

The Scotland-Russia Forum Newsletter

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RECENT FORUM EVENTS

'Explosive stuff: Kamchatka and its prehistoric links with Scotland' Thursday 15 May

Professor Geoffrey Harper treated the Forum to a very interesting talk and slide show about Kamchatka, which I'd always thought was called 'that pointy bit at the other end of Russia'. Geoffrey told us about the history and indigenous cultures of the peninsula, and showed some drawings – the ones I found most fascinating were of the traditional pyramid homes on stilts and winter underground homes. He then spoke of the spectacular volcanic geography of the region, with slides and anecdotes of his trip. The photos of volcanoes rising out of the mist were especially stunning. It was especially interesting for me, perhaps for everyone, because it is a region I had hardly heard about. The result is that most of the audience are probably now planning trips there... Steph Droop

'Russian Spectacular' Sunday 25 May

In fact a 'Belarus Spectacular' performed by the Central Band of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus. Their programme at the Queen's Hall, included a mixture of well known items (ending with Tchaikovsky's '1812' overture) and less familiar works. The soloists included cembalom player and dancers from the Belarus National Folk Dance Academy. The reception afterwards was attended by about 30 Forum members and friends: the performers said that 'Scotland was the friendliest place'. HW



Performers from the 'Russian Spectacular' and others at the reception.

The chance to meet the performers was a lovely ending. I asked Larisa Rydlevskaya (the guest soloist) how her instrument worked and I got an answer that made me both wonder how on earth she could play it with her eyes closed, and also how she made it all look so easy. The instrument [cembalom] is strung like a piano, but is played quite differently. Ruth Williams

OTHER NEWS

President Putin's visit - Forum member's account

Vladimir Putin's packed one-day visit began when Scotland's First Minister, Jack McConnell and Prince Andrew accompanied the President and his wife, Ludmilla, into Edinburgh Castle. They were shown the Castle's 16th century Great Hall including the portrait of Tsar Nicholas II, made Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Scots Greys by Queen Victoria. From their vantage point they were shown the New Town and made aware that some of the same architects were responsible for the handsome buildings in St. Petersburg. Mr Putin went on to deliver a keynote address at the Signet Library in Parliament Square. Jack McConnell joked about a notable Scottish export success to Russia: Barr's 'Irn Bru' which tastes similar to Russian lemonade, hence its huge following in Russia. Putin delivered a polished performance through a translator, explaining that he came to Scotland on advice from Tony Blair: 'Mr Blair originates from here, he recommended that I visit Scotland'. He went on to say he has 'warm memories' of the Scottish people as 'direct, straightforward and with an open culture' from his last visit to Edinburgh 12 years ago with the trade

delegation of Anatoly Sobchak, then mayor of St. Petersburg. He said, 'There is a great similarity here with my people', and went on to praise the many Scots who helped build Russia and his beloved St Petersburg. Later, I had a vantage point at the gates of Holyrood Palace and felt privileged to get a fleeting glimpse of the first head of the Russian state to come to these shores since 1874. It was about 1:30 when the onlookers first caught sight of the outriders and a large limousine drew into the drive leading to the main gates of the Palace. False alarm! It was Ludmilla and her entourage. Where was Vladimir? Finally, after another 10 minutes, the next cavalcade swung into view and a Russian State 'ZIL' limo flashed in. As the President's car was just feet away from me on the opposite side of the street, a young male protester hurled himself on the President's car brandishing a placard. He just managed to yell out what sounded like 'Murderer' and 'Free Chechnya' before being wrestled to the ground by four policemen. The car moved on unimpeded to the front door of the Palace. Mr Putin got out and took a few seconds to ponder the scene around him. Through my camera zoom lens, I could see him squinting back at us as we peered through the royal railings.

Following the private lunch hosted by Prince Andrew, the Russians were shown the exhibition of works of the famous jeweller Fabergé. That afternoon, Scotland's Russian guests said farewell and boarded their London bound Iluyshin where the President met Tony Blair, signing a major gas contract that will have significant repercussions for Scotland's oil and gas sector. In his final address President Putin singled out Scotland's role by saying to the audience 'On you largely depends the successful development of relations between Russia and Britain. And so this meeting just could not but be held'. Nicholas Schellenberg

Volunteer at the Kitezh orphanage

In mid-July Robin Thomson, a mature student of Russian and German at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, sets off to Russia - by bicycle. The countries he will visit en route include England, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Ukraine, before finishing up in the Kaluga region in south-west Russia, where he will volunteer for a month at the Kitezh orphanage. The trip will end with a ride into Moscow. Robin has agreed to send regular e-mail updates while on the journey and at the orphanage. If anybody would like to sponsor the ride - accommodation at Kitezh alone costs over £500 - Robin would be more than delighted. Please contact the Newsletter. Any other ideas, suggestions, contacts or favours he can do on the way - ditto. For more information on the Kitezh orphanage see the Russian-language site (not always up to date). It also offers an email bulletin: <http://kitezh.nm.ru/news.htm> Ecologia in Morayshire fundraises for Kitezh and arranges visits for volunteers. Its site is at www.ecologia.org.uk and has links to Kitezh materials in English.

Festival of Scottish Culture in Moscow

Any Forum member who is in Moscow during 4-15 September (or, indeed at any other time) is urged to contact the Caledonian Club, which is holding its 7th annual Festival of Scottish Culture during those dates. Performers from Scotland include the groups Quern and Calasaig, and the programme includes a ceilidh. More information: 0131 662 9149 (UK); 007 095 721 9542 (Moscow); website: www.caledclub.narod.ru

History Today tour of St Petersburg, 6-13 October 2003

Led by Professor Robin Milner-Gulland, of the University of Sussex, the tour includes visits to the Hermitage, various museums and other sites in St Petersburg itself, the towns of Pushkin and Pavlovsk and a walking tour of Dostoevsky's St Petersburg. There is also an opportunity to meet local historians. Details: Heritage Group Travel, 40 Gay Street, Bath, BA1 2NT, tel: 0800 929496, email heritage@grouptravel.co.uk

Blagovest Ensemble from St Petersburg, St Peter's Church, Lutton Place, Edinburgh

The Ensemble gave a concert at St Peter's Church on 30 May: the programme was an excellent rendition of Russian religious and folk music, followed by a haggis supper for the singers and their hosts (including three Forum members), during which Burns' *Ode to the Haggis* was recited in Russian translation. Jenny Carr

Glasgow's West End Festival: Kastalsky concert

This formed part of an enjoyable afternoon of music at the University of Glasgow Memorial Chapel on 14 June. The concert was associated with the launch of a new book on Kastalsky (*Alexander Kastal'sky: his life and music* by Svetlana Zvereva). Kastalsky was the most significant composer of sacred music in late Imperial Russia: his Liturgy of St John Chrysostom was sung quite beautifully by the Scottish Voices with Madrigirls. It was difficult to believe that this was a Scottish choir singing in Old Church Slavonic so authentic did it sound. Svetlana Zvereva herself helped the choir recreate the impressive, soul-touching sound by repeated practice and reference to Russian tapes. The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom for women's choir was written by Kastalsky in 1905 and contains eleven movements - the first ten were composed specifically for this Liturgy; the final one is a simplified arrangement of a well-known choral piece which Kastalsky composed in 1897. The book launch itself was a happy occasion with short speeches and much laughter - helped along by the wine and nibbles not to mention the excellent company. Tania Konn-Roberts. Note: the kruzhok meeting on 8 September is on Kastalsky (for details see page 4).

EVENTS THIS SUMMER

Russian Ballet Society

Evening of Ballet and Divertissements at Church Hill Theatre, Friday 25 July, 7.30pm. Tickets £6/£4 conc.

'Russian souls': exhibition of photographs, Haddington

An exhibition of photographs of Russia and Russians by Simon Crofts, entitled "Russian Souls", runs from 7 July to 14 August at the Peter Potter Gallery, 10 The Sands, Haddington, East Lothian.

Andrei Tarkovsky season at the Edinburgh Filmhouse

The Edinburgh Filmhouse is showing 6 Tarkovsky films in August and September: *Ivanovo Detstvo* (*Ivan's Childhood*, 1962) 4-6 August; *Solaris* (1972) 8-10 August; *Zerkalo* (*The Mirror*, 1974) 8-9 August; *Stalker* (1979) 8, 13 August; *Nostalgia* (1983); *The Sacrifice* (1986) 17, 19 September. Special ticket deals: any 3 Tarkovsky films, £10.50/£6 concessions; all 6, £15/£9 concessions. Also: *Russian ark*, 10-12 August.

Russian Ark and Moving Conversations panel discussion

The panel for 'Spammers and spools' includes Scottish technology gurus David Farquhar (Interactive University), Dr Aydin Kurt Elli (edNET) and Ian Preece (National Trust for Scotland). The discussion will be followed by a showing of *Russian Ark*, filmed in the Hermitage, it is the first unedited, single take, full-length digital feature film. 6.30pm, Thursday 24 July, Warner Village Cinema, Greenside Place, Edinburgh. Panel discussion plus film: £6.50/£5.50 conc. Box office 0131 557 3964, automated booking 0870 2406020.

Exhibition at Sharmanka Kinetic Gallery

'Without Sanctuary: Life and Death under German Fascism and Russian Communism' by Memorial Society (St.Petersburg), Kinetic Sculptures by Eduard Bersudsky and Furniture/Sculpture by Tim Stead and his workshop. The exhibitions continue until 15 August at Sharmanka Kinetic Gallery, 2nd floor 14 King Street/109 Trongate, Glasgow, Tel 0141 5527080. Open Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday 12 noon-6pm. Performances of kinetic sculptures-Tuesday 1pm, Thursday 7pm, Sunday 3 & 6 pm (£3 /£2 conc/children free). www.sharmanka.com

Exhibition of works by Andrew Gilchrist, Edinburgh

An exhibition of work by Andrew Gilchrist (son of Forum members Hugh and Lena Gilchrist) is on show in the Fine Art Dept, Central Library, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh from 4 to 30 July. He has exhibited since 1991: the present exhibition includes landscape and still life work, featuring paintings inspired by the Isle of Man. Times: Monday-Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 9am-1pm.

...And the **Fabergé exhibition** at the Queen's Gallery, Holyroodhouse, continues until 15 October.

EDINBURGH FESTIVALS

Events of Russian and East European interest at the Festivals: not necessarily a complete list. For full details see the relevant Festival programme. The Editor would be grateful for any reviews, for our next issue.

International Festival

The Seagull by Anton Chekhov, directed by Peter Stein, King's Theatre, 11-23 August.

Talk: Mike Falchikov 'Chekhov's *The Seagull*', 14 August, 1.20pm, Royal Museum Lecture Theatre.

Book Festival

William Hitchcock & Vitalii Vitaliev. An American and a Russian on the future of Europe. 9 August, 3pm
Andrei Makhine & Benjamin Prado. The two authors examine upheavals in 20th century Russia and Spain. 9 August, 4pm.

Simon Sebag Montefiori. Stalin and the 'untold story' of the 'court' around him. 16 August, 5pm.

Mikhail Komonov and Mikael Niemi. Komonov's *The Naked Pioneer Girl* is 'a blackly hilarious spoof of heroic Soviet tales'. Niemi's novel *Popular music* is a European best-seller. 21 August, 12.30 pm.

Fringe Festival

Dance and physical theatre

Birds Eye View, St Stephens, 3-25 August. DO-Theatre.

Derevo: Islands in the Stream, Assembly Rooms, 3-25 August. Derevo group from St Petersburg.

White Cabin, St Stephens, 5-23 (not 12, 20) August. Akhe Group: 'Russia's engineering theatre group'.

Theatre

Diary of a madman, St John's Hall, Princes Street, 18-23 August. Yakub Kolas State Theatre of Vitebsk.

Gogol's underdogs, Smirnoff Underbelly, Cowgate, 3-24 August. Rogue State Theatre Company. 'In Honour of St. Petersburg's 300th Jubilee'.

The Interrogation, Netherbow Theatre, 19-25 August. Puppet State Theatre Company. Set in Bucharest.

John Donne: a scream within, Komedia Roman Eagle Lodge, Johnston Terrace, August 3-24 (not 11, 18). Performed by Scallabouche from Hungary.

Playing the victim, Traverse Theatre, 3-25 August. By the Presnyakov Brothers.

Silence (Samuel Beckett), St John's Hall, Princes Street, 3-23 August. DMS Theatre Group from Serbia.

They are coming, St John's Hall, Princes Street, 16-23 August. Ukrainian song.

The Town of Mice, Gateway Theatre, Elm Row, 3-25 August. Performing Monkey Theatre from Russia.

Young Kozacks of Ukraine, Roxy Art House, Roxburgh Place, 4-9 August. Ukrainian folk dances by children's group Barvinok.

Comedy

Half-life?... Roxy Art House, Roxburgh Place, 5-23 August. Polaruspod Belarus Comedy Theatre.

Film Festival

Viktar Dashuk Programme: films by Belarus's leading film maker, screened in his presence, on his 40th anniversary as a film maker. Programme 1: five short films, 21 & 23 August. Programme 2: *Vitebsk's Case* (1989) and *Anxious Heights* (black & white, 1973), 22 & 23 August.

The Lease/Nuomos Sutartis (Lithuania, 2002) 17 & 21 August. First feature film from Kristijonas Vildziunas
The mansion by the lake/Wekande Walauwa (Sri Lanka, 2002) 19 and 23 August. Adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, set in rural Sri Lanka.

My way home/Igy Jöttem (Hungary, 1964) 18 August. Directed by Miklós Jancsó. Set during WWII.

The red and the white/Csillagosok, Katonák (Hungary and Soviet Union, 1967) 20 August. Directed by Miklós Jancsó. Made to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.

Shimkent Hotel (France & UK, 2003) 19 and 22 August. Directed by Charles de Meaux, set in Kazakhstan.

The Sky. The Plane. The Girl/Nebo. Samoljot. Devushka (Russia, 2002) 14, 15 August. Directed by Vera Storozheva.

FUTURE FORUM EVENTS

Friday 29 August, 7-10pm, Pot-luck supper, German-speaking church, Chalmers Crescent, Edinburgh. Social evening to welcome pupils from St Petersburg, their teacher and hosts from George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, including a short entertainment provided by the Russian group and (so far) one young UK musician. Any other members wishing to perform should contact Jenny Carr: 0131 662 9149. All members very welcome: please bring contributions of food. Drinks (soft / hot / alcoholic) available at modest cost.

Monday 8 September, 7pm, Kruzhok: *Kastalsky and Russian church music*, led by Svetlana Zvereva (in English), Scottish Poetry Library, 5 Crichton's Close, Canongate, Edinburgh. Followed by coffee, tea and biscuits: donations to Scottish Poetry Library who kindly offered us space during the university vacation.

Thursday 25 September, Paul Dukes - 1553-2003: 450 years of Russo-British Relations. Time and place to be confirmed. It is 450 years since Richard Chancellor more or less accidentally visited the Russia of Ivan the Terrible - and drowned off the Fife coast on his return three years later. Paul Dukes, Emeritus Professor of History at Aberdeen University and author of a number of books on Russian history, will trace the development of Russo-British relations since that time.

Full details of the autumn programme will appear in September's newsletter: the dates for your diary are:

Monday 13 October Kruzhok: Impressions of Russians and Russia, led by John Bowles (in Russian)

Thursday 23 October: Tim Binyon: Pushkin

Thursday 6 November: Dr Peter Semple: In Wylie's footsteps: working with Russian doctors in St. Petersburg.

Monday 10 November: Kruzhok: Chekhov's stories, led by Neville Long (in English)

Tuesday 18 November: Alexandra Tolstoy: The Last Secrets of the Silk Road

Monday 8 December: Kruzhok: Contemporary Russian writers, led by Jenny Carr (in Russian)

There will also be monthly film screenings from September, dates and venue to be confirmed. All events start at 7pm.

Further details: 0131 662 9149 or scotrussforum@blueyonder.co.uk

NOTICES / ADVERTISEMENTS

- Orthodox community of St Nicholas services in August: Friday 1 August 6pm/Saturday 2 August 11 am Vespers/Liturgy (at University of Strathclyde Chaplaincy); Sunday 10 August 11am Liturgy (Orthodox Church, Laighill Loan, Dunblane); Saturday 23 August 11am Liturgy (Orthodox Church, Laighill Loan, Dunblane). Further information from: Fr Alexander Williams, Arranmhor, Laighill Loan, Dunblane, FK15 0BJ

- Cheap phone-calls to Russia – 08444 620 620 (2p/min to Moscow); 09119 880 880 (5p min to Belarus); 08444 280 280 (4p min to Russia except Moscow). See also the website: www.telediscount.co.uk

- The Russian Tavern has been elected Pub of the Year by the SW Scotland branch of the CAMRA, and 'Overall Winner 2003 National UK Pub of the Year'. Contact: Dag and Olga Crawford, Port Royal Hotel *Russian Tavern*, Port Bannatyne, Isle of Bute, tel: 01700 505073, email: stay@butehotel.com

- The DOM Public Gallery, Advocate's Close (Royal Mile) is open again after refurbishment. Artists showing include Maria Rud, Faina Kremerman, Natalia Kharina, and Gennadi Manjaev, and masks by Evgenia from St Petersburg. Open: 12 to 5.30 daily except Wednesdays. Private views are organised by Jenny Reynolds. Contact: 07903 460752.