

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Fulfilling a Testament

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Taras Shevchenko by Oleksander Arkhynpenko, sculpture. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

Every enlightened nation makes a special effort to majestically and with dignity honor the memory of the prominent sons and daughters of its nation, identifying significant historical events of the past, confirming their authenticity, underscoring their importance and essence. For Ukrainians, denoting the birth or death of Taras Shevchenko always had a profound significance in the cultural and political life both in Ukraine, as well as in the Ukrainian diaspora. Ukrainians, no matter where they were and in what dire situation they found themselves, they never neglected to pay homage to their prophet and poet, artist, teacher. There were situations in which such commemorations were forbidden by the enemy powers and had to be performed clandestinely, risking brutal punishments if discovered. Only Ukrainian Diaspora in the free world was able to faithfully and

openly preserve and commemorate the memory of her prophet and always did it in an imposing and dignified manner. Testimonies to this are the numerous archival documents which are preserved in our museum and library. The Diaspora published informative materials in English about Shevchenko, erected monuments in major capital cities of the world where they resided, spread his word of truth and knowledge among the people of the world and among her own enslaved nation. Throughout the years, Ukrainian diaspora was always mindful of their brethren in Ukraine, their needs in tragic moments and have always been ready to lend a helping hand.

The life and work of Taras Shevchenko have always served and still serve as a guiding light in all aspects of Ukrainian national rebirth. The preservation of our national identity, in

its struggle for independence Shevchenko was the inspiration of and unceasing reminder to fulfill his testament. Throughout the centuries Ukraine fought repeatedly for its independence and sadly these efforts were not successful. We were an unknown entity then, and as a nation not politically united in order to succeed. But, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as one of the former soviet republics, without a single battle, without the shedding of blood, Ukraine declared its independence. Last year, in August, Ukraine joyfully and magnificently celebrated its 30 years of independence. But, our neighbor from the north, our perpetual enemy, did not like the successful, thriving, democratic development of Ukraine. Putin – the president of Russia has fabricated groundless accusations against Ukraine and then militarily attacked Ukraine. Right now the Russian army is mercilessly murdering the population, destroying the country's infrastructure, ruining historical monuments and cultural treasures, trying to erase Ukrainian historical memory.

This year we are commemorating the 161st year of of Taras Shevchenko's death. It is truly an exceptional moment because it is the year when Ukrainians are fighting, once again, for their independence, trying to fulfill Shevchenko's Testament. And for the first time in our history, in this war, the Ukrainian nation is united into one whole and powerful family. It follows one guiding light – we will not let the enemy take our land. Steadfastness, resoluteness, devotion, bravery of the Ukrainian soldiers and the populace is astonishing. Finally, the whole world has been made aware as to who we are, and by our actions has witnessed in truthful and unadulterated light the true character of the Ukrainian nation. The Ukrainian diaspora, as in the past, has immediately responded to the needs of the people in war torn Ukraine.

We have a fascinating document in our archives, a leaflet

announcing a concert commemorating Taras Shevchenko which took place in Pittsburg in 1915. This concert was organized one year after the beginning of World War I in 1914 when Russian tsarist soldiers attacked Western Ukraine and brought horrific devastation to the land and death to the people, not unlike the present war. On this program, a note was added which said "all proceeds from the concert will go to the widows and orphans of our fallen heroes". History repeats itself.

Our Museum and Library preserves many valuable documents, rare publications and art works dealing with Shevchenko subjects. Among them we have a

sculpture of Taras Shevchenko by the world's most famous sculptor – Oleksander Arkhynpenko. In this sculpture Arkhynpenko wanted to portray from Shevchenko's poem "My thoughts..." the words "go to Ukraine, my children, to our Ukraine..." These are powerful words in our troubling time. And we are going to Ukraine, if not physically then spiritually, by giving a helping hand, by preserving all that the Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian diaspora created, developed and safeguarded for decades for new generations to come, so that Ukrainian cultural heritage and Ukrainian historical memory will never be destroyed. ❖



A leaflet announcing a concert commemorating Taras Shevchenko in Pittsburg in 1915. Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

For more information about The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford, please, visit www.ukrainianmuseumlibrary.org, call 203-324-0499 or 203-323-8866. The Museum is open Wednesday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., or by appointment, and is located at: 161 Glenbrook Road, Stamford, CT 06902.



Fr. Andriy Krip and parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul, Ludlow, MA, standing in front of a fully loaded van of supplies heading to Ukraine. Thank you to all who participated! Support and pray for Ukraine!



March 2, 2022 - Governor Kathy Hochul joined the congregation of St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in #PrayersForUkraine and to show her support of Ukraine. (Facebook/Irene Rejent Saviano)