Youth Literature Festival

On 17 October, 2014 graduate students Bethany Wages, Ryan Eavenson, and undergraduate student Medina Spiodic from the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center participated in the annual Youth Literature Festival at the I-Hotel in Champaign, IL. “The Youth Literature Festival celebrates the value of literature in the lives of youth by bringing together local and national authors, illustrators, poets, and storytellers to share their stories, their craft, and their enthusiasm with children, teens and adults”(http://youthlitfest.education.illinois.edu/).

Along with many speakers, and children’s authors, there were many tables of fun activities for children to do literature themed crafts at and for parents to gain invaluable knowledge about the programs available in their city both on and off campus. This year there was a myriad of tables including coloring stations, caricature cartoonists, face painting and our ever popular firebird mask station.

In a flurry of red, yellow, and orange feathers, glue, beaked masks, and children, a mess worth making was made at our table. Kids ranging from sixth grade all the way down to pre-school joined us in making fearsome firebird masks as we told them the legend of the Russian Firebird, which was conveniently printed on bookmarks for parents and kids to take home:

“Ivan Tsarevitch came to the garden to stand watch, and he sat beneath an apple tree. He sat for one hour, two hours, and on the third, the entire garden suddenly lit up, as if illuminated by many lights. The Firebird glided in, landed on the apple tree, and began to peck at the apples. Ivan Tsarevitch crept up to the Firebird so quietly that he was able to grab its tail. But he couldn't hold on! The Firebird tore away and flew off, leaving Ivan Tsarevitch with only a single tail feather clutched firmly in his hand… This feather was so marvelously bright that if you were to take it into a dark room, it would seem that a great many candles were burning.” ~The tale of Ivan Tsarevitch, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf

Working with the children, making masks, and exposing them to REEE literature was a lot of fun, and the Youth Literature Festival was, as always, an amazing opportunity to tell their our community about REEE programs.

Balkanalia also played in the music room at the Youth Literature Festival. “Balkanalia, the University of Illinois Balkan Music Ensemble, performs traditional village, urban, and popular music styles of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey on indigenous, orchestral, and electronic instruments. Participants include musically gifted graduate and undergraduate students majoring in a variety of disciplines” (http://www.music.illinois.edu/current-students/ensembles/world-music). This year they played a selection of beautiful Bulgarian music and instructor Donna Buchanan gave the lively tales of each song before they played.

Additionally, as part of the Youth Literature Festival, REEEC sponsored an appearance by the young adult author Trent Reedy. He visited four middle schools in Central Illinois, where he spoke at assemblies, met with students, and signed copies of his books.
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