almost a thousand years in China," Buckland said. These painting themes were detailed in an 1886 book for apprentice artists that Katei contributed to.

In the exhibition, the drawings are pinned rather than hung in the gallery, allowing visitors a glimpse into how Katei's students learned from him. "His works would have been pinned around his studio for his students to copy, so that's really what [we're] doing; we're continuing his tradition of teaching," Blakeborough explained.

The amount of detail in many of the drawings is incredible. "I can still remember the first time that I saw these works and being astounded that they were not actually finished pieces," Blakeborough said.

Most of the work consists of preparatory drawings. For Katei, "to be able to repeat that detail and skill [for the final piece] is astonishing in itself," Blakeborough said.

Katei had to render the drawings to such an extent if the painting was done on silk, because the tiniest errors are impossible to erase. To perfect silk painting takes incredible patience, skill, and endless practice.

Those principles come through Katei's drawings in the exhibition. Gridlines appear on some drawings so that the picture could be enlarged when copied. Some of the drawings are annotated with corrections, as in a delightful drawing of a pair of cranes by Kazunori Ishibashi. The birds' heads have been gently adjusted in red ink by either Katei or Ishibashi.

In "Bush Peonies," Katei's delicate pink peony petals hint at a velvet texture and perhaps even a whiff of fine fragrance. And in another, simply called "Deer," the animal's fur is so finely rendered that you can sense it's soft to the touch. These subjects were not just

flights of fancy that Katei wanted to paint. Japanese paintings, just as in Chinese classical art, used nature to portray meaning. The peony brimming with its multiple layers of dense petals represents wealth and prosperity, and a deer represents longevity.

Katei and his students would've had to learn this language of East Asian art—a language conveyed not by the written or spoken word, but by the language of symbolism.

Many of these drawings and hanging scrolls are full of meaning. Often, households have 1,000 years' worth of tradition stored away in their hanging scrolls only to be unraveled on certain occasions. The peony, if in bloom, would be stored until summertime and then hung. A painting such as "Waves of the First Rank," featuring majestic cranes in undulating waves, could be hung to herald the New Year. The red-crested crane was a symbol of longevity and purity.

To have Katei's works hung in one exhibition at the same time is fortuitous indeed—for Japanese traditional culture and for art itself. May this be the first of many Taki Katei exhibitions outside of Japan.

*To find out more about "Drawing on Nature: Taki Katei's Japan," which runs until April 13, visit [LiverpoolMuseums.org.uk](http://LiverpoolMuseums.org.uk)*

1. "Bush Peonies" by Taki Katei. Paper, pigment, and ink; 56 7/8 inches by 23 1/4 inches.

2. "Cranes" by Kazunori Ishibashi. Paper, pigment, and ink; 14 5/8 inches by 11 1/4 inches.

3. A finished work: "Rabbit" by Taki Katei or Kazunori Ishibashi. Paper and ink; 16 5/8 inches by 21 inches.



In Isaiah 6:6-7, a seraph touches Isaiah's lips with an ember from the altar of the Lord and says, "Now that this has touched your lips your wickedness is removed." "The Prophet Isaiah," 18th century, by Antonio Balestra. Castelvecchio Museum, Verona, Italy.

## COMMENTARY

## Signs and Wonder: King Ahaz and the Prophet Isaiah

JAMES SALE

We are fresh from Christmas, and if we have been listening to the regular type of services in Christian churches, we will be familiar with that passage from Isaiah, Chapter 7, which speaks of a child being born whose name will be Immanuel. This is one of the most famous prophecies in the Old Testament and is regularly read, alongside a New Testament passage depicting the nativity, as proof that Jesus is the Christ—Christ meaning, of course, the long awaited Jewish Messiah. But more than that, the word "Immanuel" in its etymology means "God-with-us," and so is also indicative of the whole idea of the incarnation: that God himself became a human being and lived among us.

Less well known, however, and if considered at all, is the rather remarkable context of the prophecy itself. Why was the prophecy made, and to whom? And what has that to say to us today? The story is, I think, quite astonishing.

The prophecy is made to King Ahaz at the time after the split of the Israelites into the northern kingdom (now under the reign of King Pekah) and the southern kingdom of Judah (from which the word "Jew" comes) led by Ahaz. All the kingdoms in this area close to the Mediterranean Sea are under pressure from Tiglath-Pileser III, the Assyrian king, for Assyria is a civilization that is essentially conquering the known world at that time; its armies are savage and irresistible. But Pekah has teamed up with the king of Syria, Rezin, in order to create an alliance to resist the advance of the Assyrians, and they are demanding that Ahaz join their alliance of resistance.

## Asking God for a Sign

Isaiah, the prophet, goes to Ahaz to tell him that God has told him that Ahaz should not trust any alliance with Pekah and Rezin, but trust in God Himself and to resist this temptation. Furthermore—and here is the crux leading to the prophecy—Isaiah also informs King Ahaz that God wants to give him a sign that this prophecy is true, and that he should

ask for it. Not only that, however, but God specifically gives permission for Ahaz to ask for any sign that could be shown either from the depths of hell (in Hebrew, Sheol) or from the heights of heaven itself. The Immanuel prophecy is given to King Ahaz because he rejects asking for one.

Here is the passage from Isaiah 7:

Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!"

This permission to ask for a sign is exceptional, particularly given the scope of it; indeed, it is difficult to think of a comparable offer in the whole Bible. First, then, why does God make the offer? Usually the situation is one of receiving the prophecy and being expected to accept it because it is the "word of God."

We remember Jonah—a true prophet, but one who fled from the message and direction of God, and who consequently was swallowed by the whale and forced to go to Nineveh and deliver God's prophecy of imminent destruction. There was no question of Jonah being offered a sign to confirm that he needed to travel to Nineveh, though a sign happened anyway.



King Ahaz is believed to have been evil, offering his own children as sacrifice to an idol. "Offering to Molech," illustration by Charles Foster for the 1897 "Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us."

ings, which means their whole context.

In other words, God is having a conversation with us, and we must be alert to its nuances; in understanding spiritual matters, we must investigate more deeply its intentions and meanings.

## Virtue-Signaling: Ahaz and Us

We see in Ahaz something that we see a lot in the modern world: virtue-signaling. It really conceals a deep evil or the heart's evil intention. The psychiatrist and author Norman Doidge said, "Virtue signaling is, quite possibly, our commonest vice."

Ahaz appears pious in quoting the scriptures, but in his heart he has already decided to act as if he were God, and that he knows better than God: He will form an alliance with Tiglath-Pileser III and so, through his own cleverness, avert the catastrophe that is sweeping down upon Jerusalem. The scale of the rejection of God's offer—to show such a stupendous sign—is indicative of just how oblivious he is to God and to the world of the spirit. No amount of evidence for him would count.

### We see in King Ahaz something that we see a lot in the modern world: virtue-signaling.

If we think about Marxism, communism, socialism, and some of the other virtue-signaling philosophies that some follow, we can see exactly the same pattern. As Jordan B. Peterson observed: "If there was any excuse to be a Marxist in 1917, there is absolutely and finally no excuse now." Yet still the ideologues go on believing in the "rightness" of their way, despite all the historical evidence that these ideologies don't work and only lead to the enslavement of whole populations.

Again, citing Norman Doidge, "Ideologues are people who pretend they know how to 'make the world a better place' before they've taken care of their own chaos within."

## Supping With the Devil

Finally, we observe here that because Ahaz rejects God's way, he follows a course in which he resists evil (the invasion by Assyria) with evil; and of course, there is a catch.

Those who sup with the devil, it is said, need a long spoon. Indeed, the exact opposite of what Ahaz planned occurs: The Jews become vassals of Tiglath-Pileser, and the destruction of Jerusalem is not averted.

That Ahaz is evil is not in dispute. Perhaps the most telling detail, aside from this rejection of God's sign, is in 2 Kings 16:3 where we learn that he committed the abomination of making "his son pass through fire," and in doing so followed other nations in this pagan practice. The meaning of this is disputed: It might mean that one of his sons underwent a purification ritual, but it seems much more likely that the abomination refers to infant sacrifice. In 2 Chronicles 28:3 it expressly says that he "burned his sons in fire."

It is this indifference to human life and what people actually need and want that seems to me the mark of all the false ideologies: The death of millions are just "statistics" along the way as we progress to "equality" and socialist utopias.

As we enter fully, then, the new year, the new decade, what signs are we receiving, or choosing to ignore? And if we think there are no signs, perhaps we need to intensify our prayers to ask for guidance—for more guidance—so that we are on the "right" way. After all, as we also learn from the Bible, God is a generous giver, so unlike Ahaz, who doesn't ask and doesn't want God's guidance, we might simply do the opposite.

All quotes are from the *New American Standard version of the Bible*.

*James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and spoke at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club on June 17, 2019.*



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

## 'Good Men, Good Men, Whatcha Gonna Do?'

## MARK JACKSON

It's the continuing, bombastic adventures of Miami PD detectives Mike Lowrey (Will Smith) and Marcus Burnett (Martin Lawrence)! However, that director of bombast, Michael Bay, is only appearing in a cameo here, and our two "bad boys for life" are now middle-aged. One might be tempted to imagine this would render their whole cop-n-robbers milieu much less bombastic. And granted, the fact that these previously high-energy and loudly profane law-enforcement partners must now confront their own mortality, encroaching fatness, losing a step, and other midlife realities (like becoming more thoughtful and reflective)—that would, by definition, have to slow them down a bit, right? In a word, um, no.

Obviously, a franchise as successful as this one is going to serve up liberal portions of the ingredients that made the previous two installments work: the chemistry, one-liners, and violence. But, in the same way that Clint Eastwood started poking fun at his own aging process starting with "Unforgiven," this third "Bad Boys" film similarly makes use of the aging factor. Because this whole thing started rolling a quarter of a century ago.

## 'Bad Boys for Life'

**Director**  
Adil El Arbi and Bilal Fallah

**Starring**  
Martin Lawrence, Will Smith, Vanessa Hudgens, Alexander Ludwig, Charles Melton, Paola Núñez, Kate del Castillo, Nicky Jam, Joe Pantoliano

**Rated**  
R

**Running Time**  
2 hour, 4 minutes

**Release Date**  
Jan. 17

★★★★★



Will Smith as Detective Mike Lowrey (L) and Martin Lawrence as Detective Marcus Burnett in "Bad Boys for Life."



Dr. Dolittle (Robert Downey Jr.) discovers he is able to talk to animals. Jip is voiced by Tom Holland, in "Dolittle."

## Doesn't Just Dolittle, It Does Nothing

## MARK JACKSON

Hugh Lofting's stories of Doctor Dolittle have never done well in movie form; 1967's musical version "Doctor Dolittle," with Rex Harrison as the titular doc, flopped (although at 7 years old, I personally loved it). And the late '90s "Dr. Dolittle" that starred Eddie Murphy should never have existed.

But that doesn't stop Hollywood from trying to bring the animal-language-speaking doc back again for a new generation, because kids love that concept: being able to converse with pets. This latest incarnation, though, starring Robert Downey Jr. is just off-the-charts terrible.

**The Story, Such as It Is**  
In Victorian-era England, Dr. Dolittle loses his wife

Lily in a sailing tragedy and exiles himself from public life behind the walls of his animal sanctuary-mansion, and grows a giant, cave-man beard.

Then, young Tommy Stubbins (Harry Collett), a boy forced to go duck hunting by his trigger-happy dad, shoots by mistake an English red squirrel (voiced by Craig Robinson) that speaks 21st-century Ebonics. Stubbins delivers the wounded black, I mean red, squirrel to Dolittle's compound for doctoring.

Stubbins arrives at the same time as Lady Rose (Carmel Laniado), who delivers news to the doctor that the ailing young Queen Victoria (Jessie Buckley) has requested Dolittle's presence at Buckingham Palace.

There's political subterfuge afoot involving Dolittle's former med-school classmate, Dr. Blair Müdflly (Michael Sheen). Is somebody perhaps slowly poisoning the queen? The highly unkempt, probably somewhat zoo-smelling, odd-accent-mumbling (Is it Welsh? Is it Scottish?) Dr. Dolittle needs much con-



Will Smith in the latest installment of "Bad Boys," a film with the characteristic nonstop action.

It embraces the fact that men of action at some point must put down the warrior sword. These guys aren't quite there yet, but due to the immediate success of this installment, there will most assuredly be a fourth one in which the boys will celebrate their dotage by braining perps and trailing mayhem as they approach their final resting places in the Barcalounger.

## What Goes On

There's a nasty cartel queen-pin named Isabel Aretas (Kate del Castillo), who escapes from prison and is coming for Mike. She's a witch, too! We see her throughout the movie in her Mexico City rooftop shrine, lit with candles honoring the folk saint Nuestra Señora de la Santa Muerte, a skeletal, haunting female demon of the underworld.

She's got a loyal, Bruce Lee-like assassin son, Armando Armas (Jacob Scipio). She wants revenge on the cops who apprehended her husband. Guess which cops? So Mike and Marcus are being stalked by a scary cartel witch's scarier Bruce Lee-assassin son.

Mike's a cowboy cop who's fast-paced and whose happy single lifestyle has be-

come threatened by his past coming back to haunt him (hint, hint). This requires Will Smith to sell us on taking Mike seriously, but the character's constantly driving his 2- and 4-wheeled high-performance vehicles at unlawful speeds, as well as indulging in many fistfights with the above-mentioned Latino Bruce Lee.

Smith, ever the consummate pro, gives all this nonsense his all, which actually makes the movie fun. And in many ways, this is a reprisal of his recent "Gemini Man" role, where he also drove and biked fast and traded blows with a younger version of himself. Even though "Gemini Man" tanked critically box office-wise, Smith is still fun to watch doing Michael Bay-type mayhem stuff. Especially with Martin Lawrence trading verbal funniness with him.

## Good Men

When the original 1995 "Bad Boys" came out, both Will Smith and Martin Lawrence were starring in their own sitcoms: "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" and "Martin," respectively. "Cops," the documentary-like TV show about cops, whose theme song—"Bad Boys"—provided the title and theme music for this movie franchise, was in its sixth season, which is why the movie was such a hit at the time; it tapped into an American cop-culture zeitgeist of sorts.

The violence in "Bad Boys for Life" is non-stop, part cartoonish and part disturbing, but Smith and Lawrence, whose banter may have actually reached a zenith here, make us forget that this is all basically foolishness. Clearly Smith and Lawrence have still got it; the franchise can survive without Bay's particular brand of bombastics. (Other directors can obviously bombastic it up as well.)

The franchise has swerved unexpectedly (and somewhat impressively) into character-driven territory. And the bad boys can handle it. While Smith at one point wretchedly derides the concept of trying to sing the bad boy lyrics substituting "good men, good men," etc., the fact of the matter is—that's where they would appear to be headed.

So whatcha gonna do when they come for you, next time around, since we'll now be subjected to their shenanigans for life? We're gonna go watch them some more is what we're gonna do.

## 'Dolittle'

**Director**  
Stephen Gaghan

**Starring**  
Robert Downey Jr., Emma Thompson, Antonio Banderas, John Cena, Michael Sheen, Kumail Nanjiani, Ralph Fiennes, Octavia Spencer, Rami Malek, Craig Robinson, Carmel Laniado, Jessie Buckley, Harry Collett

**Rated**  
PG

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 41 minutes

**Release Date**  
Jan. 17

★★★★★

vincing to leave his sanctuary. But eventually he and Stubbins go on a quest to locate a secret cure from a lost island, to restore the queen to health.

However! They are thwarted. Because this treasure hunt has directions as to how to complete it, which are missing because one King Rassouli (a scary pirate king played by Antonio Banderas) is the sole possessor of them. And Rassouli likes Dr. Dolittle as much as Captain Hook likes Peter Pan. And time is running out.

Did I mention that the doc hits the high seas in a ship full of his CGI menagerie friends? Of course he does. There's a lot of voice-acting star power here, but it matters little; apart from Emma Thompson as a macaw named Poly, there's too much chaos to figure out who's playing who, or to care.

In case you take your kids, and find that you do care about who's playing who: In addition to Thompson, and Kevin the squirrel played by Robinson, there's Plimpton the ostrich (Kumail Nanjiani), Yoshi the polar bear (John Cena), Chee-Chee

the gorilla (Rami Malek), Dab-Dab the duck (Octavia Spencer), and Barry the tiger (Ralph Fiennes).

## A Bad Case of Too Many Cooks

I'll spare you the history of pre-production dosey-doing and script enhancement and a million meetings and switcheroos, all in the name of the bottom line, because this is Hollywood after all. But this "Dolittle" ends up being the Disney of the 1970s, known for cutesy, treacly mismatched kitsch, high sugar content, and low sustenance value. For example: Why is a menagerie of bad CGI animals, supposedly from the late 1800s, sounding like a bunch of millennials?

Basically, you've got highly frenetic, barely intelligible scenes with way too much synthetic visual fakery—and a paper-thin storyline. Is it only for kids? Yes. Is it even for kids? Not all kids. Just kindergartners. Is that necessarily a bad thing—shouldn't kids have their own movies sometimes? Yes. But intentionally. Not unintentionally.

## FILM REVIEW

# A Sloppily Adapted Book-to-Film Plays Cat-and-Mouse With Plotline

IAN KANE

Cat-and-mouse films are some of the hardest types of stories to pull off. That's because their success usually requires a couple of elements: intrigue and subtlety. If audiences are intrigued enough by a film's premise and if the narrative unfolds with a certain degree of subtlety, then the film usually keeps viewers immersed enough to keep them guessing until the end.

**Kingsley routinely steals the scenes of whatever production he finds himself in.**

Directed by Daniel Alfredson, "Intrigo: Death of an Author" is the first in a book-to-film trilogy known as the "Intrigo" series. The books were originally written by fellow Swede, author, and teacher Hakan Nesser.

Interestingly, Alfredson also directed two of the three films in the cartoonishly misandristic carnival known as the "Millennium" trilogy, specifically "The Girl Who Played with Fire" and "The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest" (both 2009 productions). Subtle would be the opposite of how one would describe those films.

"Intrigo: Death of an Author" certainly starts off in an intriguing fashion. The main character of the story is David (Benno Fürmann, "Joyeux Noel"), a professional translator who also happens to be an aspiring novelist. We are introduced to David while he is on vacation with his wife, Eva (Tuva Novotny, "A War," "Annihilation"). Eva ruins their little getaway by revealing that she's been impregnated by her therapist and is going to leave David. From there, David begins to plot her demise.

A few years later and we find David meeting with the famous author Alex Henderson (played to the hilt by an always game Ben Kingsley), who has apparently agreed to lend his advice to David as a favor.

This setup is pretty decently executed. David relates his story to Alex as the two perch on the sundeck of the latter's gorgeous villa in the Greek Isles, and you really get the sense that there may be a slow-burn build in store—one that could lead to a dramatic crescendo. However, the film never manages to deliver on this promise.

The problem, or part of it, is due to the story's being told in a need-



Benno Fürmann (L) and Ben Kingsley in "Intrigo: Death of an Author," filmed in a lush location.

lessly disjointed and convoluted manner; you can see the main plot points from a mile away. Many of the scenes are foreshadowed from multiple angles by all-too-obvious narration as David reads chapters of his novel to Alex. In other words, there's not a lot of subtlety here.

In addition, Fürmann's acting comes off as stiff, with somewhat labored lines. These unfortunate factors are magnified whenever he's in the presence of Kingsley, who chews through scene after scene despite having a smaller role. And it might not entirely be Fürmann's fault for being vastly out-matched; Kingsley routinely steals the scenes of whatever production he finds himself in.

The little bits of joy to be gleaned from this film mainly come from Kingsley doing his thing on-screen, as well as the film's sump-

tuously exotic locales shot beautifully by Oscar-nominated Polish cinematographer Pawel Edelman ("The Pianist").

Unfortunately, when the filmmakers attempt to be clever by bouncing back and forth between supposed reality and fiction, everything is tortuously perplexing. The story becomes stranded too far from its origins and then depends on the audience to fill in gaping plot holes. And, without a sense of cohesion, the film's confusing script begins to sag and collapse under its own soggy weight.

In the end, "Intrigo: Death of an Author" is technically a well-shot film, but it fails to translate its murky, cat-and-mouse tale with the aplomb that you'd expect from such a seasoned group of filmmakers.

Hopefully, the two coming films based on Nesser's novels will make a better, more cohesive transference onto the silver screen.

*Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com*



Ben Kingsley is the only reason to see the film.

## 'Intrigo: Death of an Author'

**Director**  
Daniel Alfredson

**Starring**  
Ben Kingsley, Benno Fürmann, Tuva Novotny

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 46 minutes

**Rated**  
R

**Release Date**  
Jan. 17

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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