

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

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Russian Doctor to Speak on September 7

Lidia Kustova, a Russian physician from St. Petersburg, Russia will be the speaker for the first RUSSIAN HERITAGE meeting of the fall.

We will meet at 4:00 pm on Friday, September 7, 2007 at the Russian American Club building at 2920 Beach Blvd. S. in Gulfport. We thank the Russian American Club for their hospitality in making this facility available, and if you haven't been here before, you will find it very interesting.

Lidia Kustova will speak on changes in the modern health care system in St. Petersburg, Russia. She will discuss her personal experiences, the new "5-star clinics", the problem diseases in Russia, and the new medical insurance system.

Come at 4:00 pm for zakuski, coffee, and tea prepared by the ladies of the Russian American club for a small fee. We will begin a general discussion of summer activities and plans for the year at 4:30, and the program with Lidia Kustova will begin at 5:00 pm.

This program is somewhat different than those we have sponsored in the past. Most of our activities have been historical, literary, or musical, but some contemporary topics can also have a definite "cultural" significance. See inside for other special upcoming programs.

Nick White in Russia

Nick White, 19, is a talented musician with plans to study at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. He applied and appeared to be accepted as a student of composition at the Conservatory based on his application and submission of his compositions. But for many months he did not hear from the conservatory and he was unable to contact them. The Board of Russian Heritage helped to reestablish contact with the Foreign Students Office of the Conservatory, and to help financially (through our Ambassador Scholarship Fund) to send him to Russia for a meeting (interview/audition) at the conservatory. His guide in St. Petersburg was a former student ambassador to Florida, Maria Kiseleva, seen with Nick in the photo on page 3.

Below is his story in his own words.

This summer I was given the opportunity to visit St. Petersburg, Russia and the St. Petersburg Conservatory named after Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. My visit to the conservatory began with a drizzly but nice walk along a canal where painters painted scenes of the Petersburg streets. I passed many small bridges, including a very special one that was capped at either end by sitting stone lions.

The conservatory was a grey building with no immediate splendor. However, it was a very important place for me knowing that greats like Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich both occupied the space in which I was now standing. It was also a fantastic first for my guide Maria Kiseleva who had up until this point never been to the conservatory. The entrance was along the far side of the building through a door marked "Portal 6". Once inside we were required to call to the Foreign Students Office in order to be admitted into the building. Security was tight to say the least. Maria and I were soon greeted by the dean of foreign students and she showed us into the building, first having us stop in the office to meet none other than the world famous composer Sergey Slonimsky.

He was a balding man who I learned was in his seventies despite a very bright young disposition. He immediately began talking about my compositions giving praise where he thought appropriate and criticisms in places he felt I needed work. To shake Slonimsky's hand, knowing that this man studied with Shostakovich and therefore created a line of composers all the way back to Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein, was just amazing. Slonimsky was fluent in German and so was my guide Maria. When he discovered this he went out of his way to say everything in both Russian and German and Maria then would say everything to me in English. It was a most entertaining hour.

After our meeting Maria and I were invited to the graduation ceremony at the conservatory. It took place in a lavish recital hall with a large pipe organ and absolutely astounding paintings on the ceiling and walls, all capped by chandeliers. The acoustics were unbelievable and the performers were so ridiculously talented that it didn't seem real. "These kinds of sounds are not possible on these instruments" or at least that was my thought.

After the concert it was time to part from the conservatory, but not before giving a very great thank you to the dean of foreign students and to Slonimsky for having hosted me. It ended with the words: "See you in September." I had never heard more beautiful words.

I can not thank Russian Heritage enough for this outstanding contribution to my educational as well as cultural understanding. Russia and its finest conservatory were experiences that I never could have had with out them. Thank you Russian Heritage.

Nick White



Who are these people?
Where are they in this picture?

There is an easy answer.
And a more complicated one.

The identities and the location of the two individuals in this picture are easy if you have read the other sections of this newsletter. Some of you will remember meeting them, especially Masha, on the left.

The picture represents something of a success story for Russian Heritage. Nick was an outstanding student of music in the performing arts program at Gibbs High School in St. Petersburg. He met our first two musical ambassadors from St. Petersburg, Russia at Gibbs when Katya and Kristina visited the school. He later met Masha and Natasha, our language ambassadors in 2004. He was inspired by Russia and Russian music, and applied to study musical composition at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. And he's going to do just that! See article on page 2.

Two members of the Russian Heritage Board are attempting to help raise funds for his tuition and expenses at the Conservatory. One donor has agreed to match the first \$300 given to Russian Heritage for the Nick White fund. With loans and grants he is in pretty good shape for the first term at the Conservatory, but with several donations at the \$1,000 level, or a larger number of lesser gifts, we could help guarantee his continued study. Remember, donations to Russian Heritage are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Discover ^{the} Baltic with Russian Heritage



You will soon be receiving further information on this exciting program for May, 2008.

Saying Goodbye to my library or what Russians read these days . . .

Your Library... How important is it to you? Those thousands of books written by famous world authors or by forgotten writers from the XVIII to XXI centuries... read and unread publications... billions of words of love and hate... Especially since it took years and even generations to gather... What does it mean to your life and your heart? Is it your friend? Your memory? Your normal comfort environment? a constant reminder about important and not so important things in your life, your family and your home? It's all of the above to me...

How and what do you feel when you hold in your hands some books with special messages or book marks inside? You remember yourself at the early age reading and laughing at and with some of the characters. You remember the time when your mother was reading them to you, but she is no longer alive. You touch and open books you've read to your daughter, making her happy... But what if you have to say Goodbye to all these books in one day? It's not just "difficult" – it's almost insane. But this was my story. I had to make a strong decision, forced by the understanding that I couldn't take them to my other life, my life across the ocean... they belong here in the Russian Saint Petersburg... and others need them more. My treasures and my memories must stay with people here, in a public library, in hospitals, orphan houses, military forces... A decision was made and it seemed so easy... But remembering our Russian reality, to make this happen, I needed to be not only emotionally but physically and financially strong... is this a Russian paradox? I had to pack and pay for transportation and delivery of all the books if I gave them to the library... But I did not have time or extra rubles to do it... So, after a couple days when my family and friends were welcomed to visit and take and keep all the books they wanted, I had to call a book store to help. To my huge surprise, the estimator arrived to my home in 15 minutes after the call! Wow, two ideas jumped into my mind "Russians are not ALWAYS late" and "Russians are STILL reading and need old books!" Surprisingly, it took the guy about 7 hours to review my collection. His verdict was strict – 2500 rubles for the selected 500 books (not counting children's thin paper backs which he took as a stack)... I was wondering what is valuable for our modern Russian readers and the answers amazed and pleased me. Lenin, Marx, Engels, Sholokhov, Simonov, Gorky, and Mayakovsky are no longer popular... They remained on my shelves... All children collection, including even very old paperbacks, were gone... All fairytales (I had such a great collection of *skazki* of Indian, Scandinavian, Arabic, Mongolian and many other nations) were taken... My Soviet Encyclopedia in 30 volumes was gone in spite of my strong belief in the internet replacement of all kind of dictionaries and encyclopedias. I was mistaken. My collection of adventure stories, especially military (WWII) "disappeared" in a second. I was thrilled that my collections of works by Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gogol, Chekhov, Turgenev, Jack London, Jules Vern, and many other Russian and world classics were still popular! Although the prices offered for all the selected books was ridiculous, with an average of 5 rubles (20 cents) per book, I was happy that someone might read, learn, and enjoy them again. Please, don't think that I have no Pushkin or Chekhov or Gogol collections in my American home. No, I do have them. It's just happen that my family's home collection in Russia had duplicate sets and I brought the best ones here during my seven years in US... The next day, I invited collectors who needed a specific book on specific subjects – medicine, psychiatry and psychology, history, film studies, etc. This group was so excited to get some rare publications which happened to be in my library.

I feel really happy with overall results of my library project and especially satisfied when I think that each book will find a welcoming home and a nice new owner. Yes, Russians still read and read a lot. Isn't it amazing that two large book stores on Nevsky Avenue are working 24/7, and I saw people at 3am shopping there? And the main, beautifully renovated bookstore "Dom Knigi", with cozy round tables and chairs and a stylish café "Chokoladnitsa" with a view on Kazan's Cathedral, is opened every day until midnight. One of the most popular and affordable series there is "Azbuka-Classiki" «Азбука-Классика». It's a nice paperback edition which costs about 60 to 80 rubles (2-3 dollars). I do have about 50 books from that series in my library here. It's mainly newly published or republished works, sometime translated world classics in addition to Russian works. This series introduced me to some great modern French, German, Czech, Japanese and many other writers. If you prefer (as I do) to read in Russian, I recommend to you works by Kundera, Gari, Murokami, Pavich, Pelevin, Osetinskaya, and many others. If you'd like to learn more about this series, you can navigate this web-site <http://shop.topkniga.ru/books/series/in/239>. I personally advise you to read "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" by Roman Kundera, *Невыносимая легкость бытия*". This was a very emotional reading for me, and made an impact on my understanding of human relationships.

I WISH YOU A VERY INTERESTING AND ENJOYABLE READING TIME!

Nadia Yevstigneyeva

Curator's widower gets 5 years for Hermitage thefts

A St. Petersburg court has convicted the husband of a former Hermitage curator in the theft of 77 artifacts from the acclaimed Russian art museum.

Judge Anzhelika Morozova of the Dzerzhinsky District Court convicted Nikolai Zavadsky on Thursday and sentenced him to five years in prison. He must also pay damages of 7.4 million rubles (about \$333,000) to the Hermitage.

Last July, Hermitage officials shocked the art and antiquities community worldwide with the announcement that more than 220 artifacts were missing from one of its departments. The discovery emerged from a routine check.

Russian officials estimated that the icons, jewelry and other items stolen are worth a total of more than 140 million rubles (about \$6.3 million).

Sudden death, confession

The investigation soon centred on one of the museum's curators, who had died suddenly at the beginning of the inventory check in October 2005.

Police arrested several suspects, including the curator's son and her husband, a history teacher.

The husband, Zavadsky, eventually confessed that he and his wife had been involved in the thefts, which he said had taken place over several years.

Zavadsky confessed that his wife had smuggled items out and that they sold pieces to antique dealers and pawn shops in order to pay for medication.

Police have since recovered about 30 of the missing artifacts, but the theft (and another subsequent one in Moscow) turned a startling light onto the meagre salaries, lax security, poor cataloguing practices and dire financial situation facing the Hermitage — one of the world's most recognized art museums — as well as most other Russian cultural organizations.

Last fall, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered government officials to begin a countrywide inventory of the estimated 50 million artworks held in Russian museums.

Established by Catherine the Great in 1764, the Hermitage is renowned for its vast collection of approximately three million objects of antiquities, and decorative and Western art, which are mostly in storage.



The thefts drew attention to the low salaries, poor record-keeping, lax security and lack of funding plaguing the Hermitage and other Russian cultural organizations.
(Dmitry Lovetsky/Associated Press)