

Christmas Carols Singing and Mikulášská

by Dana Havlik
photo Gregg Iskra

On Sunday December 3rd the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association Singers performed traditional Czech, Slovak and American Christmas carols in the 150-year-old St. Wenceslaus Church in Baltimore. The small choir has been led for many years by their music director Greg Satorie who has Czech and Irish ancestors, grew up in Nebraska, (where there is a strong Czech community) and enjoys our culture, songs, and music.

As he does every year, St. Nicholas (Svatý Mikuláš) and an angel made their appearance after the singing and brought goodie bags filled with chocolates for the good children who

attended. Over 30 children came to enjoy this traditional holiday event with their families and enjoyed singing along. After the program, attendees joined the social gathering and enjoyed refreshments, homemade pastries, and Christmas cookies with a cup of tea or coffee in the cozy, festive church dining room.

We would like to thank the wonderful people from the St. Wenceslaus congregation who always welcome us to the beautifully decorated church and create a magically homey atmosphere that brings us all together during this special time of the year.

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2023 Mikulášská at St. Wenceslaus Church in Baltimore

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Children's Language School resumed the Spring online classes the week of January 8, 2024. The Czech beginner's class will meet on Fridays at 6 PM. Advanced speakers will be meeting on Mondays at 4:30 PM. Slovak Language children's classes continue to meet on Sundays starting on January 14, 2024: beginners at 9 AM, advanced speakers at 10 AM. For more information, or to register a student, please visit our website at <https://cshamaryland.org/>

ADULT LANGUAGE SCHOOL

CSHA is one of the few organizations in the USA that offers Czech and Slovak language instruction for adults. Beginning, intermediate and advanced online classes are offered on Saturday mornings. Spring semester classes will begin on January 13, 2024. For more information about the spring semester, please see the registration form, and contact Lois Hybl at 410-243-1710 or e-mail: LHybl@verizon.net or info@cshamaryland.org.

HERITAGE SINGERS

We welcome singers of all voice parts. Contact Margaret Supik (443-739-2025) for more information or if you want to join. Future events will be announced on the CSHA website <https://cshamaryland.org> and our Facebook page. Our next singing opportunity will likely be Memorial Day at the Bohemian National Cemetery.

CSHA ONLINE - For more information about any of these activities, joining Heritage Singers or to register for classes, you can contact CSHA at: info@cshamaryland.org.

The CSHA Board of Directors will respond to answer your questions and provide information, and we are eager to hear your ideas and suggestions. Also, please check our website www.cshamaryland.org and follow us on Facebook at Czech and Slovak Heritage Association of Baltimore.

OCTOBER 2023

The 35th Annual CSHA Festival was held at the Legacy Hall in Sykesville, Maryland on Sunday, October 29, 2023, 12-6PM. Please save the date, Sunday, October 27th 2024, for next year's 39's CSHA festival.

DECEMBER 2023

The traditional Christmas Carol singing at St. Wenceslaus Church in Baltimore was on Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 2PM. We are already coordinating with Mikuláš and Anděl to bring children traditional goodies next year as well and the event will be on Sunday December 8, 2024 .

FEBRUARY 2024

The CSHA General Meeting will be held in-person on Sunday February 18, 2024 at 2 PM. The location will be announced shortly.

CSHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

OFFICERS:

President - Petr Justin
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HLAS - Dana Havlik - editor
Olga Mendel - graphic design

If you have any suggestions or comments or want to contribute to the Hlas by writing an article, email us at info@cshamaryland.org.

President's Message

Dear friends,
The end of the year is approaching. On behalf of our Association, I would like to thank all the members for supporting our mission. Whether you are a student at our language school, participate in our events, or donate money, we very much appreciate your interest in promoting the languages, cultures, traditions, and history of the Czech and Slovak nations.

Special thanks go to our volunteers. The donation of your time and effort has made a significant impact on our organization. We are grateful for your enthusiasm and dedication.

We wish you all joy and good spirits during the holiday season. All the best in the coming year and we look forward to seeing you in 2024.

Warmly and se srdečným pozdravem,

Se srdečným pozdravem,



Petr Justin - CSHA president

The 35th CSHA Festival

The 35th Czech and Slovak Festival, on October 29, 2023, was a great success and the attendance exceeded our expectations at our new location, Sykesville Fire Department's Legacy Hall in the lovely Carroll County countryside. We were honored to welcome representatives from both the Czech and Slovak Embassies - the Ambassador of Slovak Republic Radovan Javorčík and the first secretary, cultural attaché of the Embassy of Czech Republic in Washington DC, Jan Woska, as well as the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland to the State of Maryland, Richard Poremski. Over 560 guests attended the event, roughly 200 more than any other year, plus over 100 vendors and performers. Based on the feedback we have received, our visitors were satisfied and enjoyed themselves. That is our goal and that is why we organize the festival - to give back to the community that has supported the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association for 35 years.



Music and dancing at the festival

Three traditional meals were served, and we offered a variety of homemade pastries, cookies and desserts baked by La Bohemia Bakery. We provided expertly grilled hot dogs and bratwursts, and tended a bar well stocked with a variety of Czech and Slovak beer and liquor. We also hosted a dozen popular vendors who offered interesting traditional arts, crafts, sweets, pastries, calendars, handmade gifts, clothing, and jewelry. Instead of just a children's table, we set up a special room for our youngest visitors to allow plenty of space for their art projects, coloring, glass painting, face painting and tattoos. The always popular raffle offered a bigger variety of prizes including gift baskets for children and adult winners, and all the proceeds benefited CSHA.

Pajtaši once again provided an authentic and lively atmosphere with their Czech and Slovak folk music. They also accompanied the dance lesson given by Roman and Simona and drew an enthusiastic crowd to the dance floor. This year we had three performances by our sister organizations - gymnasts from Baltimore Sokol and Amerikan Sokol Washington, and a children's singing group from Slavic American Sokol.

Thanks to all our volunteers, we could not have presented a successful festival without them and their time, their willingness to help, their passion, and their love of our traditions. We hope they also enjoyed their time at the festival, and that they will consider helping us again next year. We also thank the friendly and very accommodating Legacy Hall staff as well as the CSHA Leadership and Festival Committee for their hard work and dedication over the several months of preparation. The festival would not happen without them! We look forward to seeing everybody at next year's 36th festival - October 27, 2024, at Legacy Hall in Sykesville.

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Beautiful interior of St. Wenceslaus Church in East Baltimore



Heritage Singers Caroling



Children with Mikuláš and Anďel

Adventures in Learning Czech

by Sarah Kaderabek

Brain Shock

When three of my Czech cousins announced in early 2019 that they would be coming to visit (and didn't speak English), I thought "No problem! I'll knock off this language in six months max!" It would be my fourth language after English, French and Russian so really, how hard could it be? The answer: VERY HARD. Four and a half years later, I still struggle. A lot. But now I think I have figured out what works for me, and I am still motivated to master the language of my grandparents. Here are some thoughts about my Czech language learning journey.

Find yourself a conversation tutor and/or private teacher to complement your group classes.

One good thing to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic was the pivot to virtual classes—which enabled me and others living far afield to attend the Baltimore CSHA classes. All those hours at home left me wanting more, however, so I supplemented the group classes with both an informal conversation tutor and a private teacher. Since the latter lives

in Prague, we can meet online very early in the morning before my workday starts. (Admittedly it is not ideal to be bombarded with Czech grammar at 7 a.m., but this has been working okay for me.) The more speaking practice, the better.

Take advantage of all the incredible online resources.

Where to begin?

When I was learning Russian in the '80s there was one textbook. One. It was laughably inadequate for learning to communicate, but it was all there was at that time. Fortunately, the 21st century has brought with it dozens of perks for language learners. Virtual classes, interactive grammar exercises, YouTube videos, podcasts, Česká televize online, word games, e-books—there are countless resources that are not just helpful, but fun. I have my favorites bookmarked so that I can sneak in a game of Czech Wordle or Pexeso while I'm waiting for the bus.

And speaking of fun, I am a strong advocate of children's books and programs. The vocabulary is often quite basic, words and phrases are repeated, and I think many of the stories encourage

creativity and creative learning that are beneficial at any age. I love to read the Mach a Šebestová stories of Miloš Macourek, and then watch the corresponding animated TV clip on the internet.

Pursue your favorite hobby, but try it in Czech.

I'm a hardcore yoga devotee. Before I had even arrived in Poděbrady for the 2022 summer language program, I had located a yoga studio in town and started learning all the body parts and yoga terms in Czech. Yes, it was a little terrifying to be the only foreigner in the class, but after a few sessions I felt very comfortable there. Whatever your life passion, try pursuing it in Czech just to shake things up.

I'm also a dedicated Czech dumpling devotee. I decided that learning some model sentences with the word "knedlíky" in each grammatical case would best help me remember the declension patterns:

Dva knedlíky?! Ne, ne. Dám si pět knedlíků, prosím. Dám si svíčkovou s knedlíkem, prosím. Sním o knedlíkech... And so on.

Cut yourself some slack.

The perfectionist in me has a very hard time letting go of my inner critic. I envy people who can speak without worrying about proper case endings. If things aren't going well, I tend to work harder and try to cram as much as possible into my brain. When I returned home from Poděbrady, my brain was fried. It had essentially shut down from overuse on the Czech front. I decided not to fight it, but to give myself a two-week hiatus, which I affectionately called my brain consolidation phase. I was stunned to discover how much easier everything was after that break. Wow. Now I know that time off is just as important for learning as time spent working—something I had always heard but never believed until I experienced it myself. So, be kind to yourself and remember why you want to learn Czech.

Read, write, speak, listen.

When I first started madly learning Czech in preparation for my cousins' visit, I told my private teacher that I wanted to focus exclusively on family and food vocabulary. No writing, no reading, little grammar. Of course, that wasn't really feasible, but it worked okay for a short-term goal. Keep in mind that in the longer term, you're getting an incomplete cultural picture by focusing on only one thing. So, explore reading, writing, speaking and listening with equal fervor. I exchange regular emails and text messages with my cousins now, so I'm glad to have been spending time on writing.

Phase 2: Progress (with Lots of Plateaus)

I sincerely hope that my terror phase of learning Czech has passed. It took a year before I no longer felt scared and intimidated by my private teacher and could look forward to

our meetings rather than dread them. And it wasn't she who had changed; I was finally learning to relax and enjoy myself. After all, Czech is my hobby, so there is not a big career issue on the line here. I've learned that some days/weeks are better than others, and that the plateaus are natural. Just like with anything in life. Enjoy.

Selected free online resources:

Reading comprehension <https://lingua.com/czech/reading/>

Listening comprehension <https://slowczech.com/> and <https://ceskepodcasty.cz/podcasty/cestina-s-michalem>

Games, grammar exercises, reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary, etc. <https://www.umimecesky.cz/>

Practice test for Czech permanent residence (lots of practical vocabulary) <https://cestina-pro-cizince.cz/trvaly-pobyt/a2/en/priprava-na-zkousku/modelovy-test/>

YouTube videos to prepare for Czech permanent residence exam (the situational videos are A1 and A2 level and are less than two minutes, with helpful phrases and vocabulary) <https://www.youtube.com/@zkouskazcestinyprotrvaly369/videos>

Educational materials for children on Czech TV <https://edu.ceskatelevize.cz/>



Sarah travelling around the Czech Republic

A Short Dialogue with Poet Marta Hlušíková by Alexander Parmley

A few months ago, my Slovak language teacher, Natalia Karlinsky, reached out to me with an opportunity: interview her friend and fellow writer Marta Hlušíková. Write about and raise American awareness of the poet, well-known within her own literary sphere, but perhaps not to the wider Slovak diaspora. Natalia is, and always will be, a huge proponent of sharing Slovak culture. It only took reading a few of Marta's poems for me to agree to help.

Marta Hlušíková is an exceptionally accomplished writer. She has penned more than twenty books of prose and three collections of poetry and received over a dozen literary awards. Her work has been featured in numerous publications and prestigious collections, foreign and domestic. Her words have been translated into at least six languages. When I ask about her journey toward becoming a poet, though, she offers a humble view of the matter: "Poetry found me as an author. It entered my life inconspicuously."

By the time Marta published her first collection of poetry, *Kamene* (Stones) in 2003, she already had a long and celebrated career as an author – particularly as a writer of children's books. "Poetry has become part of my profession," she says. "All my life I have tried to make sure that young people take from poetry the beautiful and wise things that exist within it."

Naše oči boli	Our eyes were
downútra	swords
obrátené meče	pointing inward
Tolko sme si povedali	We said so much to each other
a pritom sme	but at the same time
premlčali	we stayed silent
celý večer	all night

Dialóg / Dialogue

The themes in the poet's verse reflect a perspective that is at once both personal and universal: change, the passage of time, loss, identity. "These themes cannot be avoided," she writes. "Time took my husband and I had to find myself. Identity – am I still me? The same as when we were two?"

Family plays an important role in Marta's work. When I ask her about the personal meaning behind the poem *Naši starkí*, she replies, "It is a micro-view of the world of my in-laws. They were kind people who respected each other." She recalls, "My

Na druhom brehu života	–Naši starkí / Our Old Ones
stoja naši starkí	Our grandparents stand
Akoby to nevedeli	on the shore opposite life
On sa smeje	As if unaware of it
a ona mu	He smiles
odfukuje	and she blows
smietku na golieri	a speck from his collar

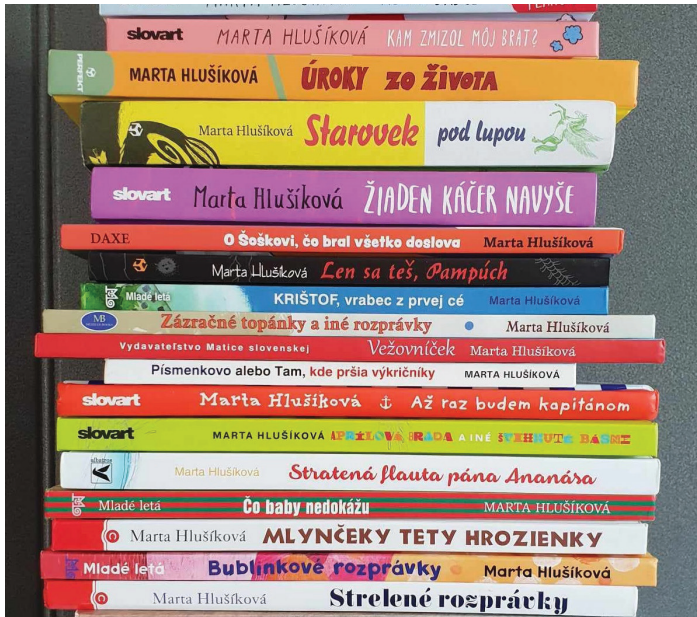
mother-in-law once found my poems, which were just being created, on my table. I found her crying. She must have been touched by my words. That's when I realized how close we are to each other."

Marta's poetry is concise and evocative in imagery and style. Its elegance, to some extent, lies in its ability to express so much in such a short space. I asked the poet about her choice of form and its effect on her verse. "I don't choose the structure or form of the poem," she replies, "both emerge from the thought I want to share. I don't even know if they improve my poetry or not. It happens automatically."

She echoes this sentiment, of heart guiding hand and expression superseding form, when I ask about the role the Slovak language plays in her poetry. "Slovak is my mother tongue," she writes, "and it is suitable for expressing all possible situations. It has many synonyms, many lexical devices. In the poem, I usually choose a word dictated by my head and heart, which are holding hands."

Working behind the scenes to bring Marta's poetry to life in English is another woman, Margaret Supik. A skilled translator and longtime collaborator of Marta's, Margaret strives to identify and preserve the meaning in the poet's words – not always a simple task, given the cultural and linguistic barriers that exist between the two languages.

"Sometimes difficulties [in translation] arise," Marta notes. "For example, in the poem *Návraty* (Returns), a desire of parents to return to the land of goodness – that is, to childhood – is indicated. I tried to express it through the example of a typical children's game known to older people, in which children make a hole in the ground and drop balls into the hole with their finger. The image that life often takes away the possibility of return. I expressed it poetically, *len ktosi jamku zobral* – someone just took the hole. Sometimes we want to go back to our childhood, but we can't." The difficulty, she notes, is that



Books by Marta Hlušíková

Americans are not familiar with the game. “I secretly hope that the descendants of Slovaks and Czechs living in the USA will ask their grandparents.”

In reflecting on her greatest achievements in poetry so far, Marta offers a characteristically modest perspective. “I am happy when I write a poem and feel that I have managed to give an appropriate shape to the idea. Those are my happiest moments, during the process of creation. For me, the moment when I express myself poetically and have put down everything I want to say to the reader, albeit on a small surface, is invaluable.”

Alexander Parmley is a student of the Slovak language who hopes to someday live and work in Slovakia. He enjoys exploring Slovak culture and history with his wife, Sam Latza. When Alexander is not writing or studying language, he works as a creative video professional.

Czech and Slovak Recipe Corner:

by Dana Petran

Stuffed Pork Roast (Nadívaný bůček)

INGREDIENTS:

- 4-5 lb of pork belly
- 1 spoon of caraway seeds
- Salt and pepper

STUFFING:

- 3 eggs
- 6 oz butter
- 1 cup of ham, smoked meat or liver,
- 1 cup of bacon cut in small pieces
- 2 cups of white bread or rolls cubes moistened in milk
- Italian parsley leaves, chopped
- Salt, black pepper and pinch of nutmeg to taste

DIRECTIONS:

- Cut a deep pocket in meat, preheat the oven to 400 F.
- To prepare the stuffing - mix egg yolks with salt, butter, and spices. Add bread and whipped egg whites. Stuff the meat, leaving about 1/3 space for stuffing to expand. Close the pocket using sharp toothpicks or a few white thread stitches.
- Rub the meat surface with salt and caraway seeds and place in the pan fat side down.
- Add a half cup of water or broth and bake covered until almost done.
- Carefully remove the pot from the oven, uncover, flip the meat, and cut about 1 inch squares through the fat layer. Finish baking without cover, basting a couple of times with fat and broth from the bottom, until the roast is golden brown and crispy, soft and juicy inside.
- Serve with boiled potatoes sprinkled with chopped parsley leaves, steamed vegetables and beer (adults only).



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Legacy Hall in Sykesville serving traditional Czech and Slovak meals to the members of Pajtaši band