

## New Neighbors Are In Town--Let Us Celebrate!

In the midst of current world events, it seems as though the promotion of cultural tolerance is needed more than ever. Since its founding in 1999, the Multicultural Center Prague has advocated international dialogue and learning among diverse cultures, both within and outside of the European Union.

“Prague is increasingly becoming a multicultural place,” said Director of Multicultural Center Prague, Jakob Hurrle. “However, how much do we know about our new neighbors?”

Holding the belief that multicultural coexistence is possible, the Multicultural Center Prague (MCP) focuses on the interaction and blending of different cultures, languages and religions in the Czech Republic.

While the MCP recognizes that a multicultural society can create tension and misunderstandings, they are confident that these societies help stimulate and enrich a population. For this reason, the non-governmental organization seeks to help people understand and explore this reality.

This October, the MCP will host its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual ‘Dialogue of Cultures’ featuring an eclectic program of film screenings, exhibitions, readings, and musical performances. The public will enjoy free entry to all activities, which will take place at the Municipal Library of Prague, in Kampa Community Centre, and in the arcades of Lucerna Palace and its Kávovarna Café.

“Each year, ‘Dialogue of Cultures’ gives minorities living in Prague an opportunity to present themselves to the wider public,” said Hurrle. “The festival is also

an opportunity for reflection about the way intercultural relations have evolved in the Czech Republic over the last years.”

According to Jarmila Neumannová, project coordinator of this year’s event, the theme, “The Neighbors from Around the Block” was inspired by the European project “Cultures from Around the Block.”

“Through eight local media projects, ‘Cultures from Around the Block’ supports the exchange of information about intercultural neighborhoods, and the experiences of grass-roots organizations,” said Neumannová. “This year we would like to focus on current or former neighbors who have come to the Czech Republic.”

The program, which runs from October 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup>, will include public debates at the Municipal Public Library, addressing students, adults, and professionals interested in multicultural issues. There will also be food competition, showing passer-bys a variety of ethnic soup. The public is invited to vote for the best soup from a selection that includes Bulgarian, Indian, Slovak, and Lebanese.

Children will also be able to spend an afternoon at the Kampa Community Center playing ethnic music and making art. Children can participate in making Japanese origami and calligraphy, as well as see and hear Romani dance and music and dance. They can also try African drumming or Hebrew writing, then listen to stories from Islam, or discover “Fairy Tale China.”

Throughout the weekend, there will also be several unique concerts. The first is Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, with Sagi, a band from the UK, playing Bhangra, an Indian style of music. Sagi will be followed by The Malik Pathé Sow Band, from Belgium, who combines traditional music of the Peuhl ethnic group and modern African rhythms.

If this isn't enough, the event wraps up on Sunday with a relaxing afternoon of readings on the topic of "Neighborhoods." Listen to writers sharing their individual outlooks on the importance of multicultural tolerance.

The Dialogue of Cultures is sponsored by *Cultures from Around the Block*, and also by the Czech Ministry of Culture, Prague 1 Municipality, the Delegation of European Commission, Visegrad Fund, and the European Cultural Foundation.

For more information, on *Dialogue of Cultures 2008*, or **The Multicultural Center in Prague**, contact:

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Word count: 551