

As a long time opera aficionado and teacher of an opera appreciation class, I did take exception to the article on the Eugene Opera and the insistence by the writer that it is the spectacle and set design that draws people to opera. Not so. It is the singing, the music that is paramount and any opera goes experience. It's considered a back handed complement when all you can say is "Well the scenery and costumes were good."

The author made no mention of the rich musical styles of *The Barber of Seville* and *Hansel and Gretel* which leads me to suspect the writer is unfamiliar with the genre as she continued to bubble on about the spectacle.

I hope *EW* will have more articles of opera in future issues that will be more inclusive of the music—the real focus of opera—to better prepare the audience for their listening enjoyment.

Alisa McLaughlin  
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: Writer Emily Freeman actually knows quite a lot about operatic music, but we asked her to write about the visual elements for this issue of Bravo.

**ILLEGAL SPEED TRAPS**

Ilse Kolbuszowski wrote a letter (8/18) that questioned the "priorities" of the Eugene Police Department after her friend received a speeding ticket for going 35 mph in a 25 mph zone on Patterson Street. I liked her sentiments, but would like to suggest that a main priority for the Eugene police system, like any other, is to raise revenue. Consequently, the police system and its officers create illegal speed traps in order to obtain more money from taxpayers.

Wait, it gets worse: Eugene police aren't only "raising" as much "revenue" from the public as possible; some are also criminals in uniform, like officer Magana who was found guilty of raping women in Eugene while on duty. However, you can fight illegal speed traps by appealing your ticket. Check out websites like: ticketkiller.com. The basic facts regarding setting speed limits in Eugene is that ODOT *must* adhere to Federal laws mandated in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Title 23 (2b-10)

and the 8 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 630.

Many speed limits in cities like Eugene have been arbitrarily set without following the federal law which requires that an engineering speed survey must be performed every five years (by an engineer) and mandates that the speed limit shall be in the 85th percentile of free-flowing traffic. Although, if you appeal for the sake of "justice," you might end up like me in a kangaroo court of Lane County in front of Judge Chuck Carlson who will laugh and yell at you.

Michelle Satterlee  
Eugene

**TWO CHOICES**

It is clear to me in the wake of the Katrina disaster and our ongoing adventures in (failure) Iraq and Afghanistan that our government has failed. Utterly.

In light of this, either of two things need to happen. We embrace European economic socialism in all it's glory or we deal away with

government once and for all. Since I can be fairly certain that most of Eugene and the other heavily-populated areas of Oregon would opt for socialism, I'll be moving to New Hampshire. In the meantime, this is something that all free-thinking beings in our "freedom" loving country need to think about.

Do we make complete our transition to socialism and the nanny-state, or do we embrace the much vaunted "freedom" we so lack? Do we ask the government to take care of us, or do we take charge of our lives and become responsible for our own successes and failures? Do we allow force and coercion to run our everyday lives, or do we become a voluntary society? Can we allow others to dictate our behavior and mores, or do we ask that they "mind their own ethics"?

Do we continue to regulate and tax, or should we allow the (truly) free market to reign? These are questions everybody needs to answer. As far as government is concerned, there is no middle ground; You are either a

**viewpoint** BY NINA SIMONS

**Changing Directions**  
Relationship, culture and the Bioneers

I keep wondering, what is the single area of our lives we could best commit our time and attention to, that might most rapidly alter this violent course of greed and environmental destruction we're on?

I think it involves looking at what we love most uncompromisingly, what sparks us so deeply that we're willing to go out on a limb, take risks and make a stand for it.

To change the direction the world's heading in, we are creating a new culture. Our culture is shaped by the nature of its relationships, by what we most love and value. There's also another, more personal reason to delve into the stew of relatedness, to see how seasoning it may improve the flavor and nourishment of our lives. There is a vast loneliness among us, and responding to that deeply human need to connect may lead us to redefine and restore our culture in a way that re-weaves the fabric of our individual lives into community, reorienting us collectively toward an Earth-honoring future and social healing.

Since culture can be roughly defined as "what we value, cultivate and care about," doesn't it make sense that to shift our culture we need to reexamine the quality of our relationships?

For what is culture comprised of, really, but an intimately interconnected series of stories, relationships and social networks, beginning with the core relationship of each of us to ourselves, and then emanating outward to embrace our "environment" of friends, partners, communities, nations and the whole web of life? What would it mean to explore the convergence of cultural change with the nature and quality of our relationships?

Dan Dagget, ecologist and author of the Pulitzer Prize-nominated book, *Beyond the Rangeland Conflict*, asked that question, and concluded: When scientists set out to discover the smallest, most basic form of matter, and discovered particles that were smaller and smaller and smaller, they finally came to a point where there were no particles, no "things." There were only relationships.

What that means is, in the most basic and fundamental of senses, we don't live in a world of things; we live in a world of relationships. He said that we can learn more about being an effective environmentalist by reading books about relationships than we can learn from books on ecology and plants; certainly more than we can learn by reading books about activism.

Dan said that to resolve environmental conflicts, he began paying more attention to what had kept him and his wife together for more than 26 years. He recognized that we're all enrolled in a continuing education learning experience about living in a world of relationships.

Communications, both verbal and non-verbal, are at the very heart of cultivating relationship. They create the tendrils of connection – the invisible webs that carry information between and among us. Ultimately, those networks shape our culture, guiding the formation of our institutions and social structures.

Our corporate-consumer culture has played a key part in severing our relationship with the Earth, as we've bought into a system of intermediaries – for our food, our power, our transportation, our information, and especially our waste – which disconnects us from the real consequences of our choices.

"In this state of total consumerism," Wendell Berry writes, "which is to say a state



of helpless dependence on things and services and ideas and motives that we have forgotten how to provide ourselves – all meaningful contact between ourselves and the Earth is broken. We do not understand the Earth in terms either of what it offers us or of what it requires of us, and I think it is the rule that people inevitably destroy what they do not understand."

One of the more powerful ideas that can spark a reconnection with ourselves, each other and the Earth is the concept of immanence, which suggests that everything that's alive in the world, including each one of us, is filled with magic and imbued with spirit.

In 18th century England, ideas of immanence were called enthusiasms, which means, from the Greek, "Full of God," and these enthusiasms were often associated with activism and rebellion. Back then, the notion of the worlds being inherently alive, full of spirit, and continually changing, helped to develop people's self-confidence. It encouraged them to step forward to act, to transform the world rather than remaining passive in the face of the great transformations that relationship and culture were then sweeping England.

The possibility of changing our worldview – and through it, our behavior – is perhaps our species' greatest gift, and also one of our greatest challenges. It involves rewiring our internal systems, and learning how to reorient ourselves toward a life that is relationally alive, alert and constantly changing.

Master healer and educator Jan Sultan has named this capacity Behavioral Plasticity, and what he means is our conscious ability to alter our behavior patterns, to revise our inner belief systems, to fundamentally approach our lives with a new perspective. To make this shift calls for a change of ethics.

In the Cherokee language, there is no word for love of an inanimate object – anyone who loves a thing is considered insane. In this time that's been called a 'Baroque epoch of greed,' we are plagued by the belief that value is based almost solely on material gain. We need to rediscover that the only real security lies in being connected to our own inner spark, those we love, our communities and the whole web of life.

The bottom line is that we're being called upon to make the shift from a worldview that's essentially self-centered, to a consciousness that recognizes our relatedness as central to our survival. This shift will expand our sense of time, and we will come to evaluate the merit of strategies, innovations and policies not merely in relation to what immediate benefits they might bring, but also in light of their extended impact on future generations. This change will involve redefining our senses of meaning, fulfillment and success based upon the quality of relational connection we have in our lives. It will invite us to more fully experience the richness of community, of belonging, of deepening, and of being loved. It will mean recognizing that dynamic, caring relationships may be the only thing that endures.

Nina Simons is co-executive director of the non-profit Bioneers. She will be convening the nationwide collaboration to unite 17 bioregions through The Bioneers Conference Oct. 14-16. The Oregon Bioneers conference will be held at LCC daily from 8 am to 10 pm. This annual event links communities live by satellite to address global and national community issues while focusing on locally relevant topics through regional workshops, presenters and dialogue. Cost is \$150 for all three days, \$100 for two days, \$55 for one day. For more info visit [www.bridgingworldsnw.org](http://www.bridgingworldsnw.org) or call LCC at 463-5594.