

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Gleaning History from A Song

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

In the last issue of *The Sower*, I wrote about some of the song postcards which had been created by the noted artist Amvrosii Zhdakha. In this month's issue, I will concentrate on just one of his postcards, not previously mentioned, not so much for its artistic value, as for the very popular historical song it illustrates, whose text has intrigued scholars and has led them to do research on it.

The song in question is *Up on the hills the harvesters are harvesting, down below, the Cossacks are marching (Oi, na hori ta zbentsi zhnut, a po-pid horoyu. Dolom dolunoyu kozaky idut)*. In the following stanzas we learn that leading the Cossack battalion is a Doroshenko. (There were a few generations of Doroshenko Cossack leaders, including a hetman.) Following the Cossack army is Sahaidachnyi. (Hetman Petro Konashevych Sahaidachnyi, ca. 1570-1622, who, according to the words of the song traded his wife for tobacco and a pipe. The song goes on saying "come Sahaidachnyi, take your wife back", but he answers "for a Cossack, a wife is in the way (assuming when he is preparing for warfare), but tobacco and a pipe will always come in handy on the road". This humorous and albeit satirical song about Sahaidachnyi carries within it an interesting element of information, hinting about the hetman's personal life, which might explain Sahaidachnyi's actions at the end of his life and the bequest he left behind.

Historians, archivists, ethnographers, and linguists, for a number of years, have been carrying on a lively polemical discussion, as to what this song means and why this metaphorical depiction of Sahaidachnyi's behavior. Just as historical data can be obtained from serious, and well-grounded archival material; so too ephemeral material, namely this song or a legend, a tale, can supply additional material but presented enigmatically, puzzling, and therefore needs scholars to decipher its significance and the roots of its source.

The two scholars who were at odds with each other about this song were Borys Hrinchenko, 1863-1910, prose writer, lexicographer, ethnographer, edu-

cator, historian, and active in cultural and political revival; and Ivan Kamanin, 1850-1921, historian, archivist, and paleographer, whose specialty was the 16th and 17th century history of Ukraine. He worked and directed the Kyiv Central Archive of Old Documents.

The hero of the song, Hetman Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachnyi, ca. 1570-1622, was a political, cultural activist, and a brilliant military leader both on land and sea. He graduated from the Ostroh Academy, one of the first institutions of higher learning in Ukraine. On becoming Hetman of the Cossacks, he managed to organize them into a regular and militarily strong formation. During the Battle of Khotyn in 1621 against the Turks, he with his 80,000 Cossack and some Polish troops, fought against the 160,000 Turkish army, and won, thanks to his military strategy and courage. But he was seriously wounded and soon died in Kyiv from his wounds.

The gentry, nobility, and the Cossack elite in the 17th and 18th centuries were generous patrons of their churches, church brotherhoods, schools, institutions of higher learning, etc. They donated huge sums of money and land for this purpose. In 1620, while Hetman of the Cossacks, Sahaidachnyi, by donating these large sums of money, registered himself and the entire Cossack army into the Kyiv Epiphany Brotherhood School. This school was founded in 1615 and later merged with the Kyiv Pecherska Lavra School into one, and became the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. Sahaidachnyi's deed meant that the sons of even low-ranking Cossacks had the right to go to this school. This fact is aptly illustrated in Mykola Hohol's novel *Taras Bulba*. The Academy underwent many changes and even destruction, especially during the Soviet days. When Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, the Academy was officially reopened as the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and still is one of the finest institutions of higher learning in today's Ukraine.

In his testament, Sahaidachnyi

bequeathed all of his assets to the Epiphany Brotherhood School in Kyiv, to the Lviv Brotherhood, and to other cultural institutions. He left nothing for his wife. Metropolitan of Kyiv, 1620-1631- Iov Boretskyi, was named the executor of the will. The fact that Sahaidachnyi left his wife out of his will had intrigued historians. Kamanin claims, based on archival documents, and various court cases which he had privy to, that Sahaidachnyi's wife was a rash, quarrelsome, and impetuous woman who often sued her neighbors, and even organized raids on the neighboring estates, for which she was tried in courts.

Hrinchenko tried to defend her, and said that in the panegyric written on Sahaidachnyi's death, it tells how his wife cried and fainted. Kamanin responded, stating that she did not cry and faint for long, because within a year she had married another nobleman. From these few facts, we can surmise that Sahaidachnyi's married life was not harmonious. The words of the song jovially and lightheartedly hint at the state of events between Sahaidachnyi and his wife.

The next time you sing this aforementioned song, think of the fascinating history behind it! ❖



Woodcut, XVII c.

Landscape Painting

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator

Landscape painting is unquestionably one of the most popular genres among Ukrainian artists. In the range of possibilities of emotional expression this genre has no equals, and Ukrainian nature dazzles with its diversity and inspires with its beauty. The picturesque hillsides of the Carpathians, boundless steppe expanses, quiet grandeur of the rivers, picturesque coziness of the villages, admirable elegance of the city – all of this amazes and inspires to creativity. No wonder then, that Ukraine in the 19th century was called The New Italy, and artists traveled to Ukraine in search of romantic landscapes and inspiration.

The Ukrainian National Landscape Painting School was founded in the mid-19th century and by the early 20th century it could proudly boast of a brilliant group of landscape painters, namely Volodymyr Orlovsky, Serhii Vasylykivsky, Kyriak

Kostandi, Ivan Trush, Serhii Svitoslavsky, Petro Levchenko, and others. In the continuous development of Ukrainian landscape painting, we can find examples of the newest European trends of styles and modes, and the daring explorations and innovations of artistic expressions.

For Ukrainian artists, landscape painting became especially very meaningful! During the last two hundred years, this genre was used for expressing love for one's country, admiration for the beauty of its nature, and the possibility of transmitting the lyrical essence of the Ukrainian soul. Moreover, during the Soviet era, when freedom of artistic expression was not only frowned upon but even penalized, Ukrainian artists turned to painting landscapes to hide in this neutral genre from the grim and severe demands of socialist realism.

This exhibit presents works

of 20th century Ukrainian artists from the fine arts collection of the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford. Among the presented are unsurpassed landscape artists: Ivan Trush, Oleksa Novakivsky, Alexis Gritchenko, Mykhailo Moroz, Lev Gets, Ivan Marchuk, and many others, even though diverse in their artistic style, esthetic outlook, manner of work, and geographic residence. A whole epoch, a wide range of artistic explorations and images will be discovered by the visitor at this gallery exhibition.

Pictorial and graphic landscapes stimulate us to ponder, to observe, to think, to take notice of the surrounding beauty of the world. In the age of powerful technological development and unrestrained flow of information, landscape art acquires a new merit and significance, reminding man about his ancient desire to live in harmony with nature. ❖

