

THE
GRIFFIS ART CENTER

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-in-RESIDENCE PROGRAM – MAISON des ARTISTES
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT USA

Nickolay Vasilev PETEV

2010 Griffis Art Center's International Writer-in-Residence
Bulgarian-American Creative Society
Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria
(1951 – 2012)



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Nikolay Petev is born on the 10.08.1951. In 1975 he finishes Journalism in the USSR. He works as an editor-in-chief in the “Native Speech” magazine from 1982 to 1985. From 1985 to 1991 he is a director of “Popular Youth” publishing house. From 1991 to 1996 Nikolay Petev is owner and director of the “Petex” and “Petexton” publishing houses. From 1996 to 2003 he is a general director of the “Hristo Botev” publishing house. Since 2003 up to present he is chairman of the Bulgarian Writers’ Union. From 2005 he is also a chairman of “Sofia Press Agency”.

Nikolay Petev is author of the following books: “Here in Time”; “Poetry and Position”; “The Lighthouse and its Guardian”; “Behind the Curtain of the Political Theater”; “The Lighthouse, the Guardian and the Wind”.

Some of his books have been published in Russia, Macedonia, Serbia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Italy, and Albania.

His first book was honored the “South Spring” prize for best debut in 1982. Nikolay Petev is winner of the National Botev Prize; of the Russian “Imperial Culture” prize; of the Serbian “Arch” prize for best foreign book in 2007. He is also the first winner of the Macedonian Literature Prize “Bookish Dedal”.

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On the occasion of the Farewell Reception for Nikolay Vasilev PETEV and Teodora ILIEVA

DON'T YOU SELL, MY DAUGHTER

By Nikolay Petev

The chimney of the great-grandfather's old house is smoking. It raises some new, white, as if strange messages to the stars. They are incomprehensible at least to me. Who is sending them? Who understands them? I am certain about one thing – the old house is telling us something new. My little daughter lived there - that is perhaps the reason why. Obviously she is sending them. I wonder what she is saying to the dark sky and to the frosty twinkling stars. With what is it different from message of my childhood, and this of my grandfather Nikola? And why am I so much interested in it? People desire to understand the ones they love. (The fathers are keen on their daughters and the other way around. This has its scientific explanation.) I love her so much that I would like to teach her everything I know, to talk to her even when one morning I have flown away with the swallows to the stars. Frosty and warm, rising and setting down, eternal, they have always welcomed and sent off the people. When one day I won't be able to talk to her they will keep sending her signals. Raise your head and listen to them, my daughter. A man who never looks up to the sky is timid, maybe - reticent, furtive, backward.

My dear girl,

The new world will to be yours. Perhaps I won't be able to foresee it, to keep you and preserve you in my arms, in the nest, under a roof, under cover and with soul. You will be reading this letter once you have grown up and when you know much more about the world and about yourself. I wonder if you would find it pretentious. Trust me, I don't mean it that way. I just want to help you so that your life is full, deep, creative, smart and beautiful, as mine has been. Then when you have children, write a letter to them yourself! We have to do it.

My little girl,

I would like to advice you of one thing – keep your great-grandfather's house. Do not sell it! Don't do that for here your mother taught you the "I am Bulgarian ..." poem. My grandfather came here back



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from the war. Alive! Can you imagine what a joy it has been for the family? His beloved one waited for him and bore him two sons. This house has seen a lot of grief and joy. There is a verandah for viewing, a fireplace for warming up, flowers for decorating, a box shrub for bringing to the cemetery and a fir-tree for Christmas. It is so Bulgarian – with the stone water spout, with the well and the table under the shed – a place for chatting and thinking. This is your homeland. I know the world will keep becoming smaller and smaller, but this homeland of yours will always be as great, if you keep experiencing it with all your Bulgarian emotionality and realizing its uniqueness with all of your intellect. You understand what I mean, don't you? People will offer you a lot of money, but don't sell it! I live in times when the big money defeats the big ideas, but I believe that the wind of men's sky will change its direction. At the sundown of my days I will do the impossible (believing people will be more mature) for you not to bow down. You will face the time right in the eyes. Someone may tell you money is eternal just like the stars – obliterate this person. He is the Devil. Believe the one who is eager to do Good, the one who brings Change. He is the Seeker and the Bugler. Follow him, do as he does. And you shouldn't be afraid that you will perish quickly. Trust everyone; don't believe in the existence of liars. Honesty will save the world. Manipulation will impair it. A white neighbor woman will teach you how to make bread. Don't you ever sell it, either.

And now, my daughter,

Keep writing messages to the stars from the fireplace of great-grandfather's house – what a nice occupation for a one-year-old!