

The Scotland-Russia Review

Special Culture Issue

No. 27, December 2012



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Dear readers,

Everything changes in this world - and so does the Scotland-Russia Forum, together with the *Review*. The current edition differs from the previous ones in many respects, in a way symbolising the changes that face the Forum. You will find more details on this in Jenny Carr's report on the next page; for now, I would like to tell you more about the magazine itself.

My name is Varvara Bashkirova, and I am the new editor of the *Review*. Chris Delaney, who has been managing the magazine for many years, stepped aside but provided invaluable support during making of this issue. We wish him very best in his career.

One of the changes is easily noticeable; the *Review* is now printed in full colour. A couple of new sections have appeared, such as *Film Reviews* and *My Story*, in which the distinguished Russians living in Britain talk about their road to success. In the extended online version of the magazine you can also find a *Visit* section, in which people who have visited Russia write about their experiences; the current issue, for example, features an account of a student from Poland of her visit to Saint-Petersburg. The online version is available at the Scotland-Russia Forum website at www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/resources/201212_SRF_Review.pdf

The current edition has a special theme: it celebrates Russian culture in many of its forms including art, cinema, theatre and literature. With all the changes and uncertainties going on in modern society and politics, art is something that remains universal, that unites people and transcends cultures and languages. Inside you will find interviews with Robert Williamson and David Johnstone, creators of a great theatrical adaptation of *Dead Souls*; Maria Rud and Gennady Gogoliuk's experiences in Scottish art world; three of the best Russian films and much more. Enjoy!

Varvara Bashkirova
Editor

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Scotland-Russia Forum: forthcoming changes

The six months since the summer issue of SRF Review have been as busy and eventful as ever. My personal programme highlights include: a wonderful exhibition of late Soviet art in August, the third time we've taken part in the Edinburgh Art Festival; our debut at the Festival of Politics that month with a debate on UK-Russian relations by an all-star panel including SRF President Sir Malcolm Rifkind; Gerry West's unique scale model of Borodino with which we celebrated the anniversary of 1812 in October; visits to the Scotland-Russia Institute by the Russian Ambassador and Vladimir Tolstoy, great great grandson of the writer and curator of the Yasnaya Polyana Museum; and a packed out lecture on the Russian opposition by our youngest ever speaker, Ben Judah.

The next few months will be quieter and give us time to reflect and plan for the future.

The life of the SRF seems to move in five year phases: in 2003-8 we set up our core activities and started to build membership, running about 10 events a year. In 2008-12 our wonderful premises allowed us to expand all our activities (events, members, visitors, web visits, bulletin circulation all grew rapidly) and to develop new ones, some of which we hope to develop in Phase 3.

So what can we expect as we prepare to leave South College Street? We cannot alas afford to run an open-all-hours culture centre any more and the demands of our very ambitious programme (I plead guilty) on volunteer time and effort have proved too onerous as well. We won't stop being ambitious though! Awareness and understanding of Russia are still disgracefully low and there is a lot of work to do. We will look for new and more effective ways to fulfil the SRF's mission and plan to spend more time on projects which were pushed out by the need to maintain the programme of the Scotland-Russia Institute – our campaign to get Russian into Scottish schools, for example. In particular we will try to continue to expand our audience, to improve our marketing skills, and to continue to develop and improve our online presence. And, not least, we will try our best to fundraise in order, eventually, to re-establish a culture centre, with professional staff.

What about you, our members? We will need your help if we are to continue much of what you tell us you value most: a regular programme of events, the library, the magazine and e-bulletins, the monthly "Chai 'n' Chat". We are grateful to Varvara and Lewis (magazine), Helen (library), Marc David (Cinema Club), Neville, Natasha and co (Chai 'n' Chat) but urgently need people to take over the talks programme.

I will leave you with very best wishes from myself and the rest of the SRF committee for the forthcoming New Year. We thank you for your support so far and hope you will stay with us as we embark on our second decade.

Jenny Carr, SRF chairperson

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Russian Classics for a Scottish Stage

Last summer, theatre director **David Johnstone** and actor **Robert Williamson** created a theatrical adaptation of *Dead Souls* which was a great success in the Scotland-Russia Institute. They told the *Review* about Gogol, Russian literature in the UK and the responsibilities of being an Artist.

Robert Williamson

Review (R): *How challenging was it to perform in Dead Souls?*

Robert Williamson (RW): If there was a thought of challenge in the approach to this play it was with regard to performing alone. Many years ago I developed two solo performances for young humans, featuring a range of characters which manifest simply through physicality, voice and attitude. I enjoyed the experience although at times found that working alone was quite different to working with a cast of 6 or 10 and full technical support. It let me know that I had the capacity to perform solo and hold an audience.

The idea of challenge is not really in my mindset regarding my work as an Actor. Much of the work I have undertaken has had an exciting element of development, which can go on until the very last performance. I love that spontaneity, that immediacy, that inevitable truth – if you will allow it as an Artist. That is my biggest joy as an Artist in performing *Dead Souls*. Joy is more fulfilling than challenge.

R: *Why do you think David decided to have a single actor in the play?*

RW: In some ways we do not think of it as a play, rather as a man telling the story of his book, making spontaneous and instantaneous decisions about how to communicate that and dealing with the memories his story conjures in his soul, in the end understanding, for the first time ever for himself, of his dear home, Russia, 'Why do you enchant?' A great joy and gift of working in a single actor performance is



*Robert Williamson as Gogol.
Photo by Heidi Pearson*

having time to think the character's thoughts and find his way to tell his story. That time element is amazing. Also, having such a wonderfully small arena and being able to physically interact with my audience is very fulfilling. I take full responsibility for what I share with my Audience and how I share it - but not for how they react and interact. I can't act someone else's reaction to my engagement with them. They have to do that, and only then I have something to work with. If they are agreeable - that's lovely, if not - that's fine too. For me, that immediacy is magical!

R: *Where does your interest in Russia and Russian literature come from?*

RW: Anton Chekhov is the Russian artist whose work I am most familiar with. I had the fine fortune to play in two outdoor productions of new adaptations of *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Both were performed in Edinburgh in the evening. As night falls and the Moon rises

our audience are drawn magically into our story. I have also performed Chekhov in broad Scots, which was a challenge. *Dead Souls* is my introduction to Nikolai Gogol and the way David has drawn the story out of Gogol's work is exceptional, intricate and finely honed. The development of *Dead Souls* has been a thought provoking collaboration from the very beginning!

David Johnstone

R: *What was it like to work on the Dead Souls adaptation?*

David Johnstone (DJ): From the beginning Robert and I wanted to do our *Dead Souls* for an audience like the one we had at Scotland-Russia Forum: Russians and British Russo-philes. For us, they were dream-performances. I wrote the first draft of *Dead Souls* in 2005, but I was waiting to find the right actor to play it as a one-man show. I knew Robert casually from seeing him in a few things, Shakespeare, Chekhov, new work... and it was last year that I finally realised: he would be especially perfect for my adaptation. I saw some short film clips of him and they especially convinced me that he was right, because my concept would be that the performance would have a special quality of cinema acting rather than stage acting.

Some early stage work I saw of Robert's was too Big, it was too Large and Grand (it was directed to be so, of course) to work for my concept. But then I saw one stage piece he was in where his acting was very cinematic and under-played, not 'projected' out into the audience, but attracting the audience to come in to his thoughts, his mind, his feelings. Of course, Gogol can be quite mad and flamboyant in

his characters and stories, but I really believed that this performance must be controlled and internal, and that Gogol should be presented as most definitely not an actor but a writer who is doing his best to present his story to an audience. For this Robert worked very hard to abandon all of his professional style and technique - and believe me, it takes an extremely talented actor to achieve this! I believe he did so beautifully and this is a great part of his success in the performance.

R: *Why have you decided to work with Russian literature?*

DJ: Many years ago I began my theatrical career as a mime artist. I was largely self-taught and was working as a professional mime when I met and worked with the famous mime artist Marcel Marceau. His company had done an adaptation of Nikolai

Gogol's short story *The Overcoat*. This is what led me to read that story - and afterwards I read everything I could that had been translated into English. I love Gogol's very soulful comic outlook! I was working in Krakow a few years after that and I saw a wonderful Polish actor do a one-man show of *Diary Of A Madman*. It was so good, I wanted to do it as a one-man show myself! I never did it, but I have wanted to do some Gogol projects for about 30 years. But *Dead Souls* is the first for me. And it was worth the wait... to do it so well.

I love Russian literature, always have, since University days. I have read everything by Dostoevsky, most of Tolstoy, Pasternak, Bulgakov, Pushkin, Nabokov. But I am always very careful about what I choose to adapt for the stage - I feel that I must have a very clear and special concept

to do it, otherwise it is best left as great literature; better for me not to ruin it! I would do *Diary Of A Madman*, *Anna Karenina*, perhaps *Crime and Punishment*...

R: *Do you think that Russian literature is underrated in the UK? And if so - why do you think it is so?*

DJ: I swear, I do not know! Maybe Russians are too passionate for British 'reserve'? How to change it? For me, that's an easy question - I will do more stage adaptations! They will become very successful and people will run out and buy the books! Many said to me at the SRF after the show: 'Now I must go buy that book!' I believe that there should be more film and television adaptations of great Russian literature... many have been done in the past, but not recently, not in Britain.

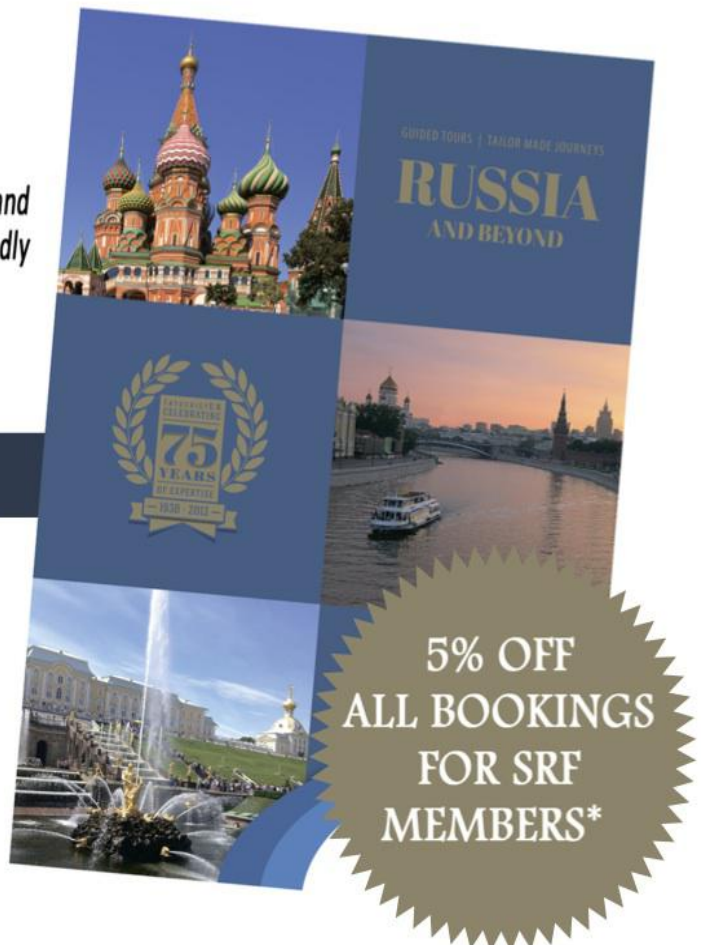


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AniMotion: bringing art and music together

Maria Rud on her innovative collaboration with **Evelyn Glennie** in which live music and the process of painting are united in one unique performance.

I love railway stations and airports.

Airports and railways are places in which all cultures collide and mix, the places in which we meet and part. A kaleidoscope of people is constantly reassembled by departures and arrivals in the wonderful world of travel in which even time flows differently.

I love airports and railways because they strip people of their belongings and in their strange order of chaos have a clarity of the purpose. Individual journeys rolled into one, broken time zones, unexpected delays and hasty departures all form a picture of the world without unnecessary details.

I was born and grew up in the heart of Moscow, lived in Stockholm for a while, in Edinburgh for

quite a few years, in York for some time... Currently, I live in Edinburgh and Teesdale. When people ask if I miss home, I find it difficult to answer. To me, home is painting. I did not choose to be a painter, starting at the age of two and going to my first art school at the age of seven.

I had great teachers and because images come to me and I just simply translate them into paintings, I can never be satisfied with my work or take credit, even when it's due. Quite a few artists said in the past that the best work is always the one you have not painted yet. I cannot agree more.

Apart from painting I have worked in film animation, ceramics, textiles, glass, metal, leather and there are many more mediums and techniques which I would love to learn.





Celebration by Maria Rud

AniMotion is a concept which unites music and art. It happened as an idea for the opening of an art exhibition and people loved it so much that the concept was born.

I co-founded the cultural project DOM, launched in 1996 and housed in Edinburgh’s Advocate’s Close between 1999 and 2005. One of the main objectives of DOM was to unite art and music. Although naturally united because colour is sound and vice versa, music and art have been separated by concert and exhibition halls for what seems a very long time. With the progress of technology, AniMotion, a simple concept in which a painter is yet another performer, in which the colour echoes the sound, finally became possible.

One day, my fellow artist and childhood friend Natalia Kharina and I were having a cup of coffee in Edinburgh. We were planning an exhibition of our work in collaboration with Homeless World Cup, the brain child of Mel Young, one of Scotland’s great social entrepreneurs. Natalia and I did not want the opening to be the usual affair of people standing around with a glass of wine. In wanting to find a way of engaging the public, we came up with the idea of AniMotion in what we thought would be just a one off. I continued the project firstly because people loved it. Secondly, because being the daughter of a composer, I grew up with music. Colour and sound for me have always been inseparable. Since the launch of AniMotion as a concept it has developed into a true dialogue between music and painting and it is precisely this dialogue which makes it so

fascinating for the public and the participants.

The collaborations that followed were with folk musicians Nuala Kennedy and Cameron Robson, classical music ensembles Cappella Nova and Canty, punk rock star Fay Fife and DJ Dolphin Boy.

Venues ranged from abandoned office blocks to St.Giles Cathedral and the Glasgow Film Theatre. For me, one of the most important aspects of AniMotion is its ability to bring both music and painting to people in a very new way, breaking from the conventional and static into something dynamic and truly alive.

My new and ongoing collaboration is with the outstanding percussionist Evelyn Glennie. The launch and the joint project developed with the National Museum of Scotland took place on the 11th of October 2012 in the NMS Grand Gallery. Evelyn and I were joined by the virtuoso cellist/composer Philip Sheppard and vocal consort Canty.

We are planning to take the project worldwide.

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Working as a Magician

Gennady Gogoliuk talks about his artistic career and discusses the differences between Western and Russian art

Review (R): *Tell a little about your professional past.*

Gennady Gogoliuk (GG): I can't say that there is such a profession – the profession of artist. So I have no profession, even though I graduated from Art College and the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg. When I was a child, there was a very popular song that everyone loved. I can only remember the chorus – “I'm just working, I'm just working, I'm just working as a magician”. Of course, I wouldn't use the word “work” or the word “profession” to describe what is a point of residence. A point in the sense of tension, focus, concentrated attention on everything that is going on around you. A sort of dance, you might call it, in which your partner may turn out to be either a face, or the thoughts of the leaves on the trees, or some object or other. For the artist, everything is alive, everything wants his attention and his wide open eyes. You need to retain the ability to be sustained by beauty, or to stay a child all your life and to look at everything as if for the first time, without the help of anybody else's authority. But this is very hard. It is certainly not for everyone. That is why there are schools where you can learn every possible creative

path, every possible trend. But when you have found your path, you need to develop it in such a way that it doesn't become mechanical, automatic. It would take a long time to say everything I could on this subject, so let's just leave it at this: an artist is a person whose heart (or you could say soul) doesn't sleep. As Pasternak wrote:

*Stay awake, artist stay awake,
Do not succumb to sleep.
You are a hostage of time,
You are a prisoner of eternity*

R: *Why and when did you become an artist?*

GG: I think that already as a child I noticed that I was different from other people. I remember how, back in nursery school, I did a drawing of a wolf. The nursery teacher had drawn a wolf in chalk on the blackboard, but I didn't copy it, I drew my own. And I remember that I thought my wolf was better. I also remember drawing a pine cone. I said aloud “I am five years old and I have drawn a pine cone”. It seemed like a sign or a code, an idea

tossed out into the future. A pine cone is a symbol of a generation, its strength and its increase; in other words, fruitfulness. and those words “I have drawn” – mean just that. I have shown myself in the shape of thousands of seeds – characters, pictures, it doesn’t matter.

Actually at one time I wanted to be a clown. I always liked it when I made people laugh. In the early 1990s, I finally joined the Academy of Fools and there I met some very talented actors and directors: for instance, Slava Polunin, Andrei Moguchii, Anton Adasinskii, Oleg Zhukovskii . It was an interesting time.

'I have shown myself in the shape of thousands of seeds - characters, pictures, it doesn't matter'

R: *How do Western artists differ from Russian ones?*

GG: In every way. They have a completely different philosophy, a different way of looking at the world and at material. Russians always turn their noses to the wall- that is to say,

they turn away from the world and look inside themselves, that’s why it has always been easier for them to work with another world, another sky. Whereas a western artist could depict whatever he chose, any Biblical subject, use nature to portray a saint, or a life-model to represent God, this wasn’t possible in the same way in the Russian artistic tradition.

R: *Who or what inspires you as an artist?*

GG: This depends on what point an artist has reached. On the way, when you begin studying everything is interesting, all artists, Velasquez, Titian, El Greco, Leonardo Da Vinci, - Serov, Repin, Vrubel’. In the Soviet Union before the era of Perestroika many artists were not openly shown and it was not possible for students at the Academy of Arts in Petersburg to copy the work of Matisse or Derain, or even Rembrandt – it was considered that such artists had nothing to teach students. They were supposed to copy more classical models such as Flemish still lives, Van Dyck, Rubens. After Perestroika suddenly we were able to discover all sorts of new things. I was very interested in Joseph Beuys and the idea of art as Shamanism, as a dialogue with the world and with objects. And then there was a turning point in history and the world that we had grown up with disappeared suddenly. And then the idea of “suffering material” became

important for me. I gathered objects from the past, pieces of the past and made “pictures in space” “picture theatres” or installations. The first installation was called Reflexio : it incorporated some images from my childhood, some fragments or sensations. The idea was to elevate an absolutely ordinary object into a work of art, to make it into a magical object. Then it seems to me that this wasn’t working – it was like a sort of frozen picture. That was when I began to move inside my 3D pictures (performance art). My first work of performance art was “Beating Rembrandt”, where I was stripped and beaten on my back. It was an expression of the times. Everything was changing so quickly it was like a speeded up film, there was a feeling that it was impossible to stand still. There were invitations to perform and you had to be ready to perform at any moment.

R: *Do you miss Russia?*

GG: Yes. But recently I have begun to write stories about my past in Russia and to have contact with friends in Russia through the internet, which helps.

Gennady Gogoliuk's works can be found at <http://www.jmlondon.com>

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Moscow: the unforgettable city

Last summer, Scotland-Russia Forum volunteer [Marta Wiejak](#) made her first trip to Moscow. Studying Russian in Edinburgh University, she was keen on exploring Russian culture, and visited numerous temples of its art, both past and present. She talks to the Review about her trip, and discusses what it is that gives Moscow its unique feel and atmosphere.



I happened to be in Moscow this summer. It definitely is the place to go for any art fan. Everything that is important in Russian art (Kandinsky, Malevich, Chagall, Vasnetsov...)



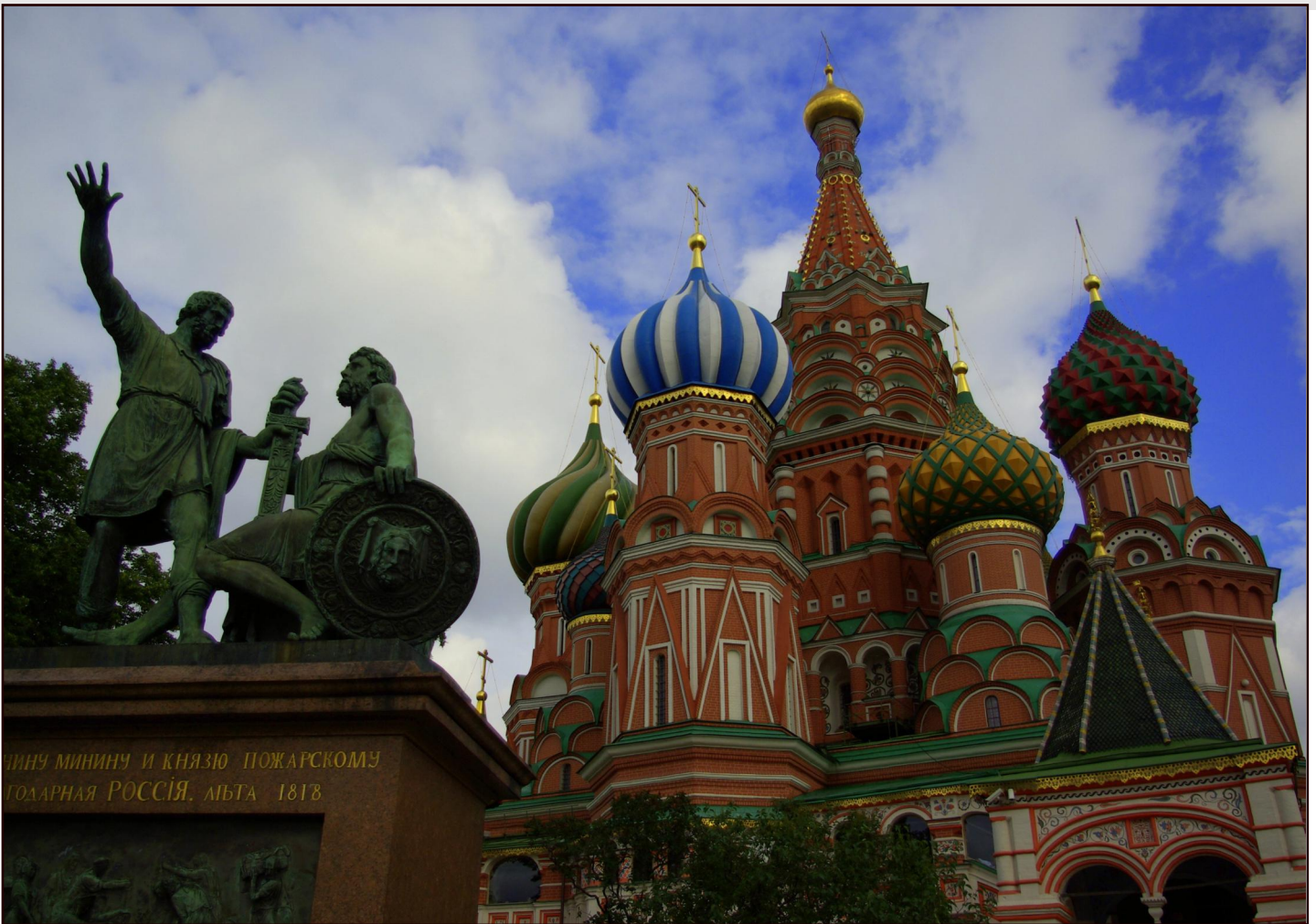
Tretyakov State Gallery

you will find in the Tretyakov Gallery (the historical building of which is a piece of art itself). An outstanding collection of Western art (Klimt, Degas, Van Gogh) awaits for you in the Pushkin Fine Art Museum. If you happen to be interested in the propaganda usages of Art, Moscow should be your mecca: hammers and sickles appear in the most unexpected places, forgotten and no longer noticed by Muscovites, giving a silent testimony of past and present to the passers-by. There are certain places that do not even try to cover their Soviet identity (like VDNKh, the exhibition centre built solely to praise the achievements of the planned economy of

particular republics or the oldest metro stations - out of which Komsomolskaya is probably the most breathtaking and scary at the same time). If you would prefer to indulge yourself in the treasures of the Enlightenment, the Kremlin Armoury is the place to visit, with its giant collection of dresses and carriages of Catherine the Great (not to mention tons of gold turned into all sorts of beautiful objects, received or ordered by Russian court at various stages of its history). If you are looking for Orthodox sacred art, both historical and modern, you will also find it in Moscow. If you are a fan of Russian literature, to say that this is the city where many influential authors (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekov, Bulgakov...) lived and that they were (to a lesser or greater extent) influenced by it would be stating the obvious.



Monument to
Worker and Kolkhoz Woman



I am a little bit of all of the above, therefore I spent the whole month exploring those different aspects of the old capital and I discovered that the beauty of it is not constituted by the beauty of objects it hosts, nor is its complex history the only thing that makes it interesting. Moscow is the most ruthless, overwhelming, difficult, capricious, and yet diverse, vibrant and rewarding city I have ever been to. Just a week after leaving I wanted to come back, but not only for its culture. The beauty - the art - of Moscow is hidden elsewhere, in an "inter-stellar medium", filling the space and binding everything together. What it is, I cannot tell for sure. Maybe it is generated by the type people you only can meet there: Muscovites, being more Moscow than Russian patriots, ladies on extremely high heels walking down the metro platforms, daily visitors leaving trains at the last stations,

'Moscow is the most ruthless, overwhelming, difficult, capricious, and yet diverse, vibrant and rewarding city I have ever been to'

rushing to a bus that will take them home to one of the nearby villages; immigrants from the East of Russia, walking around in groups, trying to find their place in the city which, being the capital of their country, is so foreign to them. Maybe it is the occasional sight of business-like Americans walking around the

Red Square, discussing Russia's present and historical policy-making; or maybe the policemen patrolling the streets in quantities unimaginable anywhere else; or the over-the-top fervour of the guards in Lenin Mausoleum. Maybe it is the terror this city experienced in the past or the contrasts and inequalities it experiences now. I have absolutely no clue and I don't think I ever will have - but I do want to explore. I believe one learns the most trying to answer the questions that cannot be answered; that is the true art of travelling.

Films

Reviews by Marc David Jacobs

The Woman with the Five Elephants

Die Frau mit den 5 Elefanten (original title)
2009 / Switzerland-Germany / 93 min
Directed by: Vadim Jendreyko

This extraordinary documentary by Swiss filmmaker Vadim Jendreyko has had, as yet, only a handful of UK screenings, but is long overdue for wider exposure. Perhaps the only standalone documentary yet made to focus in large part on the methodology of translation, this exploration of the life and career of Svetlana Geier - perhaps the world's preëminent translator of Russian literature until her death in 2010 - began as an exploration of her painstaking and personal methods in rendering Dostoevsky's *Crime And Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Devils*, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Raw Youth* (the five 'elephants' of the title) into German time and time again.

Exploring Geier's past during filming, however, brought up several irreconcilable memories, particularly those connected with her witnessing of the Babi Yar massacres, from the time shortly before she fled the Soviet Union in 1943. Spurred by these recollections, Geier decided to return to the Ukraine for the first time in nearly 65 years, thus providing a wider, poignantly moving story for the documentary to cover. In the film's more intimate moments, she also fondly butts heads with her tireless amanuensis or the equally-opinionated but always hopelessly outmanoeuvred doctor brought in to help 'correct' her clearly faultless German.

However, the film's greatest passages are surely those in which the self-assured and authoritative Geier liberally dispenses her own theories of language and of translation as an art unto itself. In a lifetime devoted to serving what she clearly considered the greatest works of the



literary art, Geier became a great artist herself, and one imagines that any aspiring writer, let alone translator, could benefit immeasurably from her technical insights. Jendreyko's greatest strength is here to allow Geier the absolute freedom to mine her complex and deeply intellectual arguments, which reveal themselves as perfectly clear without recourse to the typically interfering and patronising summaries or the unnecessary and distracting visual tics designed to retain audience attention to which the age of the digital documentary has sadly given rise.

In short, Jendreyko trusts us to follow the threads in this inimitable masterclass, and the rewards we reap are all the greater for it. With the film's understandable emphasis on Dostoevsky, we get precious few tastes of Geier's other literary predilections (she also translated, amongst many others, Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, Platonov, Bunin and Bulgakov); apart from this, however, there is little if anything which could possibly be faulted about this equally warm, human and intellectually-stimulating film.

DVD copies (with subtitles in eight languages, including Russian and English) can be purchased directly from the production company at <http://mirafilm.ch/shop>.

Elena

2011 / Russia / 109 min

Directed by: Andrei Zvyagintsev

From the start, *Elena* seems to be a film with precious little in the way of genuine inspiration. Following its unexceptional opening sequence - an inexorably by-the-numbers rehash of slow-cinema grammar which accomplishes little beyond setting a metronomic pace for what is to follow - we are launched into a plot which, on paper, seems frankly hackneyed: a younger woman has married a wealthy older man, but finds she may be written out of his will in favour of his young heir from a previous marriage and therefore takes desperate measures. By the time one gets to that phrase 'written out of the will', it seems difficult to escape the feeling that whatever follows could, at best, only aspire to that which, on the stage, would've been thought a unoriginal a century ago.

Zvyagintsev and co-writer Oleg Negin have done precious little to elaborate beyond the basics of this plot, relying instead on the former's trademark austere style, along with the talents of the actors involved, to carry what amounts to a melodrama without drama.

In the end, it is the acting alone which gives any cause for celebration: in particular, Elena Lyadova as spoiled daughter Katerina performs miracles with the uninspiringly bare-bones characterisation with which she is saddled, managing apparently without effort to provide the film's only genuinely emotional passages. Otherwise, many moments of actual tension are undercut by reliance on seemingly calculated clichés: in particular, an impressive dialogue-free sequence leading up to the husband's near-

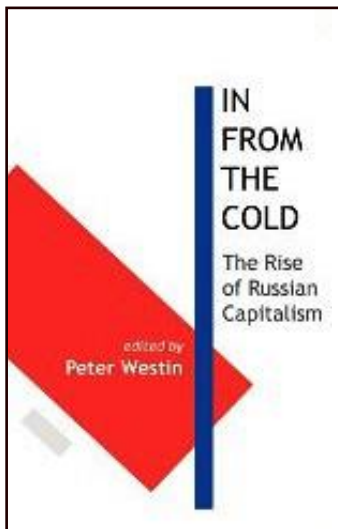


fatal heart attack in a swimming pool loses all the delicate subtlety of its impact thanks to a cynical cutaway to a distracted lifeguard leafing through a fashion magazine - one of the film's plentiful but ultimately aimless nudges towards some sort of moral about the vapidness of popular culture, on which no genuine insight is ever actually offered.

Even in its technical aspects, the film offers precious little to justify itself; in particular, a vaunted 'score' by Philip Glass amounts to nothing more than deploying the same part of the same movement of his Third Symphony (written in 1995) about once every half-hour. Apparently with no other purpose than to resuscitate the audience whenever it is felt that the story's tensions may have slackened, this results in an act of repetition so dull and seemingly disingenuous that even Glass himself might think it a bit overdone.

Overall, it would be tempting to say that, after the triumphs of his first two films, Zvyagintsev may have, in *Elena*, produced his first outright failure. However, one sequence of genuine cinematic poetry, staged onboard a train towards the film's conclusion, is enough to forgive a great deal. Alas, not nearly everything.

Books



By Peter Westin, London
Publishing Partnership, 2012,
pp. 256, £35

In From the Cold: The Rise of Russian Capitalism

Reviewed by Stephen Dalziel

It has been difficult to write a book about business or financial matters in post-Soviet Russia because the pace of change has been so great that any book would be out of date before it went on sale. Even an historical account such as *In From the Cold* has to face this problem, as its separate chapters by various authors were finished in October 2011, almost half a year before Vladimir Putin's re-election as Russian President, something which has had a significant effect on the business climate.

So whilst this book can go some way towards guiding would-be investors to consider the Russian market (by dispelling some of the myths which persist about Russian business following the crazy days of the 1990's) its real value is as a narrative of the personal experiences of a handful of businessmen (and one journalist) from the last days of the USSR until the end of 2011.

Ben Aris (Chapter One, *Russian Growing Pains*) is a journalist who now has great experience of Russia and puts his message across in an entertaining way. It is the ideal start to the book. However, as one who tends not to be inspired by charts and graphs in books or presentations, I found that the rest of the first part of the book, *Mapping Russia's Road to Capitalism* left me wanting a satellite navigation device to get off the road quicker.

An overly upbeat assessment of corporate

governance in Russia (still a serious problem); and a discussion of Russia's "membership of the BRIC Club" as if there were such a club and it had members (when, in fact, it is simply a supposedly clever acronym but ultimately meaningless title for a non-existent group) also made me want to hurry on.

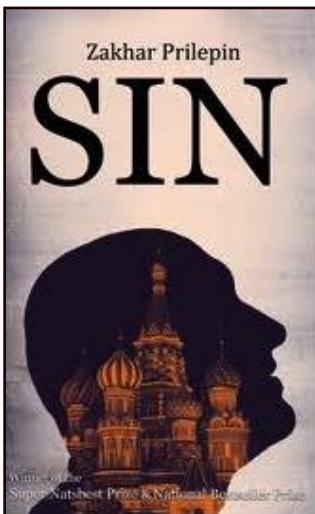
The general reader will find that after Aris' excellent opening chapter, he or she may want to turn to Part 2: *Pioneering Russia: A Personal Account* for a more riveting read. Here are well-written and informative case studies, such as that by Peter Elam Hakansson (Chapter Seven: *The Russian Investment Adventure: A Personal Account*), which starts on board a Soviet submarine in 1981. Not only is Hakansson's assessment of the milestones in the post-Soviet business adventure accurate, but his section, *Russian Risk: a Misconception* (pp140-142) neatly summarises some of the illusions often held by those wrongly scared of the Russian market, concluding, "Many people still believe Russia has significant debt problems. They have completely missed the whole transformation of the Russian economy."

Ultimately, *In From the Cold* will be no more than a snapshot of the first 20 years of the post-Soviet Russian economy; such is the problem of trying to hit such a fast-moving target. But the tales of how some succeeded in that period will be very useful as documented accounts of that period for a long time to come.

Stephen Dalziel was Executive Director of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, 2007-2012. He now runs his own company, DLC Training & Consultancy (www.dlctraining.com).

Sin

Reviewed by Lewis White



By Zakhar Prilepin, Glagoslav Publications Ltd, 2012, pp. 258, £13.80

It would be remiss simply to present this remarkable book without first providing a short introduction to Glagoslav, the publisher responsible for bringing this first English translation to an anglophone audience. The Anglo-Dutch publishing house, launched in 2011,

have already published eight translations, both English and Dutch, of recent Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian and Central Asian literature, with fifteen more planned for late 2012 and 2013. Their mission seeks to offer fresh, “uniquely Slavic” perspectives on the region, and present new voices to a Western audience perhaps unfamiliar with more recent literature emerging from the former CIS.

If Zakhar Prilepin's novel *Sin* sets a benchmark, then we should look forward to more emerging from this exciting project. His fourth novel, and winner of the Natsbet Prize in 2008, *Sin* was also proclaimed 'novel of the decade' by the same organisation, while the outspoken Nizhny Novgorod-based author continues to provoke debate and court controversy in his homeland through his writing and his prominent role within the anti-Putin opposition movement.

The book itself is essentially a novel-in-stories, tracking the life of Zakharka from a small central Russian village to a distant military outpost in Chechnya. These episodes are non-chronologically arranged, and the novel opens with Zakharka as a young journalist in the midst of a passionate love affair in an unnamed provincial town. It's a

breathless introduction, as Simon Patterson's translation captures the charm, energy, and wry humour of Prilepin's keenly observed portrayal of the young lovers.

There is a pronounced change of atmosphere in the second story, which takes us further back into Zakharka's adolescence – again, Patterson's translation preserves the languid, sensual, almost dream-like quality of the prose as we are transported into the heavy summer atmosphere of Zakharka's grandparents' village.

This modulation in tone is apparent throughout, as story-to-story we observe Zakharka as an alcoholic gravedigger, a nightclub bouncer, a child, a father, and a soldier. It's clear to see much of the author's own experience in his character – the similarity between his protagonist's name, a diminutive of the author's own pen-name (Prilepin's given name is Yevgenii) is mirrored also by Prilepin's own time spent as a labourer, journalist, security guard, and special forces soldier in Chechnya.

Zakharka functions as an effective avatar for Prilepin's own reflections on modern Russia – every chapter allows him, through Zakharka's story, to meditate on the ills, and the goodness, apparent within the modern Russian experience. There is a calm, almost cheerful fury that cuts through much of this novel, manifest in brief but explosive episodes of violence. At other points, the text is heavy with a stoical weariness towards the senseless maliciousness and petty badness of which man is capable.

Regardless, at no point does this descend into bitterness – this is first and foremost a story about love, about birth and death, and most of all, living. This accomplished and extremely welcome translation allows us an opportunity to hear one of Russia's most stimulating and thought-provoking modern voices.

Wooden Churches: Travelling in the Russian North

Reviewed by Elizabeth Warner



By Richard Davies & Matilda Moreton, White Sea Publishing, 2011, pp. 256, £40

Fired with enthusiasm after seeing some of the artist Ivan Bylibin's illustrations of Russian wooden churches, Richard Davies set off for North Russia in the hope of seeing some of these extraordinary buildings for himself.

Together with Matilda Moreton and a Russian companion he has been photographing churches all over northern Russia since 2002. These monuments to the skills of rural architects and carpenters have too often been abandoned, if not deliberately destroyed, during the years of religious repression, and anyone familiar with these remote regions and who has witnessed the fragility of those that remain standing will recognize the importance of this major historical record.

Davies himself is an architectural photographer: the photographs are therefore instructional and informative as well as simply beautiful. Many also reveal their setting within the northern rural landscape of rivers, forest, muddy roads, rickety jetties for boats, and the ubiquitous, leaning electricity and telephone poles with dangling wires which cannot be avoided in any photograph.

This is not just a book of photographs, however. The text provides background information about the fate and mission of the Orthodox Church, both past and present. Each photographed church is provided with a detailed description of its architectural and artistic merits and history. The authors draw upon a wide variety of textual sources, quotations from diaries, travellers' tales, children's books, classical literature, satirical chastushki, folk tales and so on, which provide a

fascinating literary and social commentary to the visual material. In addition to its photographs, the book is also richly furnished with historical illustrations, drawings, post-cards and magazine pictures.

Davies and Moreton were able to get to know some of the inhabitants of the villages where they stayed, including local priests. Their anecdotes of daily life and the experiences of their hosts add a very human element to the story of the churches. As someone who has also researched and photographed the Russian north I was constantly reminded of the hospitality and openness of its people and the hardships they have experienced.

This book has great visual appeal and should be enjoyed both by those interested in the architecture of wooden churches and by those who wish to absorb the atmosphere of the Russian north.

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The Coder Special Archive

Reviewed by Dairmid Gunn



By Tony Cash & Mike Gerrard,
Hodgson Press, 2012, pp. 460,
£12.99

Winston Churchill's famous 'Iron Curtain' speech in March 1946 heralded what came to be known as the Cold War – a period of political and military tension between the USA and its allies and the USSR and its satellites. The Truman doctrine of containment largely prevented the escalation of an uneasy peace into a major nuclear conflict. In view of the hostile attitude of the USSR, even after Stalin's death in 1953, the British government saw the need to have more Russian specialists at its disposal for military purposes. The introduction of National Service in 1948 had provided the Government with a pool of young men from whom to draw suitable candidates for an intensive language courses for use in military intelligence. Like an earlier book on such courses, *Secret Classrooms*, *The Coder Special Archive* covers the same period but deals specifically with the Naval experience and the *raison d'être* for learning Russian. For security reasons information on the use made of the language skills could not be divulged for many years. Now all has been revealed in descriptions of the listening and monitoring of Soviet military nets, a process called signal intelligence (Sigint) - carried out in this instance by graduates from the courses under their Naval name of coders (special). They operated from listening stations in Cuxhaven on the Elbe and later in the area of Keil Bay. The aim of the activity, a vital one, was to give the West ample

warning of significant military movements within the Communist camp.

During the 1950s around five thousand national servicemen were taught Russian at Joint Service Schools for Linguists (JSSLs). The JSSLs were set up in Surrey, Bodmin in Cornwall and later in Crail in Fife. An atmosphere of camaraderie and good humour prevailed among the students in the austere conditions of these military camps. The tutors, nearly all immigrants from Eastern Europe, were unusual in their methods and fascinating in their experiences of revolution and social turbulence. The strains of intensive absorption by the students of Russian were mitigated by access to the richer aspects of Russian culture in music and drama. Perhaps, the great incentive to complete the course was the threat of return to ordinary duties within the Fleet.

Certain students were selected to become interpreters and were able to use their skills during visits of Soviet warships to UK ports and on the occasional visits by RN ships to Soviet ports. The interpreters were able to achieve officer status as midshipmen.

Many of the coders and midshipmen used their skills on leaving the Navy not only in the academic world but also in a variety of activities pertaining to cultural and commercial links with the USSR. This book, edited and compiled by two former students of a JSSL, fascinates by the input of a number of linguists and the selection of photographs pertaining to that period. The book fills an important gap in Naval history and is an invitation to all those interested in the Russian language and teaching methods to browse its pages. Would that there were as many young people learning Russian now.

The Holy Trinity of Russian Cinema

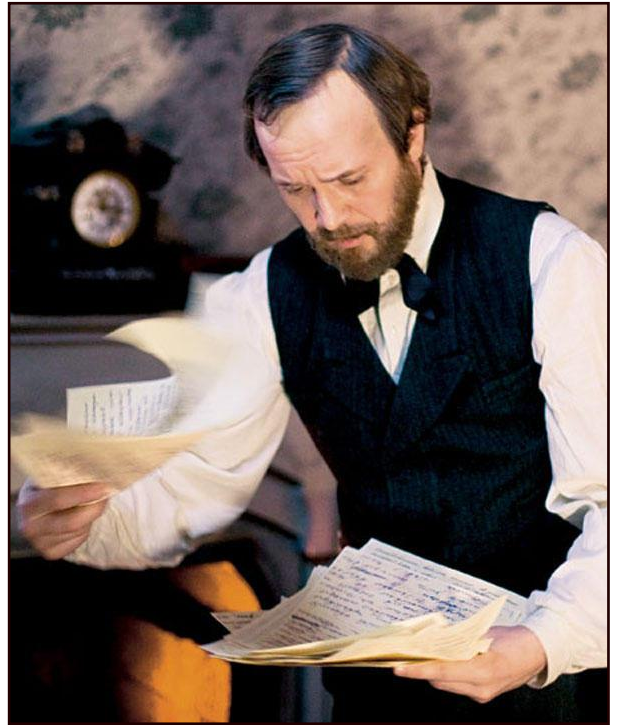
For every issue our very own cinema expert Marc David Jacobs will be discussing three films either made in Russia or about Russia. This time his top picks are *26 Days in the Life of Dostoevsky*, *New Babylon* and the British documentary *Testimony*.

1. One of the most original and overlooked feature films to deal with classic Russian literature is *26 Дней из жизни Достоевского/26 Days in the Life of Dostoevsky* (1980). The film covers a period in October 1866 in which Dostoevsky was forced to write (under strict contractual deadline) a complete novel - eventually to become *The Gambler* - and was obliged to take on a stenographer in order to do so - eventually to become his wife, Anna Snytkina. Taking a novel approach to its subject, the film contrasts the dark and worried surroundings of the author to the gorgeous locales in which he sets his work, which we see dramatised in parallel to the mundane events which call it into being. Eventually to win the Best Actor prize at the Berlin Film Festival for his breathtaking performance, Anatoly Solonitsyn - best known for his legendary collaborations with Andrei Tarkovsky - portrays Dostoevsky with the perfect balance of inspired author and tortured genius. It was to be his last great achievement; he died of cancer in 1982, aged only 47.



New Babylon

2. *Новый Вавилон/New Babylon* (1929) was one of the last feature-length silent films to be produced in the Soviet Union and was sadly neglected for several decades once the new medium took hold. However, this epic tale of the creation and collapse of the doomed 1871 Paris Commune is not only notable as the first masterpiece of director Grigori Kozintsev, but is also the first film to boast a score by Dmitri Shostakovich - his Opus 18, in fact. Given the opportunity to through-compose music for over ninety minutes of often staggering images, his inspiration proved enormous, and the score itself has been recorded separately several times - possibly to greater exposure than the film itself. Although many of the nearly forty scores he worked on subsequently were unable to sustain this initial burst of achievement, Shostakovich's remained loyal to Kozintsev through a total of ten films, concluding with the final cinematic masterpieces of both artists, *Гамлет/Hamlet* (1964) and *Король Лир/King Lear* (1970).



Anatoly Solonitsyn in
26 Days in the Life of Dostoevsky

3. It is perhaps unsurprising that a composer with such strong connections to the cinema should therefore have eventually himself become the subject of several documentaries, as well the exceptional biographical film *Testimony* (1987). Made in Great Britain and directed by Tony Palmer (whose work also includes dramatised and documentary films on Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, Wagner, Handel, Vaughan Williams and Malcolm Arnold), the ambitious *Testimony* features a finely nuanced performance by Ben Kingsley as Shostakovich in a life story centring on his troublesome relationship to the Soviet government, particularly in his dealings with Stalin and Zhdanov, played with bravura menace by Terence Rigby and John Shrapnel, respectively. Just as interestingly, the film's fascinating cast of characters also depicts a full breadth of Soviet cultural life, including portraits of Khatchaturyan, Mayakovsky, Akhmatova and Mandelstam (not to mention HG Wells and André Gide). Above anything else, though, Palmer's spectacular gift of matching sound to image is lent its fullest scope here in the grand and eloquent sweep of Shostakovich's music, which has rarely ever sounded - and certainly never looked - as good.

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