

Artslink brings European artists to Madison

By PATT GERMANN

For Tatiana Tumasian and Iskra Dimitrova, the past couple of weeks and the next couple of weeks are the chance of a lifetime. Both women are spending a month in Madison and the surrounding area as part of the Artslink Fellowship program, which allows European arts managers to learn more about how the arts are administered in the United States.

This is the first trip to the U.S. for both women.

One of the immediate differences they found was the lack of cultural opportunities in rural America when compared with their own cities. They both come from large cities which are full of theaters and museums.

The visitors have found the people of South Dakota to be very welcoming and friendly. Dimitrova said she would describe South Dakota as "calm."

Iskra Dimitrova

Dimitrova is from Skopje, Macedonia, a city of 800,000, which is part of the former Yugoslavia. She said the situation in her country is still peaceful compared to other portions of what was Yugoslavia. But, she said, the Serbs are a very aggressive people so the Macedonians are unsure of what the future may hold.

Although she works as a technical

manager for a children's theater, she is also an artist. Her major project while in South Dakota will be to create a multimedia sculpture project. She hopes to include music as well as visual performing art.

Dimitrova's mother is an arts manager. She said she saw a lot of art around her all the time she was growing up. Although she didn't think she could be an artist, she found that it's what makes her happy.

She is a graduate of the department of sculpture of the Faculty of Philosophy. Dimitrova speaks English, Italian, French,

Bulgarian and Serbian. She is 25 and has a son.

Dimitrova is most interested in the art of Native Americans. She wants to work with natural materials while she is here. One of her goals is to introduce the art of her people to the people of South Dakota through lectures and programs.

Although there are some differences, neither woman has found the food to be greatly different from what they are used to, they said. They haven't found anything they don't like especially, they said. Dimitrova said she thinks the preoccupation with food is something strictly American.

"We don't have all those things on our food containers — like calories and fat and all that. I think there's a big preoccupation with food here," she said.

Tumasian said, "There have been some surprises here, but none I don't like."

Both artists will be visiting schools, museums and galleries in eastern South Dakota while they are here.

The women will be presenting a program Thursday at a noon Brown Bag at Smith-Zimmermann Museum. They will share information about their countries and answer questions. There is no charge for the program. Everyone is invited to come to learn a bit more about Macedonia and the Ukraine and the artists from those countries who are visiting in Madison.



Iskra Dimitrova