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OPINION

Letter from the editor: Dominic Erickson



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The cadence “I was adopted from Ukraine” is so familiar to me, like I could say it in my sleep.

When I was much younger, old people I had no recollection of would come to me in the grocery store and tell me that they remember when my parents brought me to town as a baby. I mean, I made the front page and all. “From Ukraine With Love” was the headline. I couldn’t write a headline like that in a million years.

Every single time I heard any mention of Ukraine (or “the Ukraine” as it has been commonly and erroneously referred to) I would perk up and share that I was from that country. I did geography reports in middle school on the place, and I would

often scour adoption papers, not written in English, to look for clues about myself.

So, as you can imagine, things started to get weird during the unrest happening around 2014.

The country was going through turmoil, and young people took to the streets to fight. I’m still not positive why, but I knew that this country I had always held close was in some trouble in the headlines.

A few weeks ago, my dad sent me a news article about a man who split his time between the St. Louis area and Ukraine and helped aid Americans in international adoption. His name was Serge.

In 2000, my parents spent 10 days in Ukraine when they went to pick me up. They stayed with a host family who fixed them food and gave them a place to stay, but I don’t think I was ever told their names. Maybe I was, but never with the same enthusiasm as when I was told about Serge.

They told me of a man that would navigate them through busy roundabouts in the metro area and drove them all about the city. I remember the way my mom said his name when talking about him. Serge. *Aww, Serge*, my mom would say. *He was the best.*

The article that my dad sent me said that a man named Serge that aided in Ukraine adoptions in the area was killed in a bomb. He had volunteered to check on a “commotion” outside a bomb shelter, according to KVRN, and was killed.

Immediately, I got my mom on the phone to try to piece together if this was him. She flipped through scrapbooks (for the love of God, hug the scrapbookers of

your family) and watched videos they took over in Mykolaiv. My parents were trying to look for similarities to see if it was truly him. I can about imagine that they looked through every last document and piece of footage that they had. They found a picture of the man that was killed, Serge Zevlever, online, and compared it to a video of a Serge holding me.

And to be honest, I still don’t know. It’s really close, but I just don’t know.

And do I have to know? For all those years, I had never really given Serge a second thought, even after hearing about him. I’ve never cared so much about *Serge* or my unnamed biological father or biological mother or biological anyone like this before.

The point is, a man with a popular Slavic name was killed by a bomb and it feels very personal.

I was born in Ukraine, nothing more. I was seven months old when they brought me to the States. I have no ties nor do I have any memory whatsoever of that place. I just do not know what to feel.

I have received messages from extended family members whom I have no idea got my number (they know it too, the way they introduce themselves in the text). I try to stay as informed as I can. I have found myself in a really weird situation.

Through the next couple of weeks, I hope to find the vocabulary to explain how I feel. There’s been a bit of a cloud looming overhead and maybe it’s because I’m trying too hard to find the words.

Please keep Ukraine in your thoughts and please be mindful of messages you send to people around you.



Serge Zevlever, who was killed in the Ukraine invasion. ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, 2022



A man named Serge who aided the Erickson family in Ukraine, holding baby Dominic. CORINNA ERICKSON, SEPT. 2000



The orphanage in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, were Dominic spent his first seven months. CORINNA ERICKSON, SEPT. 2000

Letter to the editor: Uyanga Naranbaatar



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My friend Aya Al-Shakarchi recommended me a book called “A Philosophy of Walking”

by Frédéric Gros during summer 2020. It started with the idea that we, as human beings, always walk to get somewhere. We walk from car to building, building to building and building to car. I agreed with that idea, so I flipped through the next couple of pages. No offense to Aya’s taste, but the book wasn’t really what I expected, so I didn’t flip any further until the day I had to return to the library.

About a month ago, the topic of “great learning” in my Religions of East Asia class made me realize that the idea of walking to get somewhere applies not only to walking, but also to everything we do. By everything, I mean everything. We do things to get somewhere. We don’t take a survey if there is a chance to get a \$10 Amazon gift card. We don’t attend event unless our professors offer extra credit. We do homework to get a decent grade. On the first day of class, a lot of students ask what the exam would be about and how they would be graded when talking about the syllabus. It’s awesome if we get good grades and show that we are intellectually competent, but I didn’t realize that our intention for getting a good grade was a problem for a long time.

A second problem highly embedded in the first is lack of inquiry or lack of purpose. I wanted to come to the U.S. to get a higher education. Later, I realized it was not enough. We don’t ask ourselves why we are going to school or doing certain things. It was very risky for me to come to a country where I didn’t know anybody and didn’t know the language well enough to speak or understand. Nobody would’ve known if I was kidnapped at Hector Airport in 2018. I didn’t ask myself why I wanted to be more educated, why I came to Concordia or why I wanted to major in what I study. I didn’t ask myself the deepest reason why I wanted to get an A. Now that I think back, I wish I didn’t memorize all the formulas, concepts and theorems to get an A because I don’t remember all of them today. I wish I understood the main concepts, so I would be ready to use them for projects after college. I wish I had stayed for five minutes after class to ask my professor how to apply what we learned to real-life problems, and what I could do to learn more, so I would’ve been a step closer to finding my passion.

Last semester, I took a film class and learned about “intertextuality,” which means getting a better understanding of something after gaining the foundational knowledge of the text and observing the relationship between two or more texts. For example, if you’ve watched a gangster movie before, you will enjoy and understand the second gangster movie better. Intertextuality can apply to any subject I can think of. If you watched a

YouTube video then read a two-minute article on sleep and memory, or if you took Introduction to Neuroscience, you might have a better understanding after going to the Concordia College Nornes Lectureship in Neuroscience than someone else who didn’t watch, read or take the class at all.

The simple terms of “great learning” in my religion class and “intertextuality” in film studies helped me to understand the more I learn about new things, the less I feel I actually know, which makes me want to learn more. As a result, my intention got clearer: learning to understand and enjoy what is happening around me better.

After these big realizations, I tried to figure out why I am here. The answer turned out to be finding out who I am and what I love to do. The answer might differ for everyone, but I believe that life is brighter and more exciting when you know what you want to accomplish every time you wake up. It might sound weird, but to figure out who I am, I take surveys even if there is no incentive. At the end of those surveys, I feel I am helping the people conducting the surveys even a little, and I know more about myself and my opinion on different topics. I try to go to different events, so I am learning about not only myself but also others who are organizing, planning and attending the event. So I would encourage everyone to start thinking about their intention and purpose.

Even taking surveys and going to events are good places to start.

Chapel Choir woes



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I still remember the last day of Concordia Chapel Choir rehearsal in 2020. It was a Friday, Mar. 13,

and we were supposed to go on tour the following Thursday. We sang a few songs from our tour set, hoping to end the week on a positive note. We were going into the weekend unsure if we would still be touring. As it turned out, we would not even make it to Monday.

Now, here we are, two years later. We have a new director, and we are away from campus today on our tour. The thing is, we will be back later tonight, and we will do the same thing tomorrow.

I feel let down by the choral administration.

I do not want the administration to tell me there are pandemic-related reasons why we cannot do an overnight tour. Other ensembles have gone on tours this year when COVID cases and death rates were higher than they are now in both the Fargo-Moorhead area and in the U.S.

The reason we cannot go back to our regular tour while other ensembles are is, in the eyes of the administration, we are worth less than flagship ensembles.

We will not visit any national parks or beaches. We will not stay in hotels, we will not do any home-stays and we will probably spend more time on a bus than anywhere else.

In the halls where echoes of a promised non-hierarchical choir program resound, I feel we as a non-flagship ensemble are brushed aside. Our tour would not go anywhere outside the Midwest in a pre-pandemic year, and I have no gripes about that or the fact our tour is only four days. I knew what I was signing up for.

There have continually been decisions made that put the Concordia Choir above other ensembles. The music administration and the Director of Choral Activities privilege the Concordia Choir above other

choral ensembles. I feel the Concordia Choir is even placed above other flagship ensembles whose semi-annual tours are only one week compared to the Concordia Choir’s annual two-week tour.

What bothers me is we will bus back and forth from Concordia for our field trips while other ensembles enjoy hotels and homestays for their tours. The Concordia Choir flew to the Southwestern U.S. for their two-week tour while we are not allowed to spend a night away from our beds.

I am very grateful for the opportunity I have to tour as a member of the Chapel Choir; Concordia’s Kantorei choir does not even get one. I understand the Concordia Choir has more donors giving more money than the Chapel Choir or Kantorei does. What I do not understand is how the Concordia Choir can receive such treatment by the choral administration while we are told there is no hierarchy.

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