The Polyglot

November 2005
Volume 5, Issue 2

Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department of Modern Languages Newsletter
Contact us: 507-389-2116

25 Years of French Study Abroad Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato

The Summer Study in France Program began in 1981. Initially students spent the last week or so of July visiting Paris and various sites around the French capitol. They then went to La Rochelle where they spent the month of August living with French families and taking classes at the Institut d’Études Françaises. In 1983, the program changed a bit. Students began spending the last two weeks of June in Paris and Normandy and the month of July in La Rochelle.

While in Paris, the students visit the following museums: Salvador Dali, Cluny (basically Medieval), Orsay, the Louvre, Carnavelet (the history of Paris), Picasso and Rodin. During their free time, they are able to visit other museums that interest them. They also visit the following chapels, churches and cathedrals in and around Paris: Notre-Dame, Sainte-Chapelle, la Madeleine, la Trinité, Sacré-Cœur, Saint-Pierre, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Germain des Prés, Saint-Denis and Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis. Excursions are organized to these castles and palaces: Fontainebleau, Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles. They also take a trip to Epernay where they tour the Castellane champagne producer and learn how this marvelous beverage is made.

After ten days in Paris, the participants head for Normandy where they visit Giverny (site of Monet’s gardens and home) and the American Art Museum, the cities of Lisieux with its splendid basilica and Bayeux with its famous tapestry and cathedral, Arromanches with its D-Day museum and landing beaches, and the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach. They also tour what is considered to be the eighth wonder of the world, the Mont-Saint-Michel.

While in the beautiful port city of La Rochelle, participants enjoy wonderful weather, sandy beaches, bountiful seafood, weekend excursions and excellent courses in language, culture and contemporary civilization.

Students who are interested in France and its rich culture and history can participate in the first two weeks of the program. They do not have to speak French. More than 400 students have taken advantage of this program which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Many have gone twice and several have done so three times. Information is available in the office of the Department of Modern Languages (507-389-2116) or from Dr. Janc, the program’s only director (507-389-1817 or john.janc@mnsu.edu).
Dr. Janc and some of the students in La Rochelle, France

Congratulations on running this wonderful program!

Don Quixote Across the Disciplines: Unraveling Myth(s)

The conference was held on the MSU campus in the middle of October 2005. It opened with a Don Quixote Poetry Recital on Tuesday afternoon, October 11, where students and faculty read poems in Spanish from Cervantes’ masterpiece or poetry about Don Quixote. While Spanish clearly dominated this event, poems were also recited in German, French, Korean, Japanese and English. About 80 people attended the recital.

The conference itself was unusual, unusual in the positive sense. As promised by the two main conference organizers, Dr. Kimberly Contag and Dr. Jim Grabowska, this was not the straightforward “academic” conference, but a fun academic conference that was truly interdisciplinary. While the audience and conference participants were treated to many interesting papers on a wide variety of topics and traditions, they were also invited to explore food, music and dancing from the period, courtesy of the MSU Music Department, to view Quixotic art created by MSU art students and to see a performance of Man of La Mancha by the MSU Theatre Department. The conference came to an end at the Manchegan banquet, where diners were surprised by windmills on each table that elementary students at Jefferson Elementary School had created especially for this dinner and where diners were treated to Vihuela music performed by Philip Rukavina. While organizing a conference clearly is an exhausting task—and I came across visual evidence thereof the following Monday, when I found Jim Grabowska exhausted and lying on the floor in the main office (actually, he might have been photographing the windmills before returning them to the students)—this conference was very enjoyable to attend. Congratulations to everyone who helped make it a success!
Each Fall Semester, during International Education Week, Dr. Enrique Torner sends out a call for participation in the International Poetry Recital. This year, he found himself in the unusual situation of having to organize two poetry recitals, the Don Quixote Poetry Recital and the International Poetry Recital. With the wonderful technical support of Shirley Nieto-Flores, who created the power point presentations for both recitals that made it easier for the audience to follow along either in the original language or in translation. Both events were a great success! Thank you, Shirley and Enrique! I would also like to thank the sponsors of both recitals, the International Student Office, who provided refreshments, and the Department of Modern Languages, the Office of Institutional Diversity and Memorial Library.

Each year, the International Poetry Recital attracts a diverse group of participants, students from the language classes at MSU who recite poems in the languages they study—this year students from Dr. Torner’s Readings in Spanish literature course read poems by Spanish authors or poems they themselves had written some of which are featured in this edition of the Polyglot; students from Dr. Tomany’s Norwegian and Swedish courses recited poems in a variety of Scandinavian languages, and students from Dr. Peterson’s ESL courses recited poems in their native languages. But participants are not only drawn from the language classes but come from the wider student and faculty body at MSU, or even the Mankato community. Students, faculty and community members recited poems in the following languages: Japanese, Spanish, Norwegian, Nynorsk (New Norwegian) and Danish-Norwegian, Creole, French, Swedish, Finnish, Korean, Yiddish, Nepali, English, German, Old Norse, Catalan, Middle High German, Latvian, and Dakota. As diverse as the languages were, so were the recitals of the poems. Ikars Justin Sarma lives in Mankato and recited his own poetry in Latvian. Particularly moving for me were the last two performances in the Poetry Recital in Dakota, those by Gwen Westerman Griffin, professor in the English Department and the Dakota Hymn beautifully sung and accompanied on the guitar by Mandy Nelson, Brittany Stephens and Rogene Crawford. But absolutely mind-boggling was the performance by four-year old Luna Moreno who recited from memory the rather lengthy “El renacuajo paseador” by Rafael Pombo. She deserved the standing ovation given to her by the audience! Well done Luna!

Poetry Written By Students of Dr. Torner’s Literature Class

“Amor Incompleto”, by John Baquero

Quiero besar sus labios, pero tengo miedo.
Quiero tocar su mano, pero no puedo.
Su cara parece similar a un gran angel,
Como una suava manta, se parece su piel.

No se si puedo hablar con alguien como usted.
Me pongo nervioso cuando oigo su voz,
La quiero mas y mas como estoy lleno de sed
Cada dia que pase que no estoy con usted.

“Incomplete Love”

I want to kiss your lips, but I am afraid.
I want to touch your hand, but I am unable to.
Your face is that similar to an angel,
Your skin is like a smooth blanket.

I don’t know if I can talk with anyone, like I can with you.
I get nervous when I hear your voice,
I love you more and more like I am full of thirst
Each day that passes that I am not with you.
"Palabras Congeladas", by Summer Wenger
Las palabras vuelan en círculos sobre mi cabeza
y caen como granizo por el piso
Me molesta el significado congelado
Me molesta la calle única que usa mi maestro.

Siempre estoy atrapado en un laberinto de palabras insignificantes
Hay partes de mi cerebro que han estado muertas por años
Las grietas del arte y del movimiento encubiertas de polvo

Tengo una actitud para aprender
Pero nadie me invita
Tengo el regalo de una perspectiva única
Pero nadie tuvo el gozo de abrir mis pensamientos
Soy un creador de cosas tan bonitas
¿Por qué no quieres ver mis creaciones?

Finalmente es el fin de clase.
Salgo por el corredor cuidadosamente
Para no caer por el hielo sobre el piso.
Voy por las calles a caminar libre de mi jaula

"Operación no hambre", by Cassie Fleischer
Es la víspera de Todos los Santos
Y llevo un traje que da mucho miedo.
Mi plan es causar a los niños llantos
Y robarte el dulce de los dedos.

Sí, soy estudiante de la universidad,
Pero no tengo nada y dulces quiero.
Además, ellos van a darme su piedad
Porque mi necesidad es sincera.

"Helado", by Sheila Shetka
Helado
Suave y frío,
Dulce.
¡Ah, chocolate!
Helado
En mi estómago.
¡Qué bueno!
¡Ah, chocolate!

"Frozen Words", by Summer Wenger
The words fly in circles around my head
And fall to the floor like hail
Their frozen significance bothers me
The single road my teacher uses bothers me
I am always trapped in a labyrinth of insignificant words
There are parts of my brain that have been dead for years
The crevices of art and movement are covered in dust
I have the ability to learn
But no one invites me
I have the gift of a unique perspective
But nobody has the joy of opening my thoughts
I am a creator of very beautiful things
Why don’t you want to see my creations?

Finally, class has ended
I go out into the hall careful
Not to fall on the ice on the floor
I go out into the streets to walk free of my cage

"Operation No Hunger", by Cassie Fleischer
It’s All Saints’ Day’s eve,
And I am wearing a disguise which scares people to death.
Mi plan is to make children cry,
And steal sweets from their fingers.

Yes, I am a college student,
But I don’t have anything, and I want sweets.
Besides, they are going to give me mercy,
Because my need is sincere.

"Icecream", by Sheila Shetka
Icecream,
Soft and cold,
Sweet.
Ahh, chocolate!
Icecream
In my stomach.
So gooood!
Ahh, chocolate!
A Unique Perspective On the Poetry Recital

Robert Bly once said something to the effect that music goes directly to the gut while poetry must unfortunately first pass through the brain before it gets there. Being an avid fan of poetry recitals, I can attest that, even though hearing a poem read is far more preferable an experience than just reading one for yourself, it is not a given that the full impact of a poem reaches the heart as well as the sound does. By impact, I mean that a poem must, according to many accomplished practitioners of the art, make sense as well as sound and one that makes sense but does not please the ear is not exactly a respectable or significant exemplar of what poetry is about.

It may well be that only a few are fortunate enough to witness a truly unique experience. Certainly, shaking hands with the president of the United States is a rare experience, but it is not an entirely unique one, because there have been a goodly number of presidents, and a new one every four years or so. Therefore, what I regard as a truly unique experience has to be one which has not happened before and may not happen again, I do hope I am wrong on the latter because there is no reason an event I had the privilege of witnessing recently cannot happen again.

The International Poetry Recital held on November 16, 2005 at Minnesota State University in Mankato, Minnesota was just the kind of experience I am thinking of. Before I walked into the assembly place I had no inkling that a modestly advertised poetry recital would drawn an audience of close to 100 listeners. Well, this recital did, and the audience found an opportunity to hear some 50-odd poems presented by 41 readers in no less than 18 different languages. In the face of these statistics, many a poetry recital could seem pale in comparison.

The planners of this event deserve much praise. To enhance the ability of the audience to experience poetry more fully than is usual, they had wisely decided to use a Power Point presentation to project the texts of each and every poem on large screens bracketing the podium. What was even more special was that both the original text and its English translation were shown simultaneously on side-by-side screens. That gave each one present an opportunity to get the gist of what the poem has to say without extensive familiarity with the language of the original before hearing its music. I certainly found that most of the time I could close my eyes and concentrate on how the sounds underline the word images. Having captured ahead of time the core of the poem, I was able to enjoy the feast for the soul and mind that good poetry surely intends to provide.

While it cannot detract from the most positive overall satisfaction gained from the event, it is possible there were some attendees whose enjoyment might have been limited, depending on their background, to a given specific few of all the poems recited. I certainly found only a few cases where I had to try to read both the texts during the recital, and that was so only for the lengthier pieces where there was not enough time for scanning the text prior to its performance. The recital was a bold undertaking, and it would be nice to see it tried again. It deserves no criticism.

We must remind ourselves that poetry is, primarily and beyond all the nice things that are said about it, a performing art. Anyone who has not had the opportunity to hear a poem read to him or her out loud by someone else will never realize how that beats just reading it by yourself.

Written by Ikars Justin Sarma

Ikars Justin Sarma is from Latvia and now resides in North Mankato. From an early age, he has written fiction, in particular poems, which he writes in English and Latvian and which have been published. He has won prizes for his poetry. He thinks of himself as a student of poetry and languages more than being a poet.
News From Scandinavian Studies

Classes in the spring (4 credits each)
SCAN 299 The Vikings in Scandinavia and the British Isles (in English), MTWH 9-9.50.
SCAN 499 Contemporary Scandinavian Film (in English), MW 1-2.50
SCAN 102 Elementary Norwegian II
SCAN 295 Elementary Swedish II
Requirements for a BA Minor in Scandinavian Studies: 20 credits, for a Major: 32 credits. For information, contact maria-claudia.tomany@mnsu.edu

Exchange Programs
The Scandinavian Studies Program has been working with the International Programs Office on establishing exchange programs with the Telemarken University College in Norway and Halmstad University College in Sweden. From the fall of 2006 on, students can go and study in Norway or Sweden in programs lasting anywhere from two weeks to a year. All classes except language courses can be taken in English. Students will receive MSU credit for their studies abroad. Course offerings are varied and very interesting, ranging from wetland biology to outdoor sports management.

Summer Programs in Scandinavia
A number of Scandinavian universities offer summer programs to foreign students. Students can take classes in their majors and/or intensive language courses. Some of the oldest and most successful programs are in Bergen, Uppsala, Reykjavik, and Kopenhagen but many smaller universities offer innovative and fun programs, too. The application deadlines are around February 1, 2006 for the coming summer. Any students interested in spending two to eight weeks on such a program can find forms, information, and help with the applications in Dr. Tomany’s office (218 E).

Scandinavian Students Skiing Retreat
Every year, the Scandinavian Studies programs in the Midwest organize a skiing retreat in Eau Claire, WI. This year, it will take place from February 17-19, 2006. The Scandinavian Studies program supports every student who has taken a class in Scandinavian Studies during the school year, by covering transportation and the costs for the hostel in Eau Claire.

Spanish Movie Night
¡Hola amigos!

Last September I started something called Spanish Film Night. My intent with this initiative is to expose students, especially students of Spanish, to significant films made in Hispanic countries within the last five to ten years. A group of us have been getting together every other Wednesday from 5:30-8:00 at the Casual Learning Lab (basement of the library) to watch a movie and, sometimes, to have a discussion afterwards. People who have been coming have improved their Spanish listening skills, have learned more about the culture of some Spanish speaking countries and have become familiar with very important personalities in the Spanish speaking world such as Ernesto “Che” Guevara. We would love to have you join us. Our last movie this semester will be on November 30th. We will be watching the Puerto Rican movie “Sudor Amargo” (2004). But, we will be back on February 8th, 2006. Look for the announcements at the beginning of the semester or contact me. ¡Hasta pronto amigos!

Submitted by Silvia M. Roca-Martínez
silvia.roca-martinez@mnsu.edu
Language Club News

Scandinavian Club Activities
On December 3, we will go to the Twin Cities to visit the Swedish-American Institute which is housed in the palace-like former home of an early Swedish immigrant. The holiday decorations are famous, as are their book- and gift store and the cafe. Birgitta Hendrickson, professor of Scandinavian languages and German at MSU until her retirement this summer, will give us a special guided tour!

On December 8, we will have a Greta Garbo Evening and watch one of her great movies - a feast for all lovers of early Hollywood movies! Popcorn and soda will be served.

December 13 is the day of Santa Lucia in Sweden. We will meet for a session of music exchange - bring any music you like, any style, Scandinavian or otherwise, and your ipods, portable cd-players etc. and headphones so we can introduce each other to some new stuff. There will be pizza, and for dessert the typical Swedish saffron buns (“lussekattor”) of the Lucia Day.

News from the ever-growing German Club
Drinking their dark hot coffee after a hard day of studying, students greet each other with a hearty “Wie geht’s?” Both fluent and struggling speakers converse about sundry topics with fellow German Club members. This is a scene at German Club’s weekly conversation at the Hub Café. It remains our most attended event. Any and every topic is discussed: movies, current events, history, German culture and homework are just a few.

Two Pretzel Fundraisers were held this semester with great success. You may have seen members of the German club selling the warm, soft, pretzels near Sandellas, Barnes and Noble or in the halls.

Other events this semester included an evening of bowling and an expression of environmental care with the club’s Adopt-A-Highway clean-up. Members at the recent movie night viewed Das Vergessen and enjoyed German style popcorn (with butter and sugar).

German Club is also sponsoring a trip to the Twin Cities where members will dine on authentic German cuisine and explore the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. This will take place on December 4th.

Tuesday (through Finals week) from 5:00-6:30 at the hub Café.
Tysen Dauer, German Club Secretary

French Club Activities
The French Club had a game night on Sunday, October 16 and a movie night on Thursday, November 10 during which students watched “Les Choristes.” It is planning a holiday party on Sunday, December 4.

“Language Clubs are made up of wonderful people with a genuine love for languages and cultures.”

Tysen Dauer, German Club Secretary
Faculty News

Dr. Kimberly Contag attended El encuentro sobre la literatura ecuatoriana Alfonso Carrasco V, a writers conference, sponsored by the University of Cuenca in Cuenca, Ecuador November 21-25. She met with Ecuadorian writers in preparation for her new research project on Fantasy and Realism in Ecuadorian Literature written since 1975.

Dr. Jim Grabowska’s The Challenge to Spanish Nobility in the Fourteenth Century: The Struggle for Power in Don Juan Manuel’s Conde Lucanor, 1335 has been published by Edwin Mellen Press. The press also offered the conference organizers a contract to publish in book form, selected papers from the Don Quixote conference held in October. Dr. Contag and Dr. Grabowska will edit this book.

Dr. John J. Janc attended the fall conference of the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures on October 20-21 in Brooklyn Park. He served as show manager for the exhibits and gave two presentations. One dealt with what is going on in France today and the other dealt with the use of cohesive devices in language teaching.

This summer Patricia Longwell traveled and studied in Spain. She visited friends in Valencia and Madrid, and spent several days in Sevilla and Palma de Mallorca. The most sensational tourist site was the Oceanogràfic in Valencia, a gigantic, new aquarium and sea world, which is well worth the four to five hours one needs to see everything.

Dr. Evelyn Meyer’s article “Gender Erasures, Knightly Maidens and (Un)knightly Knights in Hartmann von Aue’s Iwein” has been accepted for publication by Neophilologus. She also gave a presentation at the Don Quixote conference on “The German Tradition: (Mis)Readings of Don Quixote,” a presentation she is currently revising for publication.

Dr. Enrique Torner organized and led the Literary Translation Workshop, Upper Midwest Translators & Interpreters Association (A Chapter of ATA) 3rd Annual Conference (Bloomington, MN, September 24, 2005) and a Literary Translation Workshop: “Translating Don Quixote”, Don Quixote Across the Disciplines Conference, Minnesota State University, Mankato, October 14, 2005. His article “Translating for the Publishing Field” will appear in January 2006 in the ATA (American Translators Association) Chronicle. He also organized the Don Quixote and the International Poetry Recitals in October and November 2005 at MSU.

News From A Former Student

Kelly Murphy, a 1995 graduate of MSU, received her bachelor’s in Spanish and is still pursuing her academic goals. She is currently working on her master’s in Linguistics at Arizona State University and hopes to continue on to obtain her Ph.D. Her thesis topic is Hawaiian Intonation in Hawaiian Creole English. "The professors at MSU in the Modern Languages department helped me build a strong foundation in language acquisition and analysis. Everything I have learned in my Spanish courses I have used in my master’s courses in linguistics. I’ll never forget the Don Quixote class I took from Dr. Contag! I participated in the Mexico study abroad program with Dr. Heise, which was an invaluable experience."

Best wishes to you Kelly as you complete your Master’s degree and move on into a Ph.D. program!