

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

VOLUME XI, ISSUE 5.

FEBRUARY 2007

A Musical Spring for Russian Heritage

Are you interested in Russian music? Do you like to sing? Would you like to learn more about serious Russian music, folk music and dance, and maybe even participate in some Russian group singing?

We have in our Russian Heritage community a number of serious and talented musicians and many who have a strong interest in this music. We would like to bring them together in a series of Saturday matinee programs in February, March and April. We hope that you will want to take part of this program.

A Maslenitsa Musical Program

Saturday, February 17, 2007

1:30 PM

Lewis House at Eckerd College

The first program will be an examination of the connection between Russian folk music and concert music of the nineteenth century, together with some discussion of the Russian traditions of Maslenitsa. Participants will include pianist Vladimir Khokhlov, Susan Haig and Eugene Bazhanov of the Florida Orchestra, and singers Serge Boldireff, Vladislav Markov, and Boris Lebedinsky.

At 1:30 pm there will be two 45-minute **workshops** at Lewis House. One will be for persons interested in learning to play the balalaika or performing in a Russian folk instruments ensemble. Balalaikas will be available. The second workshop will be for persons seriously interested in singing in a Russian chorus. This session will be led by Serge Boldireff, Vladislav Markov, and Vladimir Khokhlov. If you would like to participate in either of these two workshops, please RSVP by email to: HeritageRussian@aof.com.

The featured presentation will begin about 2:15 and will include examples of how the Russian composers from Glinka to Tchaikovsky used themes from Russian folk music in their concert music. Musical examples will be demonstrated. This will be followed by group singing in Russian of favorite Russian songs, such as Kalinka, Katiusha, Moscow Nights, In the Field Stood a Little Birch Tree, and others. Words will be available in English phonetic transcription for those who do not know Russian.

The second program in this series will take place on Saturday afternoon, March 10. The time and place and specific focus will be announced later.

TWO OTHER MASLENITSA CELEBRATIONS

Blini at the Russian-American Club. February 16 at 2:00 pm. Call 727-341-1820.

Blini with USF in Tampa. Sponsored by USF Russian Club. February 18 in early afternoon. Check the Russian Heritage Website for details.

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Old Russian New Year's Celebration

Another successful Old Russian New Year's Gala took place, this time at the TradeWinds Resort on St. Pete Beach, on Saturday, January 13, with more than 280 members and friends of *Russian Heritage* in attendance. The party atmosphere, the decorations, the music, and the food – all lived up to expectations in this beautiful location. The silent auction brought in \$2,620 to the scholarship fund, and everyone seemed to have a great time.

The food was especially good this year. Several guessed correctly that the "Chicken Petersburg" was really "Kotlety Pozharsky", but no one seemed to know that the "Steak Moskva" was known as "Steak Hussar". The Kievan Tort dessert was a special treat, and the Russian chocolate and the *pryaniki* was a great final touch. Our congratulations to chef Jeff and his staff.

We had several special guests in attendance. Congressmen Mike Bilirakis and Gus Bilirakis said a few words, as did Carl Kuttler, the Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation to the State of Florida. A surprise visitor was Ded Moroz and Snegurochka (Grandfather Frost and the Snow Princess) who greeted the party goers, and led them in the singing of "V lesu rodilas yolochka". Thank you Boris and Nadia.

Many people helped to make this party a big success. We thank all those who participated in the planning and preparation for the event, those who helped with the decorating and smooth functioning of the evening. We thank the Dazzlers for their dazzling dance music, Vladimir Khokhlov for reception music, and Margo Catsimatidis for her work as emcee. Finally, we thank Tatiana Vondersaar and Margo Catsimatidis for their generosity in providing the decorations and many of the silent auction prizes that helped make this such a special party!



*Margo and John Catsimatidis
with Congressman Gus Bilirakis*



*Ded Moroz and Snegurochka
at Carl Kuttler's Table*

Red Square in the Twenty-first Century: *Is this the way you remember Red Square?*

WHAT do Lenin, Paul McCartney, Chanel and St. Basil the Blessed have in common?

They're all part of the phantasmagoric cultural pageant associated these days with Red Square, the cobbled, iconic heart of Moscow and, indeed, all of Russia. In the past year alone, the square, which is adjacent to the Kremlin, and Vasilyevsky Spusk, the square's extension right behind St. Basil's Cathedral, have been the site of fashion shows, rock concerts, revivals of czarist rituals and even religious processions. The opening of a skating rink in December prompted one Russian Web publication to call the site where tanks and goose-stepping soldiers once paraded past geriatric Soviet leaders standing on Lenin's Mausoleum "The Square of Amusements."

"The Kremlin and Red Square are brands known around the world," said Grigory Antyufeyev, chairman of the Moscow City Committee for Tourism, which organizes some of the events. "Since 1991, Red Square has become more and more accessible to Muscovites, Russians and foreign visitors."

One of the biggest events it now promotes is Maslenitsa, the pre-Lenten festival, this year Feb. 12 to 18, that will turn the Vasilyevsky Spusk section into a full-fledged carnival. While the Russian capital, even with global warming, is too cold for women to dance nearly naked through the streets in winter, Maslenitsa will provide ample opportunity for visitors to Red Square to ponder the vagaries of Russian history.

Here, after all, is where you will find an array of inimitable Russian symbols: St. Basil's, with its multicolored domes, commissioned by Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century; GUM, the pre-Revolutionary shopping arcade that became a Soviet showcase and is now a luxury shopping mall; the red brick State Historical Museum; and, of course, the somber Lenin Mausoleum.

Over the years, the square has encompassed wildly varying concepts of public spectacle. In Imperial Russia, it was used for everything from executions to outdoor markets to a cavalry ceremony that was recently revived and is now held, in all its pomp and glory, from April into the fall.

Its Soviet image was more severe. Red Square, or Krasnaya Ploschad, was host of an endless parade of, well, parades, from proletarians bearing banners of Lenin and Stalin to military hardware that underscored Soviet might. The Russian word "krasnaya" means both "red" and "beautiful," but the "red" stuck in translation, adding to the square's ideological baggage. In Soviet times, Lenin's imposing mausoleum, where the embalmed body of the founder of the Soviet state lies at the foot of the Kremlin's crenellated walls, was the square's focal point. These days people aren't exactly dancing on Lenin's grave, but close enough.

Paul McCartney performed "Back in the U.S.S.R." on the square in 2003 in a concert attended by President Vladimir V. Putin, and Black Eyed Peas pumped up the hip-hop volume on Vasilyevsky Spusk last summer. Of course, this being Russia, there have been setbacks. An Eric Clapton concert scheduled for Aug. 3 was abruptly canceled; the musician's Web site said authorities had withdrawn permission, while other reports said the Vasilyevsky Spusk site wasn't to Mr. Clapton's liking.

All the partying hasn't gone without criticism. Preservationists have raised alarms about the impact of concerts and construction on St. Basil's. "The cathedral was built in 1555-1561, and like any antiquity it requires a particular preservation regime," Andrei Batalov, the chief of an advisory commission on the cathedral's restoration, told *Izvestia* last year. "But it ends up being in the epicenter of noisy, uncontrolled life, on a huge theatrical stage — something which has never been the case before."

But while rock concerts in front of the cathedral might seem sacrilegious, elsewhere the soundtrack is literally a prayer. The Voskresenskiye Vorota, or Resurrection Gates, — a pre-Revolutionary structure destroyed to clear the way for tanks entering Red Square for Soviet parades, and then restored in the

'90s — includes a tiny chapel that draws a constant stream of pilgrims. As tourists swarm through the gates, an endless loop of recorded prayer to the Virgin Mary plays on loudspeakers.

Last month, in an apparent sign of approval of the most recent form of entertainment, Mr. Putin paid a visit to the skating rink as part of an effort to promote sports among Russian youth. Aside from being open to the public for amateur skating, the rink was host last month to a match between Soviet and National Hockey League veterans who once crossed sticks against the background of the cold war.

In another development, Mr. Putin's office has announced detailed plans to turn a building near St. Basil's into a luxury complex, including an auction house and a hotel.

All the activity is a sign of the square's vitality, said Mikhail Kusnirovich, GUM's chief shareholder. Mr. Kusnirovich spearheaded the skating rink, which opens out from the mall's Chanel cosmetics boutique, full of huge portraits of Nicole Kidman promoting Chanel No. 5. Long lines used to wind around the mausoleum for a precious view of Lenin. This winter they have wended around GUM for a spin on the ice.

"When there is only a mausoleum and no people, then the square is not alive," said Mr. Kusnirovich, after a figure-skating extravaganza on the rink featuring stars like Aleksei Yagudin, Irina Slutskaya and Oksana Baiul. Behind him, GUM was lit up like something out of Disneyland. "When there are smiling, kissing people, GUM, the Mausoleum, St. Basil's, the Historical Museum and the Kremlin," he said, "this is all very natural."

Meanwhile, Maslenitsa, a festival of song, dance and mountains of blini, the Russian pancake, will be widely celebrated in Moscow for the sixth year in a row, with Vasilyevsky Spusk as the main venue.

"It is a very ancient celebration, over 1,000 years old," Mr. Antyufeyev said of the festival, which precedes the beginning of the Russian Orthodox observance of Lent but has pre-Christian, pagan roots. A Russian fairy-tale-inspired gorodok, or town, is built on Vasilyevsky Spusk for the festivities. Pop singers and folk ensembles perform on the square and, of course, blini are sold. This year, thanks to the skating rink, the festivities are likely to extend to the heart of Red Square as well. A detailed program of the celebration will soon be posted, in English and Russian, on www.maslenitsa.com.

Those in search of formal dining with a historical twist can find it on Red Square. From November through Russian Orthodox Easter, the State Historical Museum, which has a restaurant called Red Square (www.redsquare.ru), presents a monthly themed dinner based on menus retrieved and recreated from the Historical Museum's archives. Themes range from pre-Revolutionary street food to the traditional Russian Easter meal, all presented with musical accompaniment. For Maslenitsa, the restaurant will recreate the elaborate blini menu from the estate of the noble Volkonsky family, Sukhanovo, near Moscow. Tickets, which must be bought in advance, vary in price based on the meal's complexity.

The square's new openness is perhaps most casually reflected in a warm-weather outdoor cafe the restaurant now runs. "This summer is the first time we had a street cafe," said Mikhail Zrellov, who runs the restaurant. It took eight years to get official permission to open the cafe, which, he said, offers visitors a chance to "sit and look at the square" over coffee.

Some people, though, still have a mission when they come to Red Square. In late December, a flow of people made their way to the Lenin Mausoleum to honor Stalin, buried by the wall behind it. A sign, however, noted that the mausoleum was "temporarily closed." One visitor, an elegant woman dressed as if for a party, laid down carnations at the cordon and walked briskly past the rink, where Soviet golden oldies sounded and skaters reveled, and through the gates, where hymns floated through the air.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 16, 2007. **Blini** at the Russian-American Club. Seating limited. 727-341-1820.

February 17, 2007. **"Maslenitsa" MUSICAL PROGRAM** at Eckerd College.
(see page 1 for details).

February 18, 2007. **Blini** with USF in Tampa. See posting on Russian Heritage Website.

March 10, 2007. **Second Musical Program** (Time and Place TBA)

March 16 – 20, 2007. **SPIFFS 32nd Anniversary Folk Festival at Vinoy Park**
This year's theme is "The World at Play". Our exhibit will feature sale items from "Vladimir's Collection", food from "St. Petersburg Nights" and our cultural and educational display. We need volunteers who are willing to help.

April 2007. Three events are being considered for April: One is a Third Musical Program. The second is a Russian Dog Show. And the third is a Russian Heritage Picnic. Look for details in the next newsletter, but keep the date April 21 in mind for one or more of these activities.

May 6, 2007. **Business Meeting & Final Musical Program of the Spring.**
At the "St. Petersburg Nights" Restaurant
3:30 pm Gathering; 4:00 Business Meeting and Elections, Followed by Russian Dinner (ordered from the regular menu), and musical program (TBA).

This May Interest You

Maslenitsa (Масленица) is the week just preceding Lent in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is a type of Mardi Gras, but it lasts a full week. Although the date is dependent on when Easter is celebrated, the origins of Maslenitsa were pagan, a salute to the sun whose warmth made the grain grow high. The blini (Russian pancakes) are the typical food for Maslenitsa, and the round shape of the blini represents the sun. See the article about how Maslenitsa is making a comeback on Red Square in Moscow (pp. 3-4).

Andrei Ustinov and Elena Martinson, outstanding ballet dancers and former Board Members for Russian Heritage, have accepted positions teaching ballet at the Boyar College of Music and Dance at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Congratulations to these dear friends and talented dancers.

The mystery of the disappearing gift bag and car keys at the Old Russian New Year's party was solved when it turned out that a member of the Board of Russian Heritage had mistakenly picked up the bag of another member of the Board. All's well that ends well.