

CAS President's Report, 2013

15 May 2013

Dear Colleagues, Members and Friends of the Canadian Association of Slavists,

This year my colleagues and I at the University of Victoria have the pleasure of welcoming Slavists from across North America and Europe to our leafy campus for the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences. The congress is one of the highlights of our 50th anniversary celebrations here at UVic. Specialists in Slavic Studies will join 7000 congress participants bringing new research to new audiences. The congress theme of “@ the edge” reflects not only our geographic location in the Pacific Northwest, but also our collective work as academics creating new boundaries of knowledge. The Canadian Association of Slavists, who meet June 1-3, are cordially invited to special cultural events such as a performance of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* at the McPherson Playhouse, as well as congress-wide events like WorldFEST, a sensory extravaganza of food, music, and art. Our annual conference has been skillfully organized this year by program chair Serhy Yekelchuk and local events coordinator Olga Pressitch. Many thanks to them for their hard work in creating an exciting program and a delightful banquet!

Russia, Ukraine and the countries of eastern and central Europe continue to generate media attention on the world stage. The items contained in this newsletter attest to the fact that our Canadian Slavists are deeply connected with contemporary political and artistic culture. Whether students are enjoying a dramatized “new ending” for Chekhov's *The Seagull* by current best-selling Russian author Boris Akunin, at the University of Calgary, or a visit from the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Roza Otunbaeva, at Carleton University, it's clear that faculty are keeping Slavic studies engaging and up-to-date at their respective institutions.

New and continuing initiatives are also taking place within our own Canadian Association of Slavists. In an effort to engage budding Slavists, a cross-Canada high school Russian essay contest will soon be launched. This will become the sister competition to our well-established undergraduate and graduate essay contest, whose results are announced below. As advocates for our profession, we are also continuing to monitor enrolment trends in Slavic departments across Canada and reporting them at our annual general meeting. Financial constraints continue at many of our home universities, and I applaud colleagues who are meeting the challenge by introducing new, innovative courses and continuing their top-level, often award-winning research. At a time when the humanities in general and Slavic Studies in particular are feeling the pinch of budget cuts, let's remind ourselves of our larger goal, reflected in the words of former governor general Vincent Massey:

“What can be more *practical* in modern business or industry or public administration than the work of young men or women who have been trained to think clearly, to organize their ideas, to detect the essential points of an argument, to express themselves effectively and, it may be added, with economy in words? All this should be in the gift of a liberal education.”

(*On Being Canadian*, 1948)

Canadian Slavonic Papers continues as a well-respected North American journal of Slavic studies and a venue for important research under the editorship of Heather Coleman. This year the journal produced two double-issues, including a special issue dedicated to historical memory and World War II in Russia and Ukraine, guest edited by David Marples.

Neither the journal nor the association itself could continue without the work of a wonderful team, including Assistant Editor Svitlana Kryz and the CAS executive. Thanks to our Honorary President, Oleh Ilnytskyj, Vice-Presidents Allan Reid and Alison Rowley, Secretary-Treasurer Bohdan Nebesio, Members-at-large Jean-Guy Lalande, Timothy Ormond and Nigel Raab, Nominating Committee Chair (and Past President) Zina Gimpelevich, Nominating Committee members Myroslav Shkandrij and Elena Baraban, International committee representative Olga Mladenova, ICCEES representative Andrii Krawchuk, International relations committee member Natalia Pylypiuk and graduate student representative Janick Roy, who went above and beyond the call of duty by helping us to become a better bilingual organization that connects with colleagues at French-speaking universities.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bohdan Nebesio, the program committee members for the 2014 conference to be hosted by Brock University. We look forward to a wonderful meeting in Ontario next year!

Five other colleagues who have given generously of their time for this organization need to be mentioned here. Jeff Sahadeo and Carter Elwood were my eyes and ears at Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences meetings in Ottawa. And Nigel Raab, Allan Reid and Shannon Spasova comprised this year's hard-working jury for the CAS student essay contest. Congratulations to the following student winners:

In the graduate category:

Francesca Silano, "A Link in the Chain of Art': The Life of Maria Yudina." Nominated by Prof. Lynne Viola, Department of History, University of Toronto.

In the undergraduate category:

Dennis Khaite, "Reflecting the Problems from One Epoch to Another: A Contrast of Pushkin and Tchaikovsky's Versions of Yevgeni Onegin." Nominated by Prof. Christopher J. Barnes, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto.

I wish you the best in your academic pursuits. Let us continue to work hard so that Slavic Studies persists in flourishing in Canada.

With warmest regards,

Megan Swift
University of Victoria