Biliana Velkova: The Musical

What’s Up at the ICCC?

Northern Studies Students Grab Awards

Biliana Velkova, Canadiana poster for *Biliana Velkova: The Musical* on view at the Snelgrove Gallery, August 30–September 10
Celebrating our successes

DEAN JO-ANNE R. DILLON

Spring is a time to celebrate new growth.

Each spring, those of us who are gardeners carefully lift dead leaves to search for new shoots emerging from the earth. Likewise, in the academic world, it is a time when our graduates emerge after their years of hard work to find their way in the larger world.

On May 31, members of the College gathered to honour the brightest and most talented graduates at the annual Spring Convocation Awards Dinner and Ceremony. Through their tremendous work, these students are key advocates as our College moves toward being recognized as one of the most innovative and imaginative centres for arts and science scholarship in Canada.

I am proud of the accomplishments of our newest graduates, who are poised to make a difference in their professional endeavours and to the communities in which they live. Indeed, many students in our College have already begun this journey through volunteer work, research projects, cultural activities and by taking on leadership roles across campus.

This gala also honoured staff and faculty who have displayed excellence, commitment and passion for their work. The recipients of this year’s College’s Teaching Excellence Awards are Karen Lawson (Psychology) and Ken Wilson (Biology), who also won a 2009/10 Provost’s Award for Outstanding Teaching. Lorin Elias (Psychology) also received a Provost’s Award for Outstanding Teaching. Both students and colleagues commended these outstanding professors for their dedication, enthusiasm and innovation in the classroom as well as for providing the support and encouragement needed to enrich the learning process.

I would like to thank these professors—as well as those from our College who won USSU and other U of S teaching/research awards this year—for their commitment to making a difference. They include: Stella Spriet (Language & Linguistics), Carolyn Brooks (Sociology), Sarah Powrie (English), Braj Sinha (Religion & Culture), Margaret Crossley (Psychology), and John Tse (Physics & Engineering Physics).

The College depends on the many talents of our staff to function. As always, choosing a winner for the Dean’s Distinguished Staff Award was a difficult task for the selection committee. Each of the nominees make remarkable contributions to their units and the College as a whole. The DDSA for 2010 was awarded to Gary Brunet, Associate Director of Information Technologies. For more on this award, please see page 8.

If you know of a teacher or staff member who is doing exceptional work, I strongly encourage you to nominate them for the various College and University awards available in subsequent years. It is an excellent way to recognize those who consistently go “above and beyond” and say “thank you” in a meaningful way.

I wish everyone a relaxing summer, and look forward to working with you in the coming academic year on both ongoing and new initiatives that will continue making our College an excellent place to both work and learn.
Grad students cash in on ACUNS awards

BY KIRK SIBBALD

Three students have received prestigious graduate scholarships that underline the strength of Northern Studies-related programming in the College of Arts & Science.

For more than 30 years, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) has promoted northern study in several ways, one of which includes an extensive scholarship program for graduate students from the more than 40 ACUNS member institutions.

According to Alec Aitken, Professor of Geography and Planning, students in the College of Arts & Science have established a long tradition of excellence in Northern Studies scholarship and this is consistently reflected in the annual Canadian Northern Studies Trust Awards Program (CNST) offered through ACUNS.

“We have done very well this decade,” he said, “and even prior to that. We’ve often had multiple award winners annually.

“It speaks to two things, really. It speaks to the quality of the students we recruit, and they come here because of the prestige of the researchers at the U of S and our strong reputation.”

Carissa Brown, a PhD candidate in Biology, received one of six $40,000 Garfield Weston Awards for Northern Research (PhD) in 2009/10. Brown received this award for her research project titled, “Forest fire and tree line migration, northern Yukon Territory.”

Ross Phillips, a Masters candidate in Hydrology, received a $15,000 Garfield Weston Award for Northern Research (Masters). His research project is titled, “Runoff in a complex drainage basin near Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.”

Deanna Kimbley received a $10,000 Northern Resident Scholarship. Kimbley, a Masters Candidate in Native Studies, received this award for her research project titled, “The northwestern Saskatchewan Métis: conceptions of the trapline tradition 1918-1960.”

Aitken noted the significant esteem associated with these awards, and said the dollar values of the CNST awards are amongst the highest of all scholarships offered to graduate students in Canada.

“It really adds to the prestige of our faculty, students and departments when these awards come to the U of S,” he said.
If you haven’t heard the name “Biliana Velkova,” that may be about to change. The MFA student in Studio Art is unleashing a marketing blitz to promote her thesis exhibition: Biliana Velkova, The Musical.

Velkova’s work—which is at once charming, serious and alarmingly seductive—takes aim at our obsession in the West with fashion and fame, as well as the ease with which the media plays into our hunger for perfection. She is remarkably adept at expressing herself through a variety of media, including video, performance, painting and photography. She also uses humour, which she calls a powerful tool that allows her to reach out to people who might otherwise avoid her message.

Velkova’s avid interest in the panoply of shopping choices that face North Americans could very well be traced to her roots. Born in Bulgaria, she spent her early years in a decidedly non-consumerist Communist society. She and her family immigrated to Vancouver from Sofia shortly after the Berlin Wall came down, in 1991. Upon arrival in Canada, the huge number of choices available and the level of visual stimuli immediately overwhelmed her.

“In Bulgaria the stores were empty. Even if you had money, you couldn’t buy anything. The fact that I could go into a store and there were bananas and 20 kinds of bread was almost scary. Also, the packaging was really colourful, full of cherry reds and shiny things. In Bulgaria, when you bought something it was wrapped up in brown paper—whether it was books or meat, everything looked the same.”

Looking at magazines or television shows from the West was strictly forbidden in Bulgaria. Velkova’s idea of what it was like to live in North America was mainly shaped by bootlegged American movies—mostly musicals and films starring Dolly Parton, Burt Reynolds and Liza Minnelli—smuggled in by an uncle.

“The only TV show we got … was the 80s show Alf because it was non-threatening—it was funny and it was improbable, it was totally safe. I had this very skewed version of the West…this colourful, over the top view that you see in musicals.”

This lack of choice extended to Velkova’s career path. In Bulgaria, children were expected to follow in their parents’ footsteps. Velkova’s father was an artist and like him, she attended the academy for young artists and planned to go on to the National Academy. She had been training for almost four years just to take the three-day entrance exam when world events took her in an entirely different direction.
"My father was trained in the academy so he was doing the Communist murals on buildings depicting workers and tractors. I grew up in his studio and then I had to follow in his steps. You have to decide early on what you want to be. You don't have many choices; you just have one. You train like you're an athlete. You are taught art just the same way you would be taught chemistry or sports."

After the collapse of Communism, Velkova’s father wanted to get as far from Sofia as he could. Once the Canadian government accepted their visa applications, the family moved to Vancouver.

"It was not that my parents suffered physically, but intellectually...my dad wanted that freedom. For many years, he could only express himself one way, because art was the language of the Party. Yes, the Party gave him a studio and he could work freely as an artist, but only in the way they said. It was a propaganda machine, basically."

It wasn’t until she arrived in Canada that Velkova learned that other types of art existed. While at Concordia University in Montreal, she became acquainted with performance art and different types of sculpture—"sculpture that wasn’t just a statue"—as well as installation art and video art. After completing her BFA at Concordia, Velkova came to the University of Saskatchewan to pursue her MFA as well as to work with Alison Norlen (Associate Professor, Art & Art History), who is now her advisor.

To create her thesis exhibition, *Biliana Velkova, The Musical*, Velkova is incorporating the symbols of Communism and consumerism, which represent the two sides of her identity. She considers the musical an ideal form in which to explore concepts of identity, truth and lost history. The project is also a “consumerist self-portrait,” a satirical look at herself “becoming this consumerist person devouring accoutrements and choices of the West.

"In America, you don't have to do much to be famous, it's all marketing...you can manipulate the media, you can build yourself a famous persona.”

With encouragement from her professors, she is also exploring her own “lost history” in her thesis, specifically the period after the Wall came down.

"That winter we didn’t have a history exam because our teacher said that everything we learned, it’s been a lie... I saw an ideology crumble—something you believe or were made to believe all your life and work for all your life—it’s gone, just like that. And then you have to start believing in something else."

Velkova was taught that the Party was like a mother whom you must love and respect unconditionally. To question anything about it was forbidden. Travel was also not allowed so she only saw one point of view. She watched the Wall come down on television and the next day, the prime minister who had been in power for 35 years was gone. To experience the demise of a belief that was so big was liberating for Velkova.

"Now I can make up whatever history I want because I have that blank space.”

She is busy doing just that—making up a history that will include everything from a marching procession of Communist-era East German cars to the strip malls and fast food restaurants on 8th Street. Through the act of rearranging these symbols and layers of her history and identity, she hopes to find a middle ground, one that might even fill the blank space.

*Biliana Velkova, The Musical* will be shown at the Snelgrove Gallery from August 30 to September 10, with a reception on September 9. To watch the trailer, go to: http://artsandscience.usask.ca/news/event.php?newsid=1570
The Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity (ICCC) was officially established in 2008 and the staff, headed by Director David Parkinson, has been working since then on a number of initiatives that focus on both interdisciplinary and community-based partnerships. With Parkinson’s appointment as the College’s Vice-Dean, Humanities & Fine Arts effective July 1, 2010 (see box), the ICCC is now in the process of identifying an acting Director for a one-year term beginning on that date.

Parkinson said rumblings for the Centre began several years ago and stemmed from a lack of structures in the College, and University-wide, that would encourage interdisciplinary work.

“People really wanted to work across departments, but what was preventing that was that there was no structure to support it,” he said. “If we wanted to make (interdisciplinary programs and partnerships) sustainable, we realized we needed to create a new way to offer them.”

Sabrina Kehoe, research coordinator for the Division of Humanities & Fine Arts, said that momentum behind the ICCC started to pick up in 2007, following a University-led task force with a mandate to examine centres across campus.

Although most centres on campus were strictly research-based, the recommendations arrived at by this task force encouraged centres to focus on both research and programming. Because the ICCC steering committee was envisioning programming as an essential component of what they eventually wanted to be, these recommendations prompted them to seek approval for the Centre from University Council, which was granted in May 2008.

“Once we had the structure approved, that was huge,” said Kehoe. “It was very meaningful, in that it inspired hope that we can do things in a different way and the University will support these kinds of initiatives.”

Following council approval, support for the ICCC continued and, according to Kehoe, was “almost overwhelming.” The ICCC received funding from PCIP—the most money PCIP had ever approved for a centre on campus—and was also listed as one of the University’s most important initiatives in the Second Integrated Plan.

Parkinson explained that because universities across Canada have been placing an increased emphasis in recent years on knowledge transfer and community partnerships, one of the ICCC’s first objectives was to explore options in this regard. They consulted with various community groups...
and decided to take over the Ideas to Ivory Tower (I2I) discussion series, which had been running in the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts for the past few years. This discussion series flips the traditional community-university dynamic, inviting members of the public to the U of S and encouraging them to ask scholars for help with their ideas and/or projects.

The first of these I2I consultations under the aegis of the ICCC took place on Feb. 17, 2010 when Jeremy Morgan from the Saskatchewan Arts Board led a discussion on campus to explore the possibility of University researchers assisting with projects in the provincial arts community.

“From an artist and scholar’s perspective, these (community) partnerships are very important,” said Parkinson. “As researchers at a publicly-funded institution, we have to consider the whole issue of accountability: What really is your work doing in the world and what are you contributing?”

“It’s important from a student’s perspective as well, because it’s critical that education is seen to involve an intense connection to the community. What so often happens is that students become interested in a subject area and then face a real crisis: What is the relation between what I’m learning and what I’m practicing.”

In addition to the I2I series, the ICCC is in various stages of establishing other research-related initiatives. Several working groups and research fellowships are being developed, and Parkinson said he also hopes to recruit and establish a faculty research chair in the coming months.

On the programming side, the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies (WGST) will officially become a program in July make its new home in the Centre. An MFA in Writing is in the final stages of consideration and approval and will likely be offered through the ICCC in September 2011. Similarly, a new graduate course, Reading French, is already being offered.

The ICCC also has a physical space secured. Room 1007 in the Arts Building is being renovated over the summer and Parkinson hopes to hold an official grand opening before the end of this year.

“Each of these steps in procedurally huge,” said Parkinson. “I feel what has happened during this year is that we’re now beginning to develop synergies and a record of credibility. It’s becoming more and more obvious that this is no longer simply a place where people have invested some hope. It’s also a place where people are beginning to see some kind of returns.”

As for the future, Parkinson doesn’t expect the ICCC’s current momentum to slow much in the coming years.

“What’s likely to happen as the centre moves forward is either it decides to be tiny-perfect, or it decides to expand and go for more money,” he said. “I would expect that very soon we will be looking at the serious need to do some fundraising.”

**Parkinson appointed Vice-Dean, Humanities & Fine Arts**

David Parkinson, Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity, has accepted the appointment as Vice-Dean, Humanities and Fine Arts in the College of Arts & Science for a five-year term, effective July 1, 2010. Parkinson considers this opportunity to work with colleagues across and beyond the College of Arts & Science on interdisciplinary initiatives the highlight of his career.

“Our Humanities and Fine Arts may be stretched, but their strengths are more apparent than ever,” he said, “and the next few years will bring exciting change. I look forward to advocating for the Division and the College, and to supporting their strategic initiatives, not least the Clarion Project.”

Parkinson pursued studies in English literature at the University of Victoria, McMaster University and the University of Toronto, earning a PhD at the University of Toronto. His dissertation titled “Flyting and Abuse in Scots Verse 1450–1580,” concerned the exchange of insults in literary form. His current research concerns elements of continuity in late-medieval and early modern Scottish literary culture. Since 1983, Dr. Parkinson has been a member of the Department of English in the College of Arts & Science. In 1995, he was awarded the Teaching Excellence Award by the University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union.
As one can imagine, being responsible for the efficient and proper operations of Information Technologies (IT) in the largest College at the U of S is no easy task. However, under Gary Brunet’s direction, it’s generally smooth sailing on the Arts & Science IT networks.

Brunet won the Dean’s Distinguished Staff Award for 2009/10, which was presented on May 31 at the College’s annual Convocation Awards Banquet. The award winner each year receives a certificate and $1,000 cash prize.

Brunet has been employed with the College of Arts & Science for the past eight years, first as an IT Audit Project Leader and currently as Associate Director of IT. His many nominators commented on Brunet’s exceptional organizational skills, and his efforts to create a respect-based and collaborative work environment can be summed up in the mission statement he created for the College’s IT unit:

“The mission of the A&S IT is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, respect, friendliness, individual pride and team spirit. Simply put, you must always treat people the way you would like to be treated.”

His staff said they are consistently thanked and recognized for the work they do, and feel appreciated for what they bring to the IT unit. Brunet has also worked hard to establish positive relationships with various other departments, units and individuals on campus, which have facilitated many important initiatives in the College. Examples of these partnerships include the podcasting project (in collaboration with ITS and EMAP), the Arts & Science Channel/Tab (PAWS group) and bulk computer equipment purchases (Campus Computer Store).

One of his nominators summed up Brunet’s contributions with the following statement:

“Gary solicits tremendous loyalty from the many staff he directs as indicated by this nomination. The morale, behaviours and attitudes among the IT team can be, in a very large way, attributed to Gary’s leadership....The responsiveness and efficiency that Gary expects from his office has significantly reduced the down-time experience by faculty, staff and researchers which has a positive impact on productivity and the bottom line.”

The other nominees were: Sabrina Kehoe, Research Facilitator, Humanities & Fine Arts; Brenda Weenk, Administrative Assistant, Chemistry; Kenneth Thoms, Technical Staff, Chemistry; Nik Thomson, Administrative Assistant, English; Stephen McLeod, Facilities Manager; Lori Giles, Department Secretary, Sociology; Gloria Brandon, Coordinator of Student Academic Services; and Rhoda Miko, Administrative Assistant, Drama.
The Clarion Project promises to shape the cultural landscape beyond the University of Saskatchewan campus, bringing together people from all disciplines to generate synergies between the arts, science, medicine and business.

What is the Clarion Project?
The Clarion Project is a vision for an enhanced creative environment at the University of Saskatchewan that would promote innovative arts programming and multi-disciplinary programming, and would ultimately build a new fine and performing arts facility.

How was “the Clarion” name selected?
This name and visual identity was selected in September 2008 to encapsulate the project’s long-term vision and core message. A clear and melodious instrument, the “clarion” articulates both the artistic impulse and the signal for support. Extensive community consultation has shaped the vision for the Clarion Project, and the chosen visual identity symbolizes the triad of partnership between government, community and university.

Where is the Clarion Project in terms of University of Saskatchewan Board of Governors approval?
The Clarion steering committee is seeking approval from the Board of Governors before proceeding with the next stages for the Clarion Project. In June 2009, the idea for the Clarion Project was presented to the University’s Board of Governors as an informational item. The concept for the Clarion Project elicited a positive response from the Board. In October 2010, the college will be seeking formal Board 1 approval. The support of the board, government, prospective donors, faculty and students is paramount.

Has a site for this facility been finalized?
The College Quarter land is under consideration. College Quarter refers to University-owned land between Cumberland and Preston Avenues, and College Drive and 14th Street. Because the University is also planning to construct new student residences in this area, the exact location of the Clarion facility remains uncertain. The University’s designer is still finalizing these plans. However, there has been space reserved for the Clarion facility in the University’s College Quarter preliminary master plan.

What has the reaction been from the Saskatoon arts community?
The College has held many consultations with Saskatoon and Saskatchewan arts communities about the Clarion Project, resulting in positive feedback and enthusiastic support. From the outset, the Clarion Project facility was envisioned as complementing the many performance venues that already exist and thrive in Saskatoon. It would be a place to create and strengthen partnerships between the University and community, and would fill a niche for community groups who want to host small-to-medium-sized cultural events.

How do you plan to fund this project?
The College and University are working towards developing a mixed funding model for the Clarion Project. The model would consist of various funding sources, including government, private individuals, industry and a loan.

How can I get involved?
Dean Dillon would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about all of the ways to both shape and support the Clarion Project. Regular consultations will be taking place with faculty and staff in the College. All colleagues and students are encouraged to participate in this ongoing dialogue. Visit the Clarion website, which features a short film created by students at: http://clarion.usask.ca/
Rita Hamline receives CIHR awards

Rita Hamoline, a PhD candidate in Sociology, was awarded a $20,000 CIHR TUTOR-PHC fellowship (Transdisciplinary Understanding and Training on Research-Primary Health Care), a CIHR funded initiative to train researchers who work in primary health care research. She is one of 14 students from across Canada who will receive this training and the only award recipient from Saskatchewan this year.

Hamoline also received the Frederick Banting and Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarships–Doctoral Award. Both of these highly competitive CIHR awards were based on the research Hamoline is undertaking for her PhD dissertation, “All in a day’s work: A qualitative exploration of primary care physicians’ work.” In accepting the awards, Hamoline acknowledged the mentorship of her graduate supervisor, Dr. Roanne Thomas-MacLean, Department of Sociology.

Carl von Baeyer receives award

Carl von Baeyer is the recipient of the Canadian Pain Society’s 2010 Outstanding Mentor Award. The award honours “…a researcher and/or clinician who consistently exemplifies outstanding mentorship in the training of future pain researchers and/or clinicians.”

Von Baeyer received his award at the CPS meeting in Calgary in May. Many PICH (Pain in Child Health) trainees and faculty contributed to the nomination of von Baeyer for this award.

YWCA honours Women of Distinction

Colleen Dell, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and School of Public Health, received the YWCA Women of Distinction Award in Science, Technology or Research. Dell shared the award with Sharon Acoose, a PhD candidate in Health and Epidemiology.

Forty-five women from the Battlefords Tribal Council exhibited their photographs at a gala at the Western Development Museum in North Battleford on June 2. The exhibition was part of a photo-voice research project initiated by Jennifer Poudrier (Associate Professor, Sociology), that examines perceptions of healthy body weight among First Nations women. Poudrier, who worked with community-based researchers on the project, interviewed the women about the photographs they chose to take, as well as their perceptions of health and body image.

Women exhibit photos as part of research project
Physics students awarded prizes at CAP Congress

Two graduate students from the Department of Physics and Engineering Physics received prizes in this year’s student competition at the Congress of the Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP), held June 7–11 at the University of Toronto.

Robin Kleiv, a PhD student in Professor Tom Steele’s group, received First Prize in the Theoretical Physics competition for his presentation on “Mixing between Quark Mesons and Scalar Gluonium.”

Jason Sadowski, an MSc student under the supervision of Professor Kaori Tanaka, received Second Prize from the Division of Condensed Matter and Materials Physics for his presentation on “Nanoscale Inhomogeneity in a Superconductor.” Jason studies the impact of atomic scale inhomogeneities on properties of superconducting materials.

Music student wins competition

Chelsea Mahan, a student in the Music Education program, recently won the Manitoba/Saskatchewan Young Artist Competition held in Saskatoon. She defeated the representative from Manitoba in a one-on-one competition.

For winning this competition, Mahan will receive a fully-funded 10-city tour of the two provinces including Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Yorkton, Brandon, and Winnipeg (and others, T.B.A.). The judges were Mezzo Soprano, Lisa Hornung and Regina composer/pianist David McIntyre.

Mahan is a vocal student of Dr. Garry Gable, and also works as a vocal coach with Kathleen Lohrenz Gable. Mahan marks the sixth winner of this competition for the Gables since 1997.

Beamteam students receive NSERC scholarships

Four PhD students in Physics & Engineering Physics have been awarded a total of $252,000 in scholarships from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). The four—John McLeod, Robert Green, Teak Boyko and Adrian Hunt—are working together on materials science projects as part of Canada Research Chair Alexander Moewes’ eight-member “beamteam” at the Canadian Light Source (CLS). Each student will receive $63,000 over three years. The funding will allow them to continue their research and attend professional conferences.

Bill Waiser launches new book

Former Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas and his many achievements have long been in the spotlight. But who were the people working behind the stage or in the wings who helped make the Douglas years such an exciting period in Saskatchewan history? Bill Waiser (History) and co-author Stuart Houston (Professor Emeritus, Medical Imaging and Radiology) have put the spotlight on them in their new book, Tommy’s Team: The People Behind the Douglas Years. (Fifth House Publishers).

For current news & events, visit our website at http://artsandscience.usask.ca
Physics & Engineering Physics

100 Year Reunion

Join us in Saskatoon on Friday & Saturday Sept 24-25!

In 2010, our department of Physics and Engineering Physics will be 100 years old. We have laid claim to many firsts in Canada: the betatron, the Cobalt 60 unit, the Tokamak reactor, the linear accelerator and the Canadian Light Source. What a tradition of excellence!

Mark your calendar for the weekend of Sept. 24-25, and plan to be in Saskatoon to catch up with alumni from all years and your favourite professors.

Presentations by Hugh Wood, Jack Cunningham, Karen Chad, Bahrad Sokhansanj, George Sofko, Doug Cormack, Kelly Paton and more!

Welcome Reception Hosted at President Peter MacKinnon’s House

Saturday Night Banquet at Dakota Dunes Casino!

Early bird registration ends soon - register today!

http://physics.usask.ca