
GIFT TO AMERICA

"THESE MURALS ARE MY GIFT TO AMERICA.

MAY THIS ST. NICHOLAS CROATIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
KEEP ALIVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS THE MEMORY OF THEIR
IMMIGRANT ANCESTORS, THEIR FAITH AND THEIR COURAGE."

*Wednesday, May 4 –
Saturday, May 7, 2011*

*St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church
Millvale, Pennsylvania*

Gift to America was first performed in 1981. The play was written by Dr. David Demarest. During his time at CMU, David would lead students on long hikes through the industrial landscape of the region and often ended their journey at St. Nicholas. Over time, Demarest gathered oral histories and stories from the congregation and pastor, Fr. Romildo Hrboka, that formed the foundation of the play. He met with Vanka's widow, Margaret, and his daughter, Peggy. A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts through the PA Humanities Council allowed the story of the murals to be rediscovered with the premiere of **Gift to America**. The play came back to St. Nicholas in 2008 where it and the murals were introduced to sold-out audiences. Today, 30 years since its premiere, **Gift to America** is playing another role in the life and future of the murals. Excerpts of dialogue—a product of Demarest's thorough research—have provided interesting clues for the conservators about Vanka's materials and techniques.

Geoffrey Hitch, Director

An active freelance director in the Stage Directors & Choreographers Society since 1984, Geoffrey has directed over 160 productions in London, New York & all over the eastern United States in Off-Broadway & regional Equity theatres, professional training programs, national tours & international festivals. Geoffrey is on the faculty of The Tepper School of Business & the Center for Executive Education, & teaches annually for Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.

ACTORS

Mike Sambol, Father Zagar

Michael resides in Pittsburgh, Pa. He is an active member of St. Nicholas Catholic Croatian Church and volunteers as a cantor. Mr. Sambol's musical talent and propensity for languages led him to study Opera Performance privately, under the world renowned Soprano, Katerina Musetti, from 2000 to 2007. Michael is a classically trained Tenor, a member of the Pittsburgh Opera Chorus since 2007, and has performed in several operas under Conductor Antony Walker.

Dixie Tymitz, Female Voice #1

Dixie has worked in theatres in Indiana, West Virginia, Oklahoma, California, Florida and Pennsylvania and on three ships. In addition to plays and musicals, she also is a storyteller who has specialized in Raven Stories of the Pacific Northwest and Caribbean folktales. She has also written and performed *You're Never Too Old To Raise A Little Hell*, the story of Granny D/Doris Had-dock walking across America in her 90th Year. Her last cabaret/story event was *Dead People: The Musical*.

David Crawford, Maxo Vanka

David Crawford has worked with Geoffrey, Dixie and Catherine in about a dozen other shows in regional theater and on the high seas. Lately he's been touring the horror conventions as Dr. James Foster from George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, performing his one-man Edgar Allan Poe show. In August he'll appear as Canon Chasuble in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Pitts-burgh Irish and Classical Theater.

Katherine Carlson, Female Voice #2

Katherine has acted for theatres including Indiana Repertory Theatre, New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, Long Island Stage, South Jersey Regional Theatre, Circle Repertory, The Barter Theatre of Virginia, Acadia Repertory Theatre, Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts and many others. She has also worked in NYC daytime dramas and motion pictures in New York and locally. Recently, for West Virginia Public Theatre, she has played Eunice Hubbel in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Mrs. Higgins in *My Fair Lady*.

- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices.
- No photography is permitted during the production; but afterward the murals will be lit, and photography will be permitted at that time.
- There is no intermission.

David Demarest

Dave Demarest will be long remembered in Pittsburgh and beyond for his seminal role in nurturing an appreciation for the magnificent murals of Maxo Vanka at St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale. He loved Vanka's murals because they took the underlying themes of Christian belief in crucifixion and resurrection and embodied them in the Croatian community's concrete experience of war, oppression and class struggle. The murals depict suffering and sorrow, but they also raise the community up toward transcendence and hope.

He's also known for rediscovering and championing Thomas Bell's *Out of This Furnace*; for assisting the heroic efforts of the people of Braddock to preserve their Carnegie library and their historical memory in the pages of the Braddock Fields Historical Society newsletter that he edited for decades; for editing important anthologies of Western Pennsylvania literature (*From These Hills, From These Valleys*) and contemporary accounts of the famous Homestead steel strike of 1892 (*The River Ran Red*).

Dave arrived in Pittsburgh in 1964 to teach at Carnegie Mellon University. He did his master's at the University of Connecticut and his doctorate on 18th Century English literature at the University of Wisconsin. At Wisconsin he met Marlene. They had three children with regal names: Victoria, James and Elizabeth, known at home as Vicky, Jamey and Liz.

His passion was social geography. He and his great friend, CMU historian Gene Levy, would take the 61C bus to McKeesport and set off on long multi-day hikes through the coke country, examining beehives and batteries, staying at hardscrabble workers' hotels. Gene took photographs

and Dave wrote the articles that chronicled these jaunts in the pages of the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. They loved the textures of the industrial ruins, the slag piles and ore pits that imposed upon the ancient topography of the hills and valleys, the coal patch company towns, and the tough resilient people who lived there. He taught courses like "Reading the Built Landscape" and led CMU students on walking tours of Braddock, Homestead, Millvale, McKees Rocks.

Dave's enduring contribution has been to help us understand the common humanity that underlies and challenges divisions of class, race and ethnicity. In one of Dave's favorite passages from *Out of This Furnace*, the third generation Slovak, mill hunky, union organizer reflects: "It wasn't where you were born or how you spelled your name or where your father had come from. It was the way you thought and felt about certain things. About the freedom of speech and the equality of men and the importance of having one law—the same law—for rich and poor, for the people you liked and the people you didn't like."

Dave wrote something about Pennsylvania literature that applies to the murals. "Novels and stories about Pennsylvania bristle with insistence that readers step across borders and experience places they would never in real life enter, be invited to—or perhaps dare to go." Dave Demarest dared to cross borders. He beckons us to follow.

Dr. Charles McColleston is a retired professor of industrial and labor relations at IUP. He is author of The Point of Pittsburgh: Production and Struggle at the Forks of the Ohio and president of the Battle of Homestead Foundation.

THE VANKA FAMILY

May 4, 2011

It has been 70 years since Maxo Vanka, our father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather, completed his Gift to America on the walls of St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church in Millvale, PA. Seven decades since he made his last trek across Pennsylvania to spend time at the church with his friend, Father Albert Zagar. The product of a true meeting of the minds between these two extraordinary men, the murals represent a shared vision and view of the world. It was a collaboration that had a deep impact on our family and for which we remain extremely grateful.

Although we cannot be with you to mark the 30th Anniversary of the production, Gift to America, we are with you in spirit. We wish to thank the congregation of St. Nicholas and the dedicated volunteers of the Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka for their constant care of the murals all these years. We are also so appreciative for the renewed interest and support for their preservation demonstrated by the Pittsburgh community and beyond.

Maxo's intent was a tribute that would be present in Pittsburgh for generations. As a family, we are committed to honoring his vision for the murals. It is a pleasure to share this goal with you and we look forward to our next visit to view the progress of the restoration.

Thank you for your interest and investment in the Campaign to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka. It is our great privilege to represent Maxo in this ongoing effort to preserve and celebrate his Gift to America.

Sincerely,

*A. William Brasko
Son-in-Law of Maxo Vanka*

*Marya Brasko Halderman
Granddaughter of Maxo Vanka*

**THE SOCIETY TO PRESERVE THE MILLVALE MURALS
OF MAXO VANKA THANKS THE FOLLOWING
INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT
OF THE BENEFIT PERFORMANCE ON MAY 5, 2011:**

- Gerald Bartolomucci
- Ronald A. Berlin
- Joy Borelli-Edwards
- Russell and Mary Brignano
- Lila Hirsch Brody and Victor Brody
- Julia Bubanovich
- Becky Burdick
- Mayor Vincent Cinski
- Alan and Debbie Cuteri
- Claudia Davidson
- Rich Dieter and Kira Lathrop
- Anna L. Doering
- Dan and Nancey Fales
- Stephanie Flom and Peter Oresick
- Laurie Graham
- Phil Hallen and Katheryn Lindutt
- Carol Hochman and Bill Lafe
- James Hohman
- Laura and Kevin Horner
- Joseph J. Juretic
- Norm Koehler and
Patricia Carlson Koehler
- James and Patty Kopriva
- Dr. Elliott J. Kramer
- Bill and Elaine Linkenheimer
- William and Carol Markus
- John Martine AIA
- Barbara McCloskey and Fred Evans
- Fr. Donald McIlvane
- Ernie and Janice Meade
- Pamela Meadowcroft and
Jim Holland
- Mary Miller
- Daniel and Mary Muchnok
- Susan L. and Richard Nernberg
- Diane Novosel
- Dolores and Terry Nypaver
- Fritz Okie
- Mary T. Petrich
- Robert Qualters
- Michale Robertson
- Alice and Geraldine Sambol
- Sapp Roofing Company
- Gregory Saxon
- Marcia R. Turbiner and
Ray McGogney
- Pam Plesh Weigand
- Lynn Zelevansky
- Stephen J. Zivic, Esq.

List complete as of April 25, 2011

**THANKS TO
THE FOLLOWING
INDIVIDUALS FOR
THEIR VOLUNTEER AND
IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS
TO GIFT TO AMERICA:**

- Congregation of St. Nicholas for
their dedication and support
- Carol Cubelic
- Anna Doering
- Bill Lafe
- Charlie McCollester
- Mike Murray
- SPMMMV Board of Directors
- SPMMMV Docents
- Steel Valley Printers
- Fr. Dan Whalen

BEST WISHES
on the
30th Anniversary Year
of
“Gift to America”
A Celebration of the
Murals of Maxo Vanka



BERNARD M. LUKETICH
National President

JOSEPH M. BRIGICH
Vice-President/Member Services

EDWARD W. PAZO
National Secretary/Treasurer

THE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE THE MILLVALE MURALS OF MAXO VANKA

The fundraising effort, led by the Society to Preserve the Murals of Maxo Vanka, to clean and repair the Vanka murals and the re-lighting of the interior of St Nicholas Church, which began in 2009, has raised more than \$280,000 to date. Contributors include six foundations and nearly 1,000 individuals, including members of the Vanka family.

These donations are funding Phase I of the project: the restoration of seven of the most prominent murals and the installation of lighting in key places throughout the church. The restoration of the murals is essential to their long-term preservation. Without professional cleaning and restoration, the paint will deteriorate and, over time, disintegrate into flakes leaving bare spots on the walls and critical losses to these treasures.

Implementation of Phase II, which will begin when funding is secured, will involve the remaining fifteen murals and lighting for the ceiling and high side walls. Phase II is more technically complex and more time-consuming and estimated at \$400,000.



SPMMMMV is pleased to introduce and acknowledge the following individuals as **Friends of the Vanka Mural Project**. We are grateful for their support and endorsement of the Society's mission and the goals of the Campaign.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Deborah Acklin | ■ Marya Halderman* | ■ Dr. Sylvia Rhor |
| ■ Drew Armstrong | ■ Phil Hallen | ■ Dr. Hilary Robinson |
| ■ David Aschkenas | ■ Laura Horner | ■ Jen Saffron |
| ■ Sam Berkovitz | ■ Charlie Humphrey | ■ Diane Samuels |
| ■ Bill Bodine | ■ Barbara Luderowski | ■ Eric Shiner |
| ■ A. William Brasko* | ■ Janet McCall | ■ Alice Snyder |
| ■ Charlee Brodsky | ■ Dr. Barbara McCloskey | ■ Katherine Talcott |
| ■ Dan Byers | ■ Dr. Charles McCollester | ■ Lynn Zelevansky |
| ■ Laura Domencic | ■ Michael Olijnyk | ■ Arthur Ziegler |
| ■ Ellen Fleurov | ■ Judy O'Toole | ■ Kathleen Zimbicki |
| ■ John Halderman* | ■ Bob Qualters | |

**Vanka Family Member*

List complete as of 3/1/2011



For more information about the Campaign including sponsorship opportunities, please visit: www.vankamurals.org or contact Bill Lafe at 412-871-0399 or by email: williamlafe@gmail.com.

RESTORATION UPDATE

The conservation treatment addresses measures of surface cleaning and stabilization of efflorescing salts. Conservators working on the project are formally trained in the conservation of works of art and have earned degrees in graduate and international programs. For the long-term preservation of Maxo Vanka's murals, the conservators have been working with national and international colleagues to bring innovations in mural conservation tailored to this unique Pittsburgh treasure.

Although the artist studied in Europe and worked in traditional materials, these murals are not traditional in the technical sense. Many wall paintings in Europe are carried out in fresco method, whereby pigment is bound to the wall in the plaster itself. In this case Vanka painted in a medium on top of an existing the wall surface. Decades of notorious Pittsburgh soot are present on the mural surfaces. In addition to darkening the bright original palette of the artist, this soot is abrasive, acidic, and hygroscopic (absorbs moisture from the air and keeps it on the painted surface). Removing the dirt is an essential measure in treatment of these murals. The conservators are using emulsions to lift water-soluble dirt from the delicate surfaces.

Remnants of Hurricane Ivan from 2004 caused structural damage in the bell towers of the church. Water, entering through cracks in a building structure, dissolves building materials as it is transported through the walls. This results in the formation of unstable salts and poorly adhered paint. The conservators are using a combination of traditional European techniques and new "nanotechnology" to stabilize salts and preserve the original surface of the works of art. Losses, seen as white areas, will be retouched in conservation-quality materials.

Patricia Buss

After nearly 20 years as a studio artist in Los Angeles and Amsterdam, Patricia moved to Italy and completed a Post Baccalaureate in Art Conservation from Studio Art Centers International in Florence in 2003. She remained in Italy to apprentice at private conservation studios and institutions to gain a variety of hands-on training in the treatment of canvas and panel paintings, fine art on paper, books, and archaeological objects. Patricia returned to the area in 2006 working as an art conservator and consultant for individuals and collectors.

Cynthia Fiorini

Cynthia received a Formation Professionnelle from Paris, France in 2006. She completed the 3-year program recognized by the Ministère du Travail of France from L'Atelier Du Temps Passe founded by Annette Douay and Alix Dumielle. Her previous degree is a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Kent State University in 1986 with a concentration in Ceramics.

Rikke Foulke

Rikke earned a Master of Arts and Certificate in the Conservation of Works of Art from the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. She was the Culpeper Fellow in Paintings Conservation at the National Gallery of Art in Washington; a NEA Fellow in Paintings Conservation at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh; and the Samuel H. Kress Fellow in Paintings Conservation at the North Carolina Museum of Art from 2003 to 2005.

Rhonda Wozniak

Rhonda is a professional private conservator based in Pittsburgh. She has more than 20 years of conservation experience and is a Professional Associate of the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. Her Master of Arts and Certificate of Advanced Studies in Conservation are from the State University of New York, College at Buffalo.

To read more about the conservators and to view their full resumes, visit the restoration section of the website: www.vankamurals.org.

THE SOCIETY TO PRESERVE THE MILLVALE MURALS OF MAXO VANKA

Founded in 1991, the Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka, a volunteer-led organization, exists to ensure that the murals of St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church painted by the Croatian artist Maximilian Vanka remain a lasting tribute to the man who painted them and to the story of the people who inspired them.

BOARD

- Diane Novosel, Chair
- Page Thomas, Secretary
- Claudia Davidson
- Stephanie Flom
- Janet Kopec
- Dolores Nypaver
- Audrey Zerkovic
- Robert Neu, Treasurer
- Robert Ehrman
- Sam Iusi
- John Martine
- Mary Petrich

EMERITUS

- David Demarest, Ph.D.

BOARD ADVISOR

- Fr. Daniel W. Whalen

The Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka
151 Stone Gate Drive, Leechburg, PA 15656

PHONE 724-845-2907 • FAX 724-845-1433

www.vankamurals.org • vankamurals@aol.com

Find us on Facebook.

A copy of the official registration and financial information for Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.