

# ACQUAVITAE

ALBERTA'S UKRAINIAN ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

Winter 2010-11 Volume 17, Number 2

## traditions & treasures

**Iconography:**  
Light From Within

Celebrating Music Director  
**Maria Dytyniak**

Journeys in **Ukrainian Dance**

  
ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE  
**ukrainian arts**  
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*"Angel with the Scroll"*

Artwork by  
Marianna Savaryn





*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”* Marcel Proust



**To discover something** new in a piece of art that has hung on your wall for years, or to discover a new satisfaction from a well-played piece of music takes only a change in perspective. In this issue of *ACUA Vitae* Salena Kitteringham reveals Ukrainian dance from the choreographer's perspective; Mary Oakwell looks

at icons from the view of the writer; and Lida Somchynsky lets us in on the 50 year musical career of Maria Dytyniak.

This issue also explores local Ukrainian drama troupes, folk toys, Volya's adventure in Turkey, and a wonderful book of poetry which was shortlisted for the 2010 Kobzar Award.

I wish that this issue of *ACUA Vitae* inspires you to take a new look at the art and culture in your life, and to come out and join ACUA at some of our wonderful workshops as we head into our 25th Anniversary celebrations.

Happy reading!

*Andrea Kopylech,*  
Editor



*Shumka Artistic Director Dave Ganert, in collaboration with Jean Marc Genereux (pictured right), will premiere a new contemporary piece at Shumka's annual New Works Gala on November 20 at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton. Read more in Art in Motion on page 18 of this issue.*

PHOTO COURTESY CTV EDMONTON

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**Editor:** Andrea Kopylech

**Associate Editors:** Rena Hanchuk, Darka Tarnawsky

**Guest Editors:** Ksenia Maryniak, Mary Oakwell

**Contributors:** Cheryl Balay, Roman Brytan, Rena Hanchuk, Salena Kitteringham, Olesia Markevych, Ksenia Maryniak, Mary Oakwell, Roman Petriw, Alla Semenko, Andrea Slobodian, Lida Somchynsky, Darka Tarnawsky, Eugene L. Topolnisky

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## Tales from Ukraine

January 13, 2011 | Edmonton

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra celebrates the culture of Ukraine with Tales from Ukraine, under the direction of Conductor Lucas Waldin with special guests, the Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Company and Gene Zwozdesky.

The program includes Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 "Ukraine": Finale, various composers unified as part of the Ukrainian Christmas Medley, Leontovych's Carol of the Bells and a Traditional Hopak.

Celebrate Malanka with Cheremosh and the ESO. For more information, visit [www.edmontonsymphony.com](http://www.edmontonsymphony.com). 

ESO Conductor Lucas Waldin  
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## Far, Far Away Postcards from pre-revolutionary Ukraine

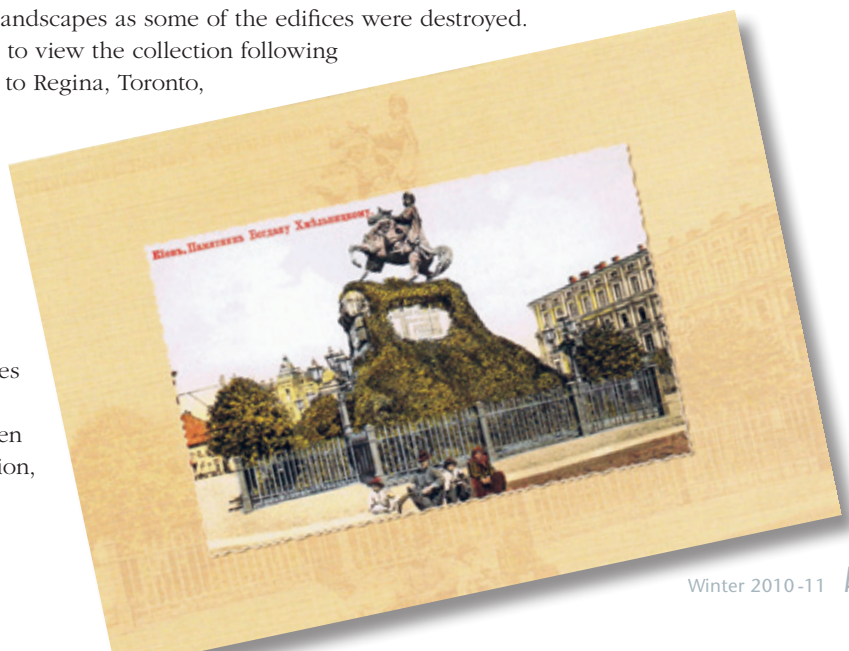
Now through November 7, 2010 | Edmonton

**More than 130** postcards, featuring photographs taken from 1896 to 1913, depict Ukrainian castles, buildings, monuments and churches from cities covering major regions of Ukraine as they were in Tsarist times. The collection sheds light on the appearance of nineteenth century Ukrainian cities; lost landscapes as some of the edifices were destroyed.

This is the last opportunity for the public to view the collection following a two year exhibition tour that has travelled to Regina, Toronto, Calgary, Saskatoon, Yorkton and New York.

Far, Far Away is presented by the Royal Alberta Museum in cooperation with the Alberta Society for the Advancement of Ukrainian Studies and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

The Royal Alberta Museum is dedicated to preserving and sharing the story of Alberta, the experiences of people and places over time. Located at 12845-102 Avenue in Edmonton, the Royal Alberta Museum is open daily 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. For more information, visit [www.royalalbertamuseum.ca](http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca). 







Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble  
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## Dancing with Fire

April 16, 2011 | Calgary

**The Calgary Philharmonic** Orchestra, under the direction of Resident Conductor Mélanie Léonard with special guests the Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, presents *Dancing with Fire*, a high-energy performance celebrating the spirit of Ukraine. *Dancing with Fire* is part of the CPO's Destination Series,

musical journeys that invite guests to take a trip through the wonderful world of music exploring romantic and exotic destinations, without ever leaving home. Other destinations this season include Mexico, Vienna and Poland.

Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble has treated Calgary audiences to the


traditional dances of Ukraine for more than 35 years. *Dancing with Fire* features dances to the music of Bartók, Dvorák, Liszt, Stravinsky and Bassenko. For more information, visit [www.cpo-live.com](http://www.cpo-live.com). 

## 101.7 World FM World Wonder Winner

Edmonton

**In its search** for the best undiscovered vocal talents in Edmonton's varied ethnic communities, 101.7 World FM found Ukrainian singer Elena Scherbyna-Baker. Elena is the winner of the 101.7 World FM

2nd Annual World Wonder contest, a talent competition for singers that perform in any of World FM's more than 30 broadcast languages, including Ukrainian. Five finalists sang live on stage at the Heritage Amphitheatre in Hawrelak Park during the Servus Heritage Festival on August 2, 2010. In addition to her Heritage Festival Main Stage performance, Elena received the \$2,000 grand prize. The Servus Heritage Festival is one of Edmonton's favourite summer festivals, welcoming more than 300,000 visitors to 63 pavilions representing

85 cultures. Visit 101.7 World FM online at [www.worldfm.com](http://www.worldfm.com) to hear Elena's winning performance. 



Elena Scherbyna-Baker  
PHOTO SUPPLIED

# Creative Cards Calgary Artist Finds Niche

By Andrea Slobodian

**At the end** of August, when most people are wrapping up summer vacation, Irene Demchuk already has Christmas on her mind. Months before shopping malls set up holiday displays, the Calgary artist is finalizing her latest Ukrainian Christmas card design.

Seven years ago, she launched a collection to fill a gap in the greeting card market.

"I could never find Ukrainian Christmas cards to send to my Baba," says Demchuk, who used to import cards to send to family and friends. "I wanted to get something new out there."

Creating cards came easy for Demchuk, an interior designer by trade who adored drawing as a child in Edmonton. She uses the technique of block printing, which she learned in high school art class and adopted as a hobby at home while raising two young sons.

"It's very hands on, that's what I like," says Demchuk, who uses wood-cutting tools to carve rubber sheets. She creates a stamp by rolling ink onto the cut-out.

While block printing results in one-colour images, she adds extra colours by computer, creating vivid, whimsical scenes of holiday customs. Themes include angels, village carollers and the nativity scene, but her best selling card is "*Sviat Vechir*" - the traditional Christmas Eve table with twelve meatless dishes and *didukh* (sheaf of wheat).

"To me, that's what Christmas means," says Demchuk. "It's always the family and religious part. I think that means a lot to people, especially those transplanted here who have tried to make their own family and bring friends over."

Appealing to Ukrainian Canadians,

her business grew through word of mouth, festival displays and online at [www.studiographika.ca](http://www.studiographika.ca) and [demchuks@shaw.ca](mailto:demchuks@shaw.ca). Fans requested blank greeting cards, so she introduced prints blooming with red poppies, a significant image in Ukrainian folk art. Her heritage provides plenty of inspiration.

"It's been an important part of my life," she says. "It's easy to translate from. Lots of legends, old wives' tales, *Ivana Kupala*, a lot of those things that go across the gamut."

Her latest project involves manipulating digital images by computer. In Kyiv, she photographed an embroidered dress hanging in the market, then transformed it into a black and white print with bright red accents called "Baba's Dress." Other fresh takes on the familiar display dill pickles in a jar and garden beets.

"I'm taking pictures Ukrainians can relate to easily, that bring back memories," explains Demchuk.

She wants to branch out with larger wall art and mainstream card sales online and in stores. Next spring, she plans to teach a block printing workshop in Calgary with the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts. She also is available to teach youth workshops on Ukrainian culture and pysanka in elementary schools and churches.

But for now, she's focused on filling orders for her latest card. "Holy Night" is a full-colour Christmas Eve corner scene, with an icon of Mary and Jesus, *kolach* and lit candle - an image sure to spark holiday memories within Demchuk and other Ukrainians. 

*Andrea Slobodian is a broadcast journalist and Director of Marketing for the Calgary Ukrainian Festival.*



"Holy Night" by Irene Demchuk  
PHOTO SUPPLIED



Block artist Irene Demchuk  
PHOTO SUPPLIED



“Everything old is new again” – except perhaps in the field of iconography where even new creations are required to have the same style and characteristics as those produced in the early centuries. The Apostle Luke is regarded as the first to ‘write’ an icon, and the ancient examples of Byzantine icons still in existence date back to the 4th century. Many earlier examples would have been destroyed by enemies of the Christian religion, as well as by those who felt that worshipping icons was too close to idolatry. Many of those early iconographers would have been in danger of persecution for their faith, but in the 14th to 16th centuries in Russia, iconography was a highly regarded art. This turbulent history is not reflected at all in the serene visages of even the new creations.

*By Mary Oakwell*

# ICONOGRAPHY

## *Light from Within*





'Writing' an icon rather than painting it goes a long way to explaining its focus: it tells a story. Many icons have been created over the centuries, telling the stories of Christ, his mother, Mary, and his disciples, but many others tell stories of the saints, particularly St. Anne and St. Joseph, his grandparents.

There are also many subjects covered in connection with this cast of characters – the annunciation, the nativity, the last supper, the crucifixion, the resurrection, to name only a few. The 'sameness' of the depictions involves the style and the symbolism of the images as well as the method of production. The faces, for example, have darker skin tones and the figures are elongated, largely because the unchanging style reflects the artwork of the early days of the Christian church. Besides the elongated figures, the images have minimal detail and avoid the look of three-dimensional space. One of the most important details about them is that the images appear to have light from within rather than an external source. And because the icons mean different things in different contexts, there is an infinite variety of stories that have, and that will be, told. Whatever the story, the icons are created or written primarily as an aid to worship, and are considered sacred in themselves.

There is a long-standing controversy as to whether iconography is an art form or not. Marianna Savaryn, an artist who has been writing icons for 20 years, says she uses the techniques that artists use to create their work, the drawing and the use of tempera for just two examples. The distinction of this particular art, according to Marianna, is that it is related to scripture and that faith has a big role in the work. She says, "It's a totally humbling experience and the first time I painted the image of Christ was actually unnerving."

Marianna has studied art at both the University of Toronto and Queen's but her background also involves growing up in the Ukrainian Catholic tradition, in a family that included several priests, her grandfather being one of them. She sang in the choir at the beautiful St. Nicholas church in Toronto. If you have seen the movie *My Big Fat Greek*

*Wedding*, you've also seen the beautiful icons that so impressed Marianna as a young chorister. The first icon she wrote was a wedding gift for her brother.

The actual technique is interesting and time consuming. The main medium is egg tempera on wood. The image is painted on an intermediate surface (for example, tracing paper) and then adhered to the wood. 24K gold is used to highlight halos and in the backgrounds. The image is then covered with many layers of cheesecloth or plaster of Paris, each layer being thoroughly dried before the next is applied. With this very particular mode of production as well as the early Roman and Greek styles of depicting images, it is not surprising that even new creations look much as they would have if written in

*As long as there are people worshipping in these churches and in their own homes, there will be a place for the writing of icons.*



Left: "Triptych: St. Theresa, Vladimirskia and Padre Kolbe" and right: "Archangel Michael" both by Marianna Savaryn.

the 4th century. True iconographers avoid a personal style and certainly do not sign their work: rather, they consider themselves co-authors with a spiritual partner.

Marianna also studied at the Sacred Arts Academy in Pennsylvania and then with a monk in Woodstock, Ontario. She has been teaching her craft in Luxembourg in partnership with a Roman Catholic priest, Don Gian Luca Busi, who also co-taught a course with her at St. Basil's in Edmonton. She most recently worked as part of a team on a work commissioned by the Missionaries of Father Kolbe that is now on its way to Rome. Working on her own, she is writing a series of 20 icons which she would like to take across Canada, inspiring others to appreciate and understand their meanings and symbolism.

Not all icons, of course, are found in churches. Some of the ancient ones are now housed in museums, but many more are in people's homes. Created as aids to worship, they can be found anywhere that worship might take place, privately or publicly. One of the loveliest exhibits of icons and other Ukrainian folk art outside a church is in Mundare at the Basilian Fathers Museum, some pieces of which date back to the 15th century. But the best way to see the beauty and spirituality of the images is to see them in their most traditional setting. Lamont County is full of Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches built by Ukrainian pioneers in the Byzantine style, many of them filled with beautiful paintings and icons from the early days of the last century.

As long as there are people worshipping in these churches and in their own homes, there will be a place for the writing of icons. The Popes have beatified new saints over the years and these too must have their stories told. It's a beautiful and ancient way to tell the stories whether of new saints or of Christ and his mother. For the millions of worshippers who rely on them as an aid to worship, the art has stood the test of time. 🕯

*Mary Oakwell is an Edmonton-based author. Her publications include Tea Time in Alberta and Many Foundations: Historic Churches of Alberta.*



The Arts of Life group performs Ivana Kupala in the Carpathian Mountains.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED.

# Ukrainian Drama Groups

Whatever happened to *Nasha Tsenia* and what is happening on Our Stages today?

By Cheryl Balay

**Amateur cultural activities** hold an important place in the life of the Ukrainian Canadian community. They continue to play a prominent role in cultural-educational development. Amateur theatre in the Ukrainian Canadian community can be traced back to as early as 1904. Since then, several thousand plays have been staged by amateur drama groups belonging to various Ukrainian organizations, literally from one end of Canada to the other - from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Amateur theatre was not limited only to the staging of plays. It also manifested itself in concert productions otherwise consisting mainly of performances by musical ensembles, choirs, and dance groups. The development of choral, music, and, particularly, dance art forms in the Ukrainian Canadian community continues to grow, often reaching high standards

of professionalism. Often incorporating elements of drama, these art forms are widely enjoyed by all Canadians, as well as by audiences abroad. Indeed, Ukrainian dance has made a substantial contribution to the development of artistic expression in Canada. Ukrainian theatre per se, on the other hand, has receded into the background of performance activity in Canada. In large part, this is likely due to the increasing lack of knowledge of Ukrainian language in the third, fourth, fifth, and subsequent generations born in Canada. While there have been a few notable exceptions where Ukrainian-language theatre in Canada has enjoyed a brief resurgence or even reached professional quality in terms of both the acting and staging of difficult and demanding works (including the youthful AYT Avant-garde Ukrainian Theatre in Toronto during the mid-1980s), these have been anomalies.

In Edmonton, for those among the most recent immigrants from Ukraine who seek organized cultural activity, the Ukrainian National Federation (UNF) hall has become a popular place to gather. And with the replenishment of native speakers in our community, it is not so surprising that Ukrainian theatre has also re-emerged.

In addition to the already well-established children's theatre group *Dzherelo*, run by the Women's Branch of the UNF, and the UNF's adult drama group *Suziria*, who have performed at Ukrainian

New Year's *Malanka* celebrations as well as at other events, now a new group has emerged, this time under UNF's Youth Branch. The Arts of Life performing studio *Kalyna – Tetractys* gained its own not-for-profit status in 2009 as a centre for youth and adult performers. Nataliya Grytsiv reports that all three drama groups rehearse weekly at the same hall on Friday evenings. Nataliya hails from the Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine, where she often directed performances at the Chernivtsi University's Students' Union. The Arts of Life studio in Edmonton aims to be a space for creative growth, supporting new performing practices and ideas. Nataliya takes pride in noting that

*Amateur theatre in the Ukrainian Canadian community can be traced back to as early as 1904. Since then, several thousand plays have been staged by amateur drama groups...*



they are developing their own leaders in the youth group, and they now have very talented and capable people who can write their own plays and develop their own staging and choreography. The studio's philosophy endorses the concept that the creative impulse lies within all people, and that participation in the arts is essential to our well-being, both as individuals and as a society.

As Ukrainian traditional celebrations incorporate music, dance, songs and drama, this studio intends to incorporate the whole range of drama, dance, vocals, music, and orchestra. Often rehearsals are more like workshops where the studio members both teach each other and learn from each other - augmented, as needed, with professional instructors and well-known community artists. Nataliya remarked that the group's montage this past July of beautiful and enticing re-enactments of the summer ritual of *Ivana Kupala* was a widely successful event. Besides headlining the Kupalo's Eve festivities at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village,

they provided a command performance for delegates from across the country at the triennial National Congress of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, with Metropolitan Lawrence and Bishop David in attendance. Picture-book landscapes created outdoors with wreaths, drapery, and traditional bedecked effigies, provided effective visual enhancement to the age-old dances, dialogues, and songs of Summer Solstice. When the youth participate in the performance, they begin to comprehend what is happening in the play, and thus they develop a profound and authentic connection to it that translates effectively to the audience as they sing along and interact with the players.

This Ivana Kupala summer solstice ritual project has been performed in workshop and staged form, since 2008 with *Suziria* and has been on the road even beyond Canada (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario). This summer the UNF youth group and the Arts of Life studio took their show to Ukraine and to Bosnia, where celebrations were taking place marking



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If you are an organization that supports Ukrainian culture and language and would like to apply for funding please contact Ryan Borle, Delton Branch Manager at [ryan.borle@servus.ca](mailto:ryan.borle@servus.ca) or 780.638.7182 for an application.



[servus.ca](http://servus.ca)

100 years of Ukrainians in Bosnia. In Ukraine, a television station from Bukovyna lent them a camera crew for two days, allowing them to film parts of this very popular ritual in Ukraine, and to record much of the music in use in a beautiful setting of the Carpathian mountains and meadows. In Chernivtsi the performers were very fortunate to meet and record an interview with a relative of the famous Ukrainian writer Olga Kobylianska. Having secured financing for editing this video, Arts of Life will continue to work on this project and expect to contribute the result to the University of Alberta's online Ukrainian folklore database.

The Arts of Life group promotes community involvement. In the past, they have solicited the help of local talent such as Luba Bilash and Svitlana Sech; in fact, this summer's Ivana Kupala performance at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village involved a cast of 89 volunteers. When the group travels and involves participants from their host destinations, it only takes three to five of the studio's experienced youth leaders to get everyone joining them ready to perform in only one or two rehearsals, says Grytsiv. Instruction is offered bilingually, in both Ukrainian and English. Everyone can participate in the ritual dances, such as a *khorovod* or walking circle dance. The dramatic dialogues are mainly performed by first-generation speakers, as a high standard is set for the level of spoken Ukrainian. The group wishes to continue setting an excellent example of heritage language preservation.

Indeed, amateur cultural activities continue to hold an important place in the life of the Ukrainian Canadian community. These small but active drama groups have a place, especially dear to the heart for those who are fluent in Ukrainian, and also for those who wish to become fluent in our beautiful and expressive language. As to how they may grow and what imprint they will leave on the community and on "our home and native land," only time will tell. 🎭

(With acknowledgement to "Our Stage.")

*Cheryl Balay is a Canadian proud of her multi-cultural heritage and always in pursuit of artistic endeavours, particularly in the field of music. www.sing4me.ca*



## Dzhereło (The Source) Ukrainian Drama Club at the UNF (Ukrainian National Federation)

*By Alla Semenko (Translated into English by Ksenia Maryniak)*

PHOTOS BY ROMAN PETRIW

Dzhereło Children's Drama Club has existed for over 18 years under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Federation, with the support of its women's organization. The club was founded in 1992 by professional actress Irena Zawadsky, and assisted by the teacher Olya Myc. The theatre troupe is currently led by Alla Semenko.

Every parent's dream is for their children to grow up strong and beautiful. And also smart, generous in deed and in love, respectful of elders and of the holy things of their people. The food on the family table provides the growth and strength, but what provides the food for the soul?

### The Word!

Thus, the goal of the club is to teach children to master words, to freely express themselves in the Ukrainian language, to be able to express emotions and moods, and to increase their vocabulary. Moreover, in an atmosphere of friendship they

will foster their interest in Ukrainian literature and traditions, learn how to comport themselves on stage, exercise their declamatory skills, develop physical coordination as well as musical and vocal skills, acting presence, and creative activity.

In play, effecting transformations into a variety of theatrical scenarios, we aim to support children to know themselves better, grow their own individuality, and find their place in the cultural milieu of our community and outside of it. In today's circumstances, with children's screen time ever on the increase, what could be better than creative interaction among friends, cooperation to make scenery and decorations, the joy of performing and being applauded, and the sense of pride in a well-played role. Now that is special!

Dzhereło's theatrical repertoire is extraordinarily wide-ranging, from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Ivasyk Telesyk Who*



*Outsmarted the Witch, Koza-Dereza the Bully, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Mitten* to a multitude of Christmas plays, St. Nicholas reception parties, and Mother's Day presentations. The troupe also performs at community ceremonies and commemorations, including Shevchenko concerts, Holodomor anniversaries, Holy Protectress concerts, Malanka New Year's parties, the Feast of Jordan and more.

The largest proportion of children start off in the 6-7-year old group. They learn how to recite verses and sing songs on stage, interspersed with little sketches of dialogue; an example of this would be the musical production *Kolysanky—Lullabies*. A mother's lullaby is the blessed and unforgettable song of our childhood, close to everyone's heart. In its melody are love of the child and trepidation for its fate, as well as guidance and gentle words for the child. Participating in this play, the children learn countless Ukrainian folk lullabies and nonsense songs, which are increasingly rarely heard at the cradle today. Living so far from our country of origin, we hope that these songs will remain in their hearts and be passed on to subsequent generations. After all, lullabies are at the root of our identity, and they foster an attitude of optimism and goodwill to the world around us.

Having learned to comport themselves on stage, our troupe moves on to the broadest and most accessible genre—stories.

*...in an atmosphere of friendship they will foster their interest in Ukrainian literature and traditions...*



Next we produced the tale *Christmas Mitten*. This story takes us back to our earliest memories of childhood. Its celebrated heroes—Scratchy-Mouse, Croaky-Frog, Fleetfoot-Bunny, Sister-Vixen, Tusky-WildHog, and Bumbling-Bear—are yet remembered by our great-great-grandparents, and are sure to find an audience among our grandchildren to come. This story is about a winter adventure that occurred with toy animals that remained unbought after the Christmas market, being somewhat morose. After moving into the mitten together, a wondrous thing happens—they become politer, gentler “softies,” and it's the magic mitten which drives out moodiness and nastiness from everyone that crawls in.

The children loved playing their roles, and that is why this old tale that we all know became a lovely storybook production for all attendees.

Dzherelo's most recent production was *Kitty's House* - a bright and happy tale that addresses the idea of goodness and cooperation overcoming all problems and obstacles. Moreover, it highlights the value of friendship, and not to refuse assistance to anyone who needs it, for true friendship is proven in hardship.

We look forward to a tradition of annual children's masquerades, performing at Ukrainian Independence Day concerts, and holding summer creative daycamps, alongside many more story productions and various events in our community. 🎭

*Alla Semenko is Artistic Director of Dzherelo Children's Theatre.*

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# Maria Dytyniak

## A Musical Treasure

By Lida Somchynsky

**“My first impression** of Maria Dytyniak was as a serious, passionate musician for Ukrainian music and as I have worked with her over time - a lady totally committed to the development of Ukrainian song in the western world.” These words were emphatically delivered by Pavlo Hunka, the internationally renowned Canadian opera singer who was recently in Edmonton, working on the Ukrainian Art Song Project. These historic first-of-their-kind recordings of 24 Ukrainian composers, whose solo music is matched to specific poems, are just one of the many projects that Dytyniak has been involved with.

More than 20 years ago, she was assistant to the conductor, Maestro Volodymyr Kolesnyk of The Millennium Choir, assembled to record the complete collection of the 35 sacred choral concertos of the highly-applauded but often overlooked 18th century composer, Bortniansky. Ground-breaking undertakings such as these are all part of Maria Dytyniak’s musical trajectory spanning 50 years.

The stage must have been set early for nurturing that musical zeal, yet Dytyniak recalls her past with modesty. “Since I can remember, singing and piano have always been a part of my life. I started piano in Ukraine, continued in the DP (displaced persons) camps and when we came to Canada in 1948, the first thing my father bought my sister and I was a piano.” As a result of employment opportunities for Maria’s husband Lubomyr, an electrical engineer, they moved to Montreal. With their two small children under the age of two, Dytyniak successfully completed the teacher’s diploma ARCT (Associateship of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto). Shortly after the birth of her third child she began teaching piano, theory, and history of music and this year she celebrated her fiftieth year as a musical educator. Her boundless energy is evident as she states matter-of-factly, “I am now semi-retired,

I only have ten students.” And this is just one of her many endeavours.

Dytyniak’s musical sphere continued to expand. “I always sang in choirs, my mother and my aunts sang in choirs.” That family musical legacy continues on with her daughter, who is very active in the Ukrainian Art Song Project in Toronto. Dytyniak’s sister is the world-renowned opera singer, Roxolana Roslak. In 1961, Dytyniak began her involvement with the Dnipro Choir (founded in 1953) as a singer and piano accompanist. With the untimely death of founder and conductor Roman Soltykewych in 1976, she agreed to accept the position of conductor. In time, Dytyniak went on to study with the Kyiv State Opera and with Ballet Theatre Maestro Volodymyr Kolesnyk, who had moved to Toronto. Because he became her esteemed mentor, the Dnipro Choir’s repertoire began to explore not only Ukrainian folk songs, but vivid and resonant operatic choruses, along with sacred and liturgical music. Cantatas and oratorios were commissioned. As Dr. Melanie Turgeon of King’s College, a former Dytyniak

piano student and conductor herself comments, “Maria has wonderful contact with the newer music from Ukraine, and has the discernment to choose accessible yet complex modern music. Because of previous innovative collaborations with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and other choirs, Dnipro’s Winspear performances with conductor Grzegorz Nowak for the fiftieth anniversary of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra were reviewed to critical acclaim.”

In addition, Maria Dytyniak co-founded the Ukrainian Musical Society of Alberta (UMSA) - the only one of its kind in Canada - and was president from 1979 to 1990. She was instrumental in organizing courses and seminars for new conductors for over 20 years, and students arrived from across Canada, from Argentina, the United States and Australia to study with Kolesnyk, who was the principal instructor and curriculum developer. Luba Boyko-Bell, current President of UMSA continues to be amazed by Dytyniak’s phenomenal archival knowledge and endless assistance to guest conductors.

The Dnipro Choir has performed across the country and as far away as Australia and Hawaii. Members speak about her with both affection and hushed admiration. Gloria Zaharia, assistant



Maria Dytyniak  
PHOTO SUPPLIED



*“... she continues to inspire us with her highly energetic and extremely creative artistic programming.”*

conductor of Dnipro and St. John's Cathedral says, “her amazing positive attitude convinces people to come to rehearsals despite pressing commitments, and she continues to inspire us with her highly energetic and extremely creative artistic programming.” Luba Feduschak, president of Dnipro Choir, a participant of church choirs since her youth, marvels at how “Dnipro was a learning experience to be exposed to the contemporary repertoire. To pull this level of musicality from us was amazing and enjoyable.” As Dytyniak explains,

“Although most of the choir members are Ukrainian, many are not fluent...and so one uses imagination...metaphors, images to get the meaning across.” Indeed, there is a treasure trove of endearing sentiments about Dytyniak's bilingual conducting methodologies. ‘Raz, dva, tre, four, five, six to ‘iak maete rest, ta pipe down.’ She calls the men ‘boysuku’. Lubomyr Pastuszenko, another long-time choir member, recounts “her habit of delicately stamping her foot as she is teaching us new material. I don't think she's aware of doing it. One difficult piece we nicknamed ‘The Tree-Huggers Song’ and were so skeptical - could we do it? And we performed it beautifully - opening up my musical world.”

Dytyniak conducts contemporary pieces, with the ability to entice her choir and engage the audience. One of her favourites is *Sacred Dnipro*, written by the Ukrainian composer Valery Kikta. “It is a historic panorama of the country as exemplified through the Dnipro River. But there are so many favourites - Bortniansky, Vedel,

Stetsenko, Dychko, Stankovych and Fiala (a Canadian composer of beautiful choral works).” For Dytyniak, music is beyond everything else, the art of feeling, and not a cerebral game. Her modest yet impassioned manner is buoyed by a mix of charisma and fearlessness.

Currently the choir is preparing for a February concert in Ottawa, including a performance at the Parliament Buildings. Local Edmonton composer, Dr. Andriy Talpash has been commissioned to honour Dnipro's 60th anniversary.

Maria Dytyniak's influence has been monumental. From paving the way for women to become conductors, to introducing contemporary Ukrainian music to the diaspora, and commissioning works by local composers—all these accomplishments will be indelibly felt in the promising future of this national treasured choir. How fortunate Edmonton is to have a musical treasure of Maria Dytyniak's stature. 

*Lida Somchynsky is a freelance writer from Edmonton.*



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# God of Missed Connections

Elizabeth Bachinsky, 2009  
Nightwood Editions

By Rena Hanchuk

**I decided to** take on the task of writing a review of this book of poetry when ACUA asked me to do so, albeit reluctantly, because I normally copy edit for ACUA Vitae

but when I learned that the Wax


Ceremony was mentioned in the book, I jumped at the opportunity.

I was shocked when I began to read *God of Missed Connections* because incantations from the Ceremony itself were interlaced with modern poetry and snippets of Ukrainian history woven into an isochronal tapestry. These were many of the very incantations I had gathered for my own book which was published in 1999! I am the Rena Jeanne Hanchuk that is credited by the young writer. Like generations before her, she was intrigued by the magical puissance of these words, of hushed and ancient utterances; solidified wax figures, empowered by her own instrument, the pen, her belles-lettres took on their own form.

Bachinsky has done her homework. There is plenty of research in this collection and that is evident throughout. I do wish, however, she would have given the reader more than brief—often frantic—sound bites of her world, her knowledge, her experience as a young Ukrainian Canadian reconciling her ethnicity with her life in the diaspora. This author left me wanting more of

her and her own conjured formulae.

As I continued to read to the end of this book, already a sign of a talented word smith, I seemed to understand less of her juxtapositions and more of her missed connections. How am I to make sense of a rogue Georgian's actions of starving children from Ukraine in the 1930s and an experience of a Vancouver fish market in 2010? Missed connection, indeed. I am perplexed even further with very graphic poetry of her lovemaking sprinkled through the book. Was Bachinsky naming herself in one of her poems aptly named, Goddess of Incongruity?

The concept of imbedding historical quotes and powerful exorcism of devilish dis-ease remains in my mind, unique and effective. Good job, Elizabeth. You have been an agent of healing and that, after all, is the goal of all healers, all poets. 

*Rena Hanchuk is the founding president of ACUA. She wrote a Master's Thesis about the Wax Ceremony which was subsequently published as The Word and Wax: A Medical Folk Ritual Among Ukrainians in Alberta.*




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# Dnipro Sings! 2010

By Roman Brytan

**At first blush**, it may seem a simple-enough task to release a choral CD:

- Throw together a random sampling of repertoire (every choir's got an active songbook anyway, right?)
- Make sure your audio recording quality is minimally passable (everyone's used to hearing you in less-than-ideal live conditions anyway, right?)
- Don't waste energy worrying about mass appeal (the only people who buy choral CDs are the performers and their families, right?).

Wrong, more wrong and most wrong.

The fact is, when a choral group sets out to produce and release a new recording, it is taking on a very difficult task. This is especially true when the choral group in question has a proud history to live up to – one that spans more than half a century.

The Dnipro Choir of Edmonton has distinguished itself as a group unafraid to take artistic chances. From the early days of staging classical Ukrainian operas on the professional stage, to the commissioning of new, avant-garde compositions that challenge the performer and audience alike; from the passionate, incendiary force of Roman Soltykewych to the nuanced, exhilarating dynamism of Maria Dytyniak – this collective has taught us all to expect the unexpected, without straying from our most basic, traditional musical appetites.

The 2010 release *Dnipro Sings! Spivaie khor "Dnipro"* is the perfect calling-card for Ukrainian choral music. That's because it contains just the right mixture of familiar and exotic, stretching the listener's musical imagination without abandoning a firm, symphonious foundation.

Let's examine those 'first-blush' elements as they apply to this disc. The 21 musical selections on this album were clearly chosen with a great deal of care and attention, to both a

wide range of genre and style, and flow from one track to the next.

Out of the gate, the opening song blends the known, totemic words of Sosiura "Love Ukraine – *Liubit' Ukrainu*" with the enticing, often challenging music of Kushnirenko. And with this one song, enough said about what awaits us in the remaining 75 minutes of material.

From the playfulness of folklore (tracks 2-7), through the somber recollection of historical truths (8-10), further along into a celebration of life and its perpetual propensity for rebirth (11-17), and ending in the glory of our collective, national genius (18-21), this is a well-balanced, intricately woven journey of affirmation.

The result is the type of album that is increasingly harder to find these days: a CD that deserves to be heard as recorded, from beginning to end, without interruption and without the need for a "shuffle" button. This is the kind of musical statement that can only be made by a seasoned artist, and Dnipro is just that artist, having evolved as an organically mature and expressively confident, aesthetic entity.

Irena Tarnawsky's piano accompaniment is often taken for granted on the Edmonton Ukrainian soundscape. Truth be known, this is the rarest form of compliment, as it bears witness to a pianist whose interpretations are ingrained in the very choral foundation of Dnipro. This seemingly effortless interplay between piano keys and vocal chords is not easily achieved, and comes about only when an accompanist's hands breathe in unison with those of the conductor.

Technically, Garth Hobden has managed to engineer a choral recording that is a treat for the ear, wide in its range of musical subtleties and grandeur, without ever causing the listener to strain or recoil.

The liner notes include a concise history of Dnipro, and dedicate

most of the booklet space to providing an evocative summary of each song, interpreting its critical context and capturing its essence through the masterfully descriptive texts of Olesia Talpash.

It's refreshing and wonderful to see care and attention paid to the composers of these songs, and the reverence with which the choir interprets such giants as Shamo, Stetsenko, Kos-Anatolsky, Dychko, Kozak, Hnatyshyn, Ivasiuk, Kolessa, Meitus and many more. And something oft overlooked – the words that these melodies envelope, are no less respectfully proffered: words from the pens of Samiilenko, Ustyianovych, Oles, Tychyna and, of course, Shevchenko, to name but a few.

*Dnipro Sings!* has been a long time coming. It's been something short of two decades since their last general-



repertoire, studio album. It's been something short of two years from original concept to the launch of this disc. And all-in-all, it's been well worth the wait. Bravo! 🎶

*Roman Brytan is Program Director at Edmonton's 101.7 World FM Radio, where he has hosted a daily Ukrainian show for the past 28 years.*

FEATURE

# ART IN *Moti*

JOURNEYS IN UKRAINIAN DANCE



*Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Company (2005)*

PHOTO SUPPLIED



By Salena Kitteringham

**Ukrainian dance elegantly** prances between folklore and innovation. At its heart is the aim to share a people's culture, to tell its stories, and celebrate its history, but in no way should Ukrainian dance be thought of as a static museum piece. Dance is a truly living, breathing, moving art form that only exists in the act of performance and Ukrainian dance is always going to evolve and be influenced by its presenters and their contemporary ideas, hopes and dreams.

It is an artistic director's responsibility to lead a Ukrainian dance company through this tricky tradition/innovation tango. As Canada's So You Think You Can Dance judge and ballroom guru Jean Marc Genereux puts it, "That's what an artistic director is supposed to do – to expose other visions to their dancers and audiences, to look on the right, look to the left and access all the beautiful dance that's out there, and open the door as wide as possible."

Two Edmonton-based Ukrainian dance companies, Cheremosh and Shumka, regularly rise to the challenge of both working to preserve and refining the customs of their medium while still pushing the boundaries and moving the art form forward to keep it engaging for today's dancers and audiences.

While each of their artistic directors, Cheremosh's Mykola Kanevets and Shumka's Dave Ganert, have very distinctive

approaches to their choreography, both concur that with the creation of a new dance piece, inspiration usually comes from what's going on in their current lives.

For the past few years, Cheremosh has been preparing to mark a very special milestone in 2010 – the company's 40th anniversary. This celebration has been the creative driving force for Kanevets, currently putting the final polish on three new pieces for the company to debut at a commemorative gala October 30 at the Edmonton Expo Centre.

"We want to do something interesting and not copy any other group, so we decided to hold the event as a dinner theatre, so all our dancers and alumni from 40 years can come and meet and share their Cheremosh experiences as friends over a wonderful meal," explains Kanevets about the idea behind the event. "I've prepared three new pieces – new music, new choreography, and new costumes."

Kanevets says the first place he starts when creating a new dance is by asking, "How do I feel? How does the company feel? What exactly is interesting for the audience right now?" Then he tries to distil that feeling or mood into an idea or concept that he wants to work with.

Selecting the music comes next for Kanevets, and he prefers to collaborate with a musical composer to create original melodies. After that, there are a great deal of details

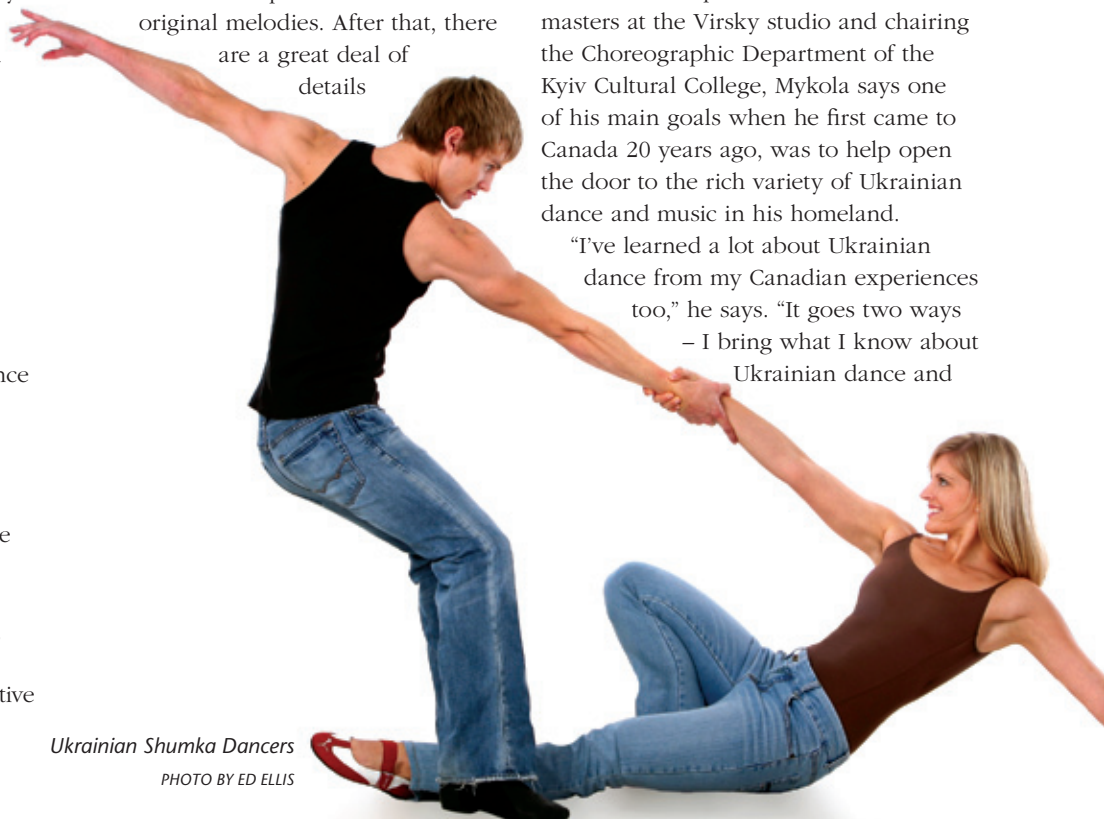
to consider – how many dancers are needed to create the lines and formations, settling on exits and entrances, and what Ukrainian region works the best stylistically for the piece. He enjoys the challenge of staying true to the traditional regional conventions in his movement vocabulary.

Once he has a loose plan in place, Kanevets begins to create the dance – every step, every position of the arms and body, the partnering between males and females. He says it isn't a process that can be rushed. Sometimes it can come together quickly in two to three months, other times it can take years. Working with designers to create the set, lights and costumes is the final step in Kanevets' choreographic journey.

Under Kanevets' artistic direction, Cheremosh has collaborated with several other Canadian dance troupes. In 2007, they went to China with the Blackfoot Medicine Speaks aboriginal dance group and in 2009, Cheremosh joined forces with the Tryzub Ukrainian Dance Ensemble (Calgary, AB) and the Rusalka Ukrainian Dance Ensemble (Winnipeg, MB) to mount Razom – A Fusion of Ukrainian Dance which traveled to all three Canadian Prairie cities.

Originally from Ukraine, with a dance background that includes training with Ukraine's most prominent classical dance masters at the Virsky studio and chairing the Choreographic Department of the Kyiv Cultural College, Mykola says one of his main goals when he first came to Canada 20 years ago, was to help open the door to the rich variety of Ukrainian dance and music in his homeland.

"I've learned a lot about Ukrainian dance from my Canadian experiences too," he says. "It goes two ways – I bring what I know about Ukrainian dance and



Ukrainian Shumka Dancers

PHOTO BY ED ELLIS

my experiences creating new Ukrainian dance in Canada teaches me too.”

Shumka’s artistic director Dave Ganert, originally from Manitoba, travels regularly to Ukraine for his dance work. He says Canadian Ukrainian dance artists are now widely regarded by dance artists in Ukraine as working on the forefront of the art form.

For Ganert, creating dance is the ultimate means of expressing himself. “Creating choreography, or learning to dance, or even dance itself – it gives you the greatest freedom to allow you to express the person that you are, or the one you are becoming, or possibly even the person that you dream of being.”

Sometimes it’s an idea that inspires him, the music, or he draws the inspiration from life, but ultimately, he says “dance is to inspire, to motivate and move an audience and evoke an emotion that is completely honest, humble and human.”

Ganert’s most recent creation involves working with Jean Marc Genereux, ballroom expert and Canadian judge

on CTV’s *So You Think You Can Dance*. Genereux was first introduced to Shumka when former member, Jeff Mortensen, dazzled the judges auditioning in 2009. Mortensen made the top 20 this season, and at the time of print, had made it as far as the top four.

Together Ganert and Genereux wanted to create a contemporary piece about the larger issues of disability, specifically Multiple Sclerosis. “It is a piece that is geared to Shumka. We’ve had members have MS in the past. It speaks to the human heart – the human emotion, the human struggle and the human hope.” It will premiere at Shumka’s annual New Works Gala on November 20 at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton.

Jean Marc Genereux says the piece is not strictly ballroom or traditional Ukrainian dance, and relies more on contemporary, almost pedestrian movement vocabulary.

Ganert says, “I think we’ll never lose the Ukrainian out of the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, but I think it is

*Dance is a truly living, breathing, moving art form that only exists in the act of performance ...*

also important to speak to a wider variety of audiences. Ukrainian dance is an incredibly special and unique art form. It can inspire and motivate and it can express cultural ideas and metaphors, poetry. But at the same time, including expression from other dance forms, I think only elevates the Ukrainian dance form and gives it rise to contemporary thoughts today and makes it relevant to our society.”

*Salena Kitteringham is a local publicist and the dance writer for The Edmonton Journal.*



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Ukrainian toys  
PHOTOS SUPPLIED

## A Ukrainian Toy Story

By Eugene L. Topolnisky

**The cottage industry** in Ukraine is experiencing a revival with artists and craftsmen producing homemade items to sell at open markets. This has created a unique national toy-making culture. Archaeological excavations have revealed figurines of women, animals, and birds that are more than twenty thousand years old from the Mizyn settlement in the Chernihiv province. Artifacts from different archaeological periods have a commonality with Ukrainian folk toys that have preserved the ethnic symbolism and reflect the ancient Ukrainian culture. These folk toys provide a valuable vehicle in fostering spiritual, physical and intellectual development of children.

Over the centuries, various materials have been used to make folk toys such as wood, clay, fabrics, dough, hard cheese, straw, grass, reeds, and corn husks. The toys take many forms: human figures, different animals, birds, fish, mythological and fantasy figures; and depict various themes and folklore.

Ukrainian rag dolls, which are called *motanky*, are made from colourful pieces of fabric and yarn that is wound without any knots, making a cross shape. It was believed that by tying a knot, one would have tied one's fate. Grass or herbs symbolic of prosperity would be placed inside. The head has no face, only a cross made out of threads. The design


of these dolls is rooted in the cross, the symbol of unity between Heaven and earth, the four corners of the world, and the four seasons. The *motanka* is used as a talisman to ward off evil and to bring good health and fortune.

Straw artwork and weaving, with its early agrarian beginnings, was used to form masks, headwear, the *didukh* (sheaf of wheat), the *pavuk* (spider), Christmas tree decorations, stars, angels and figurines. The *pavuk*, symbolic of a spider's web, is a common decoration for celebrating the New Year. This is based on a legend that the spider was the first creature on earth and as a master weaver designed and wove all the trappings and fabric of our world. The *pavuk* is used as a talisman for protection against emotional/mental/situational discord. Today cleverly woven figures of various birds and animals are made from straw and grasses.

Various clays are used to fashion whistles, bells and other toys in the shapes of different birds, animals, fish, and even *pyrohy*. Some are glazed and brightly decorated.

Wood is used as a very versatile medium and is carved, painted or burnt by a hot poker, or is unfinished, to make small figurines, moving and sound toys, musical instruments, intricate puzzles, horses and wagons.

The Ukrainian Museum of Canada – Alberta Branch will feature many

of the Ukrainian folk toys, dolls, and straw weavings, along with children's artwork in its next exhibit, "Children's World" November 10th-14th, 2010. 

Eugene L. Topolnisky, B.Ed., B.A., M.S.  
Ed. Is the President of the Ukrainian  
Museum of Canada - Alberta Branch.

Sources: Shevchenko, Yevhen. *Ukrainian Folk Toys; Catalogue of Exhibition*. Kiev, 2006

Mykoliuk, Oksana. *The Day*, February 26, 2008





## Volya in Turkey

*Photos and story by Olesia Markevych*

**This summer the** Volya Ukrainian Dance Ensemble from Edmonton was excited to travel to Turkey for our summer tour in July. We were warmly welcomed by the communities who offered many opportunities to explore the area, try the food and meet lots of new people! One of the main highlights of the trip was a once in a lifetime performance in an ancient Roman city. The 1800 year old amphitheatre was specially opened up for a one-time performance for the people in the surrounding area. It was a magnificent feeling to perform for thousands of people, in a place that has already seen so much history and so many centuries of events and performances! We were awed by the experience and will definitely remember it as an event of a lifetime.

Another enjoyable experience was the opportunity for us to share our dancing off stage. We invited people to participate in a large *kolomeyka* and picked up some new steps ourselves. It was fun to interact and socialize with other dancers!

A fun non-dancing day on the trip was our tour around Istanbul. We were taken to all the main sights from the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque to the Grand Bazaar. Turkey is such a diverse place with a wonderfully unique culture. It was a real treat to be in the thick of it in Turkey's capital city.

Overall, the tour was a great success. We had fun sharing our love for Ukrainian dance with the people of Turkey and experiencing all the wonderful people and sights Turkey had to offer. 🇺🇦







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Lyuba Seletska  
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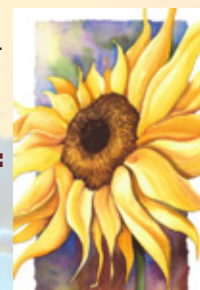
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POPPY SEED ROLL ▪ **Sophia Waplak and Irene Loszuk** - Saturday, November 27, 10:00am - 3:00pm,  
St. George's Church Hall, 11305 - 95A Street, Fee: \$45.00



Larisa Cheladyn  
Sunflower Detail

## CALGARY WORKSHOPS

ART OF TORTE ▪ **Luba Perewernycky** - Friday, November 19, 7:00pm - 9:30pm, Assumption Ukrainian Catholic Church Hall,  
704 - 6 Street, Calgary, Fee: \$50 (Members \$45)

All events and classes require pre-registration by contacting the office by phone or e-mail.

## Celebrate Ukrainian Art Join ACUA

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YES! I would like to become a member of the **Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts (ACUA)**. My membership fee includes a mailed subscription of ACUA's magazine, *ACUA Vitae* and discounts at Orbit, Ukrainian Bookstore, Delta Art & Drafting Supply and Kamena Gallery & Frames.  
(Please print clearly)

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City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Add my e-mail to the Events Announcements list.

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ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR THE UKRAINIAN ARTS

2nd Floor, 4638 - 91 Avenue

Edmonton, AB T6B 2L1

Or call the office for VISA or MC

780 488-8558 (10:00 am - 4:30 pm)



**\*New Address Starting NOVEMBER 1:**

**2nd Floor, 4638 - 91 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T6B 2L1**

**780 488-8558**

**info@acuarts.ca**

**www.acuarts.ca**