

UKRAINIAN SUN

Oleksander Koshetz - Ukrainian composer, choir master & musicologist

Submitted by Dr. Ihor Mayba

Oleksander Antonovych Koshetz was born in Romashky, Kaniv region, Ukraine on September 14, 1875.

His father, Anton Ihnatovych Koshetz - a Ukrainian Orthodox priest - moved his family to Tarasivka (Shevchenko land).

His mother was Evdokia Mykhaylivna Mayakovska.

Oleksander started theological studies in 1884.

In 1890 he attended the Kyiv Seminary and started a students' choir, worked with Artem Videl and was also a school teacher. In 1899, he was choir director of students at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy Choir.

In 1902 he was at Stavropol and lectured in history at the Teachers' Institute and was able to write down several Kuban Kozak songs. He returned to Kyiv in 1904 as choir director of the Kyiv Religious Academy. From 1906 - 1912 he was the protégé of Mykola Lysenko and studied music, composition and choral music. Oleksander organized and conducted choral music concerts to publicize the rich culture of Ukraine and to make other nations aware of Ukraine and her history. In 1915, he was a teacher at the Kyiv Conservatory of Music and director of the Kyiv Opera. Oleksander prepared five church services (liturgies) with music for mixed choir and for men's choir.

In 1917, the revolutionary Rada of Ukraine under Simon Petliura appointed him Minister of Culture. In 1919 the Bolshevik regime of Ukraine forbid Koshetz from performing with his choir and called him an enemy of the state.

The same year he organized the Ukrainian Republic's Capella of singers and toured Europe.

A year later he organized the Ukrainian National Choir and toured Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, Poland and Tiflis, Georgia, and also toured Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. His main purpose was to show the world that Ukraine had music and culture and national embroidered dress. His wife, Tetiana, toured with the choir.

He moved to New York City in 1926 and taught choir conducting and composition. During the summers of 1941 - 1944, he conducted Ukrainian choral music seminars in Winnipeg under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Federation.

Oleksander Koshetz died in Winnipeg on September 21, 1944. He received Ukrainian Orthodox funeral rites by Archbishop Ioan Theodorovich, Reverend I. Dmytriw and Reverend W. Kudryk. He is buried in Glen Eden Cemetery.

His wife Tetiana (Feorhievska) was born January 25, 1892 in Vinnytsia, Podolia Province, Ukraine. She remained in Winnipeg and was curator of the Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural Centre and the Ukrainian National Federation Museum. She taught choir, singing, and voice and gave courses in Ukrainian folk art. She conducted Winnipeg's Koshetz Choir from 1943 - 1966.

Tetiana died March 26, 1966 and is buried next to her husband.

Walter Kymytkiw became director of the Ukrainian National Federation Choir in 1951 and was associated with Mr. Paul Macenko and Tetiana Koshetz. He became conductor of the Koshetz Choir after 1966. With Kymytkiw the choir toured and sang in Ukraine in 1978. Walter Kymytkiw continued as choir director until his death on December 4, 2000.

William Solomon was assistant director of the Koshetz Choir beginning in 1965.

Other choir directors were: Roman Worobec; Corinne Villebrun, assistant director and conductor of the Children's Choir and Ladies' Choir; Walter Zulach; Tetiana Radianova; and Lawrence Ewashko, guest conductor who also gave choir seminars. Since 2008 the current choir director is Miroslava Pachtes.

Leo Mol created a bronze bust of Oleksander Koshetz and the Ukrainian Post issued an envelope with a fixed stamp of Koshetz in 1999.

On Friday, May 1, 2009 at 7 p.m., the Koshetz Choir will have a concert, dinner and draw at Canada Inns Garden City. Tickets are \$60 and available from choir members, call 663-8423 or e-mail kwarmstrong@shaw.ca.

The O. Koshetz Choir will have a joint concert with the First Mennonite Church Choir, the Winnipeg Children's Choir and the Children's Choir of Sts. Vladimir and Olga on June 7, 2009. The concert will be held at 2 p.m. at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, Bannerman Avenue and Arlington Street to benefit projects of Children of Chornobyl Canadian Fund.



Tetiana and Oleksander Koshetz

Ukrainian Canadian Events in Winnipeg are under the Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Provincial Council compiled by Sylwia Totaschuk 586-3445. (Please phone with further events in the Ukrainian community).