



Movie Festival Delights Audiences

Some of the Tamburitzaans of St. Nicholas, Monroeville, PA at the SNF Movie Festival

Below: At the Award Ceremony, from left are John Martich, President of the SNF, Zeljko Mirkovic with the "SNF Spirit Award," the movie director of the "Tesla Nation," and Milos Rastovic, the Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the SNF and Master of Ceremonies

by Milos Rastovic

PITTSBURGH, PA – On March 30th, the fourth SNF Serbian Movie Festival took place at the Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh. The Serbian Movie Festival was sponsored by the Serb National Federation, the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (CREEES), the Yugoslav Room Committee and the Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh. The Festival's main goal is to preserve, perpetuate, and promote Serbian culture, tradition and heritage in addition to furthering greater Pittsburgh's cultural diversity.

The North American Premiere of the movie "Tesla Nation" (2018) by Zeljko Mirkovic was presented. The Honorable Valerie S. Gaydos, Pennsylvania State Representative-44th Legislative District, expressed gratitude for the invitation. President Donald J. Trump was invited but unfortunately unable to attend. He sent a letter expressing best wishes for the success of the "Tesla Nation" premiere. The movie raised great public interest and received positive feedback from the audience. "Tesla Nation" describes Serbian immigrants to the United States of America and how they contributed to building America and the world. The movie won the "SNF Spirit Award" for best picture and its contribution to strengthening the bonds between the Serbian-American Diaspora and the homeland as well as developing the relationship between Serbia and the United States of America.

The World Premiere of the movie was in Kolarac Hall in Belgrade, Serbia, on October 27, 2018.

Present at the Festival were Zeljko Mirkovic, the movie director who accepted the SNF Spirit Award and the book *Serb National Federation – First 100 Years*, Milos Rastovic, the Screenwriter, as well as other participants in the movie including Aleksandar Slavkovic, the author of *The Immigrant. The Judge Fisher Story*, Milana Mim Bizic, and John Martich, President of the Serb National Federation. After receiving the award, Mirkovic stressed that the main aim of the movie is to show Serbian-American contributions in building America and the world, which spans more than 200 years, and the relationship between the two nations. He especially expressed appreciation to the SNF for the support to make the movie and for everything that the oldest Serbian Fraternal Society in America has done for Serbian immigrants and perpetuating Serbian ethnic and religious identity since 1901.

Milos Rastovic, the movie's screenwriter, talked



about the history of Serbian-Americans in the movie and highlighted the movie's main idea: "When the first Serbian immigrants came to the 'New Land,' they brought not only their readiness to sacrifice their lives for ideals, talents

but also their soul. Their soul distinguished and raised them above others. Today, our soul is the magnet that connects Serbs in different countries and continents. Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, who was also an immigrant in the United States, described Serbian-American history with the following words: 'It is all an amazing epopee begun by those Serbian farmers who escaped from tyranny and came to this country of freedom not to enjoy, but to become more capable to carry worries of Saint Sava and helping their families in the homeland to carry out the same worries and thus for more than 100 years until today. If we

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His Grace Bishop IRINEJ
and Dr. Krinka V. Petrov



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follow the path of our great people such as Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo I. Pupin, we can be sure that we will not be lost neither for faith, the homeland nor for ourselves.”

Aleksandar Slavkovic emphasized the motive which inspired him to write a book about Djordje Sagic also known as George Fisher, the first famous Serb in America, who was the pride of his nation and everything they did for their new country. Milana Mim Bizic summed up feelings about her Serbian heritage with the words: “Ja sam ko sam, i volim što sam!” and about Saint Sava which her mother taught her:

“СВЕВИШНОМ СЕ МОЛИМ БОГУ,
Да нам даје љубав, слогу,
Да се брат са братом мири,
Да се српски језик шири,
Да се слави крсна слава,
То—то нам жели Свети Сава!”

John Martich talked about the importance of Serbian heritage in his childhood and today as the Pres-

ident of the SNF: “My parents raised my brother and me in a God-fearing Serbian home. We were taught the importance of keeping those values at the forefront of our lives as we matured. Last year my family and I visited Serbia for the first time where it seemed everything I was taught suddenly came together. We walked through Belgrade as if it was home. There is an abstract part of being a Serb that cannot succinctly be put into words. You’ve gotta live it to love it!”

The fourth SNF Serbian Movie Festival was opened with a prayer led by His Grace Bishop IRINEJ, Eastern American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In his opening remarks, President John Martich stressed the importance of

preserving Serbian cultural heritage. Dr. Nancy Condee, Chair of the Department of Slavic Studies and President of CREEES at the University of Pittsburgh, accentuated the importance of introducing other cultures and how this festival grows every year. On behalf of the Yugoslav Room Committee and Deborah Studen-Pavlovich, chair of the Committee, and the Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh, Ken Kornick expressed thanks to the SNF and all the efforts to organize this festival. The Yugoslav Room Committee finds the SNF as a valuable partner in organizing cultural programs including this ongoing event and will continue to support the event.

Milos Rastovic expressed gratitude for the support of the University and gave a



From left, Pres. John Martich, Zeljko Mirkovic, His Grace Bishop IRINEJ, and Milos Rastovic

Tamburitizens of the St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church, Monroeville, PA conducted by Daniel Vucelich

Pres. John Martich awarded Dr. Aleksandar Petrov with the SNF Distinguished Service Award



The Tamburitizens of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church, Monroeville, PA



The Honorable Valerie Gaydos, PA State Legislator, with the “Tesla Nation” DVD, and Milana Mim Bizic

A panel participated after the premiere including, from left, John Martich, Aleksandar Slavkovic, Zeljko Mirkovic, Milos Rastovic, and Milana Mim Bizic



Zeljko Mirkovic, His Grace Bishop IRINEJ and Milos Rastovic with some of the children present



Milos Rastovic,
Master of Ceremonies



Dr. Nancy Condee, President
of CREEES at the University
of Pittsburgh



Ken Kornick, the Yugoslav Room
Committee, and the Nationality
Rooms at the University of
Pittsburgh



Dr. Krinka Vidaković Petrov,
Scholar and Editor of the book
The Great War 1914 – 1918

brief synopsis of the Festival as an introduction. He also introduced honored guests His Grace Bishop IRINEJ and Dr. Krinka Vidaković Petrov, scholar and editor, who presented the book *The Great War 1914 – 1918* published by Sebastian Press, Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Bishop IRINEJ and Dr. Petrov both talked about the main points in the relationship between the Kingdom of Serbia and America during World War I and the role of the Serbian-American Diaspora in helping the homeland. The book is dedicated to the common memory of World War I, which confirmed the United States of America as a global power. As a consequence of World War I, the Balkan region was restructured by founding a new state of Yugoslavia on the sacrifices and victory of the Kingdom of Serbia. The *American Srbobran*, the oldest Serbian continuously published newspaper since 1906, regularly reported about the Great War in the Balkans.

It was a great pleasure for all SNF members and other guests when John Martich, the President of the SNF, bestowed Dr. Aleksandar Petrov, the editor of the Serbian Section of the *American Srbobran*, with the SNF Distinguished Service Award for his twenty six years of work as the editor of the Serbian Section and his contribution to inform the Serbian-American community about important events in the United States and homeland. Dr.

Petrov expressed great respect on the recognition and stressed that editing the *American Srbobran* for him is not "a job, but a mission."

To add context to the documentary "The Long Road to War" (2018) by Milos Skundric, the book *The Great War 1914 – 1918* was presented. The movie is a two-hour long feature-cinema documentary about the real cause and trigger of World War I. Leading European intellectuals from Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne and other universities present their views about the origins of WWI. The movie leads the public through the political games behind the scenes and presents details on when the decision was made about the future of Europe. The movie was well received by the public, and initiated discussions about the causes of the Great War.

Children and adults had an opportunity to watch the cartoon "Twice Upon a Time" (2017) by Vojin Vasovic. The cartoon describes one king with a dual nature and split personality: King of Warrior and King of Poet. One half of his personality represents a crude and fearless warrior. The other half is a man of graceful poise and manners. They share their conscience, but have opposing wishes and desperately want to get rid of each other. This cartoon enriched the views and lives not only of the children but also the adults. The cartoon was

screened at 60 international movie festivals and won more than 20 international awards.

The Tamburitians of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church, Monroeville, PA excited the audience by singing Serbian traditional songs and playing tamburitza. The orchestra was conducted by Daniel Vucelich. The audience enjoyed every moment during their performance. Children who watched the cartoon and members of the St. Nicholas Serbian Tamburitians received generous gifts from the Serb National Federation.

The audience was delighted with the Festival. Thanks to all of the generous supporters of the Festival: the Serb National Federation, Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, and Yugoslav Room Committee, and the Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh, and particularly George Nicholas Martich who helped in screening the movies this year.

Everybody took home something valuable, and that is the idea of the rich tradition and heritage of Serbian culture and history. Our heritage strengthens bonds among us and makes a difference to other nations and continents.

"See you next year to enjoy Serbian Culture and movies! Viva Serbian Movies!"

Founded in 1966, The National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, (NCECA), is a non-profit educational organization and provides valuable resources that supports individuals, schools and organizations with a passion for the Ceramic Arts. At the recent conference in Minneapolis, Richard Wukich was honored with the NCECA Outstanding Achievement Award, which is bestowed annually on individuals who have made a significant achievement on a project that goes above and beyond his or her professional responsibilities.

Richard "Dick" Wukich's love of art began during his high school studies in North Braddock, Pennsylvania. Over the years since then, he has transformed his love of making and teaching pottery into a multifaceted movement that supports those in need locally and globally. Wukich went on to study art at Edinboro State College, where he earned a bachelor of science art education. He taught high school for a year, then he earned a master of fine arts degree from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred where he worked with NCECA founder Ted Randall, Daniel Rhodes, and master teacher and potter Val Cushing. He accepted a teaching position at Slippery Rock University where he worked for 43 years, until retiring in 2011.

Wukich remembers Cushing's influence on his work and life through support of NCECA conference scholarships to regional high school students and educators in his mentor's memory. "Val took me to the very first NCECA conference in East Lansing, Michigan in 1967. My support of his scholarship is a way of paying forward his generosity as a teacher and the influence of his expansive vision on my life." Another way that Wukich has committed to the sustainability of ceramic art in education is through support of educator initiatives through the National K-12 Ceramics Exhibition Foundation.

Wukich is also the founder of Potters Water Action Group, which has worldwide chapters dedicated to working on water quality issues. As the international coordinator for the initiative, Wukich has helped to set up production facilities across the globe in countries such as Haiti, Nigeria, and Nepal. Potters Water Action Group strives to provide safe drinking water through education, research, development, and the production of ceramic water filters.

Richard Wukich of Slippery Rock, PA is a member of SNF Lodge #68, Farrell, PA.



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world together through
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