

June 21, 2011. La nuit de la musique in Paris. (EM).

It's 10:30 pm (1:30 pm in California) and I just got back to the apartment after wandering around for several hours. This is the summer solstice (longest night of the year) and it's still not quite dark. The entire city is out on the streets celebrating "La nuit de la musique" (The night of music, celebrated every year, and all the concerts are free). I heard two wonderful classical musical concerts at the National Archives -- a quartet of talented young singers singing 15th and 16th century madrigals, followed, in a separate concert, by a superb performance of a Brahms cello/piano sonata. The National Archives is just 5 or so blocks away from the apartment and I have been to several concerts there. It's a huge, lovely Louis XIV building -- with lots of statues and marble. They had more concerts after those two -- until midnight I think, but then I decided to wander.

There is live music everywhere. In the courtyard of the nearby Museum of Nature and Hunting there were about 30 guys playing music on hunting horns (those traditional round brass horns with no keys). Further up the street the Mairie du 3^{ème} had a HUGE street dance. Each of Paris's 20 arrondissements has a City Hall (Mairie); we're in the 3rd, i.e. our zip code is 75003.

Besides the dozens of classical and jazz concerts and other events listed in the various calendars, such as MusiqueMaestro.com which I look at nearly every day, there are hundreds more performances of live music. I must have run across 10 bars with live musicians and people spilling out on the street, drinking beer, eating fast food (baguette sandwiches, crêpes) -- African drummers (little children dancing on the sidewalk), Brazilian (with a lady on the sidewalk doing what I suppose is a Samba), a jazz band at one cafe, hard rock musicians at another cafe, in the alcove of a church out on the street (the old church next door to where I often eat Italian food) what I suppose were gospel singers, and on our street (Rue du Temple) smoke and projected lights on buildings like a disco and the crowd so dense I could barely penetrate it. There was much more. I could, in 5 minutes more, have walked to the Seine, crossed it and there was a concert scheduled at the Swiss Embassy (open unusually to the public), another at a Bernadine monastery etc... But I was tired, Olivia was coming the next day and I had spent the day straightening up the apartment after 2 months of being a bachelor, so I headed home.

On the way back I was going to drop into the Jewish Museum (where Olivia and I are members) where they had a Klesmer band in their courtyard, but there was a huge line of people waiting to get in, so I skipped that. And then in the little square a block from the apartment, were a bunch of people playing Celtic music. Probably from the Quiet Man Irish Pub on that block where I go frequently. And again a few people dancing to the music. And this is only one small part of the city! It's cloudy and occasionally a drop of rain, but it's warmed up and was quite pleasant. It's nearly 11 pm, the sun finally has set and it is dark. Our outside thermometer still reads 21 (70 F.).