

## Chana Cox Bio

Chana Cox received her Ph.D. from Columbia University she, her husband, and their children lived in the Salmon River Idaho wilderness with her husband's uncle Sylvan Hart, a.k.a. Buckskin Bill Last of the Mountain Men. (See Cox's *A River Went out of Eden*, Lexikos Press).

She returned to "civilization" after seven years and was employed as a Vice President of Planning for a public company operating in the Eastern Canadian Arctic. The Cox family never quite readapted to the background noises of city life. She and her husband now live on a hill top overlooking the Columbia River Valley. When the sun shines – which it rarely does in Oregon – she lives and works in clear sight of Mount Hood, Mount St. Helens, Mount Adams, and Mount Ranier. She counts this as one of the many ways in which her life has been blessed.

By academic training she is a scholar of Leibniz and of 17th century philosophy of science; but more recently she has been teaching courses in four departments at Lewis and Clark College. She has taught courses in political science, intellectual history, classics, and economics.

As well as teaching full time, Chana Cox writes. In 2006, her book on the history of liberalism, *Liberty: God's Gift to Humanity* was published by Lexington Books, a division of Rowman and Littlefield. In 2007, Lexington published her *Reflections on the Logic of the Good*, a critique of Plato's Republic. One of her plays *Pharaoh, King of Egypt* was produced in Portland as an interfaith effort by Augustana Lutheran Church and Lewis and Clark College. There have been staged readings of other plays. In conception and execution, all of her work is intrinsically and necessarily interdisciplinary. Her life has certainly been interdisciplinary.

## How I came to write Academic Overture

I was told to write a two-hander. Unlike my other plays, a two hander would be inexpensive to produce. I was told to write about what I know. I know about Pharaoh, and I know about Feivel but I don't know about middle class angst. People like Ibsen's Hedda Gabler or Albee's Martha seem like alien creatures to me.

By academic standards, I have lived a life of great adventures and seemingly irreconcilable contradictions. And so, when I write about my own life it seems alien and bizarre to the people I now work with. I was born and raised in Detroit Michigan and Windsor Ontario, and then spent seven years in the wilderness, worked in the eastern Canadian arctic, and finally lighted on a mountain top in Oregon. I was born into a Marxist/Yiddishist world but I now live deep in the religion and culture of my grandparents. Thanks to my husband, my children are blond, blue eyed, Swedes/English/Native Americans who wear kippas and keep the Sabbath. Although I have lived all my life as Chana, my very name is somehow a lie. The name on my birth certificate was Ann Berniker. I changed my legal first name at the time of my marriage. Living my life as Ann Cox would have been an even bigger lie.

About 15 years ago I finally returned to teaching. I returned to academia not only because I have a wonderfully strong vocation to teach, but also because I wanted – indeed I needed – some boredom in my life.

So during the winter break I settled down to think about what I know. What are the sorts of things I know that might make sense to people who do identify with those characters in Ibsen, Chekhov, Pinter, and Albee? I know about fathers and about sons. I know about growing old. I know about academic pretensions and academic politics. I know about philosophy.

Last fall Lexington published my philosophical "magnum opus" on Plato's Republic. In it I skewered Plato. While I believe I was fair to Plato the philosopher, I felt, even as I was writing Reflections, that I was being unfair to Plato the man and the poet. The ghost of Plato the man and the poet cried out for justice – or at least for acknowledgment. Academic Overture is my conversation with that ghost or perhaps with that part of myself which is the ghost of Plato, the man and the poet.

## **Plays:**

### **Pharaoh King of Egypt**

A tale of bondage, freedom, redemption, and hope. Two men, Pharaoh and Moses, were raised almost as brothers. One man believes that he is a prophet of God; the other believes that he is a God.

### **The Oath**

Set in the court of William of Normandy during the time he held Harold, the Earl of Wessex, captive. Like Pharaoh, this play is a study of kingship and of the friendship between two very powerful and very different men. One man was a king and one man was a conqueror.

### **Feivel mit'n Fiddle**

Loosely adapted from a fable by I. L. Peretz, Feivel mit'n Fiddle is a love story between a simpleton with a gift for music and an impoverished widow with three children. Although it might be seen as a sort of chassidick four weddings and a funeral, it is about music in the deepest sense. Yiddish folk music and liturgical music are the heart and soul of this play. The violin is the voice of the hero and the voice of God.