EXPLORE OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Songs of Ukrainian World War I Soldiers

By Lubov Wolynetz, Curator

November is the month when we commemorate vital historical events which occurred during the years 1914–1921 in Ukraine. These events were accomplished primarily by the dedicated efforts and heroic deeds of the Ukrainian soldiers serving in the Galician Army and the Galician Army ranks. They bequeathed a rich historical and cultural legacy, one of which is the musical heritage of the Sikh Riflemen.

Music, and especially the song, has always been an important part of Ukrainian cultural heritage and consists of a wealth, a treasure trove of different genres of songs. Their lyrics and musical composition is of high quality and sophistication, and have been deemed by critics to be among the most original and beautiful songs in the world.

These songs achieved great popularity and success and were sung for many years even up to the present. Their deeply meaningful content was so strong that during the Soviet occupation of Ukraine it was banned and forbidden to be sung. Anyone who was caught singing one of these songs was jailed, beaten, and even exiled.

Music, and especially songs and singing in wartime, had a constructive purpose, played an important social role in the lives of the soldiers, and the nation or populace. It was a significant tool used during soldiers’ training and in battle by the military authorities to bolster the soldiers’ morale, improve their fighting efficiency, appease their fears, enhance emotional awakenings of their patriotism and dedication to an ideal. Wartime songs for the populace was a form of propaganda, which helped to promote specific attitudes, support, and a better understanding of the national involvement in war conflicts.

The Sichov Striltsi songs were composed and written by highly educated, professional individuals from Halychyna. They were professors, artists, composers, journalists, poets, lawyers, etc. Those who joined the Sichov Striltsi battalion at the outset of the war, took part in fierce battles with the Russian tsarist army, witnessed destruction, tragedies, and death, enjoyed victory and jubilation, sadness, happiness, and joy. All of these emotions were expressed in song. These men formed what they called a special Artistic Sheaf. It organized Army Press Headquarters which was responsible for press releases sent to Ukrainian and European newspapers, informing them about the situation on the war front. The composer Mykhailo Havoronsky, 1892-1949, composed most of the melodies for the numerous songs and poems, as well as did Lev Lekpyi, 1888-1971, Roman Kupchynsky, 1894-1976, etc. Some folk song melodies were also used with new appropriate lyrics. The lyrics were written mostly by Roman Kupchynsky and Lev Lekpyi.

At that time one of the best and most popular songs written was the song “Oi u luzi chervona kalyna” (Oh, the golden rose in the meadow, bent down) This song became so popular that it is now considered to be a “second national anthem” of Ukraine. It was very emotional, poignant song of mourning for fallen soldiers, e.g., “Zarama trembli” (The Trumpet’s mournful sound), lyrics and melody by Kupchynsky; and “Zarevachi” (The Girls bid a soldier’s grace), lyrics and melody by Kupchynsky; and the most poignant song of mourning for fallen soldiers “Zbarazi” (The Cranes are Flying). These are just a few of the hundreds of others that were composed at that time and that are still favorites today.

The artist Edward Kozak immortalized some of these songs in his paintings which he later printed as post cards, two samples of which are included in this article.

By Lubov Wolynetz, Curator

For more information about The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford, please visit www.ukrainianmuseumlibrary.org, call 203-324-0949 or 203-347-8866. The Museum is open Wednesday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., or by appointment, and is located at: 161 Glenbrook Road, Stamford, CT 06902.

Book Review by Museum Director

Mgr. John Terlecky

My Ukrainian American Story, by Adrianna Bamber (San Francisco, A. Bamber, $24.95) To order go to www.myukrainianamericanstory.com. Surfing through Amazon’s website under “Ukraine” subheadings, I came across an interesting book written and beautifully illustrated for children. It was the first time that I have read of this tale, and it was when I came across the name of the author.

Adrianna Bamber grew up in the Ukrainian-American community of New Haven, CT. I remember her parents and grandmother coming by as an assistant pastor at St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church many years ago. Her ethnic heritage is rich, having attended both the local Saturday School of Ukrainian Studies and the Plast. Currently she lives in San Francisco, CA.

The fictional character in this book is a named Oksana and she would appeal to girls from third to sixth grades. The book is filled with pre-colonial recollections of growing up with Baba and her mouth-watering recipes. So much of the book is replete with various Ukrainian customs, traditions, crafts and music engraved in the memory of a child, now a grandmother still treasures them even in her adulthood. A lot of work went into the illustrations for the book, they are authentic in tone and just simply cute. There are colored illustrations of various items—folk costumes, musical instruments, and holiday traditions. The text is in good size print and easily readable for both young and old. I would think that this book might make a nice gift for “Swaytstii Mykolait” pageants or for under the traditional Christmas tree.

The book is also available in a paperback edition (But I prefer the cloth one). The boy may be difficult to find. Amazon has just a couple of books on stock. I know that there are copies for sale @ The Ukrainian Museum Gift Shop in New York City. Perhaps the easiest way may be to just order the book through the website listed above.

---

My Ukrainian American Story, by Adrianna Bamber (San Francisco, A. Bamber, $24.95) To order go to www.myukrainianamericanstory.com. Surfing through Amazon’s website under “Ukraine” subheadings, I came across an interesting book written and beautifully illustrated for children. It was the first time that I have read of this tale, and it was when I came across the name of the author.

Adrianna Bamber grew up in the Ukrainian-American community of New Haven, CT. I remember her parents and grandmother coming by as an assistant pastor at St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church many years ago. Her ethnic heritage is rich, having attended both the local Saturday School of Ukrainian Studies and the Plast. Currently she lives in San Francisco, CA.

The fictional character in this book is a named Oksana and she would appeal to girls from third to sixth grades. The book is filled with pre-colonial recollections of growing up with Baba and her mouth-watering recipes. So much of the book is replete with various Ukrainian customs, traditions, crafts and music engraved in the memory of a child, now a grandmother still treasures them even in her adulthood. A lot of work went into the illustrations for the book, they are authentic in tone and just simply cute. There are colored illustrations of various items—folk costumes, musical instruments, and holiday traditions. The text is in good size print and easily readable for both young and old. I would think that this book might make a nice gift for “Swaytstii Mykolait” pageants or for under the traditional Christmas tree.

The book is also available in a paperback edition (But I prefer the cloth one). The boy may be difficult to find. Amazon has just a couple of books on stock. I know that there are copies for sale @ The Ukrainian Museum Gift Shop in New York City. Perhaps the easiest way may be to just order the book through the website listed above.

---

My Ukrainian American Story, by Adrianna Bamber (San Francisco, A. Bamber, $24.95) To order go to www.myukrainianamericanstory.com. Surfing through Amazon’s website under “Ukraine” subheadings, I came across an interesting book written and beautifully illustrated for children. It was the first time that I have read of this tale, and it was when I came across the name of the author.

Adrianna Bamber grew up in the Ukrainian-American community of New Haven, CT. I remember her parents and grandmother coming by as an assistant pastor at St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church many years ago. Her ethnic heritage is rich, having attended both the local Saturday School of Ukrainian Studies and the Plast. Currently she lives in San Francisco, CA.

The fictional character in this book is a named Oksana and she would appeal to girls from third to sixth grades. The book is filled with pre-colonial recollections of growing up with Baba and her mouth-watering recipes. So much of the book is replete with various Ukrainian customs, traditions, crafts and music engraved in the memory of a child, now a grandmother still treasures them even in her adulthood. A lot of work went into the illustrations for the book, they are authentic in tone and just simply cute. There are colored illustrations of various items—folk costumes, musical instruments, and holiday traditions. The text is in good size print and easily readable for both young and old. I would think that this book might make a nice gift for “Swaytstii Mykolait” pageants or for under the traditional Christmas tree.

The book is also available in a paperback edition (But I prefer the cloth one). The boy may be difficult to find. Amazon has just a couple of books on stock. I know that there are copies for sale @ The Ukrainian Museum Gift Shop in New York City. Perhaps the easiest way may be to just order the book through the website listed above.