

ACUAVITAE

20th Anniversary Edition!

Spring 2007 | Volume 14, Number 1

Alberta's Ukrainian Arts and Culture Magazine

A Toast to 20 Years

Celebrating Ukrainian Art in Alberta Shumka Stage A Kalyna Country Classic

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS

MACÉWAN

*The Ukrainian Resource
and Development Centre
(URDC)*

congratulates the Alberta Council for

the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA)

on its 20th Anniversary.

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Ukrainian Arts Scholarship Expands Across Alberta

The Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA) is pleased to announce the expansion of its awards program to cover all senior high schools in Alberta with a functioning Ukrainian Bilingual Program. Since 1999, ACUA has been offering a scholarship of \$250 to \$500 each year. Any Alberta high school student participating in a Ukrainian bilingual program and active in Ukrainian art, be it dance, music, drama or visual arts, should consider applying for this scholarship. A fact sheet and application form package is available from the ACUA office (780-488-8558; acua@telus.net).

This scholarship helps ACUA meet its objective to educate the public about the Ukrainian arts in Alberta. It recognizes those Ukrainian bilingual secondary students that complement or enhance their studies of Ukrainian language and culture through the Ukrainian arts. To students that demonstrate a promising talent in any genre of the Ukrainian arts, the cash award encourages them to further pursue their current and/or post secondary studies of the Ukrainian arts.

This scholarship program is just another way that the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts is serving the community and promoting the growth and awareness of Ukrainian art in Alberta. The annual deadline for application is May 1st.

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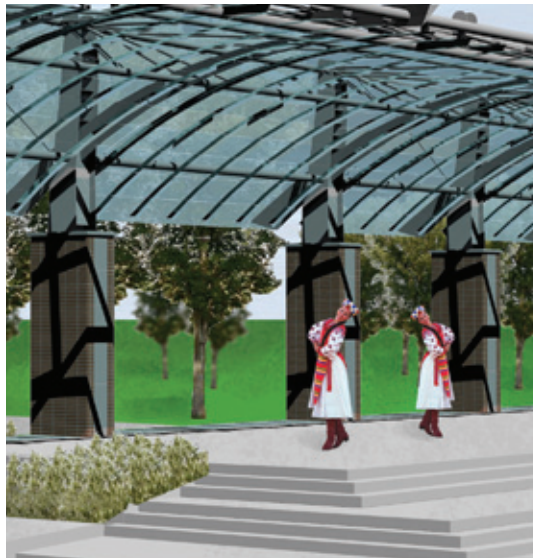
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Students from St. Matthew's Ukrainian Bilingual Program created 30 oversized papier mache pysanky that were hidden amongst the flower display at the Muttart Conservatory during the Vesna Krasna exhibit. Can you find the egg?



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Two Decades... Now let us ask for more!

Rena Hanchuk

I am honoured to be the editor of this special edition of ACUA Vitae, where we toast The Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA) on its 20 years of operation. ACUA has been nurtured for two decades by many volunteer hands who believe in the promotion and preservation of the Ukrainian arts. As an organization it has grown from infancy into a mature adult. It has gone through the growing pains, some unpleasanties (think teenage acne) and has become a full being. Of course with growing up and development, come new directions and priorities in the life of an individual and indeed, ACUA.

I remember when in 1986 one of our members asked if ACUA was just another

Ukrainian organization, a new club of Ukrainian synchronized swimmers. At the time it seemed like a cute joke but as I reflect on ACUA, it does seem like a fine-tuned organization of dedicated volunteers who have kept themselves above water and

pulled off some beautiful artistry in the Alberta pool of artists where we know many sink unfortunately.

Upon further reflection, I think of why I keep going after 20 years with the same organization. My answer is this. Through ACUA I will promote and teach the many Ukrainian traditions, Ukrainian arts, and Ukrainian handicrafts to future generations. But this isn't a feat for me alone. And so I pick up on a few lines of the refrain written by Orest Protsenko, a song which was produced and released

for ACUA in 1988: *Razom, svidomo i hordo idem* (Together we push on proudly).

So, what has ACUA done over the years? It has produced the mega arts extravaganza, Festival '88; maintained its arts magazine, ACUA Vitae; published a Ukrainian Arts Directory; published Mosaica Photographic Explorations a calendar featuring Ukrainian photographers; sponsored concerts featuring Ukrainian artists from Ukraine (Trio Marenych, Vatra, Dudaryk); put on a Ukrainian film festival; sponsored a Centennial Photography Project; organized three Excellence in Artistry awards programs; established two scholarships, one for the Ukrainian Bilingual program across Alberta and one at MacEwan College's Ukrainian Resource & Development Centre. ACUA has also sponsored a wide variety of workshops for the public featuring performing and visual arts. We have fed Ukrainian food and entertained thousands at such venues as Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village and the Fringe Festival in Edmonton. Recently, we staged Vesna Krasna as a salute to ACUA at the Muttart Conservatory. This is pretty impressive!

During one of many press interviews that I gave in the days leading up to Festival '88 I said that ACUA's Festival '88 was like a pregnant toast to the new millennium. And so, I invite you all to keep our Ukrainian arts part of the vibrant Alberta arts scene as we continue to pick up on the wafts and wanes of that beautiful tapestry.

As for ACUA Vitae, we are embarking upon our 15th year. In this next phase of our magazine, we hope to refresh our look, and bring you, our readers and supporters, more stories about the events and people who encompass our endearing Ukrainian cultural heritage around Alberta. ■

ACUAVITAE

Alberta's Ukrainian Arts and Culture Magazine

Spring 2007 Volume 14, Number 1

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Art Direction: jellyfish design

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Buy a memory... Invest in a legacy!

Plans continue for an exciting new cultural landmark – the downtown Edmonton location of the Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museum of Alberta (UCAMA). This public heritage museum, archive and community programming facility will preserve and promote the rich Ukrainian cultural heritage and the role it has played in the development of our communities, our province and our country.

Renowned artist **Peter Shostak** is providing a generous gift of his acclaimed limited edition prints in support of UCAMA. Purchase one today! Buy a memory for yourself... and invest in the legacy of UCAMA's new museum!

Complete print selection may be viewed and ordered (\$75 to \$400) by visiting www.ucama.ca or by calling 780-424-7580.

The Kule Centre

In September 2006, Peter and Doris Kule expressed their support for Ukrainian culture with a generous donation to the University of Alberta, Ukrainian studies. The sizeable donation will be used to continue the study and research of Ukrainian culture in a broader context of Canadian folklore.

The University has recognized their generous donation by changing the name of the Ukrainian Folklore Centre to the Peter and Doris Kule Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Folklore. Eventually, the Centre will study all aspects of Canadian folklore.

Volunteer News

Our Casino dates have come in! Our Casino fundraiser is at the Yellowhead Casino on September 6th and 7th. We are looking for lots of enthusiastic volunteers to help out. Remember you don't need any Casino related experience to volunteer! Call casino chair, Terri Andrews, at 481-6112.

We're cooking for cash! ACUA has taken on a food concession stand at Commonwealth Stadium. We need volunteers to come to each event and help to prepare and serve food and non-alcoholic drinks. No experience is necessary, just a smile.

ACUA needs at least 25 volunteers who can help us raise funds while enjoying Edmonton Eskimo home games and other events.

The Ukrainian arts community **NEEDS YOU!** Contact Cheryl to confirm the dates you are available, and sign up to help. Call 488-8558.



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In order to qualify for a partnership, an organization must be a not-for-profit group located in Alberta. It must be involved in a project that is of direct benefit to an Alberta community.

The Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts has been selected as a member of the **Legacy** Community Spirit Partnership. Your purchase of a **Legacy** subscription will help this organization with its important work in your community. It will also ensure that you receive **Legacy**, Alberta's heritage, arts and culture magazine. In each issue, you will find features about Alberta's distinct and evolving heritage as well as our regular departments -- book and music reviews, heritage gardens, architecture, poetry, food, destinations, and the arts.

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“...we could have never dreamed that we could pull off such an event. But we got into it.”

A Toast to 20 years

In 2006, the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA) celebrated its 20th anniversary. As glasses were raised in preparation for a toast, the board, volunteers, and members of ACUA paused for a moment, and took stock of the past 20 years.

In 1986, at the time of its inception, ACUA ventured to announce its intentions as an arts council for Ukrainian arts, with an unprecedented arts event: Festival '88. This festival offered ACUA the unique opportunity of pulling together Ukrainian artists from around the province and having them work together to create an artistic extravaganza – a celebration of Ukrainian arts and culture that would coincide with the celebrations of a millennium of Christianity in Ukraine. The goals of the event were three fold. First, a sensory spectacle for the greater community was created. Second, ACUA proved the need for an arts council by pulling together the Ukrainian artistic community for a single cooperative event. And third, Festival '88 generated the opportunity for the creation of an endowment fund for the Ukrainian Resource Development Centre at Grant MacEwan Community College, which was dedicated to the professional development of Ukrainian performing arts.

With the gathering of a separate board of directors for Festival '88, people began to rally around the idea of a Ukrainian extravaganza. Brainstorming sessions were ripe with ideas. Rena Hanchuk, current and founding President of ACUA, was a part of those sessions and remembers how one idea led to another and another, each one increasing in grandeur. “We continued to weave in as many elements as we could. For example, we got the Muttart Conservatory involved with a tie in between flora and how it is a part of the colour and symbolism of what makes up the folk part of our culture...we didn't count on having 2000 dancers performing a Hopak; we didn't count on having a horse and a cannon; we could have never dreamed that we could pull off such an event. But we got into it.”

The idea was well embraced by the Ukrainian community, with Ukrainian performing and visual artists from across Canada and the US signing on board; with approximately 100 Ukrainian dance schools joining in a choreographic mega project; with the world renowned Shumka and Cheremosh dance ensembles dancing together on one stage for the first time; and with over 400 ballots being submitted in 17 different categories for the first Ukrainian Contemporary Music Awards. The idea was also embraced by the Alberta

government with Premier Don Getty's announcement of a minimum of \$1.5 million contribution to the new Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) at Grant MacEwan College.

Festival '88 was a success and ACUA was born. The timing was right. “There was a need for professional institutions paid for with public funds to meet our community needs.

Starting with the arts made sense because the arts were a resource that was easy to mobilize,” explains Dr. Roman Petryshyn, Director of URDC at Grant MacEwan College. “The idea of an arts council was to interest them (the artists) in their Ukrainian identity in order that their creativity might come back and help us grow as a Ukrainian identity, as we were isolated from Ukrainian society in the Soviet Union, and to find ways to stimulate and introduce innovation.”

Recording session of theme song for Festival '88, 1988 (top left)

ACUA participated in the “Razom” Ukrainian Arts Festival at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, 1991 (top middle)

Audrey Uzwyshyn presenting Michael Slipchuk an award for his excellence in artistry on ice, 1992 (top right)



**DR. ROMAN PETRYSHYN, DIRECTOR OF URDC AT GMC,
FOUNDING FATHER OF ACUA AND OF FESTIVAL '88**

What challenges have ACUA and Ukrainian arts faced in Alberta?

Funding is the key challenge. Also, the emergence of an independent Ukraine has changed the meaning of the role of the arts for the diaspora, which previously emphasized mass volunteer participation. Quality has now become more central, which means more emphasis is being put on people with talent.

What do you envision for ACUA?

I envision ACUA campaigning to create endowed positions in Alberta's post-secondary system for visiting artists and performers (ie. from western countries and from Ukraine) who work closely with the Alberta arts scene.

How do we continue to nurture the Ukrainian arts for the next generation?

Invest greater time and money in the arts for the Ukrainian diaspora, with the help of the Canadian (federal, provincial) and Ukrainian governments.

ACUA came together at Festival '88 and continues to work today as a volunteer council with one part time paid volunteer coordinator. The council created a mandate to "foster the growth and awareness of all forms of Ukrainian art in Alberta."

Initial funds from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Alberta Provincial Council were immediately put to use. As governments changed, and funding was cut, ACUA has relied solely on fundraising events, membership dues, and a casino to maintain the sponsoring of many events, concerts, workshops, art shows and sales, and festivals.

It represents artistic groups and individuals, in an attempt to bridge artists and their work with the greater Alberta community. Workshops have been coordinated to give artists the opportunity to practice and explore their medium (icon writing, water colour painting, weaving, embroidery, for example) and at the same time showcase their art to a broader public who themselves can venture in creativity and participate in Ukrainian art. The Excellence in Artistry banquets were established in order to honour and outline the vast contributions and efforts of individuals to the Ukrainian arts community.

In 1990 ACUA began to publish ACUA Vitae, a publication about the events and

people who work within the Ukrainian arts community, and the results of their labours. In 1996 the council established an annual scholarship program to support students who wish to continue studying the arts in a post secondary institution.

Last spring, ACUA collaborated with the Muttart Conservatory to present Vesna Krasna, a public showcase for artists to display and sell their work, for Ukrainian musicians to express their song, and for the Bilingual program to outline its role in the maintenance and vitality of the Ukrainian cultural heritage among the youth in its schools. This event was not only for the Ukrainian community, but for a much more global audience, having been visited by an international audience of more than 10, 000.

ACUA has been working towards meeting the needs of the Ukrainian artistic community, and has faced many challenges. Other provincial Ukrainian arts councils that were created in the 80's have since disappeared.

"In order to engage a broader public, ACUA has to be all things to all people. It is a constant scramble and balance, trying to incorporate all aspects of ACUA, from fundraising, the management of the office, to organizing and promoting workshops, to creating innovative, intelligent, engaging

St. Matthew's weaving workshop, 1994 (top)

Elizabeth Holinaty demonstrates textile weaving on a loom. ACUA workshop, 1998 (middle)

"Paint Out" at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village on Ukrainian day, 1999 (bottom)

events, to drumming up members and volunteers,” explains Hanchuk. It takes a lot of effort by a lot of dedicated volunteers to keep such an organization going.

Through dance, music, language, and folk art, Ukrainians have been rediscovering their pasts, and shaping their futures. Ukrainian arts have given the Ukrainian community a means with which to honour its heritage and preserve its traditions. To have an arts council that has worked towards bonding the multitude of Ukrainian artists as one group and towards engaging and inspiring the greater community with the art and culture that has helped shape Alberta, bringing significance, vitality, and professionalism to the Ukrainian arts, is a real accomplishment.

The last 20 years have seen a lot of growth and change within our community, politically, economically, and culturally. The independence of Ukraine has given us a new connection to our heritage, and a new vitality to our arts.

“Previously we defined ourselves only by our relationship through each other, Ukrainian Canadians. With Ukrainian independence there comes an influx of diversity from Ukraine, and marginal pageantry won’t satisfy today,” says Dr. Petryshyn. He elaborates, “Being isolated for a half a century from Ukraine, we had to be independent, and our arts became ritualized and rigid. We lost a sense of creativity. Today’s generation experiences a dynamic, more interactive culture.”

Hanchuk understands that with these new influences come new needs from the community. “We need to continue to redefine ourselves. From bringing in Ukrainian events for the community, we moved to promoting our own local artists and trying to get them recognized and supported by a larger community, to finding a way to incorporate the people who have come to Canada from Ukraine or other places in the world with a Ukrainian background who are fabulously trained as dancers, or art teachers, or professional artists. How do we encompass them? Does



ACUA have a stage and a voice for them? Do they feel welcomed? That is the latest challenge, and it’s a challenge that we really hadn’t even thought about 20 years ago.”

As with all organizations there are successes and failures all along the way. To have survived 20 years certainly deserves a toast. According to Hanchuk, “Canada’s multiculturalism is the perfect place to encourage our Ukrainian arts to flourish. We have a lot to offer the community and we are continuing to grow and evolve. But we have to want to support it and participate... Ukrainian is what’s in your heart.”

ACUA can certainly take stock of the past 20 years and smile with a sense of accomplishment. But with the toasting now over, ACUA sets its sights on a plan for the next decade. Reflection allows ACUA to see its shortfalls, and begin to re-evaluate the needs of the Ukrainian artistic community



and find ways to reignite the volunteer sector, source new funding, revamp its magazine, and build a stronger council and resource for the Ukrainian arts and all those who dream in Ukrainian. ■

Andrea Kopylech is a freelance writer and reviewer in Edmonton.

ACUA sponsored Edmonton Fringe Festival wrap-up. An ACUA volunteer prepares food for more than 1000 Fringe volunteers, 2000 (top left)

St. Matthew’s School iconography class co-sponsored by ACUA and the Ukrainian Bilingual program, 2005 (top right)

GENE ZWOZDESKY, MLA, MUSIC DIRECTOR FESTIVAL ‘88

How did you get started in the arts? With ACUA?

As a child, under the tutelage of two very cultured parents, I was exposed to music, church, a Ukrainian community, and the arts, specifically Ukrainian music, dance, drama and literature. In Ukrainian dance, I had a career dancing with ensembles such as Shumka, Rusalka from Winnipeg, Yevshan in Saskatoon, and Tryzub in Calgary.

I have long been a member of ACUA, helping them get started. I am honored to have received an inaugural Excellence in Artistry Award from them.

What Challenges have faced arts organizations and Ukrainian arts in Alberta?

Our first challenge is to keep pace with the rapid growth and popularity of Ukrainian arts and the welcomed influx of Ukrainian artists from Ukraine. Our second challenge is finding meaningful ways of involving our network of support and how to keep in touch with supporters. This is cultural preservation in its truest form while becoming more culturally assimilated for continued interest. There is a market for deep rooted tradition but in a Canadian context.

In celebrating 20 years of ACUA, artists and past volunteers were asked to reflect on their time with ACUA.

Audrey Uzwyshyn, Potter

Audrey Uzwyshyn's passion for creating functional works of art began with a single pottery class while studying interior design at the University of Manitoba. After moving to Alberta with her husband, Audrey was introduced to the Potter's Guild, where she continued to learn, and develop her pottery and sculpture. She loved the process of creating beautiful and functional pieces, but had never planned on her art becoming a commercial business. Soon, her collection of pieces began to outgrow the space they inhabited, so she decided to have a show of her work after church one Sunday afternoon. Today her work graces homes around the province and beyond, and Audrey enjoys the opportunity to show her work at her annual sale. "I love the opportunity to meet and visit with everyone who stops by." She is well-known for her bowls, platters, cups, and tea pots, but her signature piece is the bold and beautiful baran (*ram*), symbolizing strength and integrity.

Audrey has been a part of ACUA for 20 years. She began as an integral part of the planning stages, and continued to volunteer her time and energy working with various committees, up to her most recent term on the Board of Directors.

In 2000, Audrey Uzwyshyn was awarded the ACUA Award for Excellence in Artistry for her incredible work and contributions to the community. As

ACUA moves forward, Audrey hopes that ACUA can further facilitate all aspects of Ukrainian Arts, "I would like to see ACUA promote Ukrainian art in the mainstream community so that the general public can enjoy, learn, and understand the Ukrainian arts in depth." ■

Jars Balan, Writer

Jars Balan was introduced to the world of the arts at a very young age, "I still remember seeing *The Nutcracker* when I was four or five years old. It left a lasting impression." His mother was passionate about theatre, opera, music, writers, and painters, and as such, exposed him to the various genres. He began writing poetry in his teens, viewing it as a challenge. Today, Balan is an accomplished writer and poet, widely known for, *Salt & Braided Bread: Ukrainian Life in Canada*, and the numerous publications that he has edited, ranging from the SUSK newspaper, *Student*, to the anthology *Yarmarok: Ukrainian Writing in Canada since the Second World War*. Besides having several exhibitions of his visual poetry in Canada, some of his poetry and literary criticism has in recent years been appearing in journals and anthologies in Ukraine. He continues to focus his writing on a broad range of Ukrainian Canadian topics.

In conjunction with his literary life, Jars Balan continues to develop and promote the Kalyna Country Ecomuseum, which focuses on the preservation

of Ukrainian Canadian historical landmarks and culture in agricultural settlements north east of Edmonton.

Balan was a board member of ACUA for several years, and is noted for naming ACUA Vitae "ACUA has a tough road ahead. The arts face challenges everywhere because politicians don't value them – budgets have been cut or frozen for years.... With the passing of generations and assimilation, we lose some of our connections to Ukraine, and as language gets lost we lose artistic genres, like theatre.... The Ukrainian arts are so diverse, encompassing all genres is very difficult. If ACUA can stay loosely defined, continue to stimulate interest and support for our artistic heritage, and simultaneously embrace the new opportunities that are emerging from an independent and open Ukraine, a new kind of Ukrainian Canadian art will emerge." ■

Larisa Sembaliuk-Cheladyn, Artist

Well-known to many Ukrainians around the province, Larisa Sembaliuk-Cheladyn is an accomplished Canadian artist. Her vibrant water colours capture the essence of our Ukrainian heritage. Her paintings reflect the rich details of our traditional dance, religious celebrations, and cultural icons. She works hard at creating beautiful works of art, and she uses her art to help raise awareness of various community issues and causes.



LaParka coat with Sembaliuk-Cheladyn's wreath design

In 2002 Larisa was acknowledged by the City of Edmonton for her contribution to the community and was named recipient of the City of Edmonton Salute to Excellence Arts Achievement Award.

But Larisa's talents reach far beyond the Edmonton community and beyond our Ukrainian community.

Through her art and exhibitions, Larisa has given prominence to Ukrainian arts, and her work has gained international acclaim. In 2006, Larisa joined forces with Canadian fashion designer, Linda Lundstrom, and created a beautiful *vinok* (wreath) design for LaParka, in celebration of its 20th anniversary. Her collection "Celebrating Women" was incorporated as part of a fundraising initiative in 2004, collaborating with the National Council of Women in Canada, addressing homelessness and domestic violence. In 2000-2001 the Canadian Millennium Partnership Program toured Canada, and Larisa's collection; "Flowers of the Bible" helped to raise over \$400,000 for various bodies such as the Rainbow Society, Breast Cancer Research, and senior and youth programs across Canada. The collection "Flowers of the Americas" toured South America in 1995-1996 as a fundraiser

for the World Wildlife Fund ending its tour in Geneva, Switzerland with His Royal Highness Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh participating in the celebrations. In addition to her fine art paintings, Larisa is also known for her beautiful illustrations of children's books and school texts.

Larisa Sembaliuk-Cheladyn started working with ACUA 18 years ago when she sat on the board for a period of time. "I was impressed by many of the initiatives that the organization was undertaking – the energy was contagious. ACUA has helped me and other artists through their ongoing commitment to increasing artist exposure through ACUA Vitae as well as other community initiatives. Artists can always use financial support, but getting your work out there into the public eye, and having an organization help the public understand the various art forms is crucial to the growth of the artist and the community...this kind of support keeps the artists producing which in turn keeps the culture alive," explains Cheladyn. She hopes that the next 20 years of ACUA will allow ACUA to maintain its role as artist advocate and Ukrainian arts educator. Luckily for ACUA, she rejoined the ACUA Board of Directors in 2006 and is offering workshops in water colour painting to sold out classes.

"Being Ukrainian is an integral part of my work. Ukrainian elements are often the major source of inspiration for many of my paintings. There is also the *Ukraiinska dusha*, the Ukrainian soul, which seems to come out in my use of colours, my interpretation of emotions, and my respect for nature." ■

Interviews conducted and profiles written by Andrea Kopylech

TERRY MUCHA, VICE PRINCIPAL, FESTIVAL '88 DANCE EXTRAVAGANZA COORDINATOR

What challenges have ACUA and Ukrainian arts faced in Alberta?

As with all volunteer organizations—time is the most needed commodity and the one least easily obtained; coordinating efforts and not duplicating them has always been a challenge, too; getting volunteers is always a challenge—to learn, to teach others, to coordinate, to spread the word among Ukrainians and beyond—to the arts community at large.

DARKA TARNAWSKY, PRESIDENT, BOTTOM LINE PRODUCTIONS, ENTERTAINMENT COORDINATOR FOR AGRICOM STAGE, FESTIVAL '88

How do we continue to nurture the Ukrainian arts for the next generation?

We're currently in a good place. The Ukrainian arts have prominence in the art scene and the visual arts traditions; the Ukrainian arts will remain strong, and continue to develop. Dance has been one of the most widely accessible Ukrainian arts. With a greater accessibility to Ukraine and its artistic talents, we see more traditional regional work, yet we manage to maintain our own Canadian perspective. It's important to have new elements in traditional dance in order to entice new crowds while continuing to stimulate current supporters. It evolves just as we do.

ROMAN BRYTAN, SENIOR PRODUCER AND HOST, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, 101.7 WORLD FM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FESTIVAL '88

What do you envision for ACUA?

That ACUA determines a specific mandate and maintain a vital and relevant role in the Ukrainian arts community.



Celebrating Ukrainian Art in Alberta



Giant wooden pysanka, Vesna Krasna festival at Muttart Conservatory, 2006 (top)

Bandura (traditional Ukrainian instrument), Vesna Krasna festival, MC, 2006 (bottom)

An eight week show at the Muttart Conservatory in Edmonton brought a celebration of Ukrainian art in Alberta to over 11,000 people last spring. Vesna Krasna or “Beautiful Spring” was the brainstorm of the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA). Partnering with the City of Edmonton, ACUA was able to showcase Ukrainian art in a mainstream public facility as the jewel of ACUA’s 20th anniversary.

The show pavilion highlighted Ukrainian art themes, with an interpretive brochure explaining the chosen symbols which included larger-than-life representations of Ukraine’s national instrument the harp-like bandura, renditions of *pysanky* (Easter eggs), various *vinok* (wreaths), and an original sculpture of a wise grandmother (*baba*). There were also workshops offered and about two dozen performances, demonstrations, exhibits and interactive opportunities to experience some Ukrainian art firsthand.

For months, people entering the venue stopped in their tracks and stood gazing in amazement at the display cases packed full of museum-quality artifacts of traditional musical instruments, elaborate costuming and jewelry, visual art sculptures, ritual wedding bread and complex folk art made right here in Alberta.

The Muttart Art Wall in the main rotunda featured the works of four of Alberta’s Ukrainian artists. Larisa

Sembaliuk Cheladyn’s brilliant watercolours included over 30 original pieces revolving around her studies of a *vinok* explored for the LaParka project with Canadian fashion designer Linda Lundstrom.

Marianna Savaryn gathered a collection of her elegant icons from various churches, private homes and her working studio to highlight the important role the Church plays in the lives of Albertan Ukrainians.

First generation Albertan artist Valeriy Semenko hails from Chernivtsi, Bukovyna, Ukraine. This visual artist and graphic designer brought a wide range of his work including landscape, still life, historical and collage pieces.

Chester and Luba Kuc presented their intricately embroidered petit point pictures on Ukrainian themes, along with *kylymy* (tapestries) by Ukrainian artist Mykhailo Bilas.

The live performances of Ukrainian folk dancing, singing, mandolin and tymbaly music, embroidery, weaving, Easter egg writing, story-telling, students’ collections of art projects, airbrush and costume design work were greatly applauded.

From the opening reception to the closing moments of the show, music played in the pavilion. Recordings were selected specifically for their Alberta Ukrainian connections and each genre of music, from each corner of the province was given its due. Visitors could hear classical, folk, instrumental, choral, solos, stage dance accompaniment, wedding polkas – everything from the traditional to the avant-garde and it all fit under the marvelous umbrella of Ukrainian art.

The community support was phenomenal as individuals, organizations, youth and seniors all came together to play pivotal roles in the successful show. The warm afterglow of such a successful event lingers and the citizens who were touched by the displays continue to seek other opportunities to enjoy Ukrainian art of all sorts in Alberta. ■

Cheryl Balay, volunteer coordinator for ACUA



Shumka Stage

The Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Alumni Association (USDAA) is working in partnership with the City of Edmonton to construct a performance stage in Edmonton's river valley. This stage is an integral element of the Louise McKinney Riverfront Park, the Oval Lawn and Millennium Plaza within the park design plan. With USDAA's funding commitment for a portion of the costs, the City will permanently name the stage "Shumka Stage." Once completed, the stage will be gifted to the City.

Multi-Purpose Performance Venue

The "Shumka Stage" is planned as a feature site for community celebrations of varying types. This multi-purpose facility will accommodate music, dance and choral performances as well as other festivals and events. The structure itself is a weatherproof design of steel, concrete and brick. It will have electrical outlets to meet professional lighting and sound system requirements. A retractable curved glass roof over the performance area will have the lettering SHUMKA etched into a section of the glass panels.

Its unique location within the Louise McKinney Riverfront Park allows community access through the river valley park system, by way of the river, bicycle and walkways as well as from the downtown corridor. The plaza has parking

lot access from the grade level lot south and east of the Shaw Conference Center, complete with handicapped designated stalls. As well, the park itself is a linkage along the river valley trail system and Heritage Trail, with wide, paved walkways that connect it to other key recreation and city amenities such as the Muttart Conservatory. This is a non-restricted public facility and therefore is open to use by all performance groups (through pre-booking with City Community Services).

The entire Millennium plaza, including the two phases of the stage involving site works, foundations, columns and steel works, concrete, paving stones, bollards, planters, electrical, and associated landscaping and glass roofing – as estimated by Carlyle & Associates

Architects, and subsequently revised (through a public tendering process) by the selected contractor, Krawford Construction – has a cost of \$1.8 million. Construction began shortly after the sod-turning ceremony with Mayor Stephen Mandel on October 3, 2005, with completion scheduled for early summer, 2007. An official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for June 9, 2007, including performances by Shumka, Shumka School and Viter dance groups.

This legacy project is a fitting tribute to the decades of cultural, community, and artistic excellence that have been the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers. It recognizes the acclaim that the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers have brought both the Ukrainian community and Edmonton. ■



A Kalyna Country Classic: All of Baba's Children



Although the well-known author and journalist, Myrna Kostash, was born and raised in Edmonton, her family roots are thoroughly intertwined with the Ukrainian bloc settlement in rural east central Alberta.

Her father, William Kostash (1906-1992), was a native of Royal Park, east of Mundare, where his parents—Fedor and Anna Kostaszczuk—settled in 1900 upon emigrating from Western Ukraine. It was on the advice Anna's older brother, Peter Svarich, that the family name was shortened to Kostash to simplify its spelling shortly after Fedor obtained his Canadian naturalization papers in 1903. An educated and progressive-minded pioneer, Fedor (1871-1938) was the founding chairman of the Kolomea School District, organized in 1907, and for several years served as the postmaster for his community.

William Kostash, who was the fifth of eight children born to Fedor and Anna, received his primary and high school education at Kolomea and Vegreville, then completed his teacher training at Calgary Normal School. Afterwards he taught at Kolomea, Hamburg, Ruthenia and Edward rural schools, before becoming the principal at the New Hairy Hill School. It was there that he met a fellow teacher, Mary Maksymiuk of Edmonton, whom he married in 1939. The following year the young couple relocated to the provincial capital, where both continued to pursue their teaching careers and became actively involved in Ukrainian organizational life. Starting a family in the midst of the Second World War, Bill and Mary felt especially blessed by the birth of Myrna (Myrosia in Ukrainian) in 1943, and another daughter, Janis (Evhenia), two years later – having previously lost a child in infancy.

Myrna's maternal great uncle, Peter Svarich, played a prominent role in the development of rural east central Alberta as a businessman and civic activist, besides being a leading member of the Ukrainian pioneer community in Canada. A co-founder and frequent contributor to the Winnipeg newspaper, *Ukrainskiy holos* (Ukrainian Voice), Peter Svarich published a volume of his memoirs under the title *Spomyny, 1877-1904*, and serialized a planned second volume in the weekly paper that he had helped to found. Peter Svarich Elementary School in Vegreville is an appropriate monument to his achievements, as in the early part of the century he was an educational trailblazer who organized many rural school districts in the sprawling Ukrainian bloc northeast of Edmonton. In a similar vein, H. Kostash High School in Smoky Lake, honours the memory of Myrna Kostash's paternal uncle, who was a long-time school superintendent in the region.

There is a relative on the Kostash side of the family who also figures prominently in Myrna's literary- journalistic pedigree. A descendant who remained in Europe, Vasyl Kostashchuk, authored an important biography of the Western Ukrainian author, Vasyl Stefanyk (1871-1936), which was published in Soviet Ukraine under the title *Volodar dum selians'kykh* (Master of peasant thoughts, 1959). Stefanyk is especially famous for an 1898 short story, "*Kaminnyi khrest*" (The Stone Cross), describing the heart-wrenching departure of a fellow villager who settled near Hilliard, east of Mundare – not far from the Kostash homestead.

Another notable writer associated with Myrna Kostash's family past is the Protestant minister, Sigmund Bychinsky (1880-1947). It was probably while he

was living with the Kostashes in Royal Park (where he taught in 1909-1910), that he authored one of the first Ukrainian-language plays written in Canada. Titled *V starim i novim kraiu* (In the Old and the New Country). This four act moralistic comedy dealing with bigamy among immigrants premiered at the Vegreville Town Hall on March 2, 1910, under the direction of Peter Svarich. After publication, the play was staged in 1913 in the Pobeda School District, south of Two Hills, and in March 1917 at Primula, east of Elk Point.

Regarded as the first Ukrainian literary critic in Canada, Bychinsky has an impressive creative output to his credit, including: translating *Ben Hur* into Ukrainian; authoring major books on the Protestant reformers, Jan Hus and Martin Luther; writing a 1927 history of Canada which featured a chapter on Ukrainians; and completing an ambitious novel about an immigrant settlement in Saskatchewan, which is to be issued in Ukraine. His wife, Anna Bychinsky, had similar interests and creative talents, becoming the first author of Ukrainian descent in Canada to try her hand at writing fiction in English.

In short, Myrna Kostash's literary connections to rural east central Alberta are almost as extensive as her family ties to the region.

It was therefore auspicious that Myrna should return to her roots when she tackled the daunting task of writing her first book. In many ways, her choice of topic – the experiences of the Canadian-born children of Ukrainian pioneers – was an attempt to finally come to terms with her Ukrainian ancestry. Myrna went through a period when she identified herself as being of Greek descent (which seemed less problematic and more exotic), and pursued a master's degree in Russian



literature partially to thumb her nose at the anti-Russian sentiment which she had often encountered among Ukrainian nationalists. She was equally ill at ease with the fierce hatred of Communism espoused by the politically militant members of the Displaced Person immigration, and what she perceived to be their smug sense of Ukrainian superiority.

But the question of what to make of the baggage of her personal history, coupled with her own growing sense of herself as an outsider in the career that she was establishing as a journalist in Toronto, gradually compelled her to courageously confront the difficult identity issues that haunted her.

And so in mid-1975, she returned to Western Canada to research a book which she hoped would finally lay to rest all of the nagging feelings which she had about her Ukrainian heritage. It marked the beginning of a journey of self-discovery which has continued to the present day...

Myrna based herself in the Two Hills area so as to avoid the complication of having to deal with friends and former neighbours of her extended family. Combining extensive interviews with her readings of available sources on Ukrainian Canadian history – which she then leavened with subjective and sometimes contentious ruminations – Kostash produced a classic work of Canadian non-fiction, the bestseller, *All of Baba's Children*. Issued in 1977 by Hurtig Publishers of Edmonton, the book was later reprinted in several soft cover editions (1980, 1987, 1992), the last two imprints containing introductory essays which reflected on the remarkable success of her first major literary endeavour. As Kostash herself noted in her preface to the 1992 reprint by NeWest Press, “The publication of the book changed my life ...

it put me into direct and intimate contact with my ethnic community from whom I had been estranged for many years...”

In writing the book Kostash consciously set out to lance what she regarded to be suspect mythologies promoted about Ukrainian Canadian history. Her iconoclastic efforts about proved rather controversial with many patriotic Ukrainians, who felt that she had misunderstood and misrepresented their cause while being distinctly “soft” on pro-Soviet Ukrainian Communists. Be that as it may, *All of Baba's Children* struck not only a raw nerve, but a responsive ethnic pride was piqued by the widespread attentions given the book in the mainstream media. The work enjoyed critical and popular success that long outlasted its initial print run, earning a place on the shelves of many Ukrainian Canadian homes, as well as on university reading lists.

Ironically, rather than neatly wrapping up the Ukrainian facet of her identity so that she could devote herself entirely to the non-ethnic interests in her life, *All of Baba's Children* merely signaled the initiation of Myrna's investigations into her ancestral past. While still researching her book, and with financial help from her mother, she purchased a cabin on a quarter-section of land northwest of Two Hills (at NE 31-55-12) to use as a dacha, or summer retreat. She named her rustic hide-away “Tulova” after the native village of her paternal grandparents. For almost two decades it served as her country cottage – a place which lacked electricity and running water, but provided her with the solitude and perspective that she needed to practice her literary craft.

Another of the fruits of Myrna's re-discovery of her Kalyna Country roots was a script which she wrote for a

hugely popular dramatic film. *Teach me to Dance*, the story of two young girls whose relationship is threatened by prejudice, was filmed at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village and set in a late-pioneer era rural community still wracked by anti-Ukrainian tensions. Directed by Ann Wheeler, the 1978 National Film Board production soon became a perennial Christmas feature on television.

A string of articles dealing with Ukrainian themes and ethnic issues followed these major forays by Kostash onto her home turf. Determined to find out even more about her Slavic birthright, she reintegrated herself into the Ukrainian Canadian community, read widely on Ukrainian history and literature, and even went back to Saturday school to improve her Ukrainian language skills. She also began traveling to Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, slowly gathering material for what eventually became her fourth book, entitled *Bloodlines: A Journey into Eastern Europe*. This part-travelogue part-meditation appeared in 1993, but in some ways was a sequel to *All of Baba's Children*. Although it didn't have the impact of her first exploration of her ancestry, in many ways it was a deeper and more ambitious attempt to deal with similar concerns.

In the spring of 1996 Myrna Kostash reluctantly sold “Tulova” because her frequent travels meant that she was unable to spend much time at her Two Hills property. Like her celebrated forbears in the extended Kostash and Svarich clans, she has left a lasting mark on the literary and historical landscape of the region. ■

Prepared for the Kalyna Country Ecomuseum with financial assistance from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Researched and written by Jars Balan

ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS

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ACUA fosters a greater awareness of Ukrainian arts through exhibits, tours, festivals, educational programs, workshops, and special projects.

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