

Petite Plaisance Conservation Fund Newsletter

December 2018

Lights, Camera, Action!

The 2018 season at Petite Plaisance got off to an exciting start with the early June arrival of a film crew from Brussels, Belgium. Director Françoise Levie, the beloved French actress Marie-Christine Barrault, and six crew members came to Maine to shoot the American sequences of *Zénon, l'insoumis* (*Zeno, the Rebel*). The film is a documentary based on Marguerite Yourcenar's 1968 novel *The Abyss*, which the author believed to be her best book.

For eight days almost every room at Petite Plaisance was turned into a film set where Madame Barrault performed readings from *The Abyss* with emotion and grace. Other sites in Northeast Harbor and around Mount Desert Island will also be featured in the film. *Zénon, l'insoumis* will have its European premiere on June 15, 2019, at the Villa Marguerite Yourcenar in Saint-Jans-Cappel, France, on the site of the de Crayencour family château where young Marguerite spent the first nine summers of her life. A lifelong lover of Yourcenar's work, Madame Barrault called the week she spent filming at Petite Plaisance "absolutely magical." We can't wait to see the finished project and hope to bring the film to MDI in 2020.



Projects

Thanks to the generosity of donors, several projects were completed at Petite Plaisance in 2018. Topping the list was the restoration of the wildflower meadow, which had become more meadow than wildflowers.

We also made a good dent in the backlog of tree work and pruning in the postseason and completed preliminary tasks related to the roof project. The main chimney was pointed and lined, a new damper was installed, and the flues of both chimneys were capped just in time for first big storm of the winter. When the snow clears out in spring, we will replace the main roof of Petite Plaisance with Maine-made white cedar shingles. It is the PPCF's biggest undertaking to date, and we need all hands on deck for this one. Many, many thanks for your support of the project!

The award-winning French actress Dominique Sanda, star of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, visited Petite Plaisance in late July 2018. She is pictured here amid the blooming wildflower meadow.

Book Launch

On August 1, 2018, Joan Howard launched her new biography *We Met in Paris: Grace Frick and Her Life with Marguerite Yourcenar* at the Northeast Harbor Library. The enthusiastic crowd included island residents who remember “Miss Frick” and “Madame,”



several of whom were interviewed for the book. Revealing much new information about its two protagonists, *We Met in Paris* is the product of more than ten years of research and writing. It was longlisted for the 2019 PEN/Bogard Weld Prize for Biography. Congratulations, Joan!

President's Message

At Petite Plaisance we work hard to keep things as they were when Marguerite Yourcenar last left the house in 1987. The challenge is less daunting indoors, but where “Grande Plaisance” — the garden — is concerned it's another matter entirely. Trees grow and block out sunlight, hungry critters feast on string beans in the organic vegetable patch. The wildflower meadow has always been a notorious horticultural challenge. But for a brief time last summer, it was magnificent! We were fortunate in 2018 to have engaged the services of the gardening duo Mary Lyman and Gordon Lyman, whom we look forward to working with in 2019. On the docket is restoring Madame Yourcenar's beloved Montmorency cherry orchard and the inevitable tweaking of the wildflower meadow with the assistance of these ever helpful professionals.

It is thanks to the generosity of donors that we are able to continue the traditions of the house. Please know how grateful we are for your support.

~ Jayne Persson

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*Thank you as well to our summer
visitors for their generosity—merci!*