



## ARTS, LITERATURE & NATURE (ALAN)

### Aria Code from New York Public Library: Opera with a Twist

#### **Recommended by Abel Ickowicz**

Aria Code is a clever podcast. Contemporary ethical dilemmas are juxtaposed to the core theme of opera arias. In each episode acclaimed performers, conductors, academics, music critics, and people whose experiences echo the featured opera's subject act as discussants. For example, a woman advocate against domestic violence and forced marriages, herself a survivor of this form of abuse, speaks about her personal struggle echoing freedom of choice, the theme of Rossini's Barber of Seville, a comic opera. In another episode, about Violeta, a Parisian courtesan who questions true love, in Verdi's La Traviata, the guest discussant is a scientist who earlier in life had a career as a sex worker. Or listen to the complicated racial history of Gershwin's Porgy and Bess opera, with testimony about what it is like for a black baritone to sing in an opera that stigmatizes post-slavery black people. Beautiful music serves as background to timely and timeless issues.

Aria code is produced by WNYC, New York Public Radio in collaboration with the Metropolitan Opera. Download the smart-phone app or access on line through <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/aria-code>.

**Dr. Abel Ickowicz** is a child & adolescent psychiatrist at Toronto's SickKids Hospital.

### Hunt, Gather, Parent: What Ancient Cultures Can Teach Us About the Lost Art of Raising Happy, Helpful Little Humans by Michaeleen Doucleff

#### **Recommended by Michael Cheng**

"Hunt, Gather, Parent" is a brilliant book about how busy, overwhelmed parents in modern society can reconnect to their child while getting them to be helpful at the same time.

I have found it helpful as a parent, as well as my work as a child psychiatrist.

**Problem:** Especially during the pandemic, parents have been feeling overwhelmed. However, our children and youth have been struggling too, which has led to all sorts of recommendations by experts about how to support their mental health. "Spend more time with them!" "Go biking with them!" "Do yoga with them!" Unfortunately, many parents (myself included), don't have all that extra time to be adding on extra activities with our kids.

**Solution:** Dr. Michaeleen's Doucleff writes about how for millennia, parents in traditional hunting, gathering and farming societies stayed attached to their kids and supported their mental health, without needing to go biking with them or do yoga. What's the secret? It involves many facets, which include spending time with your children and youth by involving them as much as possible in day-to-day survival and household activities. Instead of adding 30-minutes of yoga to my day with my kids, we can save time by doing activities mindfully such as gardening, cleaning or sweeping, or walking to the store, without distractions. Instead of my making dinner while my kids entertain themselves doing something else, it is about keeping them involved with making dinner. The youngest one (7-yo) can fetch, hold or pour things for me, while the eldest (10-yo) can actually be more independent and actually cook things on the stove. All of this helps reconnect our kids to purpose, belonging, hope and meaning. Other secrets of traditional parenting include the fact that traditional parents don't nag their kids to help or get off their screens, because nagging (and other imperatives such as commands) leads our kids to shut down and ignore us. Dr. Doucleff uses examples such as how traditional Inuit parents don't nag their kids to put on their hats in the winter. Instead, parents simply tell kids the consequences (i.e. using declarative language) -- the Northern Lights will snatch off your head to play soccer with it. It reminds me of traditional francophone parenting with the Bonhomme Sept Heures. Instead of nagging your kids to go to bed, there is the Bonhomme Sept Heures, the bogeyman who will come if you don't go to bed...

In summary, there is great wisdom that we can learn from our parenting ancestors, and this book was an incredibly practical introduction to this topic.

**Dr. Michael Cheng** is a child & adolescent psychiatrist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa.

## ***The White Saviors by Canadaland***

### ***Recommended by John D. McLennan***

The White Saviors is a five-part podcast narrated by Oluola Adeogun from the news company Canadaland. It documents the rise and possible fall of an influential Canadian children's charity called WE. Many Canadians will be familiar with WE given its high profile in the controversial and eventually unsuccessful federal government student employment program. However, this is but one of the controversies facing the complex WE phenomenon. The WE phenomenon warrants careful consideration by health

professionals and educators given WE's involving many children and youth in low- and middle-income countries, as well as high-income countries. For example, in Canada, many school children participated in "WE days" and "Free the Children" fundraising activities through their schools. The White Saviors explores several concerns about financial and other practices, as well as about claimed deliverables (e.g., number of schools built). Although Canadian school participation was presumably underpinned with the best of intentions to foster engagement of children and youth in charitable endeavours, one now wonders about the vetting of such activities, particularly given the concerning allegations. The White Saviors is a provocative and sometimes disturbing series. It is well worth a listen.

<https://www.canadaland.com/shows/the-white-saviors/>

**Dr. John D. McLennan** is a child & adolescent psychiatrist based at the University of Calgary.

**Submit your recommendations of books, movies, nature photos, etcetera for our readership for the ALAN column. They should not be more than 500 words in length. Submissions should be submitted to Vicki at [vsimmons@shaw.ca](mailto:vsimmons@shaw.ca) with the subject heading "ALAN submission". A subcommittee of the Journal will review all submissions. We look forward to your contributions.**