

# RUSSIAN HERITAGE

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## The "Seven Wonders of Russia" to be Featured at the SPIFFS Folk Fair on March 25-29, 2009

The Board of Directors of Russian Heritage has chosen the Seven Wonders of Russia as the theme for the Russian Village at the 34<sup>th</sup> annual SPIFFS Folk Fair in Vinoy Park on March 25-29. For a listing of the "Seven Wonders of Russia", go to page 6 to see how many you know. We hope to popularize these Russian treasures among the students on the school days (March 25-27) and for the general public on March 27-29.

We need volunteers who can help set up our exhibit and who can work in our village during the days of the Folk Festival. Can you help us? Laura Flesch (941-224-2403) and Zhana Sidorenko (727-360-2092) will help organize the volunteers. Contact them to volunteer. And look for more about the Folk Fair in the March Newsletter.

## OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Painting Exhibit at the St. Petersburg Museum of History**

February – March, 2009. "A TRIBUTE TO ST. PETE" Plein Air Impressionist Paintings by Russian painter, Violetta. For more information, call 727-894-1052.

**Maslenitsa.** The Russian celebration before the beginning of the Orthodox fasting before Easter is called Maslenitsa and is celebrated this year from February 23 to March 1. One such celebration this year will be at the Russian American Club on Saturday, February 28 at 2:00 pm. Tickets: \$35. For more information call 727-397-7297.

We plan to honor the Russian writer **Nikolai Gogol** during the first week of April to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth (see page 4). We will cooperate with the USF Russian program, the Russian American Club, and SPIFFS to coordinate programs of mutual interest.

Mark your calendars for a **spring picnic** for April 25, 2009. Details are being worked out and will be announced later.

Also our **annual meeting and election of officers** will be on Saturday, May 16 at a time and location to be determined later. A nominating committee has been selected by the Board to present a slate of officers for next year. The committee includes Galina Malkin, Bill Parsons, Peter Sidorenko, and Nadia Yevstigneyeva. Members of RH are encouraged to make suggestions for officers and board members to these committee members.

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*The USF Russian Program is planning a summer study program to Russia. For further information on this program, contact Olga Oleynik (813-866-5406).*

## *Old Russian New Year's Celebration: 2009*

The Old Russian New Year's Gala sparkled at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club on Friday, January 9, 2009, with 230 members and friends of *Russian Heritage* in attendance. The décor was lavish, the food was good, and everyone seemed to have a wonderful time dancing to the music of the Dazzlers and enjoying the program of Boris (Ded Moroz) and his lovely assistants.

Highlights of the celebration this year included an amazing silent auction bringing more than \$2,000 to the scholarship fund, warm welcoming speeches by Mayor Rick Baker and our emcees Susan Haig and Boris Tsatskin, the traditional toasts by Board Chair Vladimir Malkin and President Nadia Yevstigneyeva, and a charming New Year's Tree (Yolka), beautifully decorated by Laura Flesch.

We give special thanks to Margo and John Catsimatidis, who provided special decorations and party favors and the majority of the silent auction items in honor of Margo's mother Tatiana Vondersaar, a founding member of Russian Heritage. Tatiana was not able to attend, but her guiding spirit was with us.

This year's crowd included special guests from Russia (Inna Povedskaya and her family – see story below), local politicians, VIP's from New York, and a remarkable group of 14 students and young people. See how many of the people you can identify in the photographs on the following page. Further pictures from the party will be placed on our website in the near future.

## **Inna Povedskaya Presents Her New Book About Peter Demens in St. Petersburg**

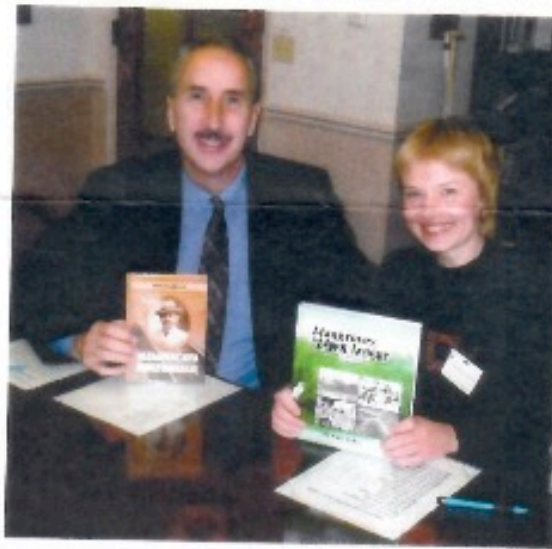
Inna Povedskaya is no stranger to St. Petersburg, Florida or the history of our city. She began studying Peter Demens, the Russian founder of our city, in 1988 while working as a research scholar in the History Museum in Tver, Russia. She has investigated historical archives and records in both St. Petersburgs, in Tver and Novgorod regions, and in Washington, D. C. In May of 2000 she participated in the Peter Demens Symposium at Eckerd College.

In November 2008 she published her biography of Peter Demens in Russian "Весьегонский Американец", which means "The American from Vesyeogonsk". Vesyeogonsk is the small town in the Tver region where Demens had his estates before coming to America in 1888. Inna presented her book at the St. Petersburg History Museum on January 11 and at the Russian American Club on January 14. She also met with Mayor Baker and exchanged historical views and books in his office. See photo in the middle of the last row on page 3. In the following issue of the newsletter there will be a review of this biography.

## **"Russian Troika" Participates in Parade**

Various ethnic groups from SPIFFS (St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society) participated in the night Christmas parade in Pinellas Park on Saturday, December 13. Representing Russian Heritage was the "Russian Troika" of Bill Parsons, Lou Blue, and Peggy Newton, pictured in the lower left-hand corner of page 3.





## RUSSIA TO MARK 200 YEARS SINCE NIKOLAI GOGOL'S BIRTH



*In 2009 Russia will mark 200 years since the birth of Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, born on April 1, 1809. Russian publishers, theater figures, and filmmakers are getting ready for the jubilee.*

The Moscow Gogol Theater will open the season with a new production of "Portrait" based on the writer's "Petersburg Stories". The premier of "Christmas Eve" will also be given in the Gogol Theater. The Gogol theme will be continued in the theater by staging Alexander Remez's play titled "I...I...I" written several years ago but still unpublished. It is about Gogol. The action takes place in St. Petersburg on April 19, 1836. On that day the first night of Gogol's probably most renowned comedy, "The Inspector General", was given on the stage of the Alexandrinsky Theater. The cast of characters includes all those who attended the premier on that night—Emperor Nicolas I, writers Turgenev and Zhukovsky. The production makes extensive use of numerous documents, contains the author's speculations about the play and provides reminiscences of the writer's contemporaries.

The text of Gogol's "Viy", or evil spirit, becomes the starting point for fantasies of filmmakers. (See below)

Publishers are also getting ready for Gogol's 200th birthday. They recently issued a collection titled "Russia should be loved", it includes fiction, critical essays, publicist and moral works of Gogol keyed with the idea of Russian ideology and moral future.

## Mail.ru to Bring Horrible Viy Back to Life

The Mail.ru internet company will become co-producer of the horror film *Viy. Return*, which is the first part of trilogy *Viy* to be made by the RFG film company. Viy (in Slavic myths, a supernatural being that can kill people by looking at them) became universally famous due to Nikolay Gogol who wrote the horror short story *Viy*. In 1967 the short story was adapted by Georgi Kropachyov into the first Soviet horror film *Viy*. (See video on line at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DctSay-1WbY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DctSay-1WbY&feature=related))

An updated version with advanced special effects is scheduled to be released in 2009 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Gogol's birth.

Investing \$ 5 million into the picture the Mail.ru holding expects to gather about \$ 20 million in the course of distribution. The overall budget of the film will amount \$ 13-14 million.





## Russian Orthodox Church elects 16th patriarch

Metropolitan Kirill, a prominent and politically astute priest with a reputation as a modernizer, was elected patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church on January 27, 2009. Kirill is the first patriarch inducted since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. He takes charge at a time when the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys wealth and political influence unmatched since the days of

Tsarist Russia.

About 700 priests, monks and powerful laypeople gathered for the vote in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, the large church destroyed under Josef Stalin and rebuilt in the 1990s as a potent symbol of the church's resurgence. On February 1, Patriarch Kirill was enthroned at the same Christ the Savior Cathedral, with President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin in attendance.

A 62-year-old native of St. Petersburg, Kirill, had been regarded as the most likely candidate to become the 16<sup>th</sup> patriarch. He served as the longtime head of the denomination's external relations. As such, he was involved in ecumenical activities with the World Council of Churches and has had contacts with the Roman Catholic Church. "On the one hand, he's a remarkable preacher and theologian; on the other hand, he's a diplomat experienced in huge, bureaucratic work," said Sergei Chapnin, editor of the patriarchy's Church Guardian newspaper.

Kirill is expected to continue the work of his predecessor, Alexiy II, who built the Soviet-wrecked church into an institution tightly allied with the government. Marginalized and infiltrated during decades of anti-religious Soviet rule, the Orthodox Church has enjoyed increasing political clout under Vladimir Putin. As Putin sought to reawaken patriotic pride among Russians, first as president and then in his current post as Prime Minister, the church regained its former power.

"Ties between the Kremlin and the church will get tighter and tighter," said Alexander Nezhny, a Russian writer who specializes in religion. "Today the Russian Orthodox Church is the de facto state church, enjoying perks and advantages from the state. In the new era, this mutual penetration will be deeper."

## Seven Wonders of Russian Chosen

Russia announced the results of the national contest to choose the "Seven Wonders of Russia" on the Russian National Holiday, June 12, 2008. The contest was organized in the autumn of 2007. More than 25 million people took part in the online voting to select the winners.

The Seven Wonders of Russia include the following: Lake Baikal; the Imperial Palaces of Peterhof; Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow; Mount Elbrus; the Motherland Monument in Volgograd; the Valley of the Geysers in Kamchatka; and the Eroded Columns in the Komi Republic.

**Lake Baikal** is located in southern Siberia, near the city of Irkutsk. It is famous for being the deepest lake in the world and the largest freshwater lake in the world by volume, holding about 20% of the world's total surface fresh water, a volume larger than all the Great Lakes in America combined. Baikal is home to more than 1,700 species of plants and animals, two thirds of which can be found nowhere else in the world. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. More than 25 million years old, it is the oldest lake in the world.

**Peterhof** is located on the outskirts of Saint Petersburg on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland. Peterhof is a series of palaces and gardens laid out on the orders of Peter the Great, and sometimes called the "Russian Versailles". The palace-ensemble is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**Saint Basil's Cathedral** is located at the southeast end of Red Square in Moscow. It is famous for its colorful onion shaped domes. The cathedral was built by Ivan the Terrible to commemorate the victory over his enemies in the sixteenth century. The interior of the cathedral is a collection of separate chapels, each filled with beautiful icons and frescos.

**The Rodina (Motherland) Monument** stands on the Mamayev Hills overlooking the city of Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) in southern Russia. This monument commemorates the Battle of Stalingrad (1942-43), the decisive Soviet victory over Germany in WWII. At the time of its construction in 1967 it was the largest free-standing sculpture in the world.

**The Valley of Geysers** in Kamchatka is the largest geyser field in Eurasia and the second largest concentration of geysers in the world. This basin with approximately ninety geysers and many hot springs is situated in the Russian Far East. It is part of the Kronotsky Nature Reserve, which is incorporated into the World Heritage Site "Volcanoes of Kamchatka".

**Mount Elbrus** is a mountain located in the western Caucasus mountain range in Russia, near the border of Georgia. It is the highest mountain in the Caucasus, in Russia, and can be considered the highest mountain in Europe at 5,642 meters (18,510 ft).

**The Eroded Columns** on the Man-Pupu-Nyor Plateau in the Komi Republic of northern Russia. This geological treasure is located near the Pechora River and has been seen by few tourists, from Russia or from other countries, because of its inaccessibility.

*Google "Seven Wonders of Russia" to see photographs of these wonders.*