

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

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Tatiana Vondersaar (1923 – 2009)

Tatiana Vondersaar passed away on April 12, 2009 after a long illness. Tatiana was one of the founders of Russian Heritage in 1996 and served many years as an officer and board member. Even though in recent years she was not been able to participate actively in the events of Russian Heritage, one of the first questions she would ask to a visitor from our organization was "What's new with Russian Heritage?"

Tatiana was born in Poland in 1923. Her father was Polish and her mother was of Russian Heritage. She had a difficult time during the years of WWII, but after the war she came to America and started a new life. On arrival she was encouraged to Americanize her name. She was known as Jane to many, but she was always "Tatiana" to her many friends in the Russian community. She was extremely proud of her Russian Heritage and her American citizenship.



Tatiana lived in Indianapolis for many years before moving to St. Petersburg in 1981. In Florida she was an active member of the St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Church, served as a board member for the Russian American Club, and was treasurer of the Association of Russian Cadets. She volunteered many hours promoting Russian culture in Russian Heritage and in the St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society (SPIFFS). She served as a translator for Russian immigrants for the public defender's office, made numerous presentations on Russian culture and traditions in local schools and nursing homes (almost always in one of her magnificent Russian costumes!), and was a frequent participant in SPIFFS Fashion Shows. She was recognized several years in a row as one of the Mayor's volunteers of year in St. Petersburg (see photograph), and she reached the peak of her volunteer activity in the early years of the 21st century as St. Petersburg was celebrating its centennial just as St. Petersburg, Russian was celebrating the 300th anniversary of its founding in 2003.

Shortly before she died, Tatiana Vondersaar was presented with a Congressional medal by Congressman Gus Bilirakis for her outstanding patriotism and contributions to American life. Her funeral was at St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Church on Tuesday, April 14. An online guestbook is at davidegross.com, or messages of sympathy can be sent to the family at 5443 4th Street S., St. Petersburg, FL 33707.

Tatiana's daughter Margo Catsimatidis and her husband John created a Tatiana Vondersaar Educational Fund at SPIFFS two years ago. The family has indicated that memorial tributes may be sent to this Tatiana Vondersaar Fund, % SPIFFS at 330 Fifth Street N., St. Petersburg FL 33701.

Вечная Память!

Russian Heritage Well Represented at SPIFFS Folk Fair 2009

The 34th annual SPIFFS Folk Fair took place in Vinoy Park in downtown St. Petersburg on March 25 – 29, 2009. Although the weather did not cooperate, Russian culture was well represented at the Russian village and in the entertainment.

The theme this year was "Wonders of the World." The Russian display included the "Seven Wonders of Russia" (outlined in last month's Newsletter) in posters, including one prepared especially for this Folk Fair by the Russian Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. The Russian village also featured art works and Russian souvenirs from "Vladimir's Collection" and Russian foods prepared by the "St. Petersburg Nights" Russian restaurant.

Outstanding Russian entertainment was provided by the Russian Folk Music group "Barynya" from Siberia and Moscow via New York. Misha Smirnov, the Russian judge on the TV program "Superstars of Dance" led the group of singers and dancers in a delightful concert with extravagant costumes and choreography. They performed for the school students on Thursday and Friday, and for the general public on Friday night and Saturday.

A visit from Evgeny Agoshkov, the Director of the Russian Cultural Center in Washington was a special event. He brought with him models of several towers of the Kremlin, in addition to the poster of the "Wonders of Russia." Read what he had to say about the Folk Fair: "Thank you very much for inviting me to this wonderful festival. I was absolutely impressed on what scale the folk festival is organized in St. Petersburg. For more than three years that I have been in the United States I have gone to a number of festivals and cultural events in different states and I can frankly tell you that you do an outstanding job!!! I wish we had the same unity of nations in bigger US cities like Washington, D.C. or even New York. I can imagine how hard it is to organize an event involving so many different cultures! So I wish prosperity and success to the St. Petersburg International Folk Fair."

The Russian Heritage village at SPIFFS Folk Fair 2009 was one of the five finalists for best village this year! Unfortunately we did not come in first, but we were recognized for our special efforts this year. These include the displays of the "Wonders of Russia" and the interactive games and puzzles that were featured in our display, the jigsaw puzzles made by Peggy Newton, and the word searches developed by Laura Flesch (see page 5).

Gogol at the Russian Club and at the Friends of the Library

On Saturday, April 4 the Russian film "Revizor" was shown at the Russian American Club to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Nikolai Gogol. This film was a modern adaptation (1996) of Gogol's play, starring Nikita Mikhalkov as the mayor of the provincial city. A lively discussion of the film took place after the film, led by professors Victor Peppard and Olga Oleynik of the University of South Florida.

On Saturday, April 18 the theme of Gogol, his life and works, will be featured in a "Friends of the Library" program at the main St. Petersburg Library (3745 9th Avenue N. in St. Petersburg) at 2:00pm. Professor Emeritus Bill Parsons of Eckerd College will lead the discussion of Gogol, and dancers from the Academy of Ballet Arts will perform as part of this program. If there are members of Russian Heritage who would like to be a part of this presentation, please contact Bill Parsons: 727-867-9148.

RUSSIAN HERITAGE PICNIC and ANNUAL MEETING: April 25, 2009

The Russian Heritage Picnic and Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, April 25 at the St. Matthew's Episcopal Church (738 Pinellas Point Drive S. in South St. Petersburg). Plan to arrive about noon with the picnic lunch being served at 1:00 pm.

A musical program of Russian favorites will be provided by Sergei Smimoff and Olga Kamargo. Many of you will remember these were the two winners of the Russian Heritage Talent Show in November 2008. The cost of the picnic is \$15 for adults, \$10 for students, and \$5 for children under 10.

The grounds of St. Matthew's Church are beautifully located on Tampa Bay. If you have canoes or kayaks, you are invited to make use of the waterfront area. Outdoor activities will be provided for one and all, and all ages are welcome. The main course will include chicken, grilled hamburgers and hot dogs.

The annual meeting will be held after the musical program. We will have elections for officers and board members for the upcoming year. If you want to nominate yourself, or another member of Russian Heritage, for a position on the Board of Directors, please contact one of the members of the nominating committee: Galina Malkin (727-895-9755), Bill Parsons (727-867-9148), Peter Sidorenko (727-360-1090), or Nadia Yevstigneyeva (727-204-9344). The nominating committee will present a slate of candidates at the April 25 meeting. Other nominations can be made from the floor.

Directions to St. Matthew's Church: coming on I-275 from the north, exit at 54th Avenue S. Turn left on 54th Avenue South and drive to 9th Street. Turn right on 9th Street and go to Pinellas Point Drive. Turn left and go to 738 (church will be on your right).
Coming from the South on I-275, turn off at exit 16, and turn right on Pinellas Point Drive S. Stay on Pinellas Point Drive S. until you reach 738 (church will be on your right).

Coming from the beaches, use the Bayway past Eckerd College, and continue straight on 54th Avenue South and follow directions above.

News from Members and Friends of Russian Heritage

Olga Fincher. Olga writes from Hawaii that they are enjoying life in a beautiful retirement home overlooking the ocean. They still have their place in Palm Harbor but they don't know when they will get back to Florida. Her new address is: 75-181 Hualalai Rd., #A-412, Kailua Kona, HI 96740, but her cell phone is still 727-871-0818. They like Hawaii, but miss their friends in Florida.

Vera Espinola Beery. Vera has moved from Bradenton to Mayaca City. Her new address and telephone number are given in the directory included in this newsletter.

Inna Povedskaya. The author of the new book on Peter Demens who presented her work here in January has received recognition for her outstanding achievements. Her book was awarded the distinction of being one of the top 30 books published in the Tver Oblast in 2008 (out of more than 700!) and she was recently awarded the title of "Distinguished Scholar of Culture and Art for the Tver Oblast." At her reception with the Governor, she presented him with her book on Demens.

Nikolai Gogol



The Bolshoi Theater



Pushkin's "Evgeny Onegin"



Gogol Museum Opens in Moscow

A new Gogol House Museum on Nikitsky Boulevard in Moscow was opened at the end of March. This is where the writer worked on the second volume of "Dead Souls" and spent the last years of his life. Almost nothing of the personal paraphernalia of Nikolai Gogol has survived. The museum creators had to restore the setting that had been here in the writer's lifetime and during the month of his death.

Recently an original portrait of Gogol has been found, as well as a few things that could have belonged to the writer. All this will be displayed in the memorial halls of the Gogol's Museum in Moscow. This is another reminder that the 1st of April is the 200th anniversary of Gogol's birth, and that UNESCO has recognized 2009 as the "Year of Nikolai Gogol."

"The Verdict on Gogol" – a New 10 part documentary series on the life of Gogol.

A new 10 part documentary series about the life of Gogol and his struggle to find the meaning of life has been produced by the literary critic and philologist Igor Zolotussky for Kultura TV. It is timed to coincide with Gogol's 200th anniversary that is being celebrated in April. In the course of shooting the film its authors visited many cities, including St. Petersburg, Moscow, Jerusalem, and many countries, such as Ukraine, France, Italy, and Germany, places which were dear to the writer and related to important events of his life.

"The Verdict on Gogol" is not just a biography of the writer, or an analysis of his works, but a documentary investigation, an attempt to find the truth, to uncover the secret of the personality of Gogol, to expose the history of his soul."

Reconstruction of Bolshoi Theatre to be Finished in 2011

Reconstruction of the Bolshoi Theatre is finally planned to be completed in October 2011. It is expected that after the repair the area of the Bolshoi Theatre will be two times larger, with a chamber hall added under the building. Instead of one stage there will be three of them. Such a decision was taken in order to make a faster shift of scenery possible.

This is a reminder that the Bolshoi Theatre was closed for reconstruction on 1 July 2005. Its opening date has been postponed several times. Two years ago it was announced that the repair would be finished in 2008. However, in the course of restoration works it became clear that the building had deteriorated more than they had supposed originally.

"Onegin. Online": a New Ballet based on Pushkin's Classic

The premiere of the new ballet *Onegin. Online* was performed by Saint Petersburg Academy Ballet under the direction of Boris Eifman's on stage of the Alexandrinsky Theatre. The ballet is a two-act version of the famous Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*. The ballet maintains poetic manner and philosophy of Pushkin's work and gives a chance to see the plot with the eyes of a modern person.

This information on this page was researched on line by Nadia Yevstigneyeva and submitted for inclusion in this issue of the newsletter.

Seven Wonders of Russia

As a response to the Internet voting for the "Seven Wonders of the World," Russia organized a national contest to select the seven most beautiful destinations the country has to offer. Almost 26 million people went online and voted for their favorites and the final results were revealed on June 1, 2008.

WORD SEARCH

Find the twenty words and phrases representing the Seven Wonders of Russia in the word search puzzle below. Circle each word as you find it. Remember to look in every direction: some words might be backwards or on a diagonal.

The Seven Wonders

PETERHOF
ST BASILS CATHEDRAL
MAMAYEV KURGAN
LAKE BAIKAL
MOUNT ELBRUS
COLUMNS OF EROSION
VALLEY OF GEYSERS

The Location in Russia

ST PETERSBURG
MOSCOW
VOLGOGRAD
SIBERIA
CAUCASUS
KOMI REPUBLIC
KAMCHATKA

A Brief Description

RUSSIAN VERSAILLES
RED SQUARE
STATUE OF MOTHERLAND
EURASIA
UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE
SEVEN STRONG MEN
[hot springs]

