



CONSULATE GENERAL OF ROMANIA IN TORONTO

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AWARD

THE “INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN, PHILANTROPIST & CULTURAL AMBASSADOR”

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming at !! the ceremony organized today for Dr. George Valentine Freundlich, who was awarded by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Mr. Titus Corlățean, for its outstanding humanitarian and cultural achievements.

The ceremony !! supposed to be held on December 1, 2012, with !! the occasion of the National Day of Romania, but Dr. George Valentine Freundlich couldn't attend it, being „detained” by his duties as full-time emergency physician of Bingham Memorial Hospital, Matheson, ON. Fortunately, we find !! the opportunity today and I am very glad to have between !! us the new Consul General of Romania in Toronto, Mrs. Antonella Marinescu, Mrs. Katherine Carleton, the Executive Director of Orchestras Canada, Dr. Alexandru Bologa, former Professor and Chair of Surgery at the University “Babeș-Bolyai” from Cluj-Napoca and Mr. Mike Milinkovich, mayor of Black River-Matheson community, as well physicians, friends, journalists and members of the Romanian-Canadian community of Toronto.

Dr. George Valentine Freundlich was born in Cluj, Romania in 1956. He is the son of Holocaust survivor parents. His exceptional talent for music was discovered early in life. He did attend the School/ Conservatory of Music and Fine Arts (in Cluj) and graduated HON. with masters (able to master) in violin, piano and trombone! At the tender age of 10 he got his first job, as a member of the "Children's Chorus" at The local "Romanian Opera House".

In 1973, at the age of 17 he was selected into the Romanian Youth Orchestra and participated (along with 20 other youth orchestras from around the world) at the inaugural "International Festival of Youth Orchestras" in Aberdeen, Scotland. There he was selected to be a member of the "all stars orchestra", "The World's Youth Orchestra" and performed in London, England in

Kenwood Park, Hyde Park and even at the world famous "Royal Albert Hall" under legendary conductor LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI.

A terrible accident at age 9 kept him in hospital, in Bucharest, (away from his family) for one year! He underwent numerous highly complex surgeries and recovered eventually.

Deeply touched by the excellent care received and by the kindness of his doctors and nurses, he eventually decided to become a physician himself and help others, just the way he had received excellent care when in need.

He "dropped" a safe and beautiful musical career and studied to catch up with the scientific background required for Medical School. To the amazement of all, he managed to be admitted to The Medical University of Cluj and graduated with top marks in 1982. Deeply disappointed with the Communist Regime official Ceausescu, Dr. George left with heavy heart his beloved Romania, his family and friends and came to Canada in 1985. The early years proved to be exceptionally tough. He worked as a carpet cleaner in Ottawa, but lost his job because he didn't own a vehicle! He then worked as an orderly in several nursing homes and at a library. He soon moved to Montreal. He wrote several exams, required for foreign graduates; he wrote them all in French and passed them all at first attempt!

Between 1986 and 1994, Dr. George (as we all affectionately call him) worked in the most remote and difficult areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. He travelled day and night by helicopter to provide (excellent) care to patients in isolated communities. He gradually and steadily earned himself an excellent reputation as a family physician, internist and emergency room physician. His dedication to his patients was and still is unparalleled.

In 1989, while working in BUCHANS, he was for 3 months, the only physician at the local "DR. A. M. GUY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL". He was on call for 3 months 24/7 without any break! He could not travel to St. John's for his Canadian Citizenship papers. When the Immigration Officers found out why, in an unprecedented gesture the top ranked officers travelled (6/2 hours) to Buchans, where the Citizenship Ceremony took place in the hospital's Board Room. Newfoundland Premier !! HONORABLE BRIAN PECKFORD invited Dr. George to St. John's to personally congratulate him for his tremendous work and sacrifices.

Dr. George quickly climbed the professional ladder:

Junior House Officer, Assistant Medical Officer, District Medical Officer and finally at age 33 "Senior Medical Officer"! The highest level one could achieve. He became the Province's youngest "Senior Medical Officer". He virtually saved the hospital in Buchans along with countless jobs and local mines.

In 1994, he worked in the Caribbean and at a later date in Hawaii and the South Pacific as a physician and surgeon on cruise lines.

He wrote more exams, (in French) and passed them all!

In 1993, he spent a sabbatical year in New Brunswick, working hard in remote communities.

In late 1994, he moved to Matheson in Northern Ontario. He soon became medical director.

In 1996, he became Director of an association of 4 hospitals. Soon after his arrival to Matheson, he became a key player with the Timmins Symphony Orchestra (trombone) and "The Timmins All Star Big Band" (saxophone). To this day, despite an incredibly busy schedule, he still performs, on a regular basis with these wonderful musical organizations. They are both award winning and have released over the years, numerous cassettes, CDs and DVDs. In 1997, Dr. George was appointed "Member of Board of Directors Orchestras Canada" an organization which is the leader of over 190 orchestras from across Canada. There are 10 members in the Board of Directors, all outstanding musicians from across the nation. Dr. George was appointed by his own request!! be in charge of the Youth orchestras of Canada. He played a key role in countless youth orchestra festivals (Mississauga 1999, Kingston 2001, Kitchener-Waterloo 2003, Windsor 2005, etc) as a teacher, educator, mentor, coach, motivator and as a very generous sponsor. Indeed he is an inspiration to the young generation of musicians. Dr. George is a very strong and most generous supporter of arts in Canada. He is also "Fellow and Benefactor" of the world renowned Metropolitan Opera House in New York,

A very highly educated, sophisticated musician, fluent in 6 languages, Dr. George writes highly appreciated reviews of top Metropolitan Opera performances in leading European Newspapers. He has personal friendships with some of the most brilliant artists of our times such as Angela Gheorghiu, Renee Fleming, Roberto Alagna, Ramon Vargas, the late Oscar Peterson, The Three Tenors, Zubin Mehta, Shania Twain, Nana Mouskouri, to name but a few....

In 1999, he was picked as one of one of the top physicians across Canada from 45,000 practicing physicians!

In 2001 he was presented with an Honorary Citizenship Diploma by Minister of Immigration, The Honourable Elinor Caplan.

In 2002 Dr. George teamed up with world famous Canadian trombonist Alain Trudel to teach master classes at the UTRECHT Conservatory in the Netherlands.

In 2002, he was appointed "Emeritus Staff".

In 2003 Dr. George led the Canadian Youth Orchestra at the 30th Anniversary of the International Youth Orchestra Festival in Aberdeen, Scotland.

In 2005, despite his tremendously busy schedule, he managed to compile and design the cover for a wonderful critically acclaimed double CD entitled "The Royal Opera Gala" containing highlights from the world's best loved opera, performed by the finest soloists. The CD contains beautiful photos of famous opera houses visited by Dr. George in his world travels. One of the photos is "The Romanian Opera House" from Cluj-Napoca Romania!

In 2006, Canadian Dr. Valerie Krym, Director of The World's Association of Emergency Physicians, assembled a team of top emergency physicians to travel to other countries to provide lectures and presentations, as well as, "hands on" courses in Emergency Medicine. All the members of her team belong !! to world famous "Sunnybrook Trauma Centre" in Toronto. The only exception was Dr. George Freundlich, who was hand-picked from the Northern Ontario city of Timmins-Matheson! They were invited to China, Brazil and Romania, to the city of Cluj, where Dr. George had previously attended the local medical school. The members of the team received honorary appointments to the university.

Dr., George's standard of care, his commitment and devotion to his patients is second to none!

In 2008 Dr. George was the proud recipient of the highly prestigious "Council Award" for excellence and outstanding medical practice (out of 69.000 practicing physicians). The award is equivalent to Physician of the Year and honours outstanding doctors and recognizes physicians who have demonstrated excellence and come closest to meeting society's vision of an ideal physician. Only 5 top physicians from across the country are presented yearly, in late November with this very highly prestigious award.

I (along with some guests present here today) was deeply honoured to be present at that festivity here in Toronto.

In March 2012, the township of Black River-Matheson organized an "Appreciation Dinner" for Dr. George to convey their heartfelt thanks and profound appreciation for the outstanding care provided so generously to all, over so many years!

In April 2012, Health Minister !! Honourable DEB MATTHEWS personally thanked Dr. George through a letter of appreciation.

Dr. George Freundlich is for many years a proud member of the Rotary Club, a world renowned organization that provides much needed help and assistance to Third World Countries.

Dr. George is a keen traveler who has travelled to over 100 countries on all continents, Antarctica included!

He had been to the most exotic and remote places on Earth. From the Arctic Circle to Antarctica, via Machu-Picchu, the Pyramids, the Holy Land of Israel, Galapagos, Iguacu Falls, Victoria Falls, Himalaya, the Taj-Mahal, Tibet, Iceland, Cook Islands, Tierra Del Fuego, Bora-Bora, Easter Island, Bhutan and the list goes on and on... ,It is easier to ask Dr. George where haven't you been! He is an excellent photographer and his clinic is full of wonderful photos from around the world.

Even on the moon - there is a crater called FREUNDLICH! In many of the countries visited, Dr. George presented scientific papers and received well deserved diplomas. Many call Dr. George "An Unsung Hero" and "A National Treasure" quite frankly for good reasons.

He is an honour to the medical profession, an unsung hero of Canada's cultural life and a philanthropist. Despite his many exceptional accomplishments, he is very humble and easily approachable. He is a true friend to many and has touched many lives. He has a great sense of humour.

In Romania he is a most generous sponsor in the cultural life and has significant contributions in the printing/or reprinting of numerous books ("Nadia", "Ar fi fost prea frumos" "Argentina", "Zile și nopți pe stadion", "Paleta și planeta", etc.).

Dr. George is a very proud Canadian; however he never forgot his Romanian roots and was always extremely proud of his Romanian heritage. He sees no contradiction in being a proud Canadian and Romanian both at the same time.

He is a wonderful son to his Holocaust survivor parents (his father passed away in 2006) and travels three times a year to Romania to spend time with his 89 year old widowed mother.

Through his exceptional accomplishments in Canada, this fine gentleman of Romanian heritage makes us all Romanians immensely proud. He is a credit and an inspiration to all and first and foremost to Romanians.

We feel that through his exceptional achievements in Canada, Dr. Freundlich brought honour to his native Romania and has certainly contributed to enhancing its prestige. Dr. George Freundlich is a Canadian citizen, however, in our view he is a public's person and a world citizen. He certainly is an (unofficial) Canadian and Romanian "good will" ambassador around the world, and we all are, in turn, proud of him.

It is for this very reason, that the Government of Romania, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to acknowledge, recognize and congratulate Dr. George Freundlich. This prestigious Honorary Award is more than deserved by Dr. Freundlich.

Thank you Dr. George Freundlich and congratulations!

Dr. Doru Liciu, consul