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*Special thanks to Jiří (George) Mírovský!*

Notes:



Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences

Společnost pro vědy a umění (SVU)

New York Chapter

**BBLA** BOHEMIAN BENEVOLENT & LITERARY ASSOCIATION



Image by Ilona Kohlová

# The 6-Minute Challenge, #16

## All Student Edition

March 28 2024 / 7 pm  
Bohemian National Hall  
New York City

*The Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU), New York Chapter, is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization promoting Czech and Slovak intellectual history and heritage through cultural events at the Bohemian National Hall in New York City, with the support of the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association (BBLA).*

Design by [czechmatters](http://czechmatters.com)

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**Produced by Suzanna Halsey**  
**Moderated by Christopher Harwood, PhD**

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**PRESENTERS** *(in order of appearance)*

**Natalie Plavec**  
**Nicole Plavec**  
**Maxwell Lurken Tvrdik**  
**Karel Ruiz**  
**Jáchym Harwood**  
**René Strezenicky Franko**  
**Jennifer Helinek**  
**Karolina Poliaková**  
**Eben Rose**  
**Q&A**  
*Wine Social*



**Eben Rose** began his career as a geologist researching the bottom layers of the Grand Canyon for a MS thesis from Northern Arizona University and the origins of life on Earth as a doctoral dissertation at Yale University. He later settled in Maine, where he entered local and state politics, serving as a City Councilor in South Portland and running for State Senate. There he encountered “economics” as a barrier to enacting policies he felt were appropriately scaled to meet the global ecologic crisis. He consequently enrolled in the MS program in Economics at the New School for Social Research with hopes to advance to the PhD program, all with the goal of developing a creative economic approach to confront this barrier and to meet this crisis. Eben sailed to NYC from Maine and presently lives on board his 30’ sailboat at a marina next door to Ellis Island, where his mother’s Slovak grandparents arrived in 1924 from the Carpathian Mts.

*Interests and hobbies:* Songwriting, formalist poetry, skiing, judo, and vlogging

*Contact:* ebenrose67@yahoo.com

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**Upcoming Events**



*Art by Hana Shannon. Photo Paul Ort.*

Thursday **April 18** at 7 pm  
**A Brief Foray into the Alchemy  
of Stem Cell Research**

A talk by Dr. Hynek Wichterle  
Columbia University Medical



*For more  
information and  
RSVP*



Wednesday **May 1** at 7 pm  
**Allen Ginsberg’s Troubles in Prague**

A talk moderated by Vít Hořejš

Please hold your questions until the Q&A, after the last presentation.  
The event will be recorded and later posted on our YouTube Channel.

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*The SVU 6-MINUTE CHALLENGE is a series conceived in 2015 by Suzanna Halsey for SVU New York. Czech and Slovak artists, professionals, scholars, students and scientists are challenged to present their talent, the subject of their work, project, research or studies in a short presentation limited to six minutes.*



**Jennifer Helinek** is from Wyomissing, Pennsylvania — her grandfather's family is from the area near Prague, and immigrated to Philadelphia. While studying Comparative Literature at Williams College, Jennifer spent a semester in Prague, and she then worked in Třebíč after graduating. When she returned to the US, Jennifer worked as a foreign rights agent at a literary agency in New York, selling American and Canadian

books into other international markets. She is now finishing a regional studies master's (MARS-REERS) at Hariman Institute at Columbia, where she focuses on the literature, history, and contemporary politics of East Central Europe. She is currently writing her master's thesis on the Magnesia Litera, one of the Czech Republic's most prestigious literary prizes. Jennifer is passionate about promoting literature from Central and Eastern Europe, and after graduating this spring, she hopes to pursue work with international relations while also raising the profile of Czech books for English-language audiences.

*Interests and hobbies:* Jennifer loves cats, yoga, and bad reality TV.

*Contact:* jennifer.j.helinek@gmail.com



**Karolína Poliaková** is from Prague and a PhD Student in Science Communication at Charles University. Currently, she is Visiting Fulbright Researcher at Columbia University, where she explores advisory models in evidence-based policymaking. During her master's studies, she spent one semester at Uppsala University in Sweden through the Erasmus program. In her presentation, Karolína will share interesting results from the Trust in Science project. Apart

from scholarly work, she leads communication activities at the Artificial Intelligence Center, Czech Technical University in Prague where she translates complex research topics into human language and motivates scientists to popularize their work. She believes that science communication can truly make an impact in the world. For more than a decade, Karolína has also organized Mezipatra Queer Film Festival, which promotes LGBTQ+ culture and advocates for equal human rights.

*Interests and Hobbies:* cooking, finding treasures in second-hand bookstores, exploring hidden parts of the city, music, and art

*Contact:* karolina.poliakova@fsv.cuni.cz



**Natalie Plavec** is an undergraduate student of Applied Psychology at New York University. She was born and raised in Connecticut by two Czech parents and spent most of her summers in the Czech Republic. Natalie hopes to become a therapist working with adolescents. She speaks Czech and is pursuing fluency in Spanish to be able to become a bilingual counselor. She also hopes to do research delving in the connection between social media and its effects on mental

health. Her previous research included looking into the disproportionate effects women experience through stereotypes reinforced through social media. In her free time she enjoys art and journaling. She hopes to use journaling in the future as a tool to help others deal with their mental health struggles. She hopes to spend a gap year traveling the world in hopes of expanding her cultural competency to develop her abilities as a mental health counselor. Natalie also spends her free time volunteering at the Czech Center in New York events in efforts to stay connected with her family's culture.

*Interests and hobbies:* traveling, exploring new places, journaling, photography, drawing, tennis, lifting weights, skiing and reading

*Contact:* np2652@nyu.edu



**Nicole Plavec** grew up in Shelton, Connecticut. She is currently a sophomore at New York University, where she is studying Applied Psychology and Anthropology. After she graduates, she plans on attending graduate school. Her father grew up in Příbram and her mother grew up in Opava. They met while studying at Charles University and came to the United States in 1997. Nicole is a dual citizen of the United States and the Czech Republic.

Czech was her first language, and her parents homeschooled her in the Czech language. She visits the Czech Republic every year to spend time with her family and friends there. She is currently working on an anthropological project on women and fiber arts.

*Interest and hobbies:* movies and crocheting (IG@crochetwithnik)

*Contact:* np2654@nyu.edu



**Maxwell Lurken Tvrdik**, a native of the 600 person town of Freeport, Minnesota, is a third-year sociology student at Columbia University. His Czech ancestors ventured to the US in the wake of the Homestead Act. Maxwell has worked a variety of odd jobs, beginning his working career at 12 as a zoo employee and later on gaining the titles of ice cream scooper, barista, athletics event staff, athlete laundry-doer, construction worker, and,

most recently, paid researcher for the Minnesota Governor's Office. In his studies, he has maintained an invested interest in what has been overlooked by sociology and has begun to explore how community shapes illegal market participation as well as the sociology of noise and spatiality. He is a product of Feminist-Marxism, Goffman, Foucault, and Weber, and has found a fresh interest in President Masaryk's sociological teachings. In the future, Maxwell plans to attend law school and become an immigration or civil rights attorney.

*Interests and Hobbies:* Arsenal football, concerts, learning, and marveling at the details of life.



**Karel Ruiz** is a third-year student at Columbia University studying Comparative Literature. Although he grew up in San Mateo, California, his mother's side of the family is Czech and he is currently learning Czech at his college. His primary academic interests are Central and Eastern European literature and history and he additionally serves as the literary editor for Columbia's undergraduate journal of Slavic Studies.

*Interests and hobbies:* cooking, playing instruments, and hiking

*Contact:* kar2241@columbia.edu



**Jáchym Harwood** was born in Brooklyn, where he lived for a year before moving to the Bronx and then Manhattan. He studied at the Bronx High School of Science and is now at Columbia University, graduating in May with a BA in biology and a concentration in environmental science. He is particularly fascinated by cell and molecular biology and currently works in the Barnhart Lab at Columbia, which focuses on the cell biology of neurons using *Drosophila* as a model organ-

ism. His mother is from Podoli in Prague, and since his father knows a *little* Czech Jáchym grew up speaking it, although he frequently messes up his *dvas* and *dvěs*. He frequently visits the Czech Republic and enjoys many of the cultural traditions, including foraging for mushrooms and drinking beer. Jáchym plans on moving to Prague in the summer and working in a molecular biology lab for a year while he prepares his applications for medical/graduate school.

*Interests and hobbies:* progressive metal, skiing, backpacking, DoTA 2

*Contact:* jah2316@columbia.edu, <https://barnhartlab.org/>



**René Strezenicky Franko**, a native of Sarasota, Florida, is a multifaceted scholar currently pursuing his undergraduate studies in Biology and Russian Language & Culture at Columbia University. With over 15 years of dedication to swimming, he recently concluded his final season as a Division 1 collegiate athlete. René has a background in the public health sector, having served as a frontline worker at a COVID-19 laboratory in

2020, during the peak of infections in Florida. This experience paved the way for his subsequent role as a Commercial Strategy & Innovation intern at Pfizer last summer. Inspired by his Slovak heritage, René remains deeply committed to advancing his knowledge in the field of Slavic Studies and will be presenting his latest academic work, "Russian Celebrities as Foreign Agents in the Invasion of Ukraine," at the REEESNe conference on April 12th at UMass Amherst.

*Interests and Hobbies:* Photography, gardening, surfing, hiking, and traveling.

*Contact:* strezenicky64@gmail.com