



Bulgarian-Macedonian National Educational and Cultural Center, Inc.



“Otets Paissii”
Pittsburgh

Preserving Tradition . . . Promoting Understanding

Volume 10, Number 1

The President's Corner

Patricia Penka French

First of all, I hope that your Holidays were good ones and extend to all my very best and warmest wishes for a most Happy and Healthy New Year!

Looking Back

The year 2005 just finished, was an extremely busy and rewarding one for the Cultural Center. Many material gifts were received which included the impressive 238 film collection of Bulgarian history and culture from the Bulgarian Embassy; a marvelous collection of 49 children's books from Vladimir Ossenov; and a valuable collection of Bulgarian coins and medallions from Walter W. Kolar. Twenty two people made similar material contributions to BMNECC.

The 75th anniversary of BMBA and the emergence of BMNECC was celebrated with a grand Gala in the Spring. New collaborations were made with other cultural organizations. Several artists were sponsored with great success. The Performing Folk ensemble outdid itself in their performances this season. A new Bulgarian language class for children was launched and the year ended with a gift of \$150,000 through the efforts of representative Mike Doyle, the largest financial gift ever received by BMNECC.

Memberships

One of the fundamental and basic support for any organization stems from its membership. So it is with BMNECC. Your membership is important to us! Beside providing much needed support for the work of the Center, it provides certain benefits to the Full Member. This includes such things as a 10% discount on Gift Shop items and monthly Vecherinkas and rentals of the Grand Social Hall. Invitations to events like the Christmas Party and other special events are included. Both children and adults have the availability to participate in the Culture Group and the Performing Folk Ensemble. A Membership Form for 2006 is included with this Newsletter. Please take time and make an effort to fill it out and become a member of BMNECC.

An Archival History Project

In 2006, BMNECC is planning to make a very concentrated effort to collect very early and old documents such as photos, passports, immigration papers, letters, newspaper

articles about early Bulgarian/Macedonian families, and all such similar materials. The project will be spearheaded by Patricia Penka French and assisted by Haley Markoff, a high school student who is the great grand-daughter of the founder of the Bulgarian organization in West Homestead, Lambe Markoff.

A number of people have been approached and they readily admit that they have a lot of photos and family materials sitting in boxes in attics or garages, and they have promised that they will send this material to BMNECC to be kept safe for posterity. If you are reading this, and you



have similar material that would be of interest to enlarging the history of BMNECC, please send it in. If you want the material back, just let us know and we'll make copies of your originals, then return your material.

A history of the Bulgarian/Macedonian community in western Pennsylvania over the past century is in the planning stages. Also being planned is the creation of a Video, or DVD, containing many graphics and pictures of families involved with the BMBA. Hopefully, this will be one of the real outcomes of this collecting project. Any information about the old BMBA is welcome. Just send in everything to BMNECC, the Archives Department. For example, a framed Policy and Regulation document for the BMBA, circa 1932, was recently given to the BMNECC archives by George Mihailoff, a former manager of the club. This document outlines the rules of behavior while in the club for all members and their guests.



REVIEWS

PAPAZOV/YUNAKOV CONCERT

On November 17th, 2005, Ivo Papazov, tabbed "World Music Artist of the Year" by BBC, and Yuri Yunakov, leader of Bulgaria's Gypsy Music Band, rocked the walls of the Bulgarian Cultural Center with their superb musicianship. They performed, almost non-stop for about two and one half hours, thrilling the capacity, full-house that attended. At the end of their concert they played some informal music to which a large part of the audience got up and danced. They were thrilling! They were mesmerizing! We can't wait for them to come back again.

PERFORMING FOLK ENSEMBLE "OTETS PAISSII"

On November 27th, 2005, the Performing Folk Ensemble "Otets Paissii" presented their autumn program entitled "Thracian Tempi". It was a smashing success! With their special guests, the Moscow Nights, Musical Ambassadors from Russia, they pleased the large crowd that attended the program at the Carnegie Library Music Hall. The costumes were colorful and impressive; the dances well-disciplined; and the songs, along with instrumental numbers were genuine crowd pleasers. It was one of the finest presentations that BMNECC has offered. Congratulations to the Staff who made it all possible.

PITTSBURGH FOLK FESTIVAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY

On May 26, 27, and 28 of May 2006, the Pittsburgh Folk Festival will celebrate its 50th birthday. Plans seem to be moving right along towards a most special three day celebration. Beside the local groups participating, many are inviting ensembles from their home country. The Bulgarian Center has already invited the Ensemble "AURA" from Sofia, Bulgaria and they have accepted to participate. A huge traditional Bulgarian Wedding is being planned and many of the former performers from 1956 to the present are being invited to be a part of a huge Wedding Celebration.

A 50th Anniversary Gala Celebration is planned for Saturday April 29th at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Pittsburgh. Patricia Penka French is the Chairperson for this event. A month-long series of events are being planned in western Pennsylvania designed to bring attention to this very special milestone in the history of the Pittsburgh Folk Festival.

Those interested in participating in the huge traditional Bulgarian Wedding Celebration, who have performed in past festival programs, are invited to write to the BMNECC to express their interest in being a part of the 50th Anniversary of the Bulgarian participation in the Pittsburgh Folk Festival.

NEW MEMBERS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Recently, the Board of Directors of BMNECC elected to expand their Board by adding new people with fresh ideas and enthusiasm. Four new additions were made. These include Her Excellency Elena Poptodorova, Bulgarian Ambassador to the United States; Eileen French, an Account Executive with Steel City Media; Jeffrey Schleicher, an Accountant with Elliot Turbomachinery; and Nemo Tirimanne, Resource Manager with Jewish Family Services. These new additions have enriched the composition of the Board of Directors. We're looking for a new spirit of entrepreneurship in this governing body. They are most welcome.



THE FIRST BULGARIAN BANDS IN AMERICA



The Granite City "Orient Band" was founded in September 21, 1914. Founder and first conductor was Peter M. Kotov, called professor. The band became impressive in that it had 17 brass and wooden band instruments along with a rhythm percussion section. Apparently they created some very high-level performances, playing not only marches, waltzes and folklore medleys, but also potpourri from famous operas and fashionable dance pieces. Most band members were from the Bitola region.

The above material was gleaned from the archives of the "Naroden Glas" (People's Voice) which was founded in Granite City, IL in 1907. The material was researched by Vladimir Gadjev and printed in the 3/2005 issue of the EK magazine, a cultural bi-monthly publication published by the Agency for Bulgarians Abroad, and translated by Tony Dremiszov.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



Yvonne Schexnayder and Patricia Penka French at the Forum Display Table.

Recently, a highly visible and successful FORUM was sponsored by the AMEN CORNER and the RIVER'S CLUB of Pittsburgh.

BMNECC participated with twelve other community cultural organizations to promote Culture, Charitable Giving, and the City of Pittsburgh.

Board members participating were Diane Mohr, Patricia French, Walter Kolar, Elsa Limbach, Nich Jordanoff and George Schexnayder.

The event was coordinated by the Center's Board member, Diane Mohr, Vice President of the Amen Corner organization.

A NEW COLLABORATION

With the receipt of the several hundred Bulgarian films donated by the Bulgarian Embassy to BMNECC, a new collaboration has been formed with two community based organizations. The first is with the Pittsburgh Filmmakers who have visited the Center and analyzed the collection and its general condition. As a result, an inventory is being taken resulting in the identification of each film. The Filmmakers have contributed certain materials to help in the identification process. The Film and Archives Department of the University of Pittsburgh has also visited BMNECC to assess firsthand the holdings of the treasured collection. They made several positive suggestions for finding support for doing work on the collection, and they offered to place an intern after the new year to begin processing each film with an eye towards preservation and transfer to a newer and more modern format. Dana Spiardi of the BMNECC Board of Directors is spearheading this entire effort with assistance from Tony Dremiszov, another Board member who is doing all of the translations for identification purposes of each film.

YOU ARE INVITED

Come to a Coffee for an informative session exploring activities, events and volunteer opportunities at the Bulgarian Cultural Center on Saturday February 4, 2006 at 11:00 AM.

BMNECC is looking for Volunteers to help with efforts to "Preserve Tradition and to Promote Understanding", participating within a positive atmosphere in an organization that wishes to make a difference in the community.

A wide variety of opportunities are available within the major components of BMNECC, such as:

1. Its highly successful and growing SOUP SEGA! operation
2. The Museum with its wide variety of exhibits, displays, and stored materials
3. The Library with its extensive collection of both written and audio/visual materials
4. The Archives, a repository for historical documentation of the immigrants who came to the Steel Valley and the cultural heritage they brought with them
5. The Performing Ensemble with its extensive wardrobe and troupe of musicians, singers and dancers
6. The Gift Shop with Bulgarian souvenir materials for sale
7. The Pittsburgh Folk Festival's 50th anniversary participation
8. Fund raising and special events
9. On going regular events

All interested parties are urged to either write to BMNECC, 449/451 West 8th Avenue, West Homestead, PA 15120, or call the Director of Volunteerism, Diane Mohr at 412-551-2369.

If you're interested, but cannot attend, please contact

Bulgarian - Macedonian
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Calendar of Events - Autumn 2005



Jan. 7	Cajun Dance Party	7:30 PM
Jan. 14	Salsa Dance Series	8:00 PM
Jan. 20	Zydeco Dance	7:30 PM
Jan. 21	Vecherinka - Balkan Dance Party	7:30 PM
Feb. 4	Cajun Dance Party	7:30 PM
Feb. 10	Bulgarian Film Showing	8:00 PM
Feb. 11	Salsa Dance Series	8:00 PM
Feb. 17	Country Swing Dance	7:30 PM
Feb. 18	Vecherinka - Balkan Dance Party	7:30 PM
Mar. 4	Cajun Dance Party	7:30 PM
Mar. 10	Bulgarian Film Showing	8:00 PM
Mar. 11	Salsa Dance Series	8:00 PM
Mar. 17	Zydeco Dance	7:30 PM
Mar. 18	Vecherinka - Balkan Dance Party	7:30 PM
On-Going - Saturdays		
SOUP SEGA !		9:00 AM to Noon
Children's Culture Program		9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
Children's Language Class		10:30 AM to Noon

