

## Dodona I. Kiziria

Professor Dodona Kiziria is known for her rare combination of extraordinary talents and unique abilities, which distinguish her from all of the other members of our Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. She has demonstrated her outstanding talents in her teaching and lecturing, her work on the Georgian language (her native language), and in the fields of Russian and East European literature and cinema. Each of these fields represents an important aspect of our colleague Dodona Kiziria, who is now retiring after a productive career as student, lecturer, and professor in the IU Slavic department.

Dodona's teaching has to be experienced to be believed. I thought I knew about it after reading dozens of testimonials from students and others as part of the process of compiling her tenure dossier, back in the 1980s. I knew that she was well-known for her teaching skills at Indiana University, and that she had won the prestigious Frederic Bachman Lieber Memorial Award in 1985, for which a plaque is on permanent display at the IMU. Yet I had not experienced her teaching for myself, until I attended a lecture she gave on her native Georgia, during one of the lectures in our Summer Workshop in Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages. Dodona Kiziria held the audience spellbound for the entire period. And she finished the lecture with the unexpected, yet dramatically appropriate gesture of pouring a glass of wine and toasting the audience. I suddenly realized that I had been a witness to a truly remarkable presentation, and it became clear that Dodona's fame as a lecturer was not just due to her vast knowledge of certain subjects, such as Georgia. Rather, it seemed to be a matter of an innate talent in the timing of words and actions, to hold the listeners captivated, much as an accomplished stage actress might. Her file overflows with letters from students who sincerely tell us how Dodona's teaching has changed their lives and given them a new perspective on learning. She has fulfilled her teaching mission in such an indelible and unforgettable way that our department will always take pride in this accomplishment. Her uniqueness in the field of teaching is so legendary that many students have been flocking to her classes in this, the year of her retirement, in order to experience her teaching at least once.

The field of Georgian is another major pillar of Dodona Kiziria's knowledge and persona. The author of Georgian grammars and textbooks, as well as an important Georgian-language poet in her own right, Dodona has single-handedly put our department on the map in this field as well. Her renown in the Georgian field extends far beyond IU, however, and she has set up or worked on Georgian-related programs for the U.S. State Department, Yale University, and Duke University, to name just a few. Although her Russian literature and cinema courses rarely permit her to offer Georgian during the fall and spring semesters at IU, she has regularly taught the Georgian language in our Summer Workshop, aided by her brother and niece, who specially fly to Bloomington to perform this important task. Since the status of Georgian evolved from a language of just one Soviet republic to a critical language of an independent state, its international importance has risen dramatically, and now the Georgian language is a mainstay of our summer offerings. This must be a great source of pride to Dodona, since she has long served as unofficial ambassador and interpreter of things Georgian. Anyone in our department would immediately think of her culinary abilities in the preparation of the famous Georgian cheese bread *khachapuri*, which Dodona often contributes to departmental receptions, where it always has the distinction of being the most eagerly awaited dish, and the first to be devoured by its many faculty and student devotees.

In addition to Dodona's vast storehouse of skills in teaching the Georgian language and representing its culture among us, mention should be made of her distinction as a Georgian poet. Legend has it that one of our colleagues once dropped the name of Dodona Kiziria in Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, and was immediately treated to an impromptu recitation of her poetry. Another colleague reports seeing a full-page Tbilisi newspaper article on Georgian poets, with Dodona Kiziria's portrait in the key central position on the page.

Dodona's eminent skills as a film specialist are yet a third major area deserving of recognition. Holder of a diploma from the All-Union Institute of Cinematography of the

U.S.S.R. and author of an IU dissertation on film, Dodona has combined cinematic expertise with her outstanding teaching skills. Small wonder that her film courses on both Russian and East European film have been a mainstay of the Slavic department and the Russian and East European Institute over the years. When we think of her rare teaching ability, her deep knowledge of Georgian, and her film expertise, we can only come to one inevitable conclusion: Dodona Kiziria will long be remembered as a remarkable member of our department, whose unique talents will never be duplicated. We wish her the best of good fortune in retirement and would like to offer her a toast as heartfelt as the one she used to close her lecture:

Me minda davlio sadġegrdzelo čveni dzvirpasi Dodonasi, romelsac čven dġes pãtivs vscent. Dodonas gaumarjos! Idġegrdzelo da ibedniero čvenma dzvirpasma kolegam Dodonam, Dodona, sul ġargad da janmrtelad gveq'olet!

I want to drink a toast to our dear Dodona, whom we are honoring today. May Dodona be victorious! May our dear colleague Dodona live long and be happy. Dodona, be well and healthy!

Ronald Feldstein