

Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees in AY 2011-12



The Fulbright Commission expresses its gratitude to the U.S. Embassy in Sofia, the U.S. Fulbrighters in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian Fulbright alumni for their participation, comments and practical advice.

We wish all grantees a very successful and rewarding experience in the U.S.!

Senior Scholars

Dr. Plamen Makariev

Field of specialization: Philosophy

Host institution in the U.S.: The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Duration of grant: 4 months, starting March 2012

Dr. Stoycho Metodiev

Field of specialization: Animal Breeding

Host institution in the U.S.: Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, IA

Duration of grant: 5 months, starting September 2011

Dr. Violina Rizova

Field of specialization: Biochemistry

Host institution in the U.S.: University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Duration of grant: 5 months, starting October 2011

Dr. Tsanka Dikova

Field of specialization: Materials Science

Host institution in the U.S.: Rice University, Houston Texas

Duration of grant: 5 months, starting October 2011

Dr. Dimitar Antonov

Field of specialization: Environmental Science

Host institution in the U.S.: University of California, Riverside, CA

Duration of grant: 5 months, starting October 2011

Hubert Humphrey Fellow

Irina Nedeva

Field of specialization: Journalism

Host institution in the U.S.: University of Maryland, College Park, MD

Duration of grant: 10 months, starting August 2011

On June 24, 2011 the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission held a one-day pre-departure orientation for the Bulgarian Fulbright grantees that will be studying and teaching in the U.S. during AY 2011-12.

Recipients of grants for AY 2011-12 are 5 senior scholars, 7 graduate students, one non-degree doctoral student, and one Hubert Humphrey fellow. The Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society was awarded to two researchers in the field of journalism.

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Graduate Students

Mariya Miteva

Field of study: Electronic Commerce

Degree: MA

Host institution in the U.S.: New York University-Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York, NY

Marina Petrova

Field of study: Graphic Design

Degree: MFA

Host institution in the U.S.: Savannah College of Art & Design-Graduate School, Savannah, GA

Lyubomir Minkov

Field of study: Business Administration

Degree: MBA

Host institution in the U.S.: Emory University-Goizueta Business School, Atlanta, GA

Galina Petkova

Field of study: Law

Degree: LLM

Host institution in the U.S.: Boston University-School of Law, Boston, MA

Irina Simova

Field of study: Comparative Literature

Degree: MA

Host institution in the U.S.: University of Texas at Austin-Graduate School, Austin, TX

Fulbright – University of Oklahoma MBA Grant

Edouard Shahpazyan

Field of study: Business Administration

Degree: MBA

Host institution in the U.S.: University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

Non-degree Research Grants for Doctoral Students

Marina Semerdjieva

Field of study: Economics

Host institution in the U.S.: University of Rochester - Simon Graduate School of Business, Rochester, NY

Duration of grant: 6 months, starting September 2011

Research Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society

Ivo Danchev

Field of study: Photography/Journalism

Host institution in the U.S.: Crow Tribe Executive Branch, Crow Agency (Baaxuwaaashe), MT

Duration of grant: 3 months, starting July 2011

Danail Danov

Field of study: Media Studies

Host institution in the U.S.: Center for International Media Assistance - National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, D.C.

Duration of grant: 3 months, starting October 2011



БЪЛГАРО-АМЕРИКАНСКА КОМИСИЯ ЗА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЕН ОБМЕН "ФУЛБРАЙТ"

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Fulbright Office News

Final Nominations for Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees in AY 2012-2013

Fulbright Interview for Bulgarian Fulbright grantees in AY 2012-2013, June, 2011
 Members of the nomination committee (from left to right): Sherry Keneson-Hall, CAO, U.S. Embassy; Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, and Iona Sarieva, Fulbright alumna



Cultural Enrichment Seminar “Social and Cultural Integration in 21st Century Europe” for US Fulbright Graduate Students April 7-9, 2011, Sofia



Professor Ivan Ilchev, Rector of Sofia University, delivering a lecture on the history of the Balkan nations



A panel session



Dr. Iovine Micaela, Senior Program Officer, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State, Washington DC (first from right to left) and participants



Trip to Plovdiv

Fulbright Office News

Wrap-up Seminar for Fulbright English Teaching Assistants, AY 2010-11 April 28-29, 2011, Sofia

(RIGHT) **Official Opening:** From left to right, Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, and Ivanka Tzankova, Director, Programs for Education and Libraries, America for Bulgaria Foundation



Participants



Teachers from the Foreign Language School in Lovech presenting on the ETA program

Cultural Enrichment Activities for U.S. Fulbright Grantees



One-day trip to Melnik and Rozhen Monastery

2011 EducationUSA Scholarship to Westminster College, Utah



Eduard Pishiyski, a Bulgarian student, nominated by educational adviser Snezhana Teneva, has won a full scholarship from Westminster College

Fulbright Office News

Fulbright Accomplishments

Serigraphy Prints and Works on Paper



Exhibition of Prof. Janet Gilmore-Bryan at the National Academy of Fine Art in Sofia

Much Ado about Nothing



Students from the Foreign Language School in Stara Zagora performing *Much Ado about Nothing* under the direction of Fulbright ETA Laura Mohs

Laura Mohs, teaching assistant at *Romain Rolland* Foreign Language School in Stara Zagora, directed and produced a performance of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. The production included students from ninth to twelfth grade, specializing in English, French and German. After several months of rehearsals, the cast opened the show at the theater in Stara Zagora to the enthusiastic response of the local community and the students. This performance marks the first English language production at *Romain Rolland* in over ten years. All proceeds from the show went to a fund that would help in establishing a continued English theater program at the school.

Balanchine & Farrell Ballet



American Ballet for Bulgaria
Choreographers:
Kathryn Olive Posin and
Momchil Mladenov

10th Anniversary FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE August 8-20, 2011, Bansko, Bulgaria

The Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI) is an academic and cultural program created by the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission in 2002. FISI offers one- or two-week intensive courses in a wide variety of subject areas. All courses are taught in English by distinguished professors from the U.S., Europe and Bulgaria, and are addressed to undergraduate and graduate students, university faculty and professionals. This year FISI is scheduled to take place from August 8 to August 20 in Bansko. Prospective participants have the unique opportunity to make their own selection of courses. A tentative program with brief course descriptions and biographical notes for the lecturers is posted on FISI website (www.fisi-bg.info). Applicants can choose between the following courses:

Business, Finance and Management

Course 1: Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Lecturer: Prof. George Siedel, University of Michigan, Ross School of Business, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Course 2: Internet for Financial and Investing Decisions

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Chenchu Bathala, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH, USA

Course 3: Global Financial Strategy

Lecturer: Dr. Emmanuel N. Roussakis, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA

Course 4: Entrepreneurship: Strategies and Skills for Starting One's Own Business

Lecturer: Prof. Alyssa Martina, Walsh College of Business, Troy, MI, USA

Course 5: Strategic Foresight: Key Concepts, Methods, Tools – and what's next?

Lecturer: Roumiana Gotseva, Foresight Alliance, Washington, DC, USA

Course 6: Company Valuation and Value Creation

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Miroslav Mateev, American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Course 7: Creative Leadership

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Frank Prochaska, Colorado Technical University, Colorado Springs, CO, USA

Course 8: International Career Planning in a Recessional Globalized Economy

Lecturer: Dr. Gary L. Schnellert, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, USA

Course 9: Projects Writing and Projects Management

Lecturer: Danail Danov, Communications and Human Resources Development Center, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 10: International Management Systems: Building the Foundation for Global Sustainability

Lecturer: Dr. Phillip Barnes, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

Political Science and Law

Course 11: American Foreign Policy and the International System in the Era of Globalization

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Mark Kramer, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

Course 12: Peace and Conflict Resolution in the 21st Century

Lecturer: Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan

Course 13: International Development Assistance

Lecturer: Boyko Todorov, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 14: Urban Politics in the Age of Globalization

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sudha Mohan, University of Mumbai, India

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Course 15: EU Citizenship: Migration and Residence Rights in an Enlarged EU

Lecturers: Prof. Dr. Jo Carby-Hall, University of Hull, and Diane Ryland, University of Lincoln, UK

Course 16: D.A.R.E. --- Debate. Argue. Reason. Examine.

Lecturer: David M. Korn, Phelps Dunbar LLP, New Orleans, LA, USA

Course 17: International Investment Law

Lecturer: Prof. Jose Gustavo Prieto Muñoz, Universidad del Pacifico, Quito, Ecuador

Course 18: Protection of Human Rights in the Council of Europe

Lecturer: Dr. Maria Zhurnalova-Juppunov, American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Social Studies, Communication and Media

Course 19: Human Rights and Contemporary Social Issues

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel, Fordham University, New York, NY, USA

Course 20: Sustainability and Globalization

Lecturer: Dr. Michael McAdams, State University of New York-Fredonia, Fredonia, NY, USA

Course 21: Youth Issues in the Arab Countries

Lecturer: Dr. Eman Nasry Daoud Shenouda, Al-Fayoum University, Egypt

Course 22: Exploring Self Strengths in Different Settings

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Elka Todorova, University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 23: Global Contexts of Well Being: International Community Psychology

Lecturer: Ronald Harvey, DePaul University, Chicago, IL, USA

Course 24: Technology of Imagination

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kristian Bankov, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 25: Public Relations: It Can Make or Break an Organization

Lecturer: Prof. Dan Fellner, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ, USA

Course 26: Effective Communication across Cultures

Lecturer: Dr. Noemi Marin, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL, USA

Course 27: Multimedia Journalism and Public Relations: Changing the World One Story at a Time

Lecturer: Terry Anzur, Terry Anzur Coaching Services, West Covina, CA, USA

Cultural Studies, Humanities and Art

Course 28: Censorship Today: Is it Still about Sex, Religion and Politics?

Lecturer: Dr. Svetlana Mintcheva, National Coalition against Censorship, New York, NY, USA

Course 29: Are Women Leaving Men Behind?

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Timothy Ilg, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH, USA

Course 30: Revolutions Unending: Feminist Theory in a World of Change

Lecturer: Prof. Kathleen Dixon, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, USA

Course 31: Thinking Critically and Learning Together in a Multi-Cultural World

Lecturers: Prof. Dana Goodrich, Northwest Vista College, San Antonio, TX and Shelley Friend, Communication Consultant, Austin, TX, USA

Course 32: Logic in the Continental Tradition

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Gungov, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 33: The Philosophical Issues of the XXI Century

Lecturers: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lidia Denkova and Prof. Dr. Hristo Todorov, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 34: American Pragmatism and Semiotics

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Ivan Mladenov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 35: Immigrant Theatre as Genre and its Uses in Promoting Intercultural Understanding

Lecturer: Prof. Marcy Arlin, City University, New York, NY, USA

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Course 36: Thriving in the Global Economy: Understanding & Using Cultural Symbols & Practices to Improve Communications, Design, Marketing, Sales, & Service

Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Phyllis Miller, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, USA

Course 37: Technology Supporting Cultural Arts and Entrepreneur Trends in the New York City

Lecturer: Prof. Michelle Hill, Parsons the New School for Design, New York, NY, USA

Course 38: Using Photography as a Tool for Research, Exploration and Recording

Lecturer: Dr. Georgia Gene Berryhill, University of Maryland, Adelphi, MD, USA

Course 39: Bulgarian Literature and its Reflections in Film, Visual arts, Theater and Dance

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Kambourov, Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Course 40: Introduction to Bulgarian Language

Lecturers: Team

10th Anniversary FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL SUMMER INSTITUTE

August 8-20, 2011, Bansko, Bulgaria

If you want to participate in this event, please visit www.fisi-bg.info for practical information and application forms.

You can also obtain general information from:

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

17, Alexander Stamboliiski Blvd.; Sofia 1000, Bulgaria, Tel.: +359 2 980 82 12; E-mail: rkaneva@fulbright.bg

Bulgarian Fulbright Alumni Association Membership Form



Full name

Home address

Field, Academic Rank and Degree

Present Place and Address of Employment

Phone, Fax

Type, Year and Duration of Grant

Place and Name of Host Institution

Please complete and return to the Fulbright Commission office address.

To Chicago and Back

Daniela Bojinova

Fulbright scholar, AY 2009-2010

Host institution in the U.S.: Democracy Foundation, Arlington, VA

Research project: Democracy through Initiative and Referendum

“As an active Bulgarian citizen and a civic organization leader I have not been able to influence the political agenda of my country and even city. We are not talking here about voting in elections. The point is doing something in between elections. To be politically active in a meaningful way I have to become a member of a political party. O.K., but I do not want to become a member of a political party. I just want to be a politician, say for a month or twice a year - to express my view, to have a say on a government expense or another issue where I am a stakeholder. In my country there is no way to do this but protest in the street or write petitions to the European institutions (writing petitions to the national institutions has proven useless). I hate to be helpless. I am certain many Bulgarians do, too. So, here I am ready to start researching how the American citizens make direct decisions on issues, how your system of referendum, popular initiative and recall came about and how it has been working”, - this is more or less my reply to my Fulbright host’s first question about what got me interested in direct democracy, as we sit down to dine and talk after a long day of flights, airports, luggage claims and hotel check-in.

I have just completed the journey from the Bulgarian Black Sea coast to the American East Coast. I am in Washington DC to do a research in political science as a Fulbright scholar. It is a special scholarship Fulbright and the Central and Eastern Europe Trust for the Development of Civil Society have opened just one year ago to address the needs of civil society in Bulgaria by providing opportunities for research and study in the US. Great opportunity! I still cannot believe Fulbright is sponsoring me to deal with issues of citizens’ direct decision-making. I have felt so many times the underdog – when my organization prepared and submitted project proposals for the advancement of direct decision-making in Bulgaria and all these proposals got turned down by government-run assistance programs.

The problem is direct decision-making is about empowerment of citizens. And to empower means to re-distribute power. Political elites usually do not like that. Neither in my country, nor in



Daniela Bozhinova and Senator Mike Gravel at an anti-war rally, Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C.

the US or anywhere else. People in the US, however, have managed to assert their democratic right to have a say on issues long ago. Popular initiative, referendum and recall have been introduced into many states’ constitutions since the Progressive Era (turn of the 20 c.) and have become over time the fourth tenet of American democracy. Citizens in the US have the ability to make, amend and adopt laws. This is commonly referred to as the initiative process. Citizens have also the ability to reject laws or amendments proposed by the state legislature. This process is commonly referred to as the referendum process. In addition, the so called recall initiative provides a mechanism for replacement of elected representatives if voters are not satisfied with their performance. Popular initiative, referendum and recall present the major mechanisms of what is called direct democracy. They enable citizens for checks and balances on state and local government, as well as empower them for policy-making.

“Yes, voting in elections is not the key to democracy. The central power of government is lawmaking. Those who make the

laws determine how, when, and if citizens can vote..."; my host comments. He is Mike Gravel, former senator (D) of Alaska (1969-1981) and life-time proponent of direct democracy. Senator Gravel has established the Democracy Foundation and developed the National Initiative for Democracy – a conception of taking up direct decision-making from state to the federal level. The USA have never had a national referendum, neither have they relevant provisions in their national constitution, regardless of the fact that all the states (except for Delaware) have some direct democracy provisions and 24 states (mainly in the West) have fully fledged Initiative-and-Referendum system. My host is a remarkable person. To promote direct democracy at the national level he ran for president in 2008. While serving in the Senate (along with Senator Fulbright), Mike Gravel opposed the war in Vietnam, advocated diplomatic relations with China, was instrumental in authorizing environmentally-sound construction and operation of the Trans-Alaskan Oil Pipeline (TAP provides for 20% of the US oil supply and has got a state-of-the-art environmentally-friendly design). Senator Gravel is most prominently known for his release of the Pentagon Papers revealing political manipulations with regard to the Vietnam war. The release of the Pentagon Papers and the ensuing lawsuits precipitated the end of the US involvement in the war.

Senator Gravel and I are going to review the provisions of the Bulgarian legislation and outline amendments to provide for voter-friendly system of direct decision-making.

Most of the research work I will be doing in the Library of Congress and also by meeting practitioners involved in the real process of citizen policy-making.

Getting access to the Library of Congress is not a problem and any researcher can tap into its resources - millions of books and manuscripts in 460 languages, maps, recordings etc. It is the largest library in the world and the oldest federal cultural institution in the USA. Perhaps the most beautiful, too. I start reading books in the Main Reading Room of the Jefferson Building. Reading in this round-shaped huge lovely hall, surrounded by giant marble columns and shelved alcoves under the magnificent soaring dome feels like performing some religious rite in a sanctuary - the sanctuary of knowledge.

My area of interest – direct democracy is understudied in Bulgaria and the former socialist block countries at large. It used to be understudied also by the mainstream political science in America until the 80-ies when the citizen tax revolt started with a popular initiative in California and spread to many other American states. Since then Initiative-and-Referendum literature has developed impressively so that today we can even speak of clusters of thinkers and researchers – a cluster of direct democracy enthusiasts, a cluster of skeptics and may be a cluster of realists, too. I am interested in all points of view and will read as much as I can. Studying

the history of initiative, referendum and recall in the US I find out interesting parallels between political life in America back in the Progressive era, when direct democracy came about and the current situation in Bulgaria. The main similarity between the two is political corruption. Political corruption has been plaguing my country for the last decade. As a new democracy Bulgaria is lacking efficient means for checks and balances on government and public resources. Political corruption, bossism, political machines, "robber barons" and big business privileges have been the major concern of the common Americans about the turn of the 20-th century. The atmosphere of hostility to legislative assemblies and charges of corruption gave rise to a direct democracy movement which ignited a fundamental discussion about the very nature of the American self-government and the Constitution and ended with a introduction of direct decision-making devices in 24 state constitutions. Initiative and referendum were political innovations modeled after the Swiss legislative design while recall was a totally new device invented on American soil. It is curious that a book has played a crucial role in this - the book "Direct Legislation by the Citizenship Through the Initiative and Referendum", written by James W. Sullivan in 1892 on his return to the US from Switzerland. Ordering and opening Sullivan's book which has proved so influential in his time is an exciting and inspiring experience in itself.

Books written a hundred years after Sullivan highlight the achievements of citizens law-making in America throughout a century of practice and these achievements include women suffrage in some states, direct primaries, the secret vote, direct election of US senators, tax and government spending cuts, nuclear freeze, term limits etc.

It is especially engrossing to read the stories of specific people, behind ballot measures who have acted as "social entrepreneurs" and made a change in society and public life. In 1971 a Richard Chambers, a mountain climber and concerned citizen initiated the Bottle Bill in Oregon which became the first ever container deposit legislation passed in the US. The law introduced by the citizens of Oregon at the initiative of Chambers is credited with reducing the roadside litter with 40% as well as increasing recycling. Another complete neophyte in politics - Helen Hill, a housewife and farmer stood up for the civil rights of adoptees. She initiated a piece of legislation which after a successful popular vote in 1998 granted all adoptees of age in Oregon with the right to receive their original birth certificate and find out who their real parents were. In 1978 Howard Jarvis – a pensioner and outraged taxpayer turned into a civic icon, started the modern tax reform in the US with his successful ballot initiative (the legendary Proposition #13) cutting exorbitant property taxes in the state of California.

Even more exciting than reading about social entrepreneurs is meeting them in real life.



Daniela Bozhinova among American and Bulgarian friends

One can learn a lot from Paul Jacob, a journalist and president of Citizens in Charge – a national organization committed to protecting and expanding the initiative and referendum rights to more states. In the 90-ies Paul and his group have helped citizens in 23 states place limits on their congressional delegations but were disappointed to see these measures struck down by the Supreme Court of the United States. "It's an amazing situation: our representatives refuse to do what 80 percent of the people want. In essence, they refuse to give back the power we've given to them."- Paul says. Term limits, however, have been successful at the state and local level. Today, 15 state legislatures, 36 governors and thousands of local officials, including those in nine of the country's ten largest cities, are under term limits. According to Jacob this has produced a backlash - legislators have launched an attack on the initiative process for enabling the people to do such a thing as term limits and in return are trying to limit the initiative right. His organization is currently engaged in eight lawsuits to overturn unconstitutional restrictions on citizen petitions.

I am lucky to be able to meet another journalist – Joe Mathews, coming from California – the initiative heavy-user state and also Bruno Kaufman, a leading European authority on direct democracy, chair of the Initiative-and-Referendum Institute - Europe. Currently Joe and Bruno are preparing the up-coming Global Forum on Direct Democracy in San Francisco. I get kindly invited to the forum to speak about my Fulbright project.

A keynote speaker at the event will be Gov.Schwartzenegger and they are scheduled to meet him in a couple of days. Joe has written a book about him - "The People's Machine. Arnold Schwartzenegger and the Rise of Block-Buster Democracy". I have read it before coming to the US and would gladly recommend it to all interested in direct democracy, Californian politics or movie business (regretfully not available in Bulgarian).

By breaking the story of the Austrian body-builder and movie star turned governor as a result of a recall referendum, the book traces the development of direct democracy and movie-making in California. According to Joe Mathews these two are twin arts which have finally merged with the election of Schwartzenegger.

It is also interesting to discuss with Bruno Kaufman (just arrived from Europe) the latest developments of the European Citizens Initiative – the right of 1 million European citizens to call directly on the European Commission to bring forward an initiative. This new civil right in the EU is in need of a few rules to be laid down and, to be able to define them, the European Commission has opened a broad public consultation, currently underway.

In the following weeks I am fortunate to talk to more people involved in ballot measures such as Jay Marx who tells me about a successful anti-nuclear initiative in DC and provides me with copies of a couple of petition pages (I will gladly use them as "visual aid" in Bulgaria) or Randy and his group of dissatisfied citizens who have just registered an initiative to recall Mayor Adrian Fenty of Washington DC. They add up fresh information and personal insights to my research on direct democracy in the US.

I believe books and sources of the Library of Congress, as well as people I meet – petitioners, activists, pundits of direct democracy (proponents or critics) will help me better understand the legislative design and practice of direct decision-making in the US. On my return to Bulgaria I hope to be able to complete my book "The Referendums" which I have started writing some time ago. My goal has been to enlighten Bulgarian citizens about the role and potential of popular initiative, referendum and recall and dispel myths circulated by ruling political elites such as: citizens are incompetent of making direct decisions, initiative and referendum are expensive and therefore poor countries like Bulgaria cannot afford them etc. I believe direct decision and law-making can provide a major way of remedying the flaws of Bulgarian representative democracy - reduce corruption, improve accountability of public institutions, improve representation of under-represented groups, raise the quality of political decisions and finally make people happier.

I know reading and writing books is not the end of it. We definitely need to change our voter-unfriendly referendum legislation and do away with plenty of totalitarian reflexes to become a really inclusive and democratic society. I will continue putting my heart and effort in this, hopefully with the help of a bunch of direct democracy champions in my country. Because taking action is what can bring the changes we need. T.H. Huxley, a British biologist has put it best: "The great end of life is not knowledge but action."

Disclaimer: *The text is published in its original and unedited version.*

To Chicago and Back

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia

Irina Galabova and Radomir Todorov

Irina Galabova is a senior legal adviser at the Bulgarian-American Enterprise Fund in Sofia, Bulgaria. As a Fulbright student in AY 2010-2011, she pursued a Master in Law degree (LL.M.) at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Radomir Todorov is a Ph.D. candidate in finance at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. In AY 2010-2011 he was a visiting Fulbright non-degree researcher at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton Business School.

The streets of Philadelphia:

Our story begins in Philadelphia, one of the largest cities in the United States and home to the Ivy League's University of Pennsylvania. In this city, a couple of blocks away from the Delaware River, in the area now called Old City, is the place where in 1776 the Declaration of Independence was signed and, a few years later, in 1787, the U.S. Constitution was drafted. It all started in Independence Hall. Nowadays, symbolically or not, Independence Hall is a starting point for all visitors who come to explore the city, and there is truly a lot to explore here. Historical sites, museums, skyscrapers, parks, nice restaurants and of course the famous Philly Cheesesteak. There is something for everyone.

Philadelphia is a city where buildings built long ago stand along with high-rise glass giants. Here, the past and the future live together in harmony and offer many sightseeing possibilities. One can just walk around and have a cup of coffee at some of the cozy places in Rittenhouse square in the heart of Downtown Philly. But one can also spend for example a very nice afternoon paying a visit to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the first zoo in the U.S.,



the first hospital on this side of the ocean, or one of America's oldest urban parks. You can also see here the oldest continuously operating theatre in the U.S. and the English speaking world! The Zoo is the oldest one in the U.S. and one of the largest. One can see some very rare species such as a black swan. The museum of art in Philadelphia is among the largest in the U.S. and hosts a unique collection of European and American Art. In the large halls of the museum, a visitor can enjoy seeing Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" or a Monet landscape of the city of Etretat, among other notable works by Picasso, Renoir and Salvador Dali. One can see collections of art thousands of miles away from their countries of origin and experience the feeling of walking through a Buddhist temple or a Japanese village which are rebuilt in the museum. The museum is also popular for hosting large collections of the work of Auguste Rodin.

The city is also home to many universities and many young people study, live and enjoy the atmosphere of Philadelphia. There is also a vibrant night life. There are plenty of restaurants, bars, lounges and pubs that offer a great variety of food and entertainment. Like in every big city, there is always a place to go and something to do in Philadelphia. One of the places where many of the young people spend tremendous amounts of time is University City in West Philadelphia—or, West “Philly”—where the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) is located. There, Penn’s beautiful campus, with historical and modern buildings, great classrooms, fabulous libraries and green areas, welcomes students from all around the world. University of Pennsylvania is an impressive educational institution of long-standing traditions and rich history. It is one of the eight schools in the Ivy League. But there is something more. It is the kind of place that inspires you to dive deep into knowledge and challenges you to never stop learning and develop. Its business school, the Wharton Business School, is the first business school founded not only in the U.S. but also the world. Established in 1881, it is today known worldwide for its impact on research in the area of finance and business and is widely considered to be one of the top business schools worldwide. According to an article in Forbes (02.2009), about 90 percent of billionaires in the U.S. who have an MBA got it from Harvard, Columbia or Wharton. In the area of finance, it is notable that the American Finance Association (AFA) was founded here in December, 1939. Wharton provides unique opportunities for conducting research. On one hand, the business school has a unique collection of data resources. On the other hand, the school hosts some of the most prominent scholars in the area of finance and other business disciplines.

The first law lectures at UPenn began in 1790, the Law department was established in 1850 and since then Penn Law has been one of the most prominent law schools in the United States. If the experience as a student at Penn Law could be described in just one sentence, one would say that it is a place where the law professors are outstanding scholars, students are bright and very friendly and one can feel at home away from home. A couple of weeks are enough for everyone to realize that at the end of the program—along with the legal knowledge that will be gained—you will find friends from all around the world and learn a lot about so many different cultures and even about yourself. The LL.M. program at Penn gives students the opportunity to choose their classes according to their interests and goals. This gives them the chance to gain knowledge in the fields they really like, thus helping them to become better lawyers and to further develop their careers. The law professors open the door for so many new ideas and it is truly enriching to learn new and different ways of understanding and putting together various legal rules. Last but not least, it is a great pleasure to be in class.

Outside of the classroom there are also opportunities to attend many conferences and law-related events organized by the school. There is an event almost every day that offers an interesting lecture or the chance to meet with judges, lawyers or leading scholars. As Irina puts it in her own words: *“My experience was also enriched by all of the people I met during my program. I spent my first month having classes with the other LL.M. students and later I had the chance to have classes together with the JD (juris doctor) students as well. It was equally enjoyable to either discuss with them complicated legal issues or just to chat after class. As I realized at the very first day of the program, I had the unique chance to meet, interact and become friends with so many different and bright people and I did my best not to waste it. The time I spent outside of the law school also helped me to broaden my horizons and sweeten even more my U.S. experience. There are many events I will remember. The list is quite long but just to name a few: the first time I watched a live baseball game, my first Halloween party, the traditional Thanksgiving dinner I helped organize for the LL.M. students, video greeting from Sylvester Stallone before the beginning of the ‘Rocky’ movie shown in front of the Art Museum, all dinners with traditional national cuisines hosted by my classmates from all around the world and many, many more. The year I had during my program was more than amazing and yes, I truly liked being a student at Penn Law, but even more, I really enjoyed it.”*

Our studies and research work at the University of Pennsylvania was a big part of our U.S. experience as Fulbrighters, but not the only one. Do you know how big the “Apple” is, whether there is a “lost symbol” in Washington DC and how much beautiful scenery there is in the Rocky Mountains? We do not, but we did have the chance to visit and explore New York, Washington DC and Denver, not just as tourists, but as Fulbrighters as well.

Georgetown University in **Washington DC** offers a pre-academic training program for Fulbright law students. The program is not just an opportunity to be better prepared for the coming academic year or to live close to the White house for a couple of weeks, but rather a chance to meet other Fulbright students and realize that there are so many outstanding people who can be your friends and colleagues with whom you can share life stories and experiences that one would never know about otherwise. The great time spent with Fulbright fellows walking from the Capitol building to the Lincoln Memorial, visiting Washington’s fabulous museums and exploring one of the U.S.’s greatest cities will never be forgotten and neither will the atmosphere of DC. The city has many faces. It is a political, cultural, educational center which attracts many people who want to work, study or just visit at least some of the many great museums, monuments or memorials. Even one month in the city was not enough to visit

all the places one should try to see. The list is very long, but just to name a few: the U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian Museums, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Sculpture Garden and Georgetown University campus.

Later, when all pre-academic programs seemed so far in the past, another great opportunity to meet with Fulbright fellows was given. Fulbright organizes and hosts many enrichment seminars that take place in different U.S. cities. We had the chance to go to the one in **Denver**. Close to the beautiful Rocky Mountains National Park, Denver was the best place to meet with Fulbrighters and discuss with them various environmental issues as part of the seminar dynamic program. Many ideas were brought to and many questions and problems were raised during the working sessions. Some real actions were taken as well. All Fulbright fellows participated in a different community works for a couple of hours, assisting a local environmental organization in their day-to-day activities. It was also very interesting to learn how some environmental problems are solved on the local level and what steps are made towards developing Denver as a sustainable city. During the seminar, participants also had the chance to explore Denver, visit its interesting Art Museum, to see buffalo and enjoy some of the beautiful scenery of the Lookout Mountain Park, part of the Denver Mountain Parks. In this park is the grave of Buffalo Bill. Born in 1846, William F. Cody was a famous buffalo hunter. Buffalo Bill's Wild West show traveled to many, many places and stands behind one of the most popular visions about the American West. Along with the great time spent with other Fulbrighters and all the nice places we visited in Denver, one more event will always be remembered. Many families in Denver hosted dinners for us in their homes. Their hospitality and warm welcome made everyone feel at home. For a couple of hours we could enjoy tasty homemade food, share our experiences and learn about our hosts' own lives. With all these events, the seminar was not just an enrichment, it was an event not to be forgotten.

Last but not least we will try to tell you something about the **New York** experience for Fulbrighters. New York is definitely one of the greatest cities in the world and there is a special organization, One-to-World, that helps Fulbrighters get to know the city as much as possible. One of the events organized for Fulbrighters in New York by One-to-World was a visit to the Council of Foreign relations (CFR) in Manhattan in February 2011. The CFR is a think tank organization which focuses on U.S. foreign policy and international affairs. It is known worldwide and is considered to be the most influential foreign-policy think tank in the U.S. It was interesting to hear more about the history and structure of this organization. Founded in 1922 as a membership organization, it currently has about 5,000 members. Historically, there have been several secretaries of states, prominent professors, bank-

ers and lawyers among its members. The Council itself has been addressed by seven presidents of the United States of America. We were invited to the CFR in New York to participate in a special briefing including topics on international law and the fight against terrorism. The briefing and consequent discussion was held by an expert in national security law and international law, specializing in domestic and international legal aspects of combating terrorism and the use of military force.

We were also invited to participate in the One-to-World special program "Conversations with Fulbrighters" which is a series of meetings with CEOs, philanthropists and prominent former Fulbrighters. In October, 2010, we had a personal meeting with Jack Abernethy, CEO of Fox Television Stations, Inc. during a visit to the headquarters of Fox News in New York. Mr. Abernethy oversees the 27 FOX owned-and-operated stations in the nation's largest television markets. We had a general discussion during this meeting on media in the U.S., the competition in this business and a short introduction to the history of Fox. The visit to the headquarters of Fox also included a tour in the building where we saw the studio from where Fox News is broadcasted, as well as the studio that was prepared to follow the U.S. mid-term elections in the beginning of November. Another meeting organized by Fulbright in November 2010 was with the General Counsel of JP Morgan, Mr. Jonathan D. Schwartz. Mr. Schwartz serves as the chief legal officer for all legal and compliance matters for the JP Morgan investment bank worldwide. It was interesting to hear about his practical experiences and previous appointments as a federal prosecutor in Manhattan and a general counsel of Napster, Inc. and Time Warner Inc.

One-to-World organized as well a visit to the NYC Federal Reserve Bank (or "Fed") and a meeting with one of its vice-presidents in charge of Community Affairs. The NYC Federal Reserve Bank is one of the 12 Federal Reserve Banks within the Federal Reserve System in the U.S. We were shown some very rare coins worth millions of dollars during our tour in the Fed building. We were also shown the underground facilities of the Reserve Bank that are used as gold storage and we were able to see the bars of gold through the bars. The NYC Fed is known worldwide for storing the gold of some international organizations and other countries' central banks. Currently, the gold stored there weighs more than 7,000 tons and is worth more than 250 billion dollars.

Many more things could be told about New York, Washington, Denver, Philadelphia and our studies, but we will stop here. As one last sentence, we would like to say that we collected great impressions here, and we had an unforgettable experience as Fulbright scholars in "always sunny" Philadelphia.

Disclaimer: The text is published in its original and unedited version.

Out of America

Laura Geier

U.S. Fulbright graduate student, violin performance

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Host Institution in Bulgaria: Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv

AY 2010-2011

Balkan Desire

Since entering college at Rice University in 2000 and beginning to get a larger picture of the world around me, I began to have an earnest desire to live abroad. I truly felt and still feel that is one of the most important undertakings & a “must” for anyone wanting to experience true growth. When living abroad you gain a broader life perspective and you start to view the world in a completely different way. Being a musician, I have always held a keen interest in Eastern Europe & Balkan music, more specifically Bulgarian folk and Rom (gypsy) music and scales. The vivacious asymmetrical dance meters & the hauntingly beautiful, soaring slow melodies... Perhaps it runs deep in my ancestry (my great-grandfather Joseph Sedlak immigrated to the United States from Hungary at the turn of the century), but I always desired to know Eastern Europe more, to uncover its secrets. Anyone of my friends or family could tell you that I have a great sense of adventure, insatiable curiosity, and a passion for culture, travel, and other people’s stories. So now I will pass on to you my story about my year in Bulgaria.

My initial interest in the Fulbright Program began six years ago in 2005. I was studying violin performance at Ohio University and my orchestral conductor, Steven Huang (Fulbright 2003-04), began talking about what a fantastic experience he had living in Romania. I met with Steven several times over the next couple of years and he mentored me about studying in Eastern Europe. At the time, I looked into studying in Hungary or Romania but ran into difficulties finding a music academy with an emphasis in folk music. I knew the music was here, but I needed a contact at an academic institution. After I graduated from OU in 2006, I put the Fulbright aside and began working, teaching through a community music school as well as performing as a contracted violin



Standing next to a Bulgarian woman in traditional folkloric clothing in the town of Dobarsko, Bulgaria (August 2010)

player with the West Virginia Symphony in Charleston. I enjoyed playing in the symphony but I never felt quite at home with classical music. Something kept tugging at me inside. Unfortunately classical music has become in some ways so institutionalized and I find that it is hard for the musician to connect with his or her audience. Classical works or composers that I enjoyed most such as Béla Bartók use elements from folk music.

My violin instructor and mentor, Marjorie Bagley, found a school in California that offers programs in world music. While there is not a Balkan music program at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), I was told upon inquiring that two teachers, Miroslav Tadic and Kate Conklin (Fulbright 2002), had experience in the Balkan music. Serbian guitarist, Miroslav Tadic, grew up in the former Yugoslavia and has played in several contexts with a great num-

ber of Balkan artists. Once I learned I could work with him first hand learning charts, scales, and modes from Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria, I decided CalArts was the place for me. It wasn't until later during my time at CalArts that I met Kate Conklin. During one of my first lessons with Kate in October of 2009 she asked me, "Have you been to Eastern Europe? Have you thought about applying for a Fulbright?" Kate had done a Fulbright in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and encouraged me that the folk academy would be a great starting point. With Kate's confidence in me, I was inspired to apply for Bulgaria. In March one year ago, I received news that I had received the grant.

I began reading about Bulgaria. Bulgaria is in a fantastic location situated on the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. To the North it is bordered by Romania, to the South by Turkey and Greece, to the West by Serbia and Macedonia, and to the East by the Black Sea. Bulgaria has over a thousand year old history dating back to 681 AD. Since then Bulgaria has been a major crossroads between East and West. The Bulgarian language is Slavic in origin and uses the Cyrillic alphabet, a writing system developed in the First Bulgarian Empire having similarities to the Russian language. The Bulgarian landscape is home to several beautiful mountain ranges-the Rila, the Pirin, the Rhodopes, Sredna Gora (Middle Forest), and the Balkan Range, the biggest and longest mountain chain crossing the entire country. I also learned that Bulgaria is one of the biggest producers of rose oil in the world.

I was aware of Bulgaria's history with Communism. From 1946 to 1990 Bulgaria was under the rule of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) and a Soviet ally during the Cold War. You can imagine that the Communist rule had quite an impact on its people. In the United States I would say we don't hear much about Bulgaria, it's no longer highly publicized. When I began telling friends and family I was going to be living abroad in Bulgaria, they looked at me with blank faces. Where? Why Bulgaria?

Why Bulgaria?

Even now when Bulgarians ask me why I am here and I tell them I am studying folk music they ask, "But, why did you come **here?**" I feel like many people are skeptical of why I chose Bulgaria and am of the opinion that I should study somewhere else. Since the Cold War Bulgaria has been struggling to rebuild itself. Bulgaria is one of the poorest countries in the European Union. For many Bulgarians, the future does not hold a lot of possibilities. Jobs are hard to come by and talented, educated people are working as taxi drivers and waiters. My flatmate Sofia, also an exchange student (from Sweden), told me of her conversation with a taxi driver, Ivan, just yesterday. Sofia told me that when he learned she came from Sweden to study in Bulgaria he was provoked and almost angry with her. He thought there could be nothing for her here that she couldn't find in Sweden and that

she should go home. Sofia tried to explain to him that the folk music and Bulgarian singing is unique, unlike anywhere else in the world, and that it is reason enough to study here. Ivan was still not convinced and started telling her his view of life in Bulgaria. He has been working for ten years as a taxi driver, sometimes working twenty-four hour shifts trying to support his wife and two kids. He told Sofia, "When you only have one life, the heart should be open. Our hearts are suffering and because of it the mouth is not smiling. Everyone wants to leave. There is no future. It's impossible to get a loan, impossible to find work, and impossible to raise money for schooling." Sofia told me she found it hard to disagree with him because ultimately she and I cannot tell you what it is like to be Bulgarian. I can give you a picture of what I know and what I have seen in Bulgaria, but I cannot tell you what it is like to live as a Bulgarian. I can tell you that you cannot really know a place until you've been there. Often I hear people talking about countries by what they hear in the media. This is a big mistake. You don't really know a place until you see it with your own eyes.



Vaulted stone bridge, Koprivshtitsa, Bulgaria (August 2010)

First Impressions-Koprivshtitsa

Before arriving in Bulgaria, it was hard to know what to expect. I wondered if Bulgaria would look like a scene out of one of Emir Kustirica's films. I was lucky that a good friend of mine from Bulgaria, Smiliana, was home visiting for the summer and she offered to pick me up at the airport and help me get accustomed to this new place. After greeting me at the airport we took a taxi to a nearby bankomat where Smiliana exchanged my American currency for the Bulgarian currency, *leva*. We then drove from the bank to the bus station where I would catch a bus to the small village of Koprivshtitsa, a town situated in the Sredna Gora mountain range. Once we found the correct bus stop, Smiliana bought us each a cheese sandwich. She explained to me that there are two types of cheese distinctive to Bulgaria, *sirene* (white cheese)



Sitting atop Assen's Fortress near Assenovgrad, Bulgaria (November 2010)

& *kashkaval* (yellow cheese). Bulgarians love cheese and they eat it a lot! I also learned that Bulgaria is known for their yoghurt and a popular yoghurt drink known as *aryan* or *airan*. Sitting at the bus station I noticed a family situated nearby with very dark skin. This was my first real picture of Rom (gypsy) people. Smiliana advised me that I should be aware of my belongings as they are known to steal according to her. The tension between Bulgarians and Roma is very high and they do not mix company. Roma people live in segregated communities known as *quarters*. There is a Roma quarter near my apartment in Plovdiv and I have walked through it a few times to quench my curiosity. It is a place with tightly packed colorful homes, people milling about, and curious faces. I really don't view the Roma any differently than I view anyone else. I have not had a negative interaction with the Roma and I think their situation all across Europe is unfortunate. They are just a poverty-stricken minority trying to survive after being prejudiced against for years.

One of Smiliana's friends met us at the bus station for a visit. Once again I was asked the infamous question, "Why Bulgaria?" Smiliana told him I was the perfect person to come here, that I have an open mind and a great deal of optimism. Soon the six o'clock bus arrived and we went outside so I could board. A couple minutes later the bus driver walked off and left the bus sitting there and all of us waiting. After some confusion, we deduced that the brakes were broken and that we would have to wait for the next bus. Smiliana gave me important advice about living in Bulgaria. "That is one thing you will have to get used to. Nobody tells you anything." I have learned that you have to be very proactive when you want information. After a couple of hours, Smili-

ana sent me on my way to Koprivshtitsa where I would attend a folk music festival that happens only every five years. Riding the bus to Koprivshtitsa was very serial. I sat on the bus thinking and I had a realization that maybe no one knew English. As we headed further into the mountains, a thunderstorm began. What an adventure! I finally arrived in Koprivshtitsa in the night and I wandered up the road to the Hotel Astra where I was to meet the owner, Maria, who was to host me at her home because the hotel was full for the music festival. Maria arrived with her son-in-law and they drove me up the road to where I would be staying. The car made its way up a narrow alleyway paved with cobblestone. I felt as though we had gone back in time to the medieval period as we passed through the alleyway in the dark. Soon in Maria's home, I could no longer stay awake. Since my flight from Salt Lake City, I had been awake for over twenty-eight hours.

Koprivshstitsa is a dream. Centered in a small valley next to the Topolnitsa River, it is a picturesque site. The town still preserves the atmosphere of the Bulgarian National Revival period-red tiled roofs, small chimneys, white stone walls overgrown with ivy and wild geranium, small alleyways made of cobblestone, and vaulted stone bridges. My three days in Koprivshtitsa couldn't have left me with a better first impression. I spent my days there wandering up and down the hilly streets, being woken up by far off calls of rooster, tasting Bulgarian cuisine, and attending the folk music festival set upon seven stages in the hills near the town. Bulgarian folk music is unlike any other music in the world. First off, you won't hear most of these in-



Two young gadulka players at the Koprivshtitsa folk festival (August 2010)

struments unless you're in Bulgaria. I immediately fell in love with two of these instruments—the *gadulka* and the *gaida*. The *gadulka* is the traditional stringed instrument of Bulgaria. It has three bowed strings and up to eleven resonating strings. Since my main instrument is violin, I decided that to learn in depth the style of Bulgarian folk that I should take *gadulka* lessons during my grant. Playing the instrument has been incredibly rewarding and I will draw from this learning experience for years to come! The sound of the *gaida*, the bagpipe of Bulgaria is both haunting and compelling. I haven't ever heard anything like it. The bag, made out of goat or sheep hide, is a reservoir that supplies the pipes with air. The *gaida* has two pipes, one for blowing and one for playing the melody, while a third pipe (optional) is used as a drone. If you are interested to hear incredible *gaida* melodies I highly recommend listening to "The Magic of the Bulgarian Bagpipe", a digital recording recorded by my friend and colleague, Ivan Georgiev.

Ordering my first couple meals in Bulgaria was an experience to remember! First off, having barely learned a few phrases about ordering I didn't even know if I was pronouncing the text correctly. I found a traditional style Bulgarian restaurant in the center of town right off the main street. Most traditional restaurants house a tavern built of stone and wood, wooden benches and tables covered by red woven tablecloths, hand painted ceramic pottery, and a fireplace. Often times they also have outdoor seating, summer gardens covered by grape vineyards, which are truly a site for the eyes. For my first meal I ordered a chicken shish kebab, garlic butter *pitka* (homemade bread covered with salt mixed with different spices known as *chubritsa*), and a glass of *rakia*, an alcoholic beverage famous in Bulgaria that is produced by distillation of fermented fruit, the most common being grapes. What a meal! My second evening in Koprivshtitsa I went back to the same restaurant because I had enjoyed my first meal so much. This time I order a cup of black coffee and fresh lemon trout. When the trout came back to me whole, eyes and all, I had to laugh because I felt like I was in the restaurant scene from *A Christmas Story* when the duck arrives with the head still attached. In Koprivshtitsa I was also introduced to the traditional folk dancing that often occurs in town squares during special celebrations and happens every day in restaurants. This is one thing I absolutely love about Bulgarian culture, everyone dances together linking hands and dancing in a circle. These memories will live in me forever. As I sit here in Plovdiv and write I am already homesick and longing for Bulgaria in the future.

This Bulgarian Life

When I was brainstorming ideas for this article I came up with so many that I could literally write a novel. It is hard to sum up my entire year in just one article but I will give you a sneak peak into some of the highlights of my year abroad.



Playing gadulka on the Roman Ampitheater Stage in Plovdiv, Bulgaria (October 2010)

I am lucky to be living in one of the most historical and cultural places in Bulgaria. Plovdiv is the second largest city in Bulgaria with a population approximately 382,000. Plovdiv's history spans some 6,000 years known in the West for most of its history by the Greek name Philoppopolis. There are many remains preserved from Antiquity such as the Ancient amphitheater, Roman odeon, Roman Stadium, the archaeological complex Eirene and others. The Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts where I attend folk rehearsals and individual lessons sits atop the hill looking down on the amphitheater.

My folk music studies encompass many elements. A typical week includes the following: individual lessons with Professor Todor Kirov learning *gadulka* and the folk style on the violin, individual voice lessons with Professor Svetla Stanilova learning traditional Bulgarian vocal technique and *narodni pesni* (national songs), and classes with Zoya Mikova on Bulgarian folklore, theory, and traditional dancing. I have also participated with both the Academy Folklore Ensemble and the Academy National Choir. Three times a week, I attend Bulgarian Language lessons with Mrs. Filipova. The language courses are full immersion courses since my teacher does not speak English. It's incredible to see Mrs. Filipova teach and to communicate meaning through her body language. In each lesson we speak, ask each other questions, repeat phrases, read Bulgarian conversations, and write. It's fantastic!

The school system in Bulgaria takes getting used to as it is not as closely structured to the model that I followed at University

in the U.S. Individual lesson instruction times vary from week to week and information is not relayed until the last minute (such as cancellation of a rehearsal). Perhaps there is also a language barrier but I showed up at a choir concert one time only later to realize that the folk ensemble I play with was also performing with the choir. In many ways the system is more just relaxed. In the U.S. when you hold an instrumental master class, a few students play a solo in a formalized setting & each student is critiqued. The setting in Bulgaria is joyous, full of talking, toasting (*Nadrave!*), & enjoying. When I showed up to my first gadulka master class in Bulgaria in a small room in the 3rd floor of the Academy, the students were setting out newspapers on the table upon which to set rakia and nuts. We celebrated together as a class & then each student played a piece while the eating and drinking continued. The marathon playing session lasted four hours. Critique does not happen in this setting. I will always remember my teacher's comment to our class, "You are my students, but first you are my friends."

The aim of my Fulbright studies has been to identify style and elements present in Bulgarian folk, recognize scales and modes, learn the ornamental style, odd-metered rhythms, and to record and archive every lesson and performance. Since I also have a profound interest in Rom (gypsy) music, I have been researching and learning this style on my own. In the past few months I have made friends with a gadulka/violin player, Atanas Slavov, who plays in the Bulgarian gypsy style, very different from gypsy music in Hungary and Romania. The Bulgarian Gypsy music is played typically at restaurants and for wedding parties. The new style has modal influences from both Bulgarian folk and Turkish music and is often played with synthesized keyboard and drums.

I have had an incredible number of experiences with my friends and colleagues! It wouldn't be right for me to write this article without mentioning one of my closest friends in Bulgaria, Sofia Högstadius. Sofia is also a violinist and exchange student from Sweden and studying folk music. Our passion for Bulgarian and Romani folk music has connected us both on a musical and personal level. Sofia and I play together often and we have many projects that keep us busy. We have given concerts with the Academy Folklore Ensemble, at a local café, the *Café Morocco* in the Old Town district of Plovdiv, and have also been invited to play on Bulgarian National Television for a program called *Polet nod Noshta* (Flight over Night), and are currently preparing for a concert with tamboura player, Valeri Dimchev at the American University in Blagoevgrad and for an Fulbright Enrichment Seminar in Sofia. Sofia & I have also traveled with the Plovdiv Academy Folklore Ensemble to perform several concerts in Umeå, Sweden on Swedish Radio and for the Umefolk Festival through a grant rewarded to us by the Umeå City Council of Culture. This was a great honor for us to share time with our teachers and colleagues and to promote Bulgarian folkloric music in Sweden.



Academy Folkloric Choir in Plovdiv (March 2010)

I have formed several friendships during my time in Bulgaria and have learned a great deal from these people. At first impression Bulgarian people seem serious but when you get to know them they are some of the warmest, good-hearted, and hospitable people you will ever meet. Two of my dearest friends, Sonya and Todor, are both musicians. Sonya is a traditional Bulgarian folklore singer and Todor is a master gadulka player. Meeting with Sonya and Todor is one of the greatest things in Bulgaria and I will miss it very much! During our time together I often play gadulka with Todor, discuss Bulgarian folklore and culture, and of course nothing is complete without homemade *banitza*, a Bulgarian cheese-pie made of very fine and thin sheets of pastry and egg.

There are aspects of Bulgarian culture that take getting used to. For instance, in Bulgaria when you ask a question and someone nods his or her head "no", it means "yes". Even now, I get confused from time to time! Smoking is permitted in most places and is in some ways built into the culture. When crossing the street in Bulgaria, one should be extra aware because the cars often have no intention of stopping for pedestrians. As mentioned earlier in this article, it is not common for people to relay important information to one another (i.e. when your bus brakes down). You often times have to wait with a great deal of patience until an answer becomes evident or you have to be proactive and seek out information. After adapting to these things, it truly is an extraordinary place to live and to visit.

At the Fulbright Summer Institute (FISI) in Bansko during my first month in Bulgaria, our executive director Dr. Julia Stefanova said, "We don't choose everyone for a Fulbright grant. Those who are chosen are the best and the brightest. One Fulbrighter will affect thousands." It is my aim to share and tell stories about Bulgaria, and to spread the joy of Bulgarian folk music with many people. I also hope to encourage others to take a chance, go after their passions, and to live in another country. The experience is one that is truly irreplaceable.

Disclaimer: *The text is published in its original and unedited version.*

Out of America

Being in Bulgaria

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A year ago at this time, my idea of the future was a buzzing emptiness, the static-y fuzz between two radio signals—unknown, as yet unactivated, but nonetheless crackling with imminent potential. Little could I imagine the experiences that would come to fill the void—it began as a brilliant kind of cacophony, the baffling dissonance of daily life in a foreign place. After seven months, life in Bulgaria has retained its dazzling impression, but has taken on subtlety, nuance, and a kind of familiar rhythm that I’ve not only learned to tap my foot to, but dance the Horo to. Acquiring the steps of this Bulgarian style of dancing, both literally and figuratively, has been a process filled with confusion and challenges, to be sure, but in reflecting back, its simplicity is what has stood out most to me. Being in Bulgaria has been an exercise in foregoing facades, in opening up and simply learning how to be with new people.

Understanding through a Lack Thereof

Being completely unfamiliar with Bulgaria has, oddly, helped me relate to my students better. Every moment is a new learning experience, and, unfortunately, my capacities do not match my desire to take in new information. The idea of repetition, practice, experience—these have all become key aspects of my teaching method, in part because I am faced with the reality of my own learning process every day. Applying layers of paint to a textured surface; it takes multiple coats from multiple angles until the spaces and gaps are all filled in. Recognizing this, I was able to feel calm and patient with myself, a patience that extended to my classrooms as well.

Moreover, I understand how overwhelming and discouraging it can be when someone speaks to you at a level far above your abilities—and the desire to simply recede into a disengaged, disinterested shell that comes with it. My slow acquisition of the Bulgarian language has been filled with awkward instances of strangers approaching me with the best of intentions, but with unsuccessful results. On more than one occasion, I have smiled politely, pretending to understand, all the while hoping I could simply get through the interaction without letting on. These are situations that I can learn from and



Kate in Bulgaria

laugh at, but also hold an unexpected benefit—this is a look that I can distinctly recognize on students too shy to tell me they don’t understand what I’m talking about. With this insight, I have been able to modify my plans on the spot, tuned to particular students’ needs and abilities, and address whatever gaps in understanding they attempt to skirt around. Being a person that likes to spend time meticulously preparing for things, this way of teaching had truly tested my ability to think on my feet. Ultimately, it’s helping me to build trust in myself, to believe that

I can handle or react to anything that’s thrown at me. Or at least live through it and accept my fumbblings.

This process of developing flexibility and adjusting my lesson plans on the spot has emphasized the role of competence and confidence building in the classroom to me. Building these is not a task that comes easily—students can be extremely resistant when asked to practice a skill with which they are not entirely adept. A major struggle for me this year has been figuring out how to demonstrate that mistakes provide opportunities for learning far more than for embarrassment or shame. Affirming effort and extracting the meaning of what someone is trying to say, however poetically or poorly, I attempt to stress the idea that communication is our ultimate goal. We want authentic communication, not rehearsed or regurgitated, but the formulation and receipt, of statements that represent honest opinions. Part of the task of an ETA is to help students see beyond their classroom to the larger conversations where their participation is both valuable and necessary, as well as the benefits of the turbulent and sometimes difficult path of learning how to formulate their unique contributions.

This said, unidirectional teaching does not work, especially in this context of an American teaching English in a foreign country. What are these

conversations they must contribute to, and whose value system, whose priorities are they determined by? My students want to share Bulgarian history and culture with me, perhaps even more than they want to listen to me talk about America. They want to share their perspectives, but on topics that they care about—not just issues that resonate in an American context. Planning around this has been a challenge at times. Even as I sought my students’ opinions and attempted to facilitate discussions, in the beginning there was still a sense of disconnect as I brought in topics and issues surrounding my own frame of reference, namely, what causes controversy in the United States. Often, when I write Bulgarian on the board or say a few awkward, crumbly phrases, I am met with cheers and applause. The absurdity of these moments is priceless, and powerful. I cannot ignore this enthusiasm—my efforts to learn must match what I am asking of my kids, and to some degree, I had to learn to adjust my lessons according to their criteria.

Reframing the Classroom

I applied for a Fulbright ETA grant because I wanted to expand my worldview and gain a better understanding of modern social issues so I would be better prepared to investigate them in the future. I felt, and still feel passionately, that this kind of work demands the inclusion of multiple perspectives—any problem collectively faced is undoubtedly contested and complex, and as such should not be approached through a single set of values. I felt that teaching English in particular complimented my interest in cross-cultural collaboration of this ilk, as it offers students opportunities to dialogue with individuals around the globe. Finally, I hoped to be an ETA for the same reason I still want to be a researcher and educator—because I felt it would place me amongst people, enabling me to formulate, share, and revise ideas in an ongoing process of discussion and growth.

As with anything, actually approaching the task of teaching in a foreign country has been complicated in very different ways than expected, making it all the more gratifying. In many instances, contrary to expectations I didn’t even know I had, most of my students are more interested in sharing themselves and Bulgaria with me than they are with learning about ‘life in the United States.’ This is made more complicated the dual desire to both disparage and celebrate Bulgaria, as students situate themselves as a nation and as individuals within a global context. I have sought to broaden my understanding of what should take place in a classroom. Through this, I have been better able to learn from my students as they reveal who they are and what they are interested in, be it Avon catalogues or Bulgarian history.

There is a certain amount of transparency that exists within my teaching methods that I think contributes to my overall presence in an important way. My students have watched me grow as much as I have watched them grow. Moreover, within my responses to their behavior and interests demonstrates importance of their actions and voices in shaping their worlds. I have found that treating them as mature people who deserve to help dictate what occurs in our classes generates more participation and enthusiasm than imposing tasks without seeking their opinions. The more time I spend with each of my classes, the more I understand what their priorities, their needs are, and what works and what doesn’t according to their personalities and preferences. This varies not just on the grade level, but on each particular



Dancing the horo

class—lesson planning demands careful attention to who the students are, as individuals, in order to effectively reach them.

Whatever idiosyncrasies each of my classes may have however, fun, it seems, is the universal motivator. After introducing a few different game formats, I cannot walk into a classroom without being asked, “Are we going to play a game today, Katie?” Discipline was initially an issue for me, as I worked out how to plan and approach teaching my students. Their unanimous enthusiasm for play sparked another realization in me. Balance! The light jubilation of a competition can bring out differing, yet equally important dynamics from the weighty importance of some social issue. Further, my students respond to group work far more than I ever witnessed in my American classrooms. They recognize and balance each others’ strengths and weaknesses. Collaboration is often an undertaught skill, with highly individualized standardized tests always looming in the background. In reality, however, people work together constantly. Particularly with English as a foreign language, the ability to understand, contribute, and modify ideas collectively is crucial. Again, rather than frequently battling with students’ tendencies to “collaborate” through copying one another, I tried to provide opportunities for them to work together, to work independently then reconvene and fill in each others’ gaps, or to let their creative talents shine in team exercises like skits or magazine writing.

One of my classes that I struggled the most with in the beginning in terms of enthusiasm and discipline organized an event to showcase Bulgarian Christmas traditions. During the event, two students described various traditions in Bulgarian, which were translated to me by another student. Following this, three students dressed in traditional Bulgarian clothing performed music—one played the bagpipes, one the accordion, and one sang. Since I had been taking traditional dance classes, I was prepared when someone grabbed my hand and pulled me to dance in the center of the room. Eventually, everyone began dancing, and we soon snaked our way through the hallway, gathering more participants as we went. I was later told this event was designed specifically for me. I could not have been more honored or touched by this gesture, which represented so much more than a surface level exchange of cultures. It was a sign of respect, of pride, of an effort to share with me. I am certain that my enthusiasm in dancing the Horo was meaningful to my students and colleagues as well. Through this event, we all found ways of communicating outside the confines of our classroom and our mutual limitations in language skills.



Students on a hike

Stepping Outside the Classroom

Without a doubt, school has been the dominant aspect of my experience and will have the most lasting impression upon me. However, my experiences outside the classroom have been absolutely essential to making my time in Bulgaria so stimulating. Getting together with other Fulbrighters has dramatically changed my experience. Sharing insights, comparing stories, asking questions, relieving isolation, exploring in groups—all of this has helped my adjustment to Bulgaria tremendously. It has also helped me bring more to my job—having a strong network of Americans through the country with different ideas and attitudes has broadened my understanding beyond my singular experience. The Fulbright International Summer Institute in Bansko was a perfect transition to life in Bulgaria. Not only was I introduced to the other Fulbright grantees, but I also met a group of open, intelligent, and motivated Bulgarians who were attending the conference. These, I later realized, are the people that I want to help my students become, these are the kind of role models both they and I need in our minds as we go about our daily classroom routines. The Fulbright Commission has done an incredible job ensuring that we see each other periodically, and, by visiting important historical sites, in the process gain a better understanding of Bulgaria and the rich history it holds. Gatherings and tours of places like Plovdiv, Koprivshitsa, and Rila Monastery have helped resituate my understanding of my students and colleagues with a larger portrait of the country.

Seeing more of Bulgaria, particularly my region, has also allowed me to connect with my students and colleagues in important ways. For example, after a trip to Trigrad Gorge, I am honestly more humbled recalling the beaming pride of one of my tenth grade boys when he learned of my visit than I was by this truly awesome facet of the Rhodope Mountains. The look on his face as he shared, “That’s my village! I’m from there!” was so genuine, so gratified, it made me realize that however rambunctious or unruly my kids can act at times, my presence here does matter, and it matters in so many more ways than simply exposure to a native speaker’s accent. I have been given tours of town and taken skiing by fellow teachers’ children, I have been on hikes and walks with my students, I have gone to dinner with colleagues, I have been invited into people’s lives in ways that I never expected. The rich-

ness of my experience comes from the real connections and relationships that can only be formed through time and investment not just in a place, but in the how and why of what that place means to people.

Final Thoughts

Like my experience in Bulgaria as a whole, there is a surprisingly large and nuanced range of emotions the different Horo dances and songs bring for me as I stumble through the steps and finally understand how to perform them properly. On several occasions when I first started taking lessons, I would try to break from the circle to learn the steps, but I never had any success this way. It’s nearly impossible to learn the Horo without holding at least one person’s hand. The longer the line you are a part of, the easier it is to fall into the proper footing, to sail along with the group, mirroring their example little by little until you are seamlessly in step. The necessary unity of the group does not change how personal the steps feel, nor does it speak to the various groupings and relationships and glances playing out within the string of people. In class as we dance, people have side conversations or share secret glances amongst themselves, each has their own set of memories or attachments to this or that particular song. Still, we hold hands and form a chain, a circle, moving together.

Lately I’ve been thinking about the nostalgic pleasure of listening to music from my childhood and teenage years with people who know it equally well. Thinking about the way in which these dances & their songs produce something similar is comforting, it makes me feel like I understand life in Bulgaria a little bit better. Every week in my Horo class, my classmates and I stand in a circle holding hands, doing the same steps to the same songs, maybe learning a few new, maybe not. This for the sake of health, spending time with friends, connecting with Bulgarian culture, showing off and participating at parties or events—for many different reasons. Every day in my classroom, we perform the roles of student and teacher, Bulgarian and American, young and old, at every step re-tuning these dynamics. Some come at the behest of their parents, some of their own drive, others out of passion, and still others out of boredom; I out of a simple love of learning and trying.

Whatever the motivation, whatever the context, ultimately, there we are. Treading down old paths while creating new experiences together. It really is as simple as that.

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Yordanovden

Out of America

How 'green' is Bulgaria?

Dr. Robert Louis Chianese is Professor Emeritus from California State University, Northridge who visited Plovdiv University in October 2010 as a senior specialist in the field of American Studies. This is his third Fulbright residency in Plovdiv.



The quick answer is that it is very green right now. Recent weeks of rain keep trees, bushes, and grasses in and out of cities fresh and chlorophyll-rich. Even with the bright cascade of yellow leaves that the Roma women sweepers whisk up all day long, greenery abounds, even in late October.

In my temporary city of Plovdiv, the topped-up Maritza River keeps vegetation thriving along its banks, the rain-blackened bark of trees sprouts new growth, moisture darkens the soil of parks and hills, and the air smells not just of pleasant decay but of quenched musky earth. That apparently wafts up from fragrant bacterial spores in the soil bounced aloft by raindrops. The pleasures of this wet, green autumn stimulate multiple senses.

However, visual blight offsets sensuous pleasures – trash lies just about everywhere. A wet blanket of plastic, paper, and glass blemishes the ground, pavements, and hillsides. The locals seem to sow this toxic crop deliberately as if to reap a noxious harvest. Instead of winter wheat, they lay down a year-round garland of garbage, sad adornments to a health-conscious land that touts its yoghurt, honey, rose lotions, and bodybuilding, but also where a quarter or more of the population still smokes.

In squares and plazas one spies occasional containers for this unnatural cornucopia – green for glass, blue for cardboard, and yellow for plastic. But people toss just about anything into these ECO-PAK recycling bins and seem not to differentiate them from the regular all-purpose containers that line side streets. Scarce and misused, ECO-PAKs stand as silent, half-filled witnesses to a failure of consciousness about trash and its effects on the land, and on us.

My Plovdiv University students abhor this junked landscape and eagerly agreed to a clean-up sweep of our own university front yard, decked out as it is with discarded plastic water bottles. Perhaps enrolling in my course in Environmental Approaches to American Literature provides some impetus for wanting a hands-on experience in ecological fix-up. But any stimulus would likely motivate these with-it college seniors. It seems no one has asked them to pitch in. Consciousness about environmental repair seems absent here, so no

one takes initiative, gets a bag and picks things up. Trash here is in sight and out of mind – or is it?

You may have heard of Balkan gloom – that bleak cultural atmosphere that used to hover over the tortured peninsular lands of southeast Europe, including Bulgaria. But even with EU accession and somewhat improved economic prospects, that gloom lingers. Corruption, sinking standards of living, and a limited future drain off lots of personal energy, especially from the young, who often dream not of homegrown success but of emigration.

Components of the current gloom have to include the psychological effects of a disorienting, unhealthy townscape. Things shift from new glass and steel tower blocks to sagging, rusting homesteads all within a few metres of each other. Mounds of bags, cups, food wrappers, picked over by dogs and cats, fester by the side of ultra-modern storefronts. Turn your head, the scene flips from gloom to glory and back to gloom again.

Walking anywhere but along the grand promenade requires deft footwork since broken paving, dented, wobbly grates, abandoned work sites strewn with debris, and ominous openings seem to tilt one to-



Cornucopia of collected trash

ward oblivion. It's a dizzy dance through a scary urban "fun house". This reminds one of how uncaring of others we can be, a gloomy thought sure enough. Add graffiti, peeling posters, and grim photo death notices and it can push gloom to blind denial.

Some places are refreshing. The central park near the main square is very clean, requiring full time attention from the women eco-workers just to sweep around and empty the stubby trash containers. Many people will use them when they are available and not overflowing. That's the first problem – not enough or big enough public trash bins.

But climbing venerable stairs up one of Plovdiv's ancient hills for photo prospects, one comes across crevasses, cracks in rocks, alcoves stuffed with garbage, as if stashed for a future archaeology of trash. It's mainly ephemera but it could last for ages – plastic bags, bottles, some electronic components and plenty of paper, on hill and dale and spread on open ground. It dominates the current settlement of old Philippopolis.

All of this un-recycled trash reminds one of the extravagance of modern society everywhere – over-consuming, useless products, mounds of packaging. In cash-strapped Bulgaria, near the bottom of the EU economic ladder, it's doubly obvious.

However, just a little better management of the city's "ecos" or household, which is where the words "ecology" and "economy" originate, could spruce up the town's look, its health, and the general mood as well.

The appeal to one's green, altruistic consciousness may have played out here without much effect. Any local "green" organisation or activism seem invisible even if you search them out. Until further systemic revisions of the deep infrastructure – sewers, garbage, water, streets, run-off, transportation, pavements, etc. – make a bit more headway, ordinary citizen involvement could necessarily focus on the surface stuff. But that's important.

A new tack may appeal to the Bulgarian flair for fashion and strength, particularly in the young. The women here are mainly thin and shapely and the men buff or working on it. Physical health and beauty motivate interest in sports, clothing, make-up, and demeanour.

A Bulgarian environmental programme that portrayed trash as a sign of sloppy style and unfit, out-of-shape civic bodies might just shift consciousness and promote clean-up. The slogan, "Give Plovdiv a Make-over" could turn a few heads to want to deep cleanse the smudged face of the city. One that urged a physical tune up, such as "Buff Up



Radoslava and Teodora with fruits of their labors

Plovdiv," might just see a few more folks twisting and bending their bodies to get more things into what bins there are.

The university and the environmental community could promote ecological civic engagement by holding a conference on Plovdiv's very prominent environmental feature – the Maritsa River itself. Multi-disciplinary study and reports on the biological health, aquatic and riparian creatures, and basic economics of the river would likely show its intrinsic value to the city and region. It's taken for granted, unremarked, but a prime candidate for renewed emotional attachment and respect. Historical review of its ancient past and living present would highlight its influential association with Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey as well.

The Humanities areas can showcase that history as well as art and literature treating the river's impact on local lives. Galleries, writing groups, and schools could sponsor exhibitions and readings inspired by the Maritsa's "cultural flow" through the life of the community.

Throughout this "eco-festival," the environmental health of the river would get proper attention and the impact of trash, urban and rural run-off, and industrial toxins would be revealed.

Perhaps more than anything to Plovdivians, the daily presence of so dominant a natural feature as the Maritsa would remind all that keeping it in shape requires attention to the greenness of both city and river – their interdependent ecological health. The fitness, beauty, and mental and physical health of ordinary people surely depend on it.

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