

Charles' Summer 25 Begins!



We're Back!

The last you heard from us, we had high-tailed it out of the U.S. of A. in response to the ridiculous tariffs and the taunts of granting us 51st state status.

As if to salute us for our patriotism, the weather gods treated us to a special welcome just after we got home.



As difficult as it was to cut our warm winter getaway short, we had to admit that there was a special kind of beauty in an Ontario winter.



And being home allowed us to see some wonderful concerts and shows.

The fabulous Whitney Ross-Barris did an evening of Tom Waits songs in the home of Sam and Sue Broverman, with Stu Harrison at the piano. It was a great night.



There was a delightful concert at the Rex with the amazing Chris Tsujiuchi doing his first jazz performance, with Stu on piano and Ross MacIntyre on bass.



Then there was the fabulous evening at Hugh's Room with the gangbuster duo of Charlotte Moore and Gabi Epstein in the first of a series of concerts produced by Ori Dagan called "All That Cabaret". These two blew the roof off the place!



We were able to celebrate World Theatre Day at what will soon be the home of Canada's Theatre Museum.



Taking advantage of John Estacio's visit to Toronto, Jim invited a group of talented musical theatre people to read his latest draft of their musical *Bluenose*, which they're hoping will get mounted sometime soon.



And suddenly there were signs of spring.



I was moved to see the response of seniors in two different residences, as they sang along with Sam Rosenthal and Michelle Piller in the Smile Theatre production of *Remember That Song?*. I continue to be awed by the joy that Smile brings to so many isolated seniors and people living in care.



In mid-May, we were thrilled to be invited to the joyous wedding of our friends Jared Klein and Miriam Maes.



Toward the end of May, the weather finally warmed up enough for us to bring Charles out of his winter hibernation. We joined our friends Vicki and Mario Gagnon who had rented a cottage near Leamington on Lake Erie. It was a lovely day for a drive.



The cottage was perfectly designed to make the most of the views.







And because of the time of the year, there were birds everywhere. Mario was prepared to capture as many as possible with his high-powered photographic apparatus.



Here are a few shots he
got from the deck.

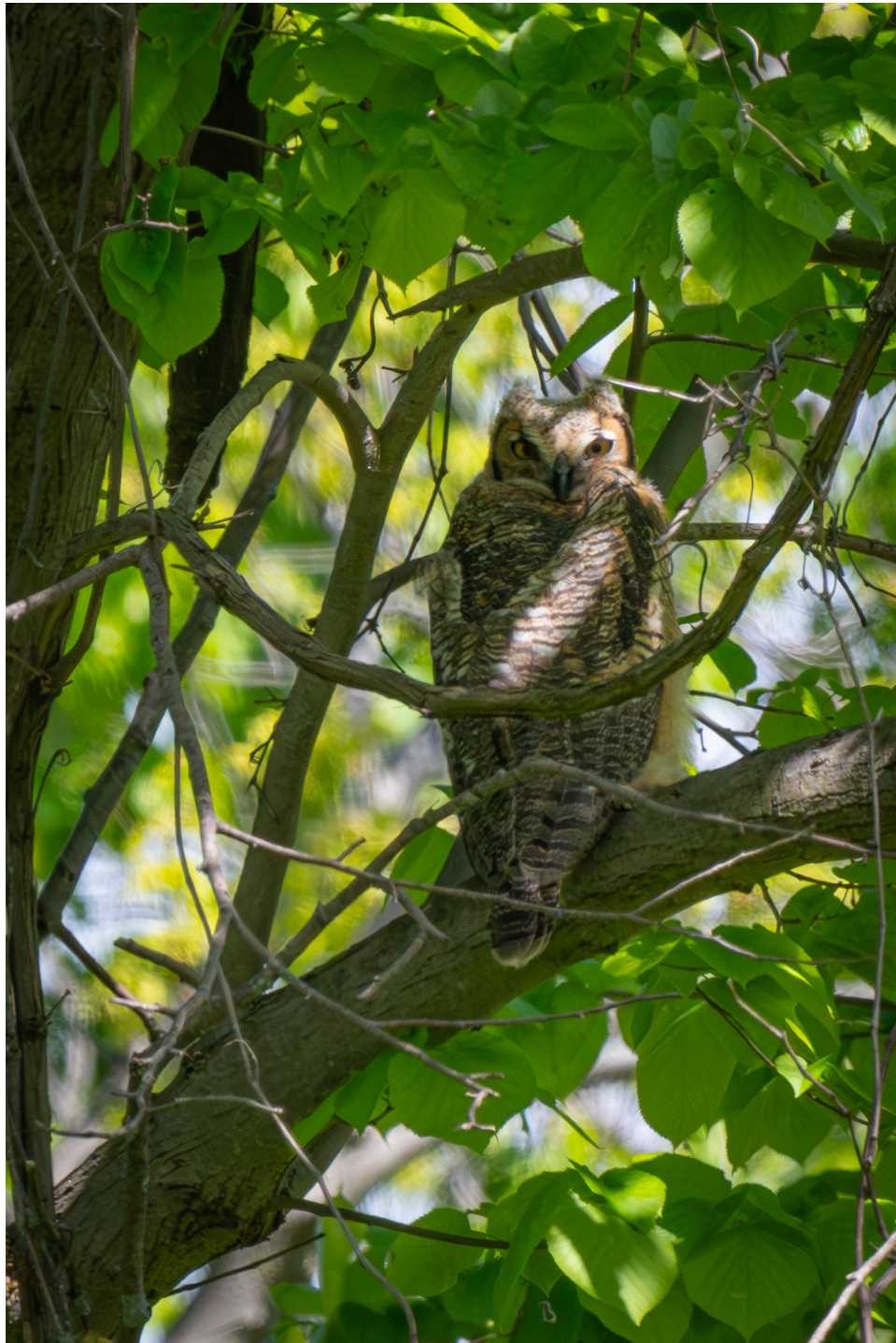




Then we went on a bird watching expedition in Point Pelee National Park. It was a birder's paradise and Mario shared some of his fabulous photos.



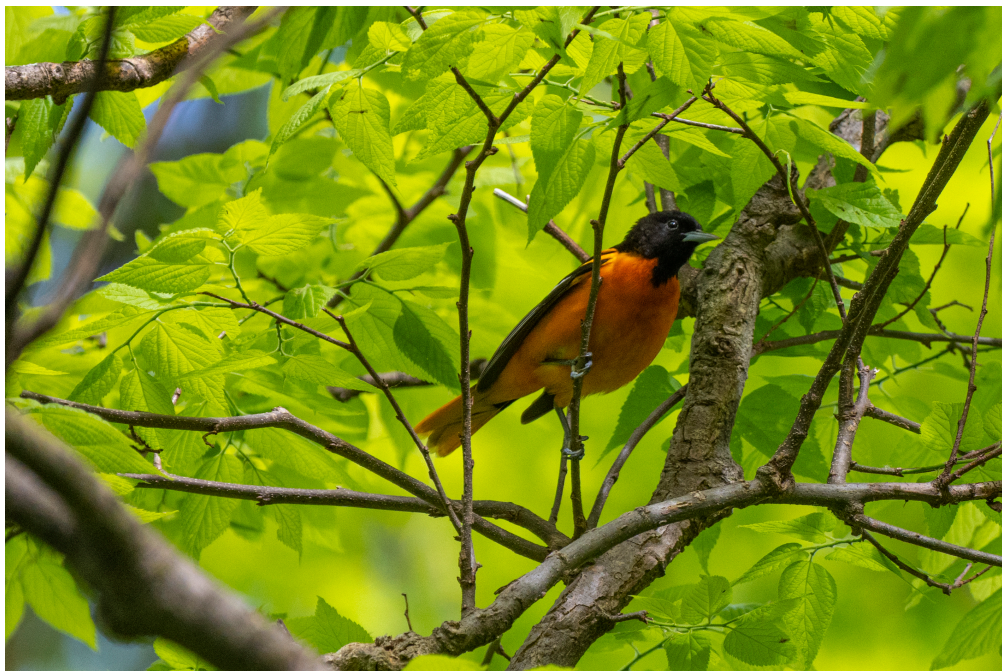
One of the best moments was when we met some guys who had spotted a bird off in the distance. They told us it was a Great Horned Owl. I could just barely make it out through my binoculars. Mario got this shot.



Just as an example of how much better Mario's lens is, this was my shot of a Baltimore Oriole.



And this was Mario's.



But even with my little phone camera, I got a few nice shots.



Mario also took this lovely photo of Jim and me.

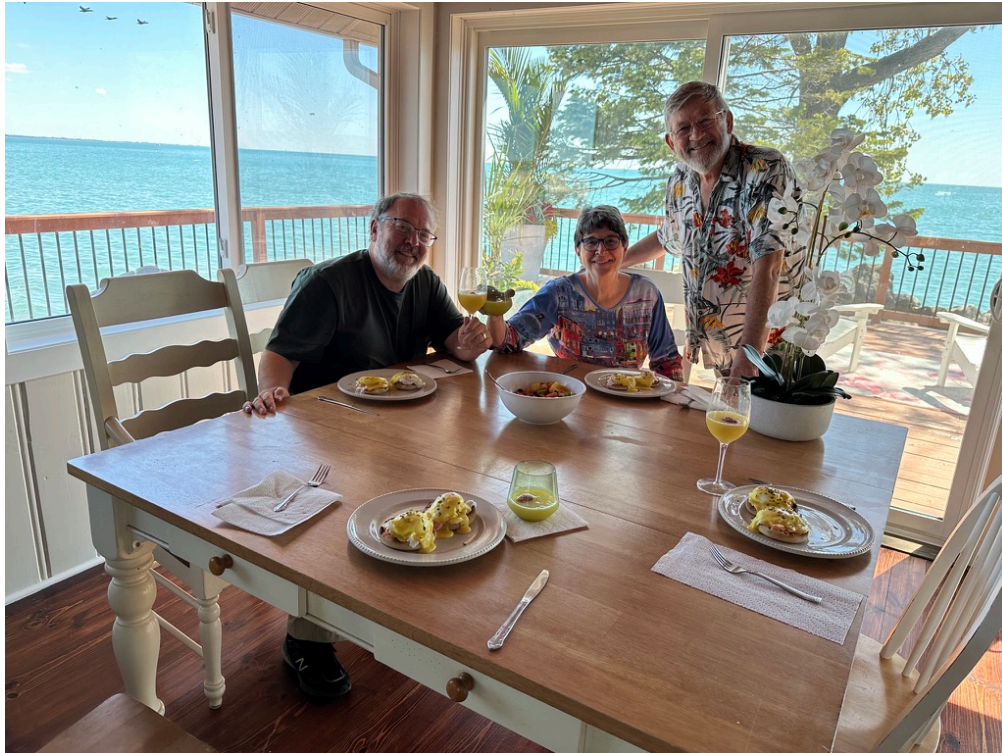


It was a fun weekend of catching up, nature and of course dining.

We went to the Oxley Winery in Leamington and had a great lunch, while sampling some of their wines.



And in honour of Mario's birthday, I made my signature dish, Eggs Benedict. We've rarely had a better setting for my Bennies.



After the birthday brunch, Jim and I (and Charles) went to Stratford and joined the glitterati for the opening of their 2025 season, announced by the traditional fanfare.



We enjoyed the opening night performance of *As You Like It*.



The next night, we met up again with Vicki and Mario, as well as other friends Jamie and Jo-Anne Newland, Bob Newland and Greg and Claire Forman. We met for dinner and then saw the Scottish Play. Which got mixed reviews.



Before leaving Stratford, we stopped in at Junction 56, where our friend Stephen Woodjetts gave us a tour of the process behind their whiskeys, gins and vodkas. It was very entertaining, and we got to sample almost everything!

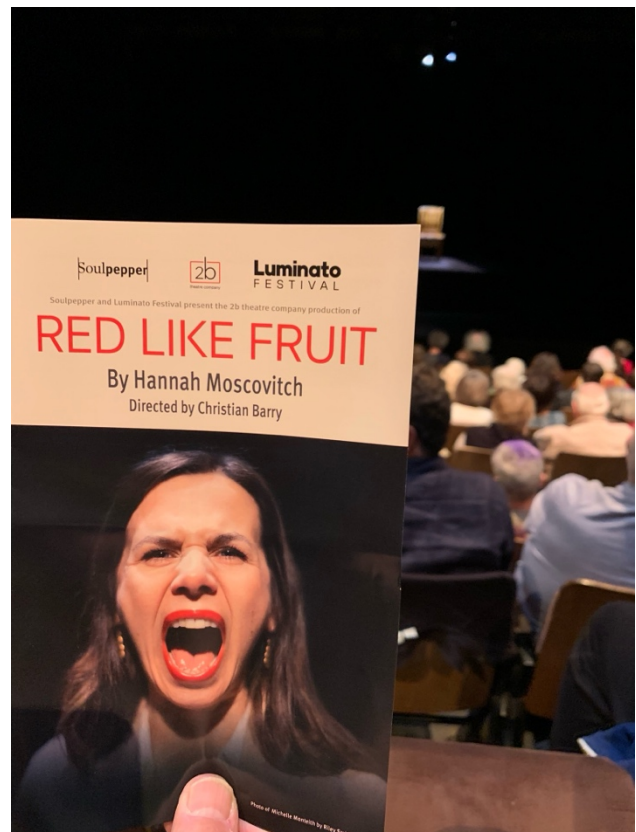


It was great fun – and very informative.

When we got back to Toronto, there was lots of to do and see. At the Tarragon, we really enjoyed Suzie Wilde's show, *After the Rain*. Some great songs and an innovative way of storytelling.



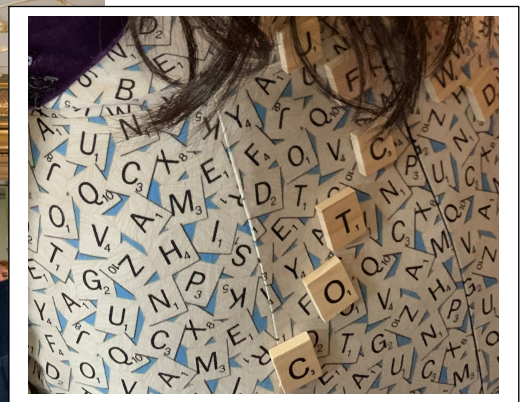
We saw the brilliant production of Hannah Moscovitch's *Red Like Fruit*. Disturbingly powerful.



The return of Scrabble With the Stars, a fundraiser for The Performing Arts Lodge (aka PAL Toronto) and the Canadian Artists Network, was set in a very exotic location.



Ann Kaplan welcomed everyone, wearing her outrageous Scrabble tile themed outfit, with a fabulous purple coat over her Scrabble dress.



We had a chance to catch up with some fun folks like Nina Keogh and Briane Nasimok. And Colin Mochrie below.



A Canadian classic, Hart Pomerantz.



Another Canadian superstar, Sharon Hampson.



And Jennifer Ward, who took all these celebrity shots.



At 98-and-a-half, the woman who started it all, Vivienne Muhling, was there to celebrate the return of this great event.



That same week, Smile Theatre did a public performance of *Remember That Song?*, which brought a lot of old and new Smile friends together to appreciate the great work that Smile does.



We ended the week with a wonderful concert at Koerner Hall to see our friend Alan Gotlib in the Singing Out choir. It was a fun and moving evening dedicated to musical icons of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Community.

We continued a tradition of celebrating our friend Sheila Croft's birthday with Eggs Benedict (again!) in our backyard. This year, to acknowledge her 90th birthday we arranged for the Smile Serenaders to sing for her.

The Serenaders arrived and one of the songs they performed was "Something Stupid". When they got to the line about saying something stupid like "I love you", Sheila spouted, "There's nothing more stupid than that!" which caused everyone to roar with laughter.



It was a fun afternoon and Sheila seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. (She would've told me if she didn't!)



There was one more event we'd planned to attend before leaving Toronto.

The evening began with a delicious dinner at Terroni with Vicki and Mario, where we were thrilled to see that Fiori di Zucca Fritti was on the menu.

The seasonal dish consists of zucchini flowers stuffed with cheese and fried. They happened to be in season when we were all together in Italy several years ago. And these just as yummy.



Then we experienced a spectacular night of music, with many of Canada's greatest jazz players on the Massey Hall stage to celebrate the 100th birthday of Oscar Peterson. Look at this list – and it's not complete!



Also on that stage was Oscar's own Bösendorfer Grand, which, according to Oscar's daughter Celine, has only left Oscar's home 3 times. It was played by 6 different pianists, all brilliant. There were more musical highlights than I can name.

Everyone was on their feet when all the musicians came out on stage at the end of the evening.



But there was one more piece to be performed and one more performer to arrive on stage.

The place erupted when Oliver Jones, at 95 years of age, walked onto the stage. With a guiding hand from his goddaughter, Celine Peterson, Oliver took centre stage and talked about his friend and mentor, Oscar.



Then Oliver sat down at that Bösendorfer and Robi Botos sat at the other grand piano that had been rolled onto the stage. And together they played Oscar's most famous composition, *Hymn to Freedom*, with a vigour and power that had the audience roaring and weeping.



You can't top that.

So, two days later, we packed up Charles and left town.