

## And now to 2008...

We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all who have supported the Fund throughout the past year and would encourage you to attend our programme of events for 2008. The Committee welcomes any fresh suggestions or novel fundraising ideas and, as ever, we look forward to you joining us for yet another year of enjoyable social and cultural events in order to promote our charitable aims. It only remains to wish each and everyone a Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

### The Committee

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Lida Paterova  
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### Webmaster

Lida Paterova



The Annual  
SCSSSF Garden  
Party, June 2007.

SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Scottish Charity No: SC 029812

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## Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

SCSSSF Newsletter - December 2007



Welcome to the 2007 Newsletter of the SCSSS Fund!

This is our opportunity to provide you, our members and supporters, with news of yet another successful year, which allowed us once more to transform the lives of some talented young students from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. You can read something about the long term effect of a time of study in Scotland, in Viktoria Vargova's letter. We also heard from Maria Kissova, a SCSSS scholarship student from 2004. She now works as a lecturer in Nitra and has just introduced a course in Scottish Studies, placing the literary texts she first encountered at the Scottish Universities International Summer School in a historical, political, religious and cultural context. It's wonderful to see what an impact one scholarship can have, and how the three weeks in Scotland can be just the start! Now Slovakian students will be able to study Muriel Spark and Edwin Morgan in their own country. And thanks to the book group they have the texts in the library of their university!

This summer we were again able to grant three students the necessary financial assistance to allow them to study abroad. A Czech and a Slovak student came to Edinburgh to attend SUISS, while a Scottish student went to Brno, in the Czech Republic. You can read their accounts in the newsletter, as well as news of the Book Group's work in delivering considerable numbers of literary texts to Czech and Slovak Universities. We also include details on our fund-raising events, including two lectures, the annual Garden Party and the ever popular Ceilidh.

Finally a big 'thank you' to all our supporters who attended the events and whose generosity contributed to the success of these occasions. Enjoy this newsletter!

The SCSSS Committee

<http://www.scsssfund.org.uk>

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok  
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- Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok - Veselé Vianoce a Štastný Nový Rok

*Viktoria Vargova writes:*

*Viktoria came to SUISS with a scholarship from the SCSSS in 2005. She writes:*

I must tell you all that now, 2 years after the Edinburgh Text and Context Course, I can see its impact on me even more. You know, it's a shame but I have to admit that the education system in my country still focuses on facts, passive knowledge, learning things and many facts by heart. We are taught an incredible amount of information but we aren't really taught to think, form our own opinions or express them, tell them to the others.

When I came to Text and Context it was quite difficult for me to talk about the books in our group. Not that I wouldn't have any opinion, I just wasn't used to share it with the others, I felt uncomfortable, why would somebody be interested in my point of view, at home nobody asks me this...so I was one of the most quiet ones in the seminar. But having experienced it, I changed a bit. I became more self-confident about my opinions. Now I have no problem at all with it. And moreover, I got to know many people, many books and it all encouraged me very much to dedicate myself more to translation. It really got me on the right way, or how would I say it. And I want to thank you very much for this opportunity, because it is in fact you who helped me to get where I am now.

### *The Book Group*

The generous donation made to the Bookgroup as reported in the last Newsletter enabled us to purchase large numbers of secondhand as well as new books. We regularly visit the bookstall in the David Hume Tower, various charity shops, Christmas sales and the Christian Aid sale in George Street held each May.

The students sponsored this summer had all reading material required by the SUISS made available to them well in advance. We are very grateful to all our volunteers who helped with transport and delivery of books to CR and Slovakia.

The University of Konstantin the Philosopher in Nitra from where we have sponsored four students to date is in the process of setting up a Scottish Studies section. One of our ex-students came to Edinburgh this summer in order to acquire material for the course. The Bookgroup provided advice and financial assistance with the project.

Professor France kindly donated a collection of literary theory books and we are currently in the process of distributing them among the Universities which have not yet benefited from such publications as they are relatively rare and expensive to purchase.



### *The Annual Lecture: Alphonse Mucha*

The Fund have by now a fine record for autumn Lectures on the topic of famous protagonists of the arts of Czech origin. We remember Dvorak and Kafka among others. This year it was the turn of Alphonse Mucha, the internationally renowned artist and designer. We were especially happy to have a unique personal perspective from Mucha's grandson, John Mucha, who now lives in London and Prague and was pleased to renew his acquaintance with Edinburgh.

Making a change from St Cecilia's Hall, we met at the French Institute, with kind permission of the Director, Anne Laval, which provided a welcoming and accessible venue. It was especially apt as Mucha had lived in Paris for many years and, of course, produced many of his most famous posters for Sarah Bernhardt's work there.

John Mucha presented a most informative film of Mucha's career and work, which showed us the enormous range of his paintings, in particular those celebrating the national history and identity of his country. These works so consonant with the politics of his time, were clearly a revelation to many of the audience. He explained the work of preservation and restoration of some of the very large canvasses which show the epic scale of Mucha's work. At last it does seem as if they will live on.

The speaker was introduced by our President, Professor Peter France, no stranger to the Institute. The expenses of our lecture are always under-written by the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic and we are most grateful for their support.

Again, the welcome refreshments were managed by Alena Linhartova. About 60 members of the Trust and others attended, raising the most useful donation of £90 for the scholarship fund. We must now make plans for next year and another such stimulus for our fund-raising in support for the visiting students.

*Mucha lecture Mucha lecture Mucha lecture Mucha lecture Mucha lecture*

The sixtieth anniversary in 2007 of The Scottish Universities' International Summer School promised to be a most special event. And as all the participants agreed on at the last day's farewell party, it indeed was unique. Each part of the programme fitted perfectly in its place: from top-quality lectures and student-friendly seminars to organised cultural evenings and trips through the beautiful city of Edinburgh. A great 'thank you' must go to the highly competent administrator of the School, Nan Mulder, the always helpful student hosts Tashi Shea and Simone Azzoni and, of course, the youthful directors Clare Elliott and Emma Lister. They all combined their powers to make the SUISS students feel at home from the very first to the last day of the School.

Attention was paid to every little detail of the organisation, so that no time was wasted on being confused in the new environment and everyone could start enjoying themselves immediately.

A weekday of SUISS would start with a 60 minute long lecture by one of the speakers whose names and lecture subjects were announced well in advance, which provided the students with a plenty of time not only to get ready for the lecture itself, but also to think about a question to ask the speaker in the time given to discussion. The lectures were extremely diverse both as to subject matter and presentation, however, what they all shared was the benefit of highly qualified speakers who were capable of mediating their experience and above all their enthusiasm to the audience. Literature was not merely talked about in theory, it was directly experienced, often by the means of an almost theatrical performance on the part of the speakers. An engaging lecture would be followed by a short coffee break, in fact rather a time for immediate feedback on the lecture among the students and an occasion to approach the lecturer for further individual consultation. The discussion would continue in the next two hours of an intensive seminar, which was otherwise built up on a variety of challenging tasks, including close reading sessions, small group workshops or individual student presentations. A great addition to the tutorials was the fact that the students attending SUISS were gathered virtually from all over the world, so that people from such different countries as for instance Canada, Turkey or South Korea met in one classroom and were able to contribute to the discussion with fresh points of view springing from their different cultural backgrounds. This exciting coming together of all the different people and their transformation into a small autonomous community held together simply by their shared love for literature could be hardly experienced anywhere else outside SUISS.

Besides an invaluable academic experience, the Summer School offered an extensive cultural and social programme of more general interest. Greatly appreciated were the evenings with distinguished literary personalities, including the crime fiction writers Denise Mina and Louise Welsh, the Irish poet Sinead Morrissey and even the most admired Alasdair Gray, who allowed the audience the unique pleasure of listening to the author's reading from his newest, yet unpublished book. Another chance to talk to one's favourite authors or to come to know just emerging talents was at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, which was running parallelly with the second term of the School and was a part of the arranged programme for the Creative Writing course students. Among the non-literary events prepared specially for the SUISS students, there was for instance the enjoyable gallery tour, several film screenings (also such relevant to the studied literature) or, certainly one of the highlights, the wonderful ceilidh dancing evening.

The overall atmosphere of SUISS was remarkable especially for the sensitive and highly stimulating approach on the part of the tutors, excellent organisation on the part of the School authorities and an enormous friendliness on everyone's part, all of which made the summer in Edinburgh simply



an unforgettable experience. To me, SUISS was the most enlightening experience of my life so far, and I feel greatly obliged to everyone who made it possible: namely, the lecturer from my home university who first suggested my attending the programme, Mrs Ema Jelínková, and all the members of the SCSSS Fund who kindly provided me with the grant. As a student, I benefited from the fact that I could obtain credits for the course and use them towards degree in my home country; furthermore, I derived much helpful information, both from the SUISS lecture/tutorial programme itself and the library resources available in Edinburgh, which will be of great use for my intended MA thesis and which would be otherwise impossible to get at in the Czech Republic. As a person, I had the unique chance to enjoy myself in the delightful company of other literature lovers from all over the world, and those three impressive weeks spent in Edinburgh were of great importance to me also in that they confirmed my decision to pursue further academic career in the given field.

### Report from Zuzana Durfinova

I joined the Text and Context Course (postmodernism) at The University of Edinburgh in August 2007. It was my first experience at a summer school and I was wondering what to expect. However, the course did not only fulfill my expectations, what's more, it surprised me with a great variety of interesting lectures, an evening programme and perfect organization. I appreciated the structure of the lectures. It started with the postmodern theory and continued with particular topics and aspects of the books from our reading list. The lectures were held by well-known professors and doctors from various universities. Most of them were not only interesting, but also highly enjoyable since the lecturers were very pleasant. Usually, they concentrated on few aspects of the literary work, which enabled us to reach the core instead of a superficial analysis.

This kind of background formed a very good basis for our discussions in the tutorial groups. It was also a chance to elaborate our own ideas or to win a different perspective from the other students. I would like to mention that I really like the fact that SUISS tried to mix the people of different nationalities and hence, people of various cultural background too.



Talking about the seminars I can not omit to mention the tutors because their teaching style was highly remarkable. The atmosphere during the tutorials was very relaxed, I felt always comfortable. Nobody felt forced to say something, neither having no space for own opinions. The tutor motivated also passive students and encouraged all to claim and reason their ideas. was not biased in the sense that she would stick to one interpretation, on the other hand, she was aware of their multitude, what made her being open to all of them when justified rationally. What's more, my tutor was there not only to listen to our suggestions and lead the discussion, she also riveted on some controversial or important aspects we did not notice.

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I would also like to highlight the support of all staff members who were friendly and always ready to help.

The evening programme was a unique mixture of literature, traditions and fun. The readings by well-known writers were very pleasant and the most wonderful of them was, naturally, the evening with Alasdair Gray and Rodge Glass. I must admit that I didn't know A.Gray before coming to Edinburgh and reading Lanark from our list. However, I liked his book very much and found it very exciting to meet him and to have even a chance to talk to him personally.

Anyway, we were also introduced to other worlds than the literary one. The world of Scottish traditions- ceilidh and the art of making beer. Both were very amusing and I enjoyed them. The most entertaining evening was the last one- the farewell party. However, it was also the saddest evening at the same time since it was time to say goodbye. That is the prize for winning great experiences,

making new friends and falling in love with such a wonderful city as Edinburgh is.

I hope I will have a chance to share the knowledge I gained there and to introduce this beautiful land and its literature in my country.

At the end, I would like to thank all the staff for great programme, they have prepared for us and also for the scholarship that enabled me to be a part of this Summer School. Thank you!



### Report from Juliet Baillie

The sponsorship provided for me by the Scottish Czech and Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund enabled me to complete the Letní `kola Slovanských (bohémistických) Studií at the Folozofické Fakult Masaryk University in Brno. The intensive course over four weeks, involved up to 4 hours of language class per day as well as a variety of optional lectures on Czech culture, history and language. The course was a great introduction to the intricacies of Czech language in an intensive environment conducive to learning fast in a class of around 14 students, wishing to learn Czech for a variety of reasons. Over the course we had two different teachers, whose personal skills and research interests enhanced our learning and understanding of Czech language and its history. A few of the optional lectures covered Czech architectural and art history which were particularly useful for me (despite being new to the language) as an Masters Student with an interest in Czech art. There were also weekly excursions to sites of interest in Moravia, including the beautiful Renaissance town, Telc, the Moravian Caves and, of course, to Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat Villa in Brno. Overall I feel that the course not only taught me some of the basics of Czech language but also encouraged an understanding of modern and historic Czech culture.

## Our ninth year = Fundraising events 2007

Members and friends have contributed liberally to maintain the work of the Fund and over the past financial year £2375 was raised by donations and a number of familiar fund-raising initiatives. Two lectures were organised by the Committee this year in addition to other social events.

In April a surprisingly large number of interested members and parents heard Dr Barbara Skarabela of the Linguistics and English Language Dept. of the University of Edinburgh deliver a fascinating and informative talk entitled "Raising Children Bilingually –Challenges and Rewards". Many in the audience had Czech or Slovak as their mother tongue and were parents of youngsters living and growing up in Scotland and thus a lengthy question and answer session followed. The evening resulted in much practical advice and reassurance from Dr Skarabela. The issue of playgroup and nursery provision for those with bilingual expectations was also briefly aired and this certainly will be given further consideration by a number of parents present on the night..

In June, Tony and Olga Franks once more cordially hosted the Annual AGM and Garden Party in their gracious and spacious St Alban's Road garden. Although the afternoon was threatened with rain, the occasion was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all present. On this leisurely summer Sunday the food and drink was plentiful, delicious and beautifully presented, as ever. The Committee would like to thank all who donated numerous prizes for the inevitable raffle and those who contributed to the cuisine and refreshments on offer.

The Annual AGM of the Fund was held prior to the Garden Party and chaired by our Honorary President, Professor Peter France. The year's activities and finances were reported to the meeting including the encouraging fact that in March the Fund's reserves stood at £4477. Three bursaries worth £1890 were awarded to students attending Summer Schools in Edinburgh and Brno this year. Duncan Spiers, our Treasurer since the inception of the SCSSS Fund, announced his resignation at the AGM. The Committee would like to record their gratitude to Mr Spiers for his stewardship and financial advice over the last eight years. The position of Treasurer is currently unfilled at the time of going to press. The Committee would welcome any nominations or volunteers for the position from the membership.

In June and September, Amanda Miller and Alena Linhartova organised and manned two car boot sales, which raised modest sums despite the time and effort expended. Contributions of books, bric-a-brac and plants for these sales are always welcome.

In September the Annual Lecture which is supported by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs was held in the civilised ambience of The French Institute in Randolph Crescent. The illustrated lecture on The Life and Work of Alphonse Mucha was given by the artist's grandson and is described more fully elsewhere in this newsletter.

Hala Belloff and Lida Paterova at the SCSSS Fund Garden Party 2007

