Alumni Spotlight: László Kőrössy (‘08)

László Kőrössy completed the Humanities, Philosophy, and Social Sciences tracks and graduated a University Scholar with degrees in History and Politics. As if that wasn’t enough to keep anyone busy, he also translated an epic poem before he graduated.

He was sitting in one of his HSSS classes when he was inspired to start translating a poem he had encountered years earlier. CUA Press describes the poem as “The story of the 1566 defense of the Fortress of Szigetvár against an Ottoman siege. After 33 days of fierce fighting, Count Miklós Zrínyi led the vastly outnumbered Croatian-Hungarian army in a suicidal charge into enemy lines. At the end of the day, the Ottomans had won victory, but at a terrible cost. Nearly 100 years later, in 1651, Zrínyi’s grandfather and namesake penned a 1,500-stanza poem to commemorate his ancestor’s heroism.”

Over the next two years, what began as just a stanza or two became an entire work. This is the first time that this poem has been translated into English. László feels that The Siege of Sziget has much to teach the world: “There is no nation that has a monopoly on righteousness, and the only true Hungarian, or Croatian, or Turk, is the one who lives humbly, righteously, and faithfully [. . .] I hope that this new translation will let that message shine through as crystal clear as it did four hundred years ago.”

He also speaks fondly of his academic experiences at CUA, saying, “It has, indeed, been a tremendous blessing to be able to delve so deep into something that’s very close to my heart. My history thesis and this project both have been ways for me to explore my own heritage and history, for which I’m thankful. That seemed to be the story of CUA for me: one terrific opportunity and experience after another. The Honors Program’s role in that cannot be overstated.”

László also completed a graduate degree at Catholic and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in public policy at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. The Siege of Sziget by Miklós Zrínyi is available through CUA Press.

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Hitchhiker Lecture Series

The Honors Upperclassmen Living and Learning Community in Gibbons Hall has started an exciting new lecture series entitled, “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Culture.” For each lecture, a professor is invited to speak briefly on any three topics that he or she wishes. The lectures are held on bi-weekly Fridays in the lobby of Gibbons, arguably the loveliest residence space at CUA. The idea for these lectures comes from Dr. Shawkat Toorawa, Near Eastern Studies professor at Cornell University. Toorawa began a lecture series he jokingly entitled ‘Everything Professor T. Thinks You Should Know but You Don’t.’ His lectures were open to the entire student body and lasted roughly 30 minutes.

The professors have relished the opportunity to edify the students on their favorite topics. Dr. Michael Mack, former Honors Program Director and current Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke on John Coltrane’s A Love Supreme, T.S. Eliot’s Little Gidding, and Barnett Newman’s Adam and Eve. Dr. Timothy Noone spoke on medieval manuscripts and roots music. Many Honors students have had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Noone play harmonica. Few have seen him play a no-holds-barred one-man jam session on harmonica and blues guitar.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

It has been an eventful semester. At the end of August, we welcomed 108 talented and motivated freshmen into the University Honors Program. The following week, nerves were rattled when an earthquake and hurricane struck Washington, DC, closing McMahon Hall for a week. (Marist Hall was closed for the entire semester.) Fortunately, students and faculty alike quickly settled into the rhythms of the semester: classes, homework, lectures, outings into the city, the fall hike, and study breaks in Regan Hall (the home of the Honors Residential Community).

I am pleased to announce that after a hiatus of several years, the Honors Program is again able to offer a spring break seminar program to our students and alumni. In March 2012, Associate Professor of German Dr. Claudia Bornholdt will lead a group of students on a trip to Vienna, Austria, where they will learn about art, historic churches, Habsburg palaces, and delicious pastries. We are currently planning future trips to Venice and Paris. Stay tuned!

Finally, I would like to ask for your help. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Honors alumni are the greatest asset of the program. We are constantly seeking to foster connections between current and former students. If you live in the Washington DC area and would be interested in sharing your insights on life after college, please let us know. And please do join us for our next alumni happy hour. (We'll be in touch.)

On behalf of the entire Honors Program, I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dr. Peter Shoemaker

Prelaw Luncheon

Four Honors students joined Honors alumna Molly Bryson, Esq. (’93) for a luncheon to discuss law school and careers in law. This is the second semester that Molly has led this activity. Students were required to submit a resume and a brief essay about why they are interested in law school. Attendance at the luncheon was restricted to four undergraduates in order to maximize the amount of personal attention. The group of students participating ranged from sophomores to a senior already in the midst of applying to law schools.

Each year, a number of graduates from the Honors program go on to Law school. This program is the beginning of a series of programs to support our graduates in planning for law school and graduate school in general.

After completing her B.A., Molly attended the Columbus School of Law where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the Catholic University Law Review. She is now a partner at Nixon Peabody LLC where she specializes in tax credit finance and real estate syndication. Earlier this fall, she traveled to Tanzania and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.

Students line up for Theater Tickets

When the staff got to the office at 8:55, there was already a line waiting at the door. Within ten minutes, all of the tickets were gone. What could inspire this sort of enthusiasm? Les Miserables!

Several times a year, the Honors Program and Residence Life subsidize tickets to a performance. Usually 10-20 tickets are available and they go quickly. This program allows students to take advantage of the great cultural institutions of DC at a price that college students can afford.

Tickets for this performance were only available to freshmen in the Regan Living and Learning Community, but performances later in the year will be available to all Honors students. Theater and musical performances of the past include Madama Butterfly, All’s Well that Ends Well, Aida and La Traviata.

Les Miserables represents one of the most accessible and familiar performances for undergraduates. The students had been lobbying for this performance for a month.

In the spring, we will be offering tickets to a performance of Eugene O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey into Night at Arena Stage. This work on addiction and family dysfunction won O’Neill a posthumous Pulitzer.
Above: Honors students with President Garvey after Freshman Convocation
Left: Students brave the rain during the annual fall hike on Sugarloaf Mountain.
Below: Honors student as the Iwo Jima Memorial.

Above: McMahon Hall during an unusual October snow storm

Above: On the Terrace of the John F. Kennedy Center.

Above: Tailgating for the first football game of the year.
Right: Junior Molly Thompson rowed with the New College team during her semester in Oxford.
As we come to the end of the year, we celebrate the generosity that makes this program possible. Please consider making a donation to one of the University Honors Program funds.

The Suziedelis Fund provides compensation for faculty invited to prepare new courses for the Honors Program, or, in the absence of such a program, any innovative course for undergraduates.

The Dr. Ingrid Merkel Endowed Honors Program Fund is used to provide financial support to the University Honors Program. Distributions for the fund may be used for costs of participation by Program students in international educational programs, study abroad programs for academic credit, or other educational or enrichment travel conducted in conjunction with the Program; travel and other costs of participation by Program students in scholarly, academic, or professional conferences; costs of participation by Program students in research projects costs of faculty development in furtherance of the academic mission of the Program; and other aspects of the Program at the Fund Manager's discretion.

Visit https://secure.imodules.com/s/817/internal.aspx?sid=817&gid=1&pgid=1257&cid=2610 and enter one of the two fund names in "Other."

We wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!