

PASSPORT

MOSCOW

DECEMBER 2010

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THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

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the White House

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John Ortega
Owner and Publisher

Yuletide greetings to one and all from the publisher and the whole staff of PASSPORT magazine.

As the year draws to a close, it is perhaps worth remembering the key events. First, the weather. We started with a horrendously cold winter, with temperatures around the minus 20-30 mark for weeks on end, and for a week or two it was minus 40. This of course is no problem for arctic explorers or weathered Russian veterans who have lived here all or most of their lives and like "real winters" in a green, masochistic sort of way. But for most of us, the winter was horrible, and lasted too long. So long in fact that we didn't really come round until it was suddenly plus 40 and not only was sleeping at nights impossible because of the stifling heat, but we couldn't even breathe properly because of carbon monoxide poisoning and lack of oxygen. The hundreds of peat fires that insisted on burning day and night, even at weekends for a month or so from late July served as a reminder that all of us are totally at the mercy of the elements, just as we are totally at the mercy of the greater Moscow economy.

This summer's freaky weather was nicknamed "Luzhkov's Chernobyl" by people in the know, and certainly Luzhkov seemed just about as in the know whilst skiing in the Swiss Alps as did Gorbachev about what was happening in his back yard in 1986. Chernobyl triggered a chain reaction that led to the end of the Soviet Union; the smog served as a reason for the government to oust Luzhkov.

Suddenly we are being told that the massive Moscow City is a "mistake" and that Moscow from a development point of view reads like an almanac of the worst possible bad practice, not to mention being highly corrupted. Well surprise, surprise! Everyone apart from Commercial Real Estate "journalists" actually knew this long ago.

We all hope that the change in leadership at the top in Moscow will bring about better business conditions, however this seems unlikely in the short term. There are many

who profit from Russia's and in particular Moscow's lack of accountability, and they are no doubt the most concerned about what is happening right now.

One thing is for sure, life will never be boring in Moscow, although it seems to be getting tougher for some of us. All of us at PASSPORT thank you for being with us this year and hope for your continued loyalty in 2011. We are a community publication and rely on feedback. Please contact the editor:

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Cover and illustration right by Catherine Hunter

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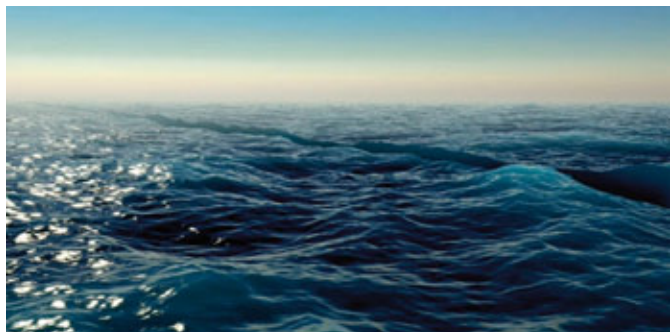


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December exhibitions

A History of Russian Video Art Volume 3



The Moscow Museum of Modern Art is presenting a three-part project celebrating video as an art form in Russia from its origins in the mid-1980s. The project includes three large-scale exhibitions, as well as special screenings, lectures and seminars. It takes us from the pioneers in the later 1980s, when video art was still an underground practice hindered by soviet state censorship. It carries on up to the recent past, celebrating those artists whose video works have gained worldwide critical acclaim in the past decade.

*17 December – 23 January,
Mon-Sun 12:00-20:00,
Thursday 13:00-21:00 17
Ermolaevsky lane*



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Panorama of empires Prince Nikolai Alexandrovich's journey to the East 1890-1891



It is a truism that the West has always been more fascinated by the East than *vice versa*: an exotic inspiration for music, literature and visual arts. From the imperial eagle downwards, Russians look both ways, West for arts and East for philosophy, and art too. The question of identity, the search for a "historical path" is everlasting, especially in the modern political context. At the end of the 19th century, the future Tsar Nicholas II travelled from St Petersburg through Trieste to China and Japan, and back via Vladivostok and the Urals. In this exhibition there are more than 1100 exhibits, including magnificent gifts to the prince, rare artefacts, authentic documents and photographs, all presented in the manner of an illustrated travel diary the Prince was keeping during his journey.

*December-March, 10:00-19:00 every day except Mondays,
State Museum-Reserve "Tsaritsyno"*

Valery Levitin



Valery Levitin knows how to find the right angle without disturbing his characters. Originally a chess player, he applied his knowledge of timing to select the right moment. "I don't shoot masterpieces, I shoot life," Valery says. But for the last thirty years he has mastered both. Sports photography taught him how to identify the best angles, a skill applicable to the military conflicts he covered in the 1990s.

*8 December – 16 January, daily except Monday 12:00-21:00
Building 1, 3 Bolotnaya Embankment (Red October)
Lumiere Brothers Centre for Photography*

French drawings at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts

The Year of France, so gloriously organised may be Russia is coming to an end but it has one more surprise for lovers of French art: a phantasmagorical group exhibition of drawings by some of the France's most famous artists. The curators have collected about 200 pieces for display conveying the major guidelines in the evolution of this genre of visual arts in France around the *Belle Époque*. Another treat is a catalogue that comprises the presented exhibits with detailed descriptions by the experts of the museum.

30 November – 16 January, 10:00-19:00 except Mondays
12, Volkhonka Street



Na Rayone-2 Alexander Vinogradov and Vladimir Dubosarsky

Alexander Vinogradov and Vladimir Dubosarsky held their first exhibitions during the Perestroika years. Dubosarsky's works are in storage in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in St Petersburg, in the Pompidou Centre in Paris and elsewhere. The exhibition at the Triumph gallery presents *plein-air* sketches of the first decade of this century. Dubosarsky and Vinogradov start with photographs taken on site and on tour: "to take the mould of time as we see it now". Small courtyards in the centre of Moscow or Khimki, city cameos, police stations—everyday subjects with unique views, not glamorous staged oeuvres. "Our new project is a desire to approach reality!" they exclaim. Every generation of artists has a fresh chance to harbour such a desire.

3-30 December, Triumph gallery,
open 12:00 – 21:00 2 Teatralny Proezd



Elizaveta and Moskva at the Tretyakov Gallery



The current exhibition at the State Tretyakov gallery is dedicated to Elizaveta Petrovna, the Empress of Russia (1741–1762), and one of the most popular rulers of Russia. This exhibition is a part of a trilogy of exhibitions addressing relations between Russian monarchs and the city of Moscow. The beginning of the 18th century saw the rise of St Petersburg, but Moscow played a vital role for the Elizaveta, who spent her childhood and had her coronation here. During her reign, Moscow University was founded, and the first Russian theatre emerged. All that is possible to imagine with the accompanying jewellery, sculpture, graphics and architecture. There are exhibits of furniture, paintings, writings, fashion designs and costumes from several Moscow museums and mansions, all of which help to reconstruct the mode of life and interiors of Elizaveta's epoch.

10 December to 27 March, open 10:00-18:30 daily except Mondays. 10, Lavrushinsky lane

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At the Moscow House of Music

1 Organ Music

Carlo Curley is a well-known organist. But unlike many of his colleagues he does not perform in one particular conservatory or church. He gained international fame as a concert performer. Born in Northern Carolina, USA, he studied music there. His career took a major leap forward when he was invited to perform in the White House, actually the first organist to play there. Among his other fans are the royal families of the old world and the Sultan of Oman, for whom Curley has made several records personally. Curley describes the aim of his life as demonstrating his belief that the organ is the best musical instrument. Curley is in Moscow to present an interesting repertoire including some gorgeous Baroque works, orchestral scores and modern lyrical plays.

23 December at 19:00



2 Christmas concert

A Christmas concert by the Moscow Virtuosi is always a special event for musical fans. Every year there is a special programme with many surprises. This time the programme is being kept secret, except for the name of the solo pianist whom Vladimir Spivakov invited to perform. This is Nobuyuki Tsujii, born blind and extremely talented, whose performance Van Cliburn calls divine. In the Svetlanovsky hall together with Spivakov's ensemble they will play Beethoven's First Piano Concerto.

24 December at 19:00



3 Italian Tenorissimo

Salvatore Licitra is one of the leading tenors in Italy and one of the best in his generation world-wide, heir to Luciano, Il Tenorissimo, even, as he is described in the Italian press. He debuted in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Parma in 1998, and one year later was already starring in Verdi's *La Forza del Destino* at La Scala, produced by Riccardo Muti. In 2002 he wowed America when he took the solo in Puccini's *Tosca*, previously immortalised by Pavarotti at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Since then he has been an invited soloist in Vienna, La Scala, Covent Garden, Paris, Washington and all over Europe. Salvatore Licitra's devotion to Belcanto is highly esteemed by both his colleagues and critics, which makes it possible for him to perform in the best opera houses, and work with the best conductors, all of which only polishes his talent yet more. The concert will be conducted by another Italian star, Lorenzo Coladonato, who currently leads the Baden-Baden Philharmonic.

28 December at 19:00



Christmas Carols & Rossini

The Moscow International Choir will be performing Rossini's *Messe Solennelle* along with Christmas carols. Come and enjoy that special Christmas feeling. Tickets cost Rb. 450 roubles and can be reserved by phoning 985 924 5581. All concert profits will go to the Downside Up charity.

*10 & 14 December, St Andrew's Church,
8 Voskresensky Perulok,
19:30 both evenings*



Richard III

played
by Konstantin
Raikin, art
director and star
actor of the
Satirikon Theatre

Olga Slobodkina

Konstantin Raikin, the art director and star actor of the Satirikon Theatre, thinks "it is quite useful to play negative characters" (no matter what the priests say), because one finds the sprouts of their horrible qualities in oneself and gets rid of them by acting the role through. According to him, negative roles are a kind of a catharsis for the actor.

Richard III is probably one of the most monstrous characters in the world literature. However, Raikin, who is brilliantly playing Richard in one more interpretation of Shakespeare's play, gives the spectator a new insight into the nature of the notorious personality. At the beginning of the performance Richard (who is washing his face and brushing his teeth) explains to us: God gave him a terrible body—a withered arm, a hump

and crippled legs. So he feels very different from the rest of us, and has no hope to be loved by anyone. Therefore, the only gratification he can get from life is having the English crown on his head, the head of a freak. Since there are many lives between him and the throne he is ready to destroy those who are on his way—beautiful and similar—for he is alone, unique.

A new translation by G. Ben and A. Druzhinin, adapted by the theatre, sounds very modern and the whole performance, directed by Yuri Butusov, is not a tragedy, but a tragi-farce, which only intensifies the cynicism of the main character, who is a serial murderer.

Contemporary music used by the creators of the production is in line with the main idea of the performance, in which

every scene is a stunning innovation. For example, when Clarence gets killed in the Tower his two assassins just pour wine into their glasses and take their turns throwing it at the victim; and the murder of the boy princes in the Tower with the pillows they used for playing with each other.

However, "bloody thy art, bloody will be thy end", says Richard's mother in her curse and prophesy. At the end of Act II Richard, who demands a horse on the battlefield, gets a pillow instead, then another one and is killed by them in the same way he killed his nephews.

The only drawback of the performance, from my point of view, is that Act I, which is undoubtedly very strong, is too long while Act II seems to be short and inexpressive as compared to Act I as if everything has already been said. **P**



Get Ready Moscow, Nightlife's Evolving!



Miguel Francis

Hopefully everyone who is into modern nightlife enjoys this section that we have got going at PASSPORT magazine. Designed for jet-setters, accessible to all, especially to those who are willing to submerge themselves in the mysterious world of Moscow's nightlife. You can catch up online at www.passportmagazine.ru and start with the first nightlife article which ran in July 2010.

"Moscow's nightlife, the best DJ's, the most fashionable people, for its playtime—play beautifully, play everywhere, in a world where you must live to play and play to live... Ladies & Gentlemen, I hope you're prepared, its time to play!" is the slogan that I had the honor to create and record for the Playhouse Club, which is now being fully produced for the foreign eye by the all-loving Giorgio Paolucci and Domenico Anaclerio.

At first people had doubts about the longevity of this club giant. To recap, this was a sister club idea, created in part from the Playhouse Hollywood concept that was generated by MUSE Lifestyle Group from Hollywood in California. Not too long ago, the owners of Moscow's very own yacht club/bar club Royal Bar, among whom is Max Karenberg, visited the place and said hey, this is something that Moscow can definitely develop on. A club which would feature huge but luxurious surroundings, lots of acrobatics, and a circus-like

feel to it. It's now been almost three months in operation and the place is getting better week by week. More and more ex-pats are coming over, getting ignited by what they witness inside. The Go-Go dancers dancing inside spinning cages which are hung from the ceiling along with other acrobatics and lots of stage shows make this place really something. To add to the extravaganza you also get sophisticated foreign acts almost every weekend, from Camille Jones to DJ Mousse T from Ministry of Sound Germany. But the main thing is that this place is finally becoming a hive for ex-pats before going to Imperia or other ventures which you can embark on, typically being the first place where people go on their Friday or Saturday. Lubyanskii Proezd 15/2 near Metro Kitai Gorod is probably one of the best places to start your weekend!

A big DJ convention took place in Amsterdam, the 15th annual international Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE), this past month became an amazing opportunity for DJs from across the world to rendezvous and embark on a journey of getting acquainted, exchanging demos, and hopefully creating some freshness for the world to hear. My good friends DJs Eugene Noiz and Julia Belle went there together and had a blast. They met and partied with people like Fedde Le Grand, the Freemasons, Sebastien Leger, MastikSoul, Fast&Small, Roger

Sanchez and other world-renowned acts. Eugene Noiz had the honour to play during the event and was instantly recognized for his unique musical taste and mixing style. This is a Russian man who can talk about music with the biggest smile on his face, stretching wide from one ear to the other, infusing you with enthusiasm as you listen to him say "You have got to listen to this track".

DJ Noiz has been accelerating fast in the Moscow music scene, working for such DJ companies as 4 DJs, which is a very big brand here in Moscow, cycling DJs between top clubs like Imperia, Poch Friends, Rai Club as well as the biggest bookings all over Russia and major clubs in major cities like Nizhniy Novgorod, St. Petersburg, Tula, Vladivostok. Now he has joined forces with DJ Nejtrino or Anton Zagradskiy who is one of the founders of Luxury Music, another big DJ-booking brand. ADE is the next big thing for Russian electronic music artists in getting acquainted with the West and even getting signed. Both DJ Eugene Noiz and DJ Nejtrino have international releases on Beatport.

Now lets swing over to the clubs and start with biking. Biking, Harley, Ducati and so on have been a big luxury for Russians. Lots of successful businessman in this city wear suits by day and get into their leather jackets and bandannas at night to break out their beasts from the garage and race the light traffic of Moscow's night. Custom Bar, located on the territory of Motorhouse Moscow, 3rd Selikatniy Proezd 4, is a conceptual club/restaurant/bar that was created by a group of people, all of them savvy clubbers, among them Konstantin Nikolaev, a young entrepreneur operating between Miami and Moscow. The feel here is simply high-tech Nevada. When you enter it's like you're on an alley of motorways with all the luxuries of Moscow's nightlife. I went there for Halloween and it was great. I performed my live vocal set there and had tons of fun with one of the old Honey Bunny producers, Pavel Rudanovsky, and my good friend who used to feed me vocal house tracks back when I was in Los An-



geles, DJ Anton Denisov. A circular bar in the middle, tables along the perimeter of the whole bar, walls are basically big windows made out glass with the view to the parking lot full of Harleys and Lamborghinis, two podiums in the middle for Go-Go dancers and a dance floor around them. Great bar menu with some signature cocktails, sushi and continental cuisine ready to be served up fresh. Cozy, Western, and very fun. Halloween in Russia was just awesome, my first Halloween in over 5 years, because I'm usually not in Moscow during Fall. I think they do it better over here than anywhere else. All we're missing is a big costume parade on Tverskaya at one in the morning!

Discotheque Club near Kurskaya Metro, at the back of Winzavod is an awesome place to be if you enjoy a freer, boundless type of setting. A huge factory made into a club, how lovely! The place is very well done inside and if you've ever been to clubs like Avalon Hollywood, or generally any Avalon in the United States, then you'll feel right at home. This club's function is to hold many people, provide basic luxuries for them from furniture to a good bar menu, and get them excited with huge DJ bookings like Erik Morillo, Axwell, David Tort, you name it they had it or will have it. This place isn't the easiest to find but, again, this is the kind of place that simply sets you free, no worthless posh and unnecessary glam-

our, very Westernized crowd, definitely a fun place to stop by if you're lucky enough to find it. The place is located on Nizhnii Susalnii Pereulok 5A, within the alleys of Winzavod.

Ladies and gentlemen, a new all inter-continental joint complex of the new Starlite at Pushkinskaya and Chicago Prime Steakhouse located in the same building at Strastnoy Blvd 8, might step outside the box and engage in some late-evening midnight madness and entertainment and I might even be woven into the music program. This is going to be live band entertainment with vocals from Rock & Roll and some Blues to Indie Rock as well as DJ-ing in Experimental Lounge and House/Dance/Top 40 music.

Just imagine, munching down on a mouth-watering steak with smooth live Coldplay-like acoustic rhythms and Nickelback-like vocals soothing you along, or dancing on the Starlite couch (shoes off please!) with a Strawberry milk-shake in one hand and Buffalo Chicken Wing with Blue Cheese Sauce in the other. The owners of Starlite decided to let the muse and the creativity of both domestic and international artists finally get an outlet at a very atmospherically all-American location. The stage construction is already on the boards. Get ready Moscow, this will be very, very fun!

Stay tuned, it's the holly-jolly season, get ready as New Year's in Moscow is probably one of biggest club

events in town, although be careful because lots of Muscovites prefer to go to warmer places to celebrate. I haven't had my turkey yet but by the time you read is I probably will, so I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving, wishing you all, wonderful expats to stay full, but be wary of turkey meat, it has a compound that puts you to sleep, not good for a clubber! Cheers. **P**



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Marina Lukanina

Uncle Vanya

The Tabakov Theatre company at the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre

Chekhov has been one of the favourite playwrights for theatre directors for generations. Almost every well known (and not so well-known) director thinks that he has something new to say about Chekhov's masterpieces. Chekhov himself called his plays comedies, even though while reading them, you can't help wondering if you should laugh or cry. I do not think I can remember any Chekhov production that actually made me laugh. His plays are usually full of paradox in the sense that his main characters spend their time pondering the eternal "what if" questions, while suffering from their inability to change either their own lives or the world around them.

It is symbolic that this version of Chekhov's Uncle Vanya is performed on the stage of the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre. It is a very Chekhovian performance, slow-paced with long pauses in the dialogue and low-key set design. The costumes and the scenery are all in light pastel colours, as if they are also reflecting the boring uniformity of the world around.

How much you enjoy this performance of Uncle Vanya probably depends on how many productions you have seen. Since this is at least my sixth, I found myself stuck in familiar territory by the end of the first act, and unable to change anything. There is only a certain amount of time that you can devote to exploring new directing techniques or originality of a set design. But for relative newcomers to Chekhov there will be plenty to ponder.

12 December www.tabakov.ru

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Play Actor

The Tabakov Theatre,

This performance, based on the Austrian drama by Thomas Bernhard, is called "a comedy which is in fact a tragedy or *vice versa*" in the playbill. One of the longest running productions by the Tabakov's theatre (it opened in 2002), Play Actor is a multi-level tragedy of an actor, into which his family is dragged. It is a great illustration of the adage that genius and folly go hand in hand.

The leading actor, Andrey Smolyakov, received an award from the Stanislavsky International Fund as well as an award from the Moscow Expert Jury for his part as Bruscon. The success of this performance is largely due to him and the monologue which he delivers so well. For two rapidly-passing hours you witness Bruscon's contemplations about theatre, and Smolyakov convincingly depicts a man who crosses the fine line between reality and acting. It is a very sharp dialogue with himself, and sometimes with his family members who truly suffer from his unbearable personality.

Fluency in Russian is especially important to enjoy this play to the fullest.

1A Chaplygina Str.

12 December

www.tabakov.ru

Don Juan

The Bolshoi Theatre,

For the first time in sixty years Mozart's opera has been staged at the Bolshoi Theatre. The opening night was in October. It is a joint production of the Bolshoi Theatre, Opera Festival in Provence, France, Theatre Real Madrid and the Canadian Opera Company from Toronto. The history of this production includes a suitably theatrical degree of scandal. Anatoly Vasyliov, the famous director, walked away from his contract after the opening night had already been announced. The scramble to find a replacement led to the Russian director, Dmitry Chernyakov, and the Greek conductor, Teodor Kurentzis, being invited to showcase the opera, which was originally created for a French festival.

The surprise novelty of this version of Don Juan is that it has a contemporary setting. Culture shock hits the audience as actors, dressed in gym shoes and modern jackets, parade around the stage of a major historic theatre. It was even more disturbing to see them getting undressed in a very provocative way and simulating sex. Of course, in Chekhov's *The Seagull*, the hero Treplev often claimed that the theatre needs new forms, but one doubts that unacceptable directing and sensationalist acting in Russia's major cultural centre is what he had in mind. It is sadly all too clear nowadays that some directors do not know how else to attract audiences' attention except by staging the classics in an ostentatiously "modern" way.

The set design is built mainly around the funeral wreaths, however there is no explanation of what they are supposed to mean. One show-goer called this experiment clownery, which summed it up neatly. It is frustrating to see something that belongs in the circus at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Teatralnaya plochad, 1

www.bolshoi.ru

Check the web site for dates.



Our Man in Havana The Malaya Bronnaya Theatre,

This is the first time that a Graham Greene novel has been staged at this theatre. The director Aleksey Frolenkov defines its genre as being "spy detective parody". Our Man in Havana is one of the best-known of Greene's novels, based on his own experience of working for the British secret service.

The action takes place on Cuba shortly before the Cuban revolution of 1959. The location of the play is an invitation to fill the evening with Cuban music and dancing. There is not really any deep philosophic value to this play but if you are



ready for a fun evening, while you follow some absurd adventures of a regular British seller of vacuum cleaners who in one day becomes a secret service agent, go for it. It is an adventurous play mixed with different farcical and grotesque situations. Pre-dating James Bond, Greene was a master at teasing out the mix of tragedy, farce and absurdity in the espionage world, with the audience unsure whether their tears are of laughter or agony. A modern Chekhov.

*Malaya Bronnaya str., 4,
<http://mbronnaya.theatre.ru>
Check the theatre web-site for dates*

Por Una Cabeza tango dancing and music performance

Tango, that intrinsically Latin American dance form, enjoys its worldwide birthday each 11 December. The popularity of this dance is increasing every year, and the Day of Tango is celebrated worldwide. Por Una Cabeza is Moscow's special programme to join in the fun.

The project leader, Pablo Zinger, is originally from Uruguay. He is a conductor and pianist, specialising in the music of Astor Piazzolla, an Argentine tango composer and bandoneón player. This programme includes the best tangos of Carlos Gardel, perhaps today's most prominent tango dancer, to the varied melodies of Piazzolla. Alexander Mitenev, a St. Petersburg virtuoso musician will be playing the bandoneón which is a type of concertina particularly popular in tango's Argentina and Uruguay heartland and an essential instrument in the tango orchestra.

Two Argentinian dancers, Valeria Maside and Annibal Lautaro also feature in the packed programme.



*The Yauza Palace,
Zhuravleva plochad, 1,
7 December, 7:30pm
www.yauza-palace.ru*

Salute to Sinatra Concert to mark the 95th birthday of Ol' Blue Eyes

On 12 December, the Yauza Palace commemorates Frank Sinatra's 95th birthday with a concert of his most famous songs, as interpreted by the British jazz singer John Downes.

John Downes started his singing career in England as a front man for the British rock group, The Dolphins. He is currently busy with a popular series of tours around the world. He has been to Russia several times, establishing artistic contacts

with the Oleg Lundstrem orchestra. In 1994, the Guinness Book of Records recognised this ensemble as the world's oldest continuously-existing jazz band. Mr. Downes has successfully performed together with them a number of times, and will do so again to celebrate the legendary American singer's birthday. Curtain up at 7:30pm.

*The Yauza Palace,
Zhuravleva plochad, 1,
www.yauza-palace.ru*

Sergey Grigoryev, *Goal Keeper*

Soviet Art of the mid 1940s – end of the 1950s

Olga Slobodkina

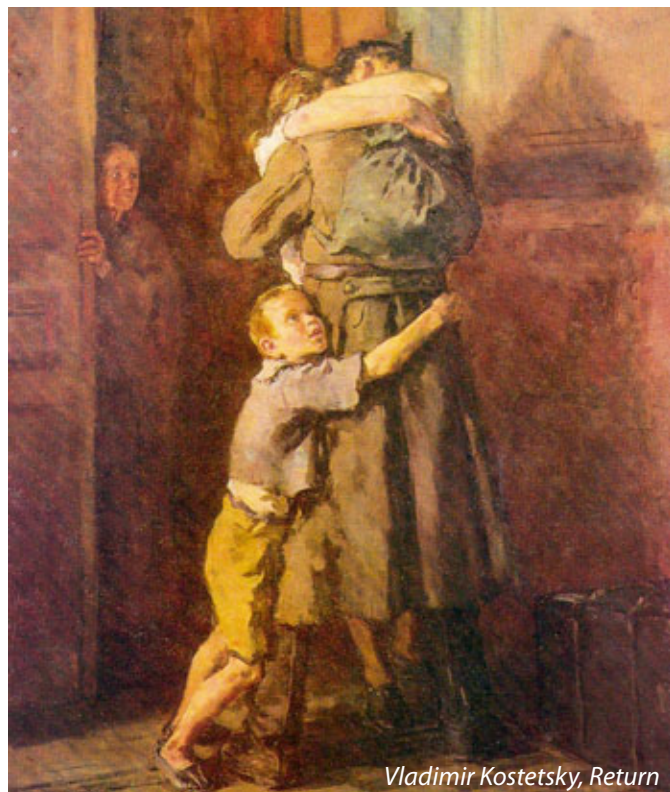
Although art life after World War II was quite active (for example, 1947 saw an All-Soviet-Union exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery) one should not forget that those were the peak years of the Stalin cult, which crushed democratic freedoms. The poet Anna Akhmatova and the satirical writer Mikhail Zoshenko were labelled as “cosmopolitans” and condemned by the journals *Zvezda* (*Star*) and *Leningrad*. That kind of atmosphere did not exactly encourage creativity and the ways of art were as difficult as the ways of life.

As far back as the decade leading up to the war, dangerous tendencies appeared in society: pseudo-heroism, theatrical-pathos and repression. As a result “the non-conflict theory” appeared in art. Art was pivoted around the axiom: “the fight of the good with the better.” That process covered not only fine arts, but also fiction, cinema and theatre. Lots of superficial and clichéd works were created. The best artists fought against those incongruities and quasi-romanticism. Despite everything, they managed to find meaningful ways and forms. Life itself dictated new themes to them, set up complicated priorities and directed their creative fates. During the war, a strong theme of moral and physical denial of weakness by Soviet people, a refusal to give in, was acute. For example, the painting of Yuri Neprintsev, *Rest After the Fight*, illustrated the famous poem by poet Alexander Tvardovsky, Vasily Tyorkin (1951) and *Return* (1945-1947) by a Ukrainian painter, Vladimir Kostetsky, as well as the famous canvas by Alexander Laktionov, *A Letter from the Front* (1947). This painting created a debate because

of its illusiveness and the scrupulous exactness of form. Artist Boris Nemensky was close to Laktionov from the point of the genre peculiarities in his painting, *About the Near and Far*. Neprintsev created an image in his painting as close to life as Tvardovsky in his poem Vasily Tyorkin. Both the poet and the artist immortalized the ordinary people who actually won the war. As the artist himself said: “In my painting I wanted to create a collective portrait of the soldier who fought for the liberating army. The real heroes of my canvas are the Russian people.”

In Kostetsky's painting, on the contrary, details are absent. The central figures of the soldier and his wife embracing are modelled in a very energetic way (one can actually see only her arms). The contrasting light and shade give an inner movement to the figures. The dramatic meeting is intensified by the figure of a boy squeezing up against the soldier's overcoat and an old woman in the doorway. The success of the painting was in its ordinariness. Behind it there were millions of “returns” and “non-returns,” four years of horrible war experienced by millions of people—that painful theme was close to everyone.

Not so many paintings based on military themes were painted, and those that were created lacked a generalizing image and very often a high artistic level. The historic multi-figure compositions were often created by a team of artists working together. The painting *Lenin Speaking at the 3rd Congress of The Young Communist League* (1950) stands out among the others. Its author Boris Ioganson worked together with the young artists Sokolov, Tegin, Chebakov and Faidysh-Krandievskaya. However, here we witness the lie and falseness in both the depicted situation and the people's faces.


Vladimir Kostetsky, *Return*

Apart from the historical-revolutionary genre, a purely historical genre began to evolve: Melikhov's work *Young Taras Shevchenko visiting Karl Bryulov* (1947) is a good example. Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) was a well-known Ukrainian and Russian poet and prose writer. His literary heritage is considered to be the basis of Ukrainian literature and even the contemporary Ukrainian language. After his death, Shevchenko became the iconic figure in forming the national consciousness among the Ukrainian intelligentsia, his influence on the national culture remaining significant up to now. Karl Blyulov (1799-1852) was a great Russian academic painter.

Peace and a regular job were something that people dreamed about during the long war years. The number one priority of Soviets after the war was to restore the ruined economy. The painting *Bread* by a young Ukrainian artist, Tatyana Yablonskaya (1949), full of life and colour, is a hymn to labour. Andrey Mylnikov's work *At the Fields of Peace* (1953) is similar to a monumental canvas rather than to an easel painting. Arkady Plastov's works *Haymaking* and *Tractor Drivers' Dinner* (1951) spiritualize the feeling of bonds with the earth. The art which took root in the 19th century Russian realist school, and first of all from Alexander Makovsky, was continued by these painters. The paintings of Fyodor Reshetnikov *Arrived for Vacation* (1948), *A Bad Mark Again* (1952), Sergey Grigoryev's *Goal Keeper* (1949), *Initiating into The Young Communist League* (1949), *Discussing the Bad Mark* (1950) became popular due to the familiar situations and characters, and the style was realistic.

The 1940s-1950s saw many interesting artists from the Soviet republics, for example, Semyon Chuikov: *Morning* (1947), Yanis Osis *Latvian Fishermen* (1956), and the Kazakh painters Sabur Mambeyev and Kanafiya Telzhanov, and Moldakhmet Kenbayev from Azerbaidzhan: Mikail Gusein Abdulayev, Asaf Dzharafarov, from Estonia, Valeryan Loik, from Armenia, Oganess Zardaryan and, from Georgia, Dzharparidze and some others.

In the post-war period, the landscape was undergoing changes as well. Land devastated by the war gave place to peaceful views. Martiros Saryan's landscapes revealed a tendency towards monumentalism. He called a whole series of landscapes *My Native*


Fyodor Reshetnikov, *Arrived for Vacation*

Land. Nikolai Romadin's landscapes showed the lyrical tradition of Isaac Levitan, for example in his series *The seasons* (1953) and in *The Northern series* (1954). Yuri Podlyassky created landscapes of Lake Baikal full of heroic romanticism. **P**

to be continued

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Zinaida Serebriakova in Moscow



ZS self portrait, turning



ZS peasants man and wife

Ross Hunter

One of the treats of a great art gallery is serendipity. I confess that when I first explored the Tretyakov, I had not heard of Zinaida Serebriakova, and was zip-ping at disgraceful speed towards the (few) paintings well-known outside Russia when stopped in my tracks by her two most compelling pictures. *Self Portrait At the Dressing Table* (1915) is deservedly her most famous, with *At Breakfast* (1914), beside it—painted in 1915, and displayed in the *old* Tretyakov! I have quizzed everyone I know: when? A few late 1930s, otherwise not before the 1960s. Twenty to fifty years ahead of her time. Just like the great engineer Shukov, and just as unjustly obscure.

The young lady with the hair brush is as timeless as her art: she was 31 at the time, with four young children, but like most of her images, it is hard to guess her age. Evidently an optimistic nature helps preserve nature's goodness. The few, great, works in Moscow's greatest gallery are deeply fascinating,



but also create yet more questions: why so few? What was her range? Where can I see more?

Happily, most of these are answered at the Dom Nashchokina Gallery, next to Mayakovskaya, 12 Vorotnikovskiy Per. www.domnaschokina.ru. While a few frames got stuck at home, scores and scores of paintings, sketches, photos, and souvenirs have been collected from France, Ukraine, Russia and beyond. The display is unassuming to the point of modesty, and one ambles around rooms, floors, galleries and cellars. But the display is clearly and logically presented, and well lit, unless you are trying to take photos (the permit is still worth it!). Until 30 January, this is a unique chance to assemble your own portrait of this most unclassifiable artist. One visit is vital, two are better.

Zinaida Serebriakova (1884-1967) was well-born and well-connected, and lived on an estate fittingly called Neskuchnoye, translated loosely as "not bored". She had a positive and gen-



Serebriakova Savoie Alps above Annecy



Serebriakova dancers

erous outlook on life, throughout her 82 years. A bolshie critic might argue that wealth makes that easier. However, among her best works are touchingly sincere portraits of working people, unfettered by class. The revolution destroyed everything, denied her the chance to show her work, and split her family. Working exile in Paris, France and Morocco doesn't seem too bad, but isolated from her older children, and making a living as an artist in the depressed 1930s cannot have been easy.

Despite all this, her works are eternally fresh, know no conventions and constantly reveal beauty in whatever she saw. Undoubtedly, she was at her best with portraits of herself, her beloved children and women generally. These are suspiciously attractive, but the photos on show prove them to be utterly realistic. She painted peasants and princesses, Moroccans and Russians, dancers and nudes. Her ballet dancers rival Degas', her nudes evoke Titian. If that is a shade generous, it is well-earned. Her subjects are ready to step out of the picture and continue chatting; each shows she enjoyed sitting for the painter.

Her eye for detail is fine, and best at intimate scales. If her landscapes are not imposing, they are inviting. She enjoyed the Alps, and one pastoral view above the wonderful Lac d'Annecy, framed by the limestone teethcliffs of Savoie, is spot on. It frames a landscape I know well, and I want to stroll into it. Style? All her own, cheerfully disregarding passing fashions and so unique in their appeal. I can't afford one myself but if, dear reader, you choose any two, I'll gladly treasure your lesser, and be happy with it. **P**

1991: The Coup

part 2

Text and photo: John Harrison

On August 4, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev took his wife and daughters on holiday to the presidential dacha in the Black Sea resort of Foros. He was fully aware that a group of senior government officials was plotting against him (see *PASSPORT* November issue) but chose not to take the threat seriously. He grossly underestimated the situation. By allowing the coup to happen, Gorbachev signed the death warrant for the Soviet Union, with its integrated industrial infrastructure. As terminator of the largest empire on earth, he did a fantastic, if unwitting, job.

What actually happened in those surreal days in August 1991?

On 18th August, Gorbachev noticed that his communications at Foros had been switched off. Shortly afterwards, Valery Boldin, Gorbachev's personal assistant, and other officials flew to Foros to inform him that a coup had been staged by a group of eight members of the government, including the Vice-President and the head of the KGB. They gave themselves the ugly acronym GKChP, which in Russian stood for "State Committee for the State of Emergency". Gorbachev was told to transfer his powers to Vice-President Gennady Yanaev whilst "order was being restored in the country". But Gorbachev was intransigent and threw his visitors out.

The GKChP leaders assumed there would be little resistance. They couldn't have been more wrong. The Soviet command system was so decayed that even officers in the elite KGB would fail to carry out the orders of their superiors. The GKChP also failed to understand the power of the media. Acting President Yanaev's fingers were twitching with nerves as he declared the state of emergency at a press conference on the morning of the 19th. Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, apparently wracked with doubt, was too drunk to attend. The group lacked cohesiveness and failed to clamp down on the foreign press, which reported live to the whole world.

Instead of arresting Yeltsin, the coup leaders gave him time to get to the White House, which he turned into a base for resistance. He requested and received the support of Pavel Grachev, Commander of Soviet Airborne Ground Forces, which

rattled the hardliners. Tanks arrived at the White House but their commanders changed sides to support Yeltsin. When he clambered up on one of the vehicles to denounce the putsch, the whole world was watching. By 8pm that evening, Yanaev's will snapped and he ordered the cessation of military action against the White House.

Other members of the GKChP overruled him and formulated plans to storm the White House. The resistance smuggled weapons inside. Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich joined Yeltsin in the building, playing his instrument in a scene reminiscent of the sinking of the Titanic. Reformists Eduard Shevardnadze and Alexander Yakovlev arrived to show solidarity. A bloody outcome seemed inevitable.

Thousands of people, mostly young, gathered outside the White House to offer their support. Some were even formed into detachments by Afghan veterans. They were prepared to fight and many would have been killed, had it come to armed confrontation. Resistance in the White House galvanised public opinion against the conservatives, particularly in Leningrad. People may not have liked the new economic reality but neither did they want to go back to the Soviet Union with its abusive hypocrisies.

On the night of 20-21 August, citizens tried to block large-scale tank movements in Moscow. Three young civilians, Dmitry Komar, Ilya Krichevsky and Vladimir Usov, were killed in an underpass near the White House. The death toll could have been much higher. Bad weather prevented a special forces group from landing on the roof of the White House and lower-ranking army officers ignored orders to attack the building from the ground.

By the morning of the 21st, the leaders of the coup had given up. At 2.15 pm, several of them boarded a plane south to plead their case directly to Gorbachev. He refused to listen to them and they were promptly arrested. Gorbachev himself returned to Moscow with his traumatised family early on the morning of the 23rd.

Elsewhere in the Soviet Union, Leonid Kravchuk and Nursultan Nazarbayev, the leaders of Ukraine and Kazakhstan respectively, initially backed the GKChP but adroitly turned against the plotters when it looked as if they would



fail. Now they could press for their own independence.

Back in power, Gorbachev characteristically refused to blame the Communist Party. He replaced the coup leaders with others equally odious. It was left to Yeltsin to attend the funeral of the three young men who had been crushed to death by the tank in the underpass.

On August 23rd, at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, Yeltsin publicly humiliated Gorbachev by ordering him to read out a full list of GKChP collaborators, which he did like a reluctant but obedient dog. On the same day, Yeltsin suspended the legal status of the Communist Party in Russia. He went on to ban it altogether in November.

Gorbachev, meanwhile, proposed replacing the USSR with a "Union of Sovereign States", which would have a single economic space and unified military command. Yeltsin wanted nothing to do with yesterday's man and this new union. After all, he was president of the biggest country on earth. Neither did the Ukrainians, who voted overwhelmingly on 1st December for full independence. All they would agree to, at a meeting on 8th December at Belovezhskaya Pushcha near Minsk, was a very watered-down union called the Commonwealth of Independent States, which would maintain a unified economic space but no single president. Its headquarters would be in Minsk.

Russians were aghast when they realised that even brother Slavs didn't much like them and would prefer to align themselves with the West. On 21st December, another eight Soviet republics agreed to join the new Commonwealth. They were: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Russia abstained. The Soviet Union was terminated on 31st December 1991. And on 2nd January, Gorbachev resigned and became history. **P**

The August Coup Remembered

Text and photo: John Harrison

In August 1991 I was living and working as a photo correspondent in Moscow for an English daily newspaper. On the morning of the 19th, having returned from a friend's dacha, I drove straight to a government office near Kievskii Vokzal to complete the long drawn out process of procuring a Soviet driving license. At about 9.30am I was waiting in a queue when I overheard people talking: "It'll be the end of it, thank God. Teach those bloody rascals a lesson, get some order around here again". "Do you know what your pension is worth now?"

I asked someone to please tell me what was happening. "Must be a foreigner, do you really think Soviet power can be stopped by your money and Jewish scheming?"

Seeing that only Swan Lake was being broadcast on the large Soviet TV at the end of the room, I thought it'd be a good idea to totally abandon the idea of getting my driving licence and head home to pick up my cameras. It took me an hour and a half to get across South Moscow (a long time then) because Leninsky Prospect was blocked with APCs and tanks trundling into central Moscow. At home, my Russian wife was in a panic, having been told by her parents that they were deserting Moscow for the countryside, but that she would be all right under the protection of a foreigner. Things seemed to move in slow motion, as they do in moments of great tragedy, or triumph. But there was no time to reason anything out. I knew only that Gorbachev had been deposed and hard-liners had taken over. There was no time to work out why, how or what to do next.

My job got me into the press conference where the coup leaders declared to the world that they had imposed a state of emergency, and that President Gorbachev, on holiday by the Black Sea, was ill and unable to return to his duties. Despite Vice President's Yanaev's trembling hands, the coup seemed very real; Moscow was in shock.

The phone from London never stopped ringing, that long beep that immediately identified a call as being from abroad. The boys in the news room wanted to know where the tanks were, but I was inside the White House. My brave wife back in our flat had a map on the kitchen table with the radio on, tuned to short wave, and was informing London where the tanks were; and was surprised to be asked so many times whether people were being killed or not.

What was amazing to us was that the self-imposed commanders bothered to call a press conference at all, and that resistance was allowed to build up around the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, who had journeyed unhindered from his dacha to the White House that morning. It seemed that the "putchists" desire to somehow gain international approval, their very civility held them back from using force while they still had time to do so. They did not count on key army and KGB units disobeying orders.

The hard-liners also did not count on the power of raw emotion which Yeltsin and his colleagues successfully harnessed against them. Russians, particularly Muscovites and Leningradians were not yet disillusioned with democracy. Yeltsin did not have the Communist Party to contend with (unlike Gorbachev),



and was the undoubted centre of reform. Thousands of Muscovites swarmed around the White House as speaker after speaker denounced the "fascists," and new arrivals such as Shevardnadze were greeted with tumultuous applause.

Inside the White House, amazing calm prevailed despite the panic. I remember sitting in the office of a deputy from Yaroslavl discussing the situation. She wasn't panicking; she was rational and together. There was a tangible sense of bravado and confidence, even co-operation, an unheard of quality in Russian politics after 1991. The phones were not cut off, a Gestetner machine was churning out samizdat copies of *Vecherniaia Moskva*, which were then distributed by the simple and effective method of being thrown out of the window to the crowd below. Alexander Listev (assassinated, 1995) and friends set up a miniature radio station which was broadcast by a weak short-wave radio transmitter. This was picked up by the Moscow based international news corps.

I remember how a Russian cameraman colleague of mine found himself on the White House roof, just as Yeltsin appeared to make a speech, but without a camera. Suddenly he was thrown a VHS video camera from 50 feet below. Amazingly, he caught it. Next to come flying through the air was a cable, an umbilical cord with the world. Sasha didn't realise it at the time, but he was broadcasting live to the world. The CNN transmissions were fed back through monitors inside the buildings. We understood that the whole world was watching. This was a moment of history, fed by the media, and, some would say, kept going by the media.

There were, however some very serious moments. Late in the cold, drizzly evening of the 20th, a voice came over the White House tannoy system advising all women and children to leave, as apparently a squad of paratroopers had been dispatched to quell the uprising. It genuinely appeared to all—even an atheist like me—a miracle that they didn't actually materialise on the roof, which they probably would have done if the weather hadn't been so bad.

Not surprisingly, Moscow was split between the good and the bad guys. Between those who supported the "putchists" and those who had supported Yeltsin. No middle ground, and certainly no favourable media attention for the "baddies". Looking back, there was an incredible naiveté around. I met a couple of young people half way up a statue near Barikadnaya Metro station, which I had scaled in order to get some good shots of the huge Russian tricolour being unfurled around one side of the White House on the 21st. I had expensive cameras, which I couldn't possibly have afforded myself sprouting from every pocket. One of the two students asked me who I supported, like at a football match. I said, "Yeltsin." He replied: "If we win, we'll all have cameras like yours." This just about summed it all up. The early democrats sincerely believed that everything would magically change now, that Russia's ills would be cured by a panacea from the West. Unfortunately that isn't quite the way it worked out. **P**

UK cosmonaut in space, on a Soviet rocket in 1991

Helen Womack

A down-to-earth girl from Mars made headlines in May 1991 by becoming the first English cosmonaut to join the Soviet crew on the orbiting space station, Mir. I took a break from all the political reporting that year to see Helen Sharman, then 27 and a chemist from Sheffield, blast off from the Baikonur launch pad in a tin can of a rocket, little changed since Yuri Gagarin's historic flight 30 years earlier.

Helen had worked as a chocolate technologist for the confectionary company Mars—indeed, she'd helped to develop ice-cream Mars bars. So that gave the headline writers some scope when it came to playing with words. But from a journalist's point of view, Helen was a maddening heroine. Before the lift-off, we tried all ways to get her to show some emotion but she was sternly downbeat about the adventure.

"I am not going into infinity," she said in her flat Yorkshire accent. "I'm going into lower Earth orbit."



She was speaking from behind a glass screen to eliminate the risk of infection but nothing, it seemed, could protect her from what she clearly considered to be our trivial questions. She'd had muesli for breakfast, she disclosed. Yes, she was taking a present from her father, a butterfly brooch, but no, she was not taking a mascot.

Interviewing her was hard work.

In search of a better story, I set off to look at Baikonur itself, which of course had been closed to foreigners in communist times. It was actually a tawdry little town called Leninsk, the real settlement of Baikonur being 620 miles to the east. Using such disinformation, the Soviet Union had tried to mask the location of its secret sites.

Perhaps more than any other town or city I had visited, Leninsk, on the steppes of Kazakhstan, opened my eyes to Soviet reality. I'd assumed the space city, at least, would be modern and well supplied but here too people queued for food and condensed milk was available only on production of a ration card.

The local Kazakhs complained that their territory was used for launches but no Kazakh had ever gone into space, a state of affairs that was to be rectified when Russia made new agreements with Kazakhstan.

Back at the launch pad, it was time for Helen's departure. She was accompanied by experienced cosmonauts Anatoly Artsebarsky and Sergei Krikalyov. With a great roar and trailing a blinding flame, the Soyuz TM12 rocket sliced the air. Helen's physicist father, John Sharman, seemed at first to be as cucumber-cool as his daughter. But after the lift-off, he admitted: "I don't think I could go through that a second time."

We hacks discovered there had been launch pad accidents at Leninsk in the past. But all the experts agreed the tried-and-tested TM-12 rocket was the guarantee of Helen's safe return.

And of course she did come home again, a media star, in demand for appearances on chat shows. But I could only pity the breakfast presenters who would have to try and extract some emotion from this scientifically-minded girl. **P**

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Starving Russians?

Helen Womack

Perestroika created a huge appetite in the West for details of how ordinary Soviet people lived. I could describe what Russians had for breakfast and be sure the readers in Britain would lap it up. The Iron Curtain had isolated us from each other for so long that now there was a great yearning to discover our common humanity.

Towards the end of Gorbachev's rule and in the early days of the Yeltsin era (1990-1992), the pressing question became: are Russians going hungry? Looking at the empty shop shelves, you might have thought so. But I knew my Russian friends always managed, somehow, to put food on the table.

Monitoring the food situation, I regularly went shopping with two Russian housewives, Tamara and Irina. Once, for the *Independent on Sunday*, we set off in search of ingredients to make a lemon pie. After scouring a number of shops, we managed to find flour, sugar and butter but lemons were unavailable, so the pie had no filling.

The readers loved it. The editors wanted more. Irina migrated to Israel.

Tamara stayed in Moscow and it was to her I turned when trying to pin down the facts about "Russian starvation".

After food-rationing was introduced in December 1990, the British press went wild with stories about "hunger and possible political repercussions". One newspaper, while writing accurately about supplies, carried a misleading photograph of Muscovites queuing in the snow outside St. Basil's Cathedral.

This prompted an angry letter from a reader: "The implication was that these were frozen people waiting for food when anyone who knows Moscow would be aware that it showed people queuing for communion at the cathedral," wrote *Disgusted of London SE10*.

Tamara showed me what Russians were buying and eating. With 60 roubles (then officially worth 60 dollars), we went shopping on Solyanka Street. "There's an assistant behind that counter," said Tamara hopefully. "That means she's got something to sell."

The shop was offering herbs, jars of apple sauce, inferior Turkish tea and "coffee drink powder". In another shop, we found scrappy meat but 30 people were queuing for it, so we moved on.

In a third shop, there were bad pomegranates and mouldy grapes but good apples, carrots and beetroots, which Tamara bought. Later, she would send her husband with a rucksack to fetch the heavy potatoes and onions. And there was always bread.

Tamara had spent 15 of a possible 60 roubles and could make borsht that night. "Fine for a vegetarian," she said, "but my children need protein: milk, eggs and cheese."

Reading these stories of limited nutrition if not starvation, well-intentioned readers in England began sending donations. It was the start of "gum-po" (humanitarian aid).

I delivered some food parcels and remember one old woman saying to me, as 1990 turned into 1991: "It may be Christmas for you but it's not Christmas for us yet. We don't want your charity."

Russians felt humiliated. In the West, people felt rebuffed. As time went on, the misunderstandings would grow. We were a way off yet from that elusive common humanity. **P**

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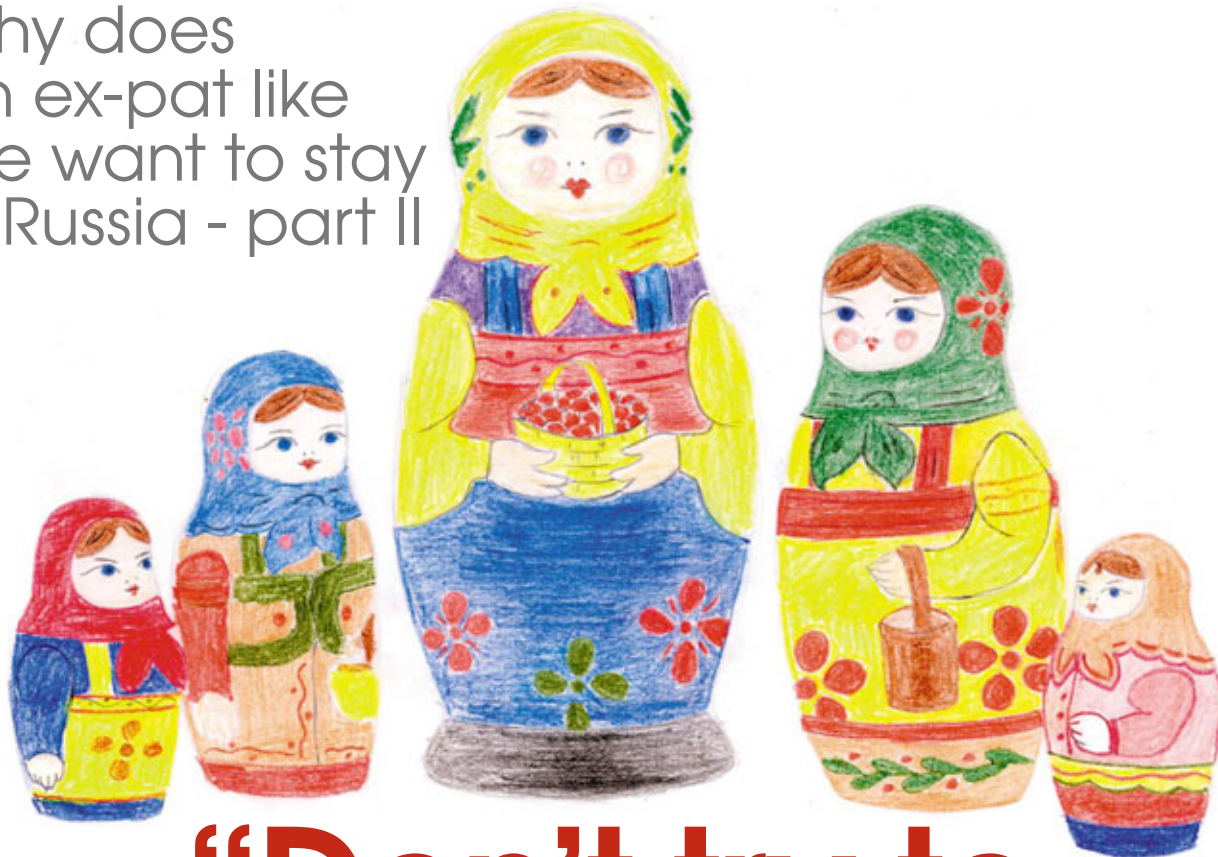


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Why does an ex-pat like me want to stay in Russia - part II



“Don’t try to understand—just feel it.”

Frank Ebbecke

Remember Natasha, my gas station-angel from part I? If not—no worries. You’ll discover more about the Russian soul trapped in a female body, and even more reasons to love Russia right below.

Russian women. Sure, there are pretty women in every corner of the world. But in Russia it seems that there are many more of them around. Easy to break your neck for 6-7 out of 10 while simply passing them on a sidewalk. Just beautiful.

It’s Christmas time, worth considering that where Santa Claus in Western countries has an assistant in the form of “Knecht Ruprecht”, an often rather unpleasant, nasty male character. Santa Claus’s Russian counterpart, called “Ded Moroz”, appears with “Snegurochka,” the “snow girl”—pretty and pretty nice.

But there is much more to most Russian woman than simply good looks.

Not only a charming lover and trustworthy partner. At the same time a gifted housewife and caring mother. Fully in charge of the elderly in the family. On top of all that: an ambitious, professional career-maker. Just admirable.

Well, this ideal combination of virtues is even stronger for girls who came to the capital from somewhere out there like Siberia, where many genuinely like nature and a more simple life. For these people, Moscow is their Mecca.

First of all many like to play their “pretty woman” and “big city girl” roles. One stylish girl in my office went a little bit extreme and even played the “femme fatale” role. I continuously

had to ask her whether she wouldn’t mind working for a time or whether she wanted to go straight to a café or club. And to button up her blouse a bit higher please. It is hard to get any serious work done when the “clack-clack-clack” accompaniment of her high heels dictate the rhythm of my workflow. Hard to keep your eyes on the laptop screen when distracted from work by swinging bumps (no wonder the art of ballet dancing has been created in Russia?). To be honest, I didn’t mind her appearance and behaviour at all because she was as good at her job.

This is how it always starts. But in the end they’re looking for the man of their life.

Ideally with big pockets. Striking for a good home, fancy lifestyle, security (for her and for the whole family). When they’ve then caught the fish, the man certainly will be the head of the family but she will be the neck—as a Russian saying goes.

They often marry very young. And if it doesn’t work? A quick, uncomplicated divorce. Who cares that there are more females than men in Russia. Life is too short. Just give it another try.

One younger lady once said to me, with a most charming smile: “Men are obliged to give gifts to women.” Well then, “ladno” (OK), if that is so I’ll keep presenting them gifts. At least flowers. I have never seen so many flower shops as here—and certainly any more expensive ones. In the end, a lot of them deserve the presents. They’re the salt of men’s lives (and sometimes the pepper, too).

Let’s come to some more serious, more rational than emo-

tional reasons (in the end I'm a German) why I've no problems becoming a long term guest-citizen in Russia.

First of all, there's the whole issue of my age. I'm in the autumn of my life. In my job, at home, I'd be probably already disposed of. Here I was given chances I'd never imagined. I was asked to preside over a group of Russian marketing communication agencies. I've registered my own consultancy (FE Communications). I run a small company for the procurement of young musicians (LISYAMUSIC), together with Yulia from Irkutsk, my partner, who has an amazing talent on the piano and even bigger talent for singing jazz.

Here there is a greater respect for age, for people's lives, not just professional experiences. Just everything seems to be possible, providing you develop the right feeling of how to play the game. Russians are highly emotional people. And they bring their emotions to work. Friendship and business are heavily intertwined. But friendship always comes first. It might take longer than elsewhere. But once you have made real friends with a Russian, you've a friend for life, in good and not so good times.

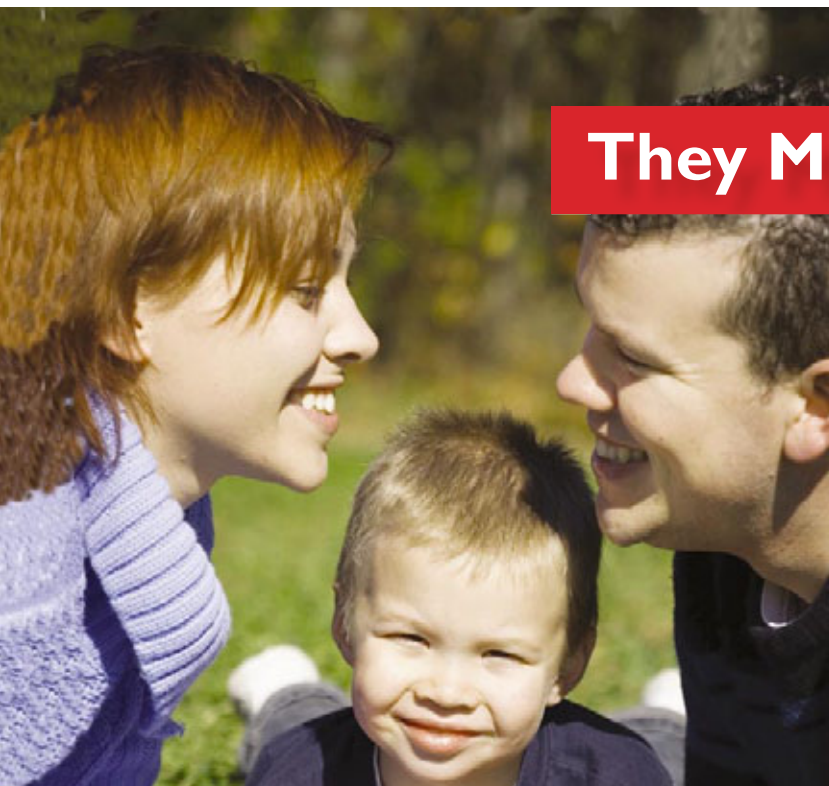
In this huge country there is a fresh and young breed of talented, well-educated, ambitious people in almost every professional field. However, and per definition (reminding that it all "restarted" only 20 years ago) they still lack a certain amount of experience to truly qualify them as "global players" or make valuable contributors to the development of the national economy and infrastructure. In addition: too many of them dream to speed up their career and their lifestyle elsewhere in the world and do not wish to come back home from their studies or temporary assignments abroad.

The crisis that started in September 2008 and its consequences have proven that the unilateral adjustment to the export of raw materials can lead to strong dependences. Russia, in many aspects, is, in spite of the leadership role it is adopting, still a developing country. The economy has to be lifted to modern standards and has to be widely diversified. This will probably last a full generation (some say more) until Russia really is up to speed in this brutal global competitive environment. "Made in Russia" has to become an internationally respected quality label. Especially the group of highly innovative smaller and mid-sized enterprises is dramatically underdeveloped. Partly because of Russian bureaucracy and other general conditions. Favorable changes are underway, driven by both the President of the Russian Federation and the national government.

Therefore and for the time being, ex-pat experts in almost every area of economic, scientific, cultural and social activity are vital. The respected Boston Consulting Group (BCG) recently (September 2010) predicted that Russia will still have a "likely large shortfall of qualified personnel from 2020 to 2030" in construction, traffic and communication, retail as well as in the agriculture."

It's the size of the Russian territory. It's the greatness of the Russian soul. It's the wide range of the opportunities available. Russia can be home. I'm here. Where are you? **P**

PASSPORT welcomes personal contributions to the debate about the pluses and minuses of life in Russia. Please feel free to mail contributions to the editor.



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Moscow's Residential Architecture

There are several main types of residential buildings in Moscow, each of them having their strengths and weaknesses that potential leaseholders and buyers should be aware of

Vladimir Kozlov

Pre-revolutionary/historic buildings

Those looking to experience some sort of a historic connection should certainly consider older buildings dating back to the 19th or early 20th century, which are usually referred to by realtors as "pre-revolutionary" or "historic" buildings. There are not that many of those in Moscow, and they are quite distinguishable among the more contemporary surrounding architecture.

"These are always chosen by tenants who are looking for a bit of romance in Moscow," Michael Bartley, General Director of Four Squares, told Passport. "They traditionally have very high ceilings of 3.5 meters to 5 meters and old decorative aspects, such as ceiling moldings and motifs. Other features include old fireplaces, large windows, and old wooden flooring."

"The main and most obvious advantage of historic buildings is their prestigious location," Alexander Ziminsky, director of the elite property sales department at Penny Lane Realty, told Passport. "Nearly all the pre-revolutionary buildings are located inside the Garden Ring, and many of them are situated in quiet lanes in walking distance from the Kremlin."

Pre-revolutionary buildings are slightly less popular among potential leaseholders than contemporary high-end residential complexes, but a historic atmosphere is what often attracts people to such housing options, Galina Tkach, director of the rental department at IntermarkSavills, told Passport.

"Owners of such apartments normally try to bring the property to its original look and sometimes even install antique furniture and interior décor items," she added.

But the older buildings apparently have disadvantages, as well. "Old wooden floors may not be flat and even, ceiling moldings may not have been decorated often, the large, imposing entrances may not have been renovated for 50 years," said Bartley, adding that a building of that kind is "definitely a building for the connoisseur."

"First, [such buildings] are often unsuitable for families with children," Ziminsky said. "More often than not, a building is

located right on the street, with no isolated territory, playgrounds and recreation zones."

"Second, historic buildings don't have underground parking or pharmacies and groceries in the ground floors, unlike contemporary residential complexes," he went on to say. "Another disadvantage of historic buildings is inconvenient – by contemporary standards – layouts of apartments. Often, they have long and narrow corridors and pass-through rooms, while there is no room for a second bathroom, a cloakroom and a utilities room."

Tkach added that sometimes it is impossible to install, for instance, climate control systems in buildings of that kind because they are considered architectural monuments and works of that kind are prohibited.

Stalin-era buildings

Some of the buildings erected in the 1930 through 1950 and therefore informally dubbed "Stalin buildings" could be confused with pre-revolutionary buildings, the only difference on the outside being Soviet symbols in the decoration, but others, like the "Seven Sisters" skyscrapers are unique.

For years, Stalin-era residential buildings belonged the best quality housing options available, and even by contemporary standards, they have notable advantages.

"In Soviet times, Stalin buildings were considered elite housing, in which top-level communist officials, heads of government agencies, prominent musicians, writers and artists were given apartments," Ziminsky said. "For regular people, moving into a Stalin building on Zemlyanoy Val, Tverskaya or Sadovaya-Sukharevskaya was unrealistic."

Just like pre-revolutionary buildings, Stalin-era ones may attract residents by historic connections. "Take, for instance, building 26 at Kutuzovsky Prospekt," said Ziminsky. "In that building, in an apartment located in entranceway 5, on the fifth floor, lived [general secretary of the Communist Party] Leonid Brezhnev, and for many Muscovites the building remains 'Brezhnev's building'."

"Stalin-era buildings are more comfortable [than pre-revolutionary ones]," Denis Bobkov, head of the analytical depart-



ment at Est-a-Tet, told PASSPORT. "Apartments are large, they have high ceilings, panoramic windows and thick walls that make them soundproof."

According to Tkach, Stalin buildings are quite popular among lease-holders, but the poor state of entryways and courtyards, as well as mixed social environment, are factors against them.

"On the other hand, Stalin buildings are more accessible by transport [than some centrally located older buildings]," argued Zimovsky. "On the other hand, residents will have to deal with constant street noise and environmental conditions that are not the best."

"The downside is due to the construction process, which limits the opportunity to knock down interior walls and change the layout of the apartment. So don't expect large, open-plan apartments in these buildings," Bartley said. "Wiring and plumbing may also not have been renovated."

TsK buildings

This category of buildings is informally referred to by the Russian abbreviation for "Central Committee", TsK, as they were built in the 1960s through 1980s for the communist elite, many of which were members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Another popular name for them is "SovMin buildings", the Russian abbreviation for the Council of Ministers.

At the time of construction, those brick buildings of normally nine to twelve floors were about the most comfortable housing available. And, although, on the outside, they may not look dramatically different from those built on a massive scale in residential neighborhoods, the apartments in them are considerably better.

"These buildings are popular on the rental market," said Bartley. "They usually have a standard brick facade and may be in an enclosed courtyard, which implies extra security. The entrance is likely to have a room for a concierge, and there may be push-chair ramp or cargo lift access. The apartments usually have standard layout and ceilings of 2.7 meters to 3.5 meters."

"Apartments in SovMin buildings are quite acceptable even by contemporary standards," Ziminsky said. "They are advantageously located, have high ceilings, comfortable layouts and spacious rooms. Among SovMin buildings are also quite a number of 'buildings with a history'. For instance, in a building on Bolshaya Bronnaya, [top level Soviet official] Mikhail Suslov and [general secretary of the Communist Party] Konstantin Chernenko used to live."

"The only downside to these buildings is that the building entrance and apartment renovation may look a bit out of date," Bartley observed.

Block buildings

This type of apartment buildings is certainly the most common in Moscow and has evolved quite a lot over the last 50 years. There is a substantial difference between late 1950s and early 1960s five-story "khrushchovkas," named informally after then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, and contemporary block buildings. However, the quality of apartments still considerably lags behind that in other types of buildings.

"These buildings don't impress in themselves," said Bartley. "Quite often tenants chose to rent here for the location as much as the apartment."

"The disadvantages of block buildings are that open plans aren't possible, and ceilings are no higher than 2.8 meters," Ziminsky said. "Also, ventilation and sound-proofing are poor."

According to Bobkov, the strengths of block buildings are that all of them are equipped with refuse chutes and elevators, while among the weaknesses is the location of many such buildings far from the city centre. "Buildings of this kind don't normally have their own infrastructure and guarded territory, and the large number of apartments in the building doesn't earn them extra points, either," he said.

"Housing in block buildings is normally chosen by those whose budgets are limited," said Tkach. "Living in those buildings is not always comfortable. It is often cold there in winter and hot in summer."

Contemporary high-end buildings

Few people can afford to live in buildings of this kind, but very many dream about it. According to Bartley, it's "everyone's dream to live in a brand-new, elite property in the center of Moscow with 24-hour security, CCTV, concierge, marble foyer, freshly renovated apartment and a swimming pool/health club in the basement."

Unlike ten or so years ago, options for this type of housing in Moscow are abundant, but, with rental prices between \$10,000 and \$60,000 a month, potential leaseholders aren't lining up to take them.

"Contemporary monolith buildings are certainly much more comfortable because they were built by contemporary standards and are in line with present-day requirements for housing, which include underground parking, the building's own infrastructure, and guarded territory," Bobkov said.

"In contemporary residential complexes, there are no small apartments," said Ziminsky. "Apartments have free plans, so that residents could design their home to their own taste."

"The only real issue with this type of apartment is that the landlord is likely to be very rich, and his/her understanding of tenants' right may be limited," Bartley concluded. "You could be in for a bumpy ride." **P**





Prices for apartments in cheaper block buildings go up

Vladimir Kozlev

Since the beginning of the fall, prices for economy-class apartments have increased more significantly than those for any other types of apartments, RIA Novosti reported. Experts say that the increase was primarily due to insufficient supply of cheaper apartments in block buildings with an area of between 35 sq. m. and 40 sq. m. on the secondary market. Although the price of an average sq. metre has not increased significantly, that of an entire economy-class apartment has gained roughly five percent since late summer. Apartments in newly-built buildings turn out to be less affordable as they have a much bigger area than those offered in the secondary market.

Newspaper kiosks to return to their original spots

Newspaper kiosks removed by orders from Moscow's prefectures are to be returned to their original spots, the Moscow mayor's office said, RIA Novosti reported. In early November, responding to City Hall's call to get rid of all kiosks in central Moscow, the city's prefectures removed dozens of them. Now, an exception is to be made for those selling newspapers and magazines. All cases of liquidating newspaper kiosks are to be carefully examined, and if the return to the original spot is not feasible, a new spot is to be provided, City Hall said. However, that does not apply to kiosks selling food and other types of products, which city authorities are determined to get rid of.

Share of foreign leaseholders of elite property plummets

The share of foreign individuals renting premium class property in Moscow

was 25 per cent smaller in October 2010, compared with October 2008, according to an analytical report by Penny Lane Realty. "Although expensive elite property has been traditionally intended for foreign nationals who basically helped to form that segment, today, demand from Russian customers is higher," said Vadim Lamin, head of the elite apartment rental department at Penny Lane Realty. "The reason is that many foreign companies have replaced mid-level managers with Russian professionals." According to the report, Russian leaseholders are primarily interested in apartments rented at either below \$3,000 a month or above \$7,000 a month, while ex-pats prefer options in the \$3,000 to \$8,000 a month range.

The lower floors of Moskva hotel to open in December

Three lower floors of the rebuilt legendary hotel Moskva are to be opened in December, the city's tourism committee said. The hotel is expected to be completely operable next year. Built in 1935 in the very heart of the capital, just a few hundred meters from the Kremlin, the hotel was closed down in 2003 and subsequently disassembled and rebuilt, preserving the original design on the outside. Thanks to the rebuilding, the hotel's total area is to increase from 98,000 sq. m. to 185,500 sq. m. The re-opening of the hotel was originally expected in 2007 and has been postponed several times. Two other well-known Moscow hotels, Leningradskaya and Ukraina, were reopened after major revamping in 2009 and 2010, respectively.

How to... enjoy the holiday season!

Inquiring after plans:

Что вы делаете на праздниках?

What are you doing for the holidays?

Где вы будете отмечать Новый год?

Where will you see the New Year in?

С кем вы будете отмечать Рождество?

Who will you celebrate Christmas with?

Making your own:

Я поеду домой на праздниках.

I'm going home for the holidays.

Я поеду к родителям на Рождество.

I'm going to my parents' home for Christmas.

Я буду отмечать Новый год на вечеринке с друзьями.

I'm going to celebrate New Year's at a party with friends.

Я буду отмечать Новый год в ресторане.

I'm going to celebrate New Year's at a restaurant.

На работе будет корпоративная вечеринка.

We're having an office party at work.

All the best wishes:

С Новым годом! Happy New Year.

New Year is the more important of the holidays so you'll be saying this a lot more than Merry Christmas.

С наступающим! Lit: Congratulations on

the forthcoming holiday! You can use this about any holiday, not just New Year.

С Рождеством! Merry Christmas! Not

forgetting that Russian Christmas isn't until the 7th January.

Со Старым Новым годом! Happy Old New

Year! This one is 13th January according to the old Russian calendar. But really, any excuse for a holiday, right?

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The Master of Malaya Bronnaya

"A round, dark object was propelled under the railing of Patriarch's Ponds' path onto the cobbled slope... it began bouncing over the cobblestones of Bronnaya Street. It was Berlioz's severed head."

Text and Photos by Katrina Marie

And with that image firmly implanted in the mind's eye, readers of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* are introduced to this main vein of Moscow's pulsating heart. Malaya Bronnaya, enchantingly connects the Garden and Boulevard rings, and offers a stimulating stroll through Bulgakov's literary genius, to the moody Patriarch's Pond and titillating Tverskoi Bulvar.

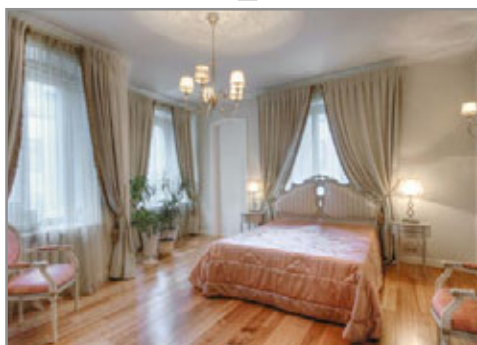
This recommended outing begins at the near-by Bulgakov House Museum at 10 Bolshaya Sadovaya (nearest Metro: Mayakovskaya).

For Bulgakov fans, this is Mecca. Bulgakov used his own flat as the model for 302a Sadovaya Street, the location of Satan's Grand Ball—though the ball itself was inspired by the notorious 1935 ball Bulgakov attended at the American Ambassador's residence at Spaso House.

Entering the small courtyard off of Bolshaya Sadovaya, one is instantly greeted by the tourist trappings of Bulgakov Land. But don't be fooled by imitation. The real house-museum is the second door-way on the left, up three flights of black-cat-graffiti-lined stairwells—an ode to the indelible Behemoth of *Master and Margarita*.



Apartments For Rent



Arbat

3-room apartment in pre-revolutionary building. Prestigious district in the centre of Moscow. Western renovated and designed.

More photos at www.realtor.ru/a64196



Mayakovskaya

3-room apartment in Stalin-era building. Luxurious author design in modern style. Elegant furniture and expensive accessories.

More photos at www.realtor.ru/a64088





Bulgakov lived at the top floor flat from 1921 to 1924. The airy apartment and the surrounding streets inspired so much of Bulgakov's writing during this timeframe. A small but lovely collection of Bulgakov's writing desk, family photos and memorabilia, as well as an original Master and Margarita manuscript, are on display.

Even for those who have not read the book, the museum is still worth a quick stop for the pretty period furnishings, charming apartment, and slice of an essential Russian classic. Entry fee is 50 rubles.

And speaking of slices, if nothing else, allow the intoxicating aroma of baking bread to pull you into the famous piroshki joint, Café Stolle, just next door. The fish and berry pies are unforgettable.

Continuing back onto Bolshaya Sadovaya, belly now happily satisfied, turn left at Malaya Bronnaya. The street provides instant eye candy. Garish modern and elegant Victorian buildings intertwine, high-end boutiques, galleries and restaurants beckon the passer-by to gaze dreamily, and Patriarch's Pond (Patriarshiy Prudi) sparkles just steps away.

Malaya Bronnaya has a long history as Moscow's centre for craftsmen and blacksmiths. During Ivan the Terrible's reign, the area housed Moscow's primary weapons producers, making chain-mail and armour (some of which is on display at the Moscow City Museum). Indeed, Bolshaya and Malaya Bronnaya owe their name to these craftsmen: "bronya" means armor.

In the 1800s, the area became known as Moscow's "Latin Quarter", attracting intellectuals, students and artisans. It still very much retains a creative vibe, as the plethora of galleries, nightclubs, and theaters attest.

Patriarch's Pond, though by its very name, holds a deeper spiritual meaning in Moscow's past and hence Bulgakov's use of it in Master and Margarita as Satan's playground.

Legend has it that this was the site of a haunted marsh, drained in the 14th century and planted with three small ponds maintained by monks as fish farms for the church. During the Soviet era, authorities tried to change the name of the ponds to Pionerskiye, but locals wouldn't budge.

Today, only one pond remains. The demand for real estate in this prime location prompted sell-offs over the years. Nevertheless, the pond's tree-lined paths and atypical statues continue to attract people. During winter, the pond serves as a popular ice-skating rink; during summer, its café offers a bit of respite.



Back on Malaya Bronnaya, continue to take note of the street's interesting architectural features: dazzling art nouveau, crumbling Victorian, and whimsical mosaic-studded modernism.

Approaching Bolshaya Bronnaya, at right is the carnation-covered statue dedicated to Sholem Aleichem, a popular Yiddish author who inspired Fiddler on the Roof.

At the intersection of Malaya and Bolshaya Bronnaya, take a look at the fascinating Lubavitch Synagogue (Agndas Chas-sideri Chabad) on Bolshaya Bronnaya. Built in 1863 following the emancipation of the Jews by Alexander II, its original walls are now encased in a gleaming glass exterior, adding an usual and modernist impression to the synagogue.

A decent Kosher restaurant is at the top, but be forewarned that the menu is hit-and-miss. Regulars seem to have learned how to navigate to the best choices. There are fabulous Israeli wines and tempting-looking lamb, but avoid the tasteless soups. If still in need of sustenance, the trendy Kafe Kafe back at the intersection of Malaya and Bolshaya Bronnaya, is a reliable choice.

Continuing on Malaya Bronnaya toward the Boulevard Ring, the glowing façade of the Theatre on Malaya Bronnaya offers a warm welcome. The building was once occupied by the State Yiddish Theatre, whose famous director Solomon Mikhoels was purportedly murdered on Stalin's order by the NKVD. The theatre was subsequently closed.

The Theatre on Malaya Bronnaya opened in 1946. Its repertoire includes an impressive mix of Russian plays and Anglo-American classics, such as Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*.

Taking a left onto Tverskoi Bulvar, the charming Yermolova House-Museum at number 11 in honor of the renowned Maly Theatre actress is worth a visit, as is the modern art museum at number 9. In the court-yard at the left just before the popular Pushkin Drama Theatre is the small but beautiful 17th century Church of Ionna Bogoslova Na Bronnoi.

Now back onto Bolshaya Bronnaya, opposite an amusing-looking Fisheriya, a right turn takes you past a small outdoor market on weekends, with vendors selling everything from zucchini and tomatoes to Kazan honey, before arriving at Moscow's first McDonalds (which opened to 5-hour queues in 1989).

But more importantly, the last stop is Pushkinskaya Metro station. **P**



New Year Wine Buyer Guide

Charles W. Borden

This time of year I often get asked about wines for a company party, for a unique gift to take home for the holidays, or a Moscow New Year's present for the boss. Here is my comprehensive 2011 Moscow Holiday Wine Shopper Guide.

The Company Party

When asked about wines for a company party I always respond, "would you feel comfortable serving Russian wines, because there are a number of wines Russian and Ukrainian wines produced near the Black Sea that are completely adequate as party wines and offer good value to price?" If there is hesitation I add that, "you can always fall back on patriotism, and support of local producers, to explain your choice."

Chateau Le Grand Vostock, with its French winemaker, and new French equipped, top-of-the-line winery, is clearly, by an order of magnitude, Russia's leader in terms of modern wine production. CGV has pairs of red and white wines at several price levels starting with Terre du Sud at 199r per bottle to Cuvee Karsov at 430r. They have an English language website, stock in Moscow and deliver in case lots.

Two other Russian wineries, Fanagoria and Mysakho, employ an Australian flying winemaker, John Worontschak, and some wines from either winery might make a good selection. Fanagoria has two lines, Cru Lermont and the lower priced NR, which I've seen at Auchan and Sedmoi Kontinent. Also, keep in mind

that many Russians, though some would be loathe to admit, really prefer sweet wines. Fanagoria makes a very rich, dark sweet herbal wine that is very reasonably priced wine called Chorny Lecker, which you might add to the menu.

You can forget about most Russian sparkling wines, but Abrau Durso on the Russian Black Sea coast, and Novy Svet in Crimea, make sparkling wines in accordance with the classic methods used for Champagne, and Tsimlanskoye Winery in Rostov region makes a sweet, purple sparkling wines "in accordance with an ancient Cossack method."

Tsimlanskoye Sparking (500r), with the bottle encased in a fancy tin.

Novy Svet Pinot Noir Brut (600r), a very dry rose sparkling wine that bested some French Champagnes in a Passport blind tasting in 2008. Serve very cold.

Abrau Durso Classic Brut (600r), from this historic winery on the Black Sea. One of the best sparkling wines I've ever tasted was at Abrau Durso.

Keep in mind that these wineries also produce cheaper sparkling wines, which are produced using the faster Soviet "reservoir" method and at least from local grapes, unlike the sparkling wines produced at so-called "wineries" in the big cities that are far from grape sources.

The Massandra shops in Moscow carry many Russian and Ukrainian wines including the sparkling wines from Abrau Durso, Novy Svet and Tsimlanskoye.

If you insist on import wines, Argentinean and Chilean wines offer a good value price ratio, with Argentinean a

little less expensive than wines than its neighbor. For Bordeaux, the best value I've found is a pair of white and red from Bel Air Perponcher (Bordeaux Superieur AOC) available from Kauffman shops. The South African Tortoise Hill Red and White are a good choice under 600r from Grand Cru. For Italian, try a pair of Villa Antinori from Intendant.

Gifts to Take Home

It's always nice to take home something of quality that's actually made in Russia, something besides a matryoshka doll set. The aforementioned Russian wines might do, but an interesting choice would be the wines and spirits from Praskoveya Winery near Budyonnovsk of Stavropol region. Praskoveya specializes in brandies (called cognac in Russia), produced under a French-trained winemaker. Praskoveya also makes a retro-labeled Samogon No.5 (Russian moonshine), which is grape based and 45% alcohol. It also has a large collection of wines dating back to 1945, post German occupation. These Praskoveya collector wines, such as a 1992 Uliybka (Smile, a sweet Muscat wine) at 1,460r or a 1955 Buket Prikumya at 17,660r, and its brandies and samogon are available at a small shop off Krasnoprenya Prospekt near the Moscow zoo.

Gifts for the Boss or Friends

The membership shopping retailer Metro has the best prices in town and a very broad selection; the only catch is that a membership card is required to shop at Metro. The wine choice at



Auchan is disappointing; it is poor and thin, and mostly very low end. Among city supermarkets, Azbuka Vkusa remains the best for choices but it has few wines under 800 rubles. The selection at Sedmoi Kontinent and the AM alcohol shops is better in the lower range.

Surprisingly, the best prices and selection of high-end wines are at the major wine boutiques (Grand Cru, Intendant, Kauffman, Kolleksiya Vin, Magnum and Decanter). This is because they are importer owned, so they can offer lower prices for wines they import. You may pay 20% to 40% more for the same wines at the supermarkets. For efficient shopping, you can hit every major wine boutique with a cruise along Kutuzovskiy. Here's the marshrut:

Head out of town on Kutuzovskiy, and start at Kolleksiya Vin (under common ownership with Azbuka Vkusa) at Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 18. Leave your car because you can walk to the next three; in short order Grand Cru (Simple Wines) and Kauffman (VX Import) at Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 22, and Magnum (DP Trade) at Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 24. Return to the car and go a little further out Kutuzovskiy and swing around back towards the city to stop at Intendant (MBG Group) at Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 33.

Some notes on each boutique:

Kolleksiya Vin – a good selection, few wines under 800r, and many wines come from other importers, so prices may be higher than their neighbors a few steps away.

Grand Cru – I like Simple Wines selection, but there are very few wines under 800r. Grand Cru has a good website and online order system that shows Parker and Wine Spectator ratings.

Kauffman – has the best line of wines priced under 800r and an excellent selection of New Zealand wines. Kauffman imports the huge Concha y Toro line of wines from Chile and Robert Mondavi California wines, but it has Seghesio Zinfandels, some of the best American reds in Moscow.

Magnum – carries the outstanding Australian wines that DP Trade imports on behalf of wine expert and PGA pro Grant Dodd, a Friend of Passport. Look for Grant's wines from Dalwhinnie, Dutschke, Kaesler, Kalleske and Wild Duck Creek. DP also imports Montes wines from Chile, which are consistently good. It also imports the very expensive, California cult wines from Sine Qua Non, the ultimate gift.

Intendant – exclusive importer for Antinori, which produces the very popular Umbrian Cervaro della Sala, a Chardonnay, and the beautiful and respected super Tuscan Tignanello. Intendant also imports from several good California wineries.

By the way, Preston Haskell has some of his excellent Haskell Vineyards wines (Stellenbosch, South Africa) in town. Contact me by email if you would like to find them.

Here are some of my favorite wines from the past year:

Favorite Wines between \$30 and \$100

Montes Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc (Colchagua, Chile)
Seghesio Zinfandel (Sonoma, California)
Gaja Ca'Marcanda Estate Toscana Promis (Tuscany)
Antinori Tignanello (Tuscany)

Favorite Wines Under \$30

Emiliana Novas Chardonnay (Casablanca Valley, Chile)
Flagstone Noon Gun (South Africa)
Salento Primitivo (Puglia, Italy)
Vina Falernia Sangiovese (Elqui Valley, Chile)
Yalumba Bush Vine Grenache (Barossa Valley, Australia)

The Shops

Chateau le Grand Vostock

www.grandvostock.ru
Ryabinovaya street, 55
+7 495 785 8865

Praskoveya Shop

Ulitsa Malaya Gruzinskaya 12
+7 495 252 1408

Massandra Shops

Zvenigorodskoye Shosse 7
Oktyabryskaya 5
Komsomolsky Prospekt 15

DP Trade Shops

www.wine-dp-trade.ru
Decanter, Bol. Polyanka 30
Magnum, Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 24
Magnum, Ul. Plyuschkina 20
Vinum, Prechistenka 40/2

Kauffman Shops

www.whitehall.ru
Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 22
Ul. Kuznetsky Most 3
Ul. Ostojhenka 27

Grand Cru Shops

(www.grandcru.ru)
Novinsky Passage, Novinsky Bulvar 31
Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 22
Lenigradskiy Prospekt 50
Malaya Bronaya 31
Komsomolsky Prospekt 48

Kolleksiya Vin

www.vine.ru
Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 18
Novinsky Bulvar 12
Ulitsa Tverskaya 20
Leninsky Prospekt 16

Intendant

www.mbg-wine.ru/bootique/
Kutuzovskiy Prospekt 33





Christmas tipples

Eleonora Scholes

The holiday season is approaching fast. This is the time of year when we can finally relax and enjoy the company of family and friends. Wine is intrinsically linked to our sense of joy and conviviality. As such, it is a perfect festive drink. The ancient Greeks praised wine for its spirit of celebration, and we often recall that, too, when we rush to do our Christmas shopping. Wine is bought either as a universal gift or simply for the pleasure of drinking, or, very frequently, for both reasons.

Thankfully, our choices of wine for Christmas do not have to be rigid. Whilst Christmas dinner is impossible without the traditional centrepiece of a turkey, the variety of drinks on our table entirely depends on our whims and wishes—within a

given budget, of course. If you want a glittering wine, literally, you can indulge yourself. There is a Spanish sparkling rosé that is mixed with a liquor containing silver dust. This is what Madonna and other show-biz people drink at Christmas—they say. I am not sure I would like to splash US\$300 for the privilege of drinking silver, though I might get a couple of bottles of Il Vino dei Poeti Gold from the Italian Distilleria Bottega, just for fun. This is an easy going sparkling wine called Prosecco which is made close to Venice and sold in gilded bottles. It doesn't break the bank, the bottles serve as an additional Christmas decoration and the wine drinks pleasantly.

Talking of fizz, any sparkling wine has a magical effect, not least because of the wonderful ceremony that it involves. The foil is carefully removed, so as not to spoil the bottle's elegant appearance, a cage is untwisted, and a cork is slowly released. Pop! The wine flows in a glass with a gentle noise, its soft evanescent mousse and fine beard of bubbles keeping our attention.

As a symbol of celebration and happiness, sparkling wines have a universal appeal, from cheerful Prosecco to prestigious Champagne. While they all have bubbles, various fizzy wines actually taste quite differently, and it serves us well to remember what's what. Champagne remains the king, even if it has many worthy rivals nowadays. In very broad terms, Champagne is distinguished by its particular freshness and finesse, complexity and minerality. Each Champagne producer has non-vintage wine as a signature of his style, whereas bottles with an indication of vintage or so called prestige cuvees showcase especially great harvests or blends.

There are plenty of wines around the world which are made following the same production processes as champagne. With this method, which is referred to as a traditional





or classic method, wines undergo their second fermentation in bottles, where carbon dioxide is trapped to create an effect of mousse and bubbles. Some of the better known traditional method examples outside Champagne include French Cremants from Alsace and Burgundy, Spanish Cava and Italian wines from Franciacorta and Trentino. Abrau-Durso near Novorossiysk, a once renowned historic producer who is now reviving a Russian tradition of classic method wines, offers Imperial Collection Vintage Brut, cellared for at least seven years prior to release.

The process of making Champagne and traditional method wines is complex and time consuming which translates into higher price tags. There is, however, another group of sparkling wines, with a simplified production. They may not reach the heights of sophistication of Champagne, but they still give a nice play of bubbles, have an attractive taste and are friendlier on the wallet. These sparklers always come as a good alternative when we have a large number of guests, or simply want a lighter drink. The most popular wines in this class, Prosecco and Asti Spumante, both come from Italy. Prosecco from the north-east of the country has enjoyed a phenomenal success in the past few years, thanks to its clean, fruity flavours of apples and pears and an accommodating style. Romantic Venice, the city that loves to party, adapted Prosecco as its unofficial drink, readily available in Venetian bars day and night. Winemakers in Piedmont, in the north-west of Italy, make fizzy Asti Spumante with the Moscato grape. The aromatic, slightly sweet yet light and vibrant wine is also popular in Russia, especially with ladies. Asti Spumante has an "elder brother", called Moscato d'Asti. It is sweeter, more complex and intense, and is traditionally reserved by the Italians for the end of the meal.

Sparkling wines are usually served as an aperitif and are rarely considered as an accompaniment to the meal. Contrary to this habit, I find Champagne and other high quality classical method wines as universal gastronomic partners and can happily serve them throughout the whole dinner. I may take, for example, several wines from Bellavista, a top producer from Franciacorta whose refined style wins my heart and taste buds. Non-vintage Cuvee Brut is indeed an excellent aperitif which goes with light snacks and canapés. A step up is vintage Gran Cuvee Brut, to be served with panoply of starters. Gran Cuvee Rose will show off elegant meat dishes, whereas luscious Gran Cuvee Pas Opere should be poured to highlight the most important course of the dinner.

Sparkling wine can go well with any meal, but then you might prefer to serve something else. Luckily, choice is not

a problem. There is such a great variety of wines that the problem is often more about making the right choice. When buying wines for Christmas, my advice is to stick to trusted labels to avoid disappointment. Leave experiments for another time, unless you are absolutely confident that a new wine will suit your taste.

White wines, especially in lighter styles, may not always agree with the Russian winter and rich food. If you like them, it's best to serve them as an aperitif, and leave more complex and structured wines for the meal. Chardonnay, aged in oak barrels, normally provides an extra layer of richness and concentration. Another safe tip is to look for wines made with grapes from old vines. This is usually mentioned on a label and indicates that the wine is likely to be more intense and complex. For the fashion conscious, Pinot Grigio and local varieties, found in specific wine growing areas, are in vogue, ranging from Albarino in Spanish Galicia to Gruner Veltliner in Lower Austria.

I cannot possibly cover everything that's on offer for red wines. Christmas is a time of indulgence, and you might just get some special bottles. In my choices, I usually look for great red wine regions, be it Bordeaux and Burgundy in France, Piedmont and Tuscany in Italy, or Rioja and Ribera del Duero in Spain. Yet, outstanding red wines are now being made in all corners of the world, from Australia to California, and it is ultimately your decision what to buy.

Last, but not least are pudding wines. I am a huge fan, and drink them on many more occasions than just Christmas. Some of the world's greatest white sweet wines are made in Germany and Austria with the Riesling grape which is capable of combining elegance and intensity, sweetness and freshness in a perfect manner. Italian wines from dried grapes, such as Vin Santo and Recioto, are also delectable. Finally, there are three all-time fortified classics: Spanish Sherry and Port and Madeira from Portugal, which are indeed great winter wines.

As a concluding note, don't be worried about serving the wrong wine. Whatever you choose, the most important thing is to enjoy it in the company of those you love. I wish you all wonderful Christmas. **P**





Dining with friends – Tutto Bene (Все Нормально)

Mandisa Baptiste

"Tutto bene, tutto bene!" Filippo says with a genuine smile that leaves you with a sense that everything is really okay—or at least it will be.

Filippo was introduced to us by Viktor—the young, energetic art director at Tutto Bene, which is an exquisitely homey Italian restaurant located in the now booming Moscow City. Our party consisted of me (photographer and writer of poetry and short stories), a Moscow resident of one year plus from Guyana, Frode, the head of the United Nations in the Russian Federation, Tighereda, a former businesswoman who is married to the head of UNFPA in Moscow, and Miguel, a singer, actor, nightlife writer at PASSPORT Magazine and the Business Development Coordinator at International Apparel, the Moscow fashion emporium.

Upon entering Tutto Bene we were greeted by cheery, eager staff, and with a natural charm comparable to visiting friends and family. Intricate vines nicely decorating the intimate staircase complete the homely feel.

And Filippo was all part of the ambience. If there was ever an archetypical Italian chef, a solid man with a passion for food, he would look like Filippo, the restaurant's master chef. We chatted as my dining party placed orders. The consensus was soup, and as we settled down to wait, I wondered about what the evening's conversations would touch on.

Filippo attempted the best Italian-English accent he could manage. "I used to be in New York for 10 years," he mused. "It is very nice. I love it." You could almost see the nostalgia in his eyes as he recalled his past glowingly, when Frode enquired where in New York he had worked.

Filippo: "I worked in many places—Scarlati Restaurant on Fifth and Madison; at Cameron between Madison and Park; I worked in downtown Manhattan at Bill Borker; I was consulting for Kappa Restaurant, and got 2 stars in New York. I also worked in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Singapore."

As he spoke I realized we were to be treated to a rare combination of cultural cuisine. Filippo had been at Tutto Bene just a year, and I was curious how he got the job.

Filippo: "It is a funny thing—I have a friend in Vietnam who is a chef at a hotel. He wrote me by email and said: 'A friend of a friend in Moscow is looking for a great chef, would you like to go to Moscow?' I was working in Rome and I said, 'Okay let me talk to them.' I came; they liked my food and so here I am!"

Just then, Miguel arrived.

We were famished and as Miguel headed to the washroom, our fingers and legs began the tapping and swinging of anxious diners. Frode was typical. I made a vain bid to read him, wanting to see him cave in to the tempting smells of food

and show some weakness for a change. It never happened. He acted as if he had just eaten a cow and was waiting for dessert, while my stomach punched me with uppercuts like a heavyweight boxer.

Not a moment too soon, the soup rolled in. Now, something about soup: soup was a Sunday tradition in my family when I was growing up. Back home in Georgetown, Guyana, the Sunday soup was either Blackeye, Split peas, or, the more popular choice, cow heel soup, with cassava, plantain, eddoes, sweet potatoes and yam, boiled in the sauce of salted meat, tripe, beef and chicken, and mixed in with spices and seasoning. Well, you don't want to live in a world without cow heel soup. It is heaven to the palate.

It was so popular, some eating houses made cow heel soup a Saturday special. None however, could compare with "German's." German's is a restaurant started by two brothers, one called "German", the other "Survivor" and their friend Mickey. Together the three made their mark with their famous cow heel soup, reigning supreme for decades. Although the founding chefs have all died, the name continues to live on.

So, with the cow heel as reference, I waited expectantly for Filippo's soup. My first sip, or gulp, more aptly, was sensational. I was not disappointed. Filippo's soup was right up there at the top for taste, colour and consistency. All agreed.



It turned out that Miguel had almost dined at Tutto Bene before. He related that one night he stumbled into the place, declaring he was from PASSPORT Magazine and was hungry. He got the sympathy of the staff. He also reminded Tighereda about a night at Vecher when she was left on the dance floor.

Tighereda: "Oh that guy, he was rude, you don't run away from a lady dancing on the floor. Even though it is his place, if I dragged him to dance, he should've been a gentleman and finish the dance."

Noticing Tighereda was fuming as she recalled that night, Miguel quickly switched and engaged Frode.

Frode mentioned he was expecting a visit from a Geneva-based undersecretary general.

Frode: "Undersecretary General in UN terminology is a very senior position, and this guy is the one in charge of the UN office for Sports, Peace and Development. He came today and has already left for Sochi to negotiate collaboration with the UN on the Sochi Olympics. He is a pleasant guy, previously was the executive manager of Werder Bremen—one of the top football clubs in Germany, and has been Minister of Sports in Germany."

Miguel: "Wow nice! I have never been to Sochi, I've only seen photographs. Recently I saw this video of a guy who films the Sochi skyline from his window, he managed to detect at extremely slow

speeds, weird oval shaped objects flying into the mountain range and some into the ocean at astronomical speeds, he estimated that the objects were moving about a kilometre per second. They went into the ocean."

Miguel moved the conversation to juices and then to food again.

Miguel: "I think I will try the Spinael melon with white mushrooms."

Tighereda: "No you can have that anywhere, have something Italian!"

Miguel: "Why is the menu in Russian and Italian—isn't there an English menu?"

Mandisa: "No, but during my previous visit I was told that they will have some in English soon."

Miguel: "They'd better have. An English-speaking ex-pat will be lost!"

Frode: "Well, of course you have to assume people know some Latin and if you know Latin, you know Italian." As Miguel and Tighereda tried to make up their minds about the main course, Miguel announced that he was half Chilean and that Chileans liked meat and rice, while Tighereda made it "ravioli de camberi, consulo de contura." Frode had other ideas.

Frode: "Do you know where the word carnival comes from?"

Miguel: "Carnival—like a predator feast?"

Mandisa: "Very funny."

Frode: "No actually it means goodbye to meat; it is the festivity to introduce fast-

ing. I guess they had to fast one month per year and February being the shortest month, that was conveniently selected."

Tighereda: "How about filet de manso con fungi per se senior."

Miguel: "What is that? Sounds like a fungus."

Mandisa: "It is. Mushroom is a fungus."

Miguel: "Now I definitely don't want to have it."

Waiter returns:

Miguel: "I will have the Risotto lobster. Mandy what are you having?"

Mandisa: "The Special."

Tighereda: "I'll have the Ravioli contra and spinach conguro salvio a polo moderi."

Frode: "Salmon Risotto."

Later on, the chef appeared.

Filippo: "So how is everything?"

Mandisa: "Ah, the soup was fantastic—not salty, I like that."

Miguel: "Awesome soup!"

Filippo: "What about the Risotto? You like it?"

Frode: "Ah this is really, really good, we didn't find it on the menu, it is a special isn't it?"

Filippo: "We now have a festival of mushrooms"

Frode: "This is really good"

Mandisa: "You know, I have eaten at more expensive restaurants in Moscow but the food was not as good as it is here. Elsewhere, either it was too salted, but here the food is perfect—so far at least. You can always tell a good restaurant by the quantity of salt in the dishes."

Miguel suddenly discovered that there was no crab in his crab meal and did not find it this a very funny \$50-a-dish joke. We would later discover Miguel's crab was in fact embedded in the rice.

After dessert:

Tighereda: "I think this was a great night, I am truly satisfied with the food, everything was delicious, Frode and I were cleaning our plates with the bread! And dessert—wow!"

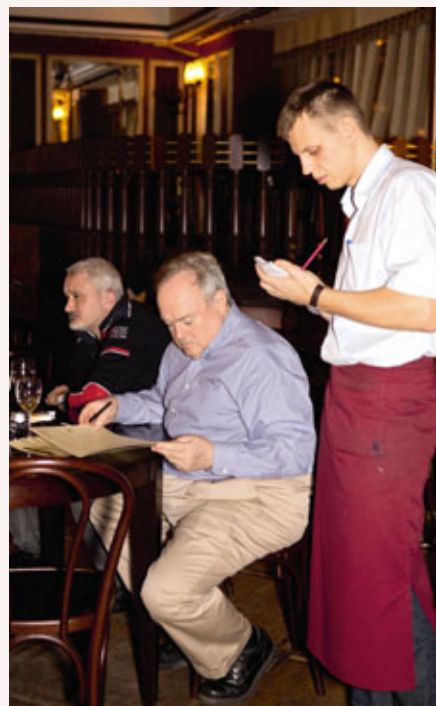
Miguel: "I really enjoyed this night, I will bring my mom here sometime, she'll love it!"

Frode: "Absolutely, a very good night, pleasant company, wonderful food and it is 12:30 am."

Mandisa: "Yes we should be going, thank you all for coming. I am really pleased with the food it was super, particularly dessert! Will definitely return again. Okay guys, here is to great friends—may we meet again." **P**

Marseille

From Chef's specials we selected Salad with Salted Salmon and Asparagus (240r) and Scallops with Spinach Covered with Cream Sauce (495r). From the main menu, I took Marseille Fresh Soup with Rui (rouille)



Charles Borden

Marcel, which is apparently the way Russians transliterate Marseille, was a pleasant surprise. The owner had extended an invitation to me. I accepted since I assumed (wrongly) that the menu was French and since Marcel was not yet on the PASSPORT radar.

I met a colleague at the Novoslobodskaya Metro station and we hiked the few blocks to Marcel's maroon, heavy wooden doors that face Ulitsa Krasno-proletarskaya. There were large black chalkboards with handwritten news and announcements on either side of the bright entrance. I like chalkboards.

The coat check is on the left. A large handsomely designed poster announced in three languages, "LeCabaque, Пятница, Live Musique CABARET Клубный День" and "Face Controle." I like cabaret.

The hostess ushered us past a large, more like huge, rectangular bar to the main hall. And a hall it is, with high ceilings, a stage up front, and large circular tables scattered around cabaret style. The décor is dark wood, with heavy, dark brown leather upholstery and dark wooden chairs. As we sat, a band was setting up, and a solo "accordeoniste" performed. Soon, a magician appeared at the table to show us a few card tricks. A very young man, long, curly hair tied in a top knot,

hypnotized us with several large, glowing balls that he magically moved over, up and down his thin fingers, hands and arms. The entertainment reminded me of the "show-programs" that many Moscow restaurants offered in the early to mid 90s. I have been sorry to see them disappear from Moscow nightlife.

As I studied the menu and wine list, the owner joined us. Apparently he had previously helped put together some of Moscow's alternative clubs: Equipage, Club Petrovich, and Art Garbage. He informed us that Marcel has been open a year but it is now undergoing a makeover. This led to a discussion about Moscow's middle-class market, which still elusively defies definition. Marcel is searching for that market, and, if Moscow is to become a "developed" city, that is where the future lies.

I was startled by Marcel's wine prices: decent bottles under 1000r and most under 2000r. A Vistamar (Chile) Sauvignon Blanc 2007 is listed at 950r. Wines by the glass run from 150r and up.

Chef Vladimir Godachev came to the table. He is a laureate of international national chef team competitions in Europe. His menu is eclectic European with some standards and a few innovations. In addition to the main menu there is a one-page Invitation from the Chef. Menus are bi-lingual Russian and English.

Sauce and a Warm Bun (250r) and Tagliatelle Bolognese (190r). My colleague ordered Lamb with Crispy Eggplant (590r). The salad, was excellent: tasty, slightly salted salmon over very fresh arugula, radicchio, and other greens with slightly blanched asparagus pieces. The scallop dish was also very good, pieces of scallops swimming in a very creamy sauce laced with spinach.

Except for the warm bun, which was home baked around a dollop of cheese, I was not impressed with the soup, essentially a light broth with a few pieces of seafood and mussels. Since it carried Marseille in the name and was billed with a rouille sauce so I expected something akin to a classic Bouillabaisse, which has its origins in Marseille. The Tagliatelle was much better and a good imitation of the traditional Italian dish. The lamb chops, from New Zealand, were also delicious.

Marcel was a pleasant discovery, a nice combination of chef-prepared menu, very reasonably priced wine list, and live entertainment. Marcel would also make a great event venue with its separate large bar area and open dining area with stage. **P**

Marcel

Ulitsa Krasno-proletarskaya Dom 16
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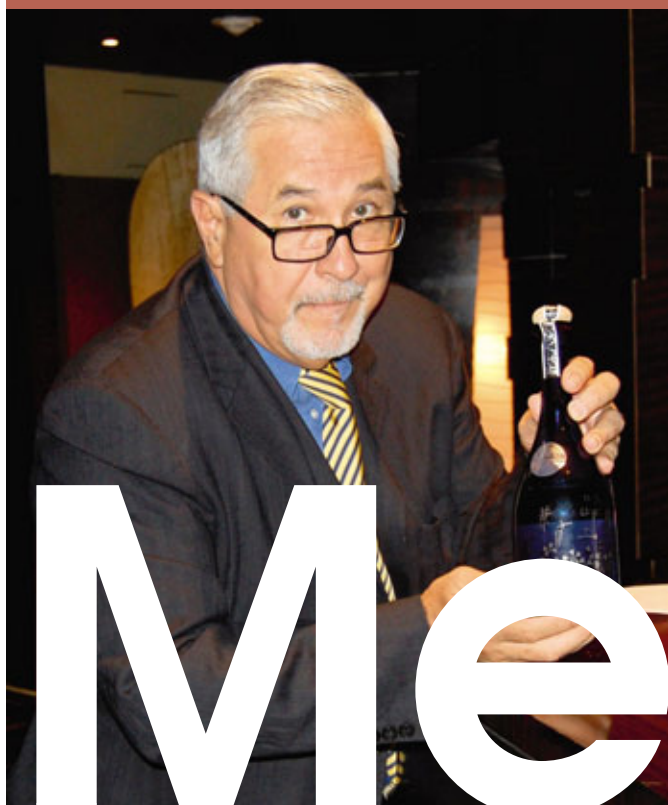
NOTE: For restaurants with multiple locations the most popular location is given – see the website for others. All phone numbers have city code 495 unless otherwise indicated. Reservations suggested for most restaurants.



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Megu brags about its 600 bottle selection. The Les Menus list has some decent wines under 3000r, for instance an Australian McLaren Hermit Crab Shiraz at 1950r. I searched for Antinori Cervaro della Sala, a Tuscan Chardonnay that I use as a “wine list price index” since it is ubiquitous on Moscow wine lists. At Megu, Cervaro lists at 8900r, a mark-up index of 4.45.

The New York Megu has been praised for its service, and our Moscow server, Daria, made a very good impression from the start. We learned from her that the pre-opening staff training was extensive, with an emphasis on knowledge of the dishes and ingredients, and that was apparent as the evening wore on. Megu relies upon fresh, organic and exclusive ingredients and it apparently arranges its own twice-weekly import of fish and other Japanese products.



Text and photos by Charles Borden

Spoiler alert: By the end of the evening, PASSPORT’s publisher had declared Megu served the best sushi in Moscow, which was, hands down, better than Nobu.

I had been itching to try Moscow’ Megu since looking over the New York website, which emphasizes “sophisticated organic dining”—Japanese cuisine with refined and finest ingredients. Megu opened in New York five years ago, and its two locations have garnered fine reviews, though tempered with a fair number of complaints about price. Moscow’s Megu is the first offshore venture, paired with Les Menus par Pierre Gagnaire in the Lotte Plaza Hotel on the southeast corner of the Garden Ring and Novy Arbat.

The décor is a contrast of light, brightly-polished wood and beige leather chairs against a backdrop of black walls and dark floors. We sat near the sushi bar, which fronts a large open kitchen where three Japanese chefs work their knives.

John ordered a round of Rojo Hana Ari (Bloom on the Path) sake from Nishiyama Brewery in Hyogo prefecture, which wine guru Robert Parker has called the best of Japan. Rojo is expensive anywhere, and at Megu was 3000r for a 150ml glass.

There are just a few wines on the Megu drinks list. When I asked about a wine list, the server presented a thick leather binder imprinted “Les Menus,” a surprise since the New York





The thin Megu menu is modest by Moscow standards. Daria recommended we order an Omakase dinner, the chef's daily selection, but we struck out on our own. We opened with Megu's signature dishes, first with Megu Original Crispy Asparagus (800r): two very large asparagus spears, lightly cooked yet still firm, with a thick crumbled rice cracker coating, served and displayed on a skewer - delicious. The Megu Oriental Salad (600r) consisted of shredded carrots and daikon, topped with a spicy dressing and very thin slices of madai (Japanese sea bream). The Salmon Toro Tartare (1400r) was a beautifully presented, a thick medallion of chopped salmon fashioned around a bit of black caviar and salmon roe set on a thin lemon slice surrounded by a citrus fruit sauce. It was topped with a dark soy mousse, which Daria melted at the table using a piece of hot charcoal.

From the starter list, we took Sauteed Scallops (1100r), three large, tender grilled scallops set over a very rich foie gras teriyaki sauce. I went for the Emerald Edamame Soup (500r), and John the Spicy Bouillabaisse Miso Soup (900r). The edamame soup, made from fresh soybeans, was bright green, slightly sweet, and lusciously creamy. I stole a taste of the bouillabaisse, a very creative take on the Mediterranean dish with a red, pungent broth and small chunks of shrimp and other seafood.

Megu's beef signature is a river stone grill with "Hennessy Flambee" for Waygu steaks that range from 1600r for a tiny

80gram ribeye to 4000r for a 160gram filet mignon. We split a 240 gram Waygu beef chateaubriand, Australian beef so we understood, at 7000r for 200g. Japanese beef can be substituted for a 2000r premium. For rice, we chose Garlic Vegetable Fried Rice (600r), the sole forgettable dish of the evening.

One of the menu's few pages is devoted to sushi and sashimi. The list has many standards, but it's not the name that's important, it's the fish, and we were impressed with the small selection we tried. We tried sashimi slices from the six tuna offerings that range from Akami (300r) to Oh Toro (900r). The sushi page also has some intriguing items such as Soy Akami Tuna with Black Truffle (650r), or Crispy Chi Toro Tuna Roll (900r). We went for several rolls: Grilled Eel and Avocado (600r), Salmon and Avocado (550r) and Spicy and Crispy Shrimp (600r). With the sushi Daria brought out a surprise, a piece of fresh wasabi root and a small wooden board coated with dried sharkskin to grate the wasabi at the table. I have already given away John's judgment on the sushi.

Megu offers a three-course lunch menu, which includes a red miso soup, an appetizer, and choice of entrée such as Megu Sushi Roll Combination (total 1250r) or Premium Waygu Beef Sirloin (total 1550r).



Dear reader, I already spoiled you already with the results of this evening, and I'm ready to return to Megu anytime you wish to invite me. **P**

MEGU

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HSBC's Festive Premier Day

Open Days are something usually associated with schools and colleges, not with banks. After all, banks are hallowed institutions full of learned scribes who look down on any mortal entering their sanctimonious chambers. Such a Dickensian view of a bank does not of course have anything to do with today's Moscow, which enjoys relatively modern banking. However HSBC is a bank that sometimes is perceived to be exclusive and it was to dispel this particular myth that the bank organised its "Premier Day".

Existing account holders were invited to their local branch with their colleagues, friends and relatives. Champagne and soft drinks flowed freely and there was something of a festive occasion. Branch managers mixed with cli-

ents and staff and held discussions and conversations about the bank's services, this came as a bit of a shock to some as the branch manager in many banks here is still somebody who stamps documents and is the person you are confronted with only when experiencing a "financial downturn".

The bank was keen to explain the global nature of its premier account service, and all the advantages that being part of a global bank hold for individual and corporate account holders. The fact that the bank has dedicated British, American, German, French and Turkish ex-pats ready to explain these services and introduce local providers of education, housing, and medical care is something that people may not know. The ability to open up accounts easily in other countries as and when needed is something that perhaps only travelling ex-pats need, and not all ex-pats travel. However the fact that the bank can arrange mortgages for ex-pats, has a zero-charge debit card system and can be genuinely useful in mailing international bank transfers which are free when made between HSBC accounts in different countries is something else that not all people who came to Premier Day knew. But HSBC doesn't pretend to do everything. It doesn't for example, organise car loans. The bank's premier account demands a fairly high initial deposit, and UK citizens may not relate to the fact that an HSBC bank account has an entry barrier.

"At the same time HSBC in Russia offers a variety of services tailored to the needs of both expat and Russian population", explained Svetlana Mishustina the bank's deputy head of retail banking business. "Apart from HSBC Premier we also offer HSBC Plus, a service based on the high-quality service offered via branches as well as via our call centre and internet services. With a low entry barrier one receives a full range of domestic services, international transfer capabilities, and also free cash withdrawal at no charge in any HSBC and non-HSBC ATM in Russia and abroad."

Premier Day was apparently a success. The bank signed up 300 new clients on October 21st, 15% of them ex-pats. Svetlana recounted what happened in one of the Moscow HSBC branches: "We had a really fantastic case at White Square branch—some expats (who were not HSBC clients) were passing by and were attracted by the balloons, the window decorations, the sight of the improvised bar stand with drinks and canape snacks inside the branch, and the red carpet in the street in front of the entrance. They stood there hesitant whether they could get in, then one of our branch members welcomed them in. They got inside, learned about HSBC and retail propositions and opened accounts. Moreover, they happened to work in the same business centre complex where the branch is located. Later in the evening they came again bringing along their co-workers." JH **P**

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Russia v Argentina Rugby

The 2011 Rugby World Cup is in just nine months, and the build-up is well under way. Russia did extremely well to qualify, and now face a steep learning curve before they meet the top nations. In October, they started with two home games against Argentina, before heading for Japan and acclimatisation in New Zealand, the host country. Both teams fielded experimental sides, and the Pumas used their development team name, The Jaguars, to reflect this. After losing 40-20 in the first game, the Russian team were intending to step up a gear for the rematch. Awesomely powerful scrummaging is the rock of Argentine rugby, but the home pack competed impressively. With tackling tight across the mid-field, and surprisingly poor positional and place kicking, half time saw the Russians hold them very well, at only 10-6 and one try down. Throughout the game, the back row trio Viktor, Kirill and Nikita impressed visibly, while the front five were practising the dark arts unseen but well appreciated. The scrum half Alexander Janjushkin and outside centre Vasiliy Artemev looked sharp, but Russia's hero was the full back Igor Kljuchnikov, who took endless

high balls under extreme pressure and led most of the best counter attacks. After half time, the superior experience of the visitors started to tell. Their backs were sharper and played together well. As the game reds tired, and they used substitutes providing power not pace, gaps started appearing. In a disappointing finish, the Jaguars ran in tries regularly, and finished 32-6 ahead.

Experienced coach Steve Diamond was disappointed but realistic after the game, well hosted at Slava's ground: "We're building on a very thin foundation. None of these boys gets the quality experience they need from club rugby, so the step up to internationals is huge. We are very short of teamwork and facilities, and need more fitness equipment, cones and balls. The team have potential, and tests like today enable them to learn by seeing real quality at first hand."

Russia have the European Nations and the Churchill Cup tournaments coming up in 2011, and then their two big RWC games are against the USA on 15 September and Italy five days later. These will show how far they have progressed. An exciting season for Russian rugby has started. RDH **P**

My Bar

Watering holes in Moscow evolve and revolve. Explore a great location tucked away just off Kuznetsky Most and unearth the latest incarnation: the "barchaeology" of Shelter and Shambala is fun to discover and uncover, with as many style elements as stairs. "We know what makes you happy" is My Bar's strap line. With its own branded beer, assorted happy hours, big menus and small prices, they are off to a good start. My Bar Beer is eminently quaffably unpretentious, and the whisky shelf is impressively stocked and varied. The malt Scotches are if anything too mobile, with viscous consequences. Who put the more into Glenmorangie? I am not a burger person, but was impressed with the quality of real meat and the cooking. They offer *a la kartoffeln*, trying all combinations from routine fries to decent chipped potatoes. Promising! The staff, led by exuberant French *pied-noire* Aisher and lugubrious Irish host Danny, are trying hard and are eager to please.

The atmosphere? Impossible to summarise, as it changes by the minute. A quiet business noggin quickly becomes an



art(y) student party; a quiet Saturday explodes into a packed dancing disco, where customers can feel very young and very, very old. Try an after work swift half, a pre-party warm up or a full on night out. Each visit is different, and the clientele have not settled down. Not much Mafia presence yet, but the detective hoods-and-goodies party game will fire up soon, no doubt. Here's winking at you, kid. RDH **P**

Silver's Costume Drama Party

All Souls, our souls and solos were at Silver's late, very late in October. The best bar staff in Moscow are famed for their party fun, and frocks. Traditional Russian/Ukrainian village dress was the theme, but inevitably, the ghouls, ghosts and garish garbs of that night were out in force as well. A great evening ensued in Moscow's original Irish cavern tavern, cobwebbed and grassy floored for the occasion. There were lots of treats to enjoy, but no tricks. Julia careened us with classic songs, again, resplendent in her Gotham-gothic outfit. Her colleagues were equally visually enhanced as angels, clowns, the undead and even an air hostess, but kept drinks flowing with their efficiency that shames every other bar. The guests wore lots and not a lot, and stayed all night or moved on. One intrepid team of witches and warlocks looked set to crash every fancy dress party in Moscow. They have not been seen since.



The his and hers best costume prizes were deservedly won by a Russian West Ham fan in classic Cossack dancing kit, and an English rose in Russian princess headwear. But the winners were everyone who was there, as most but not all will remember. See you at the next one. RDH **P**

MILLIONAIRE FAIR



From 22nd to 24th of October the organizers of the Millionaire Fair, the legendary luxury exhibition, along with the world renowned brands, opened the new epoch of luxury and style. On October 22 in the Manezh central exhibition hall the 6th Millionaire Fair Moscow with the support of its long-term official partner Sobranie Tobacco House hospitably opened its doors. The global premieres of the Millionaire Fair Moscow greatly stirred the luxury admiring experts from top Russian and foreign media. The night of the Millionaire Fair gala opening became the most discussed topic of high society and business folk of Moscow the very next morning. The Russian business elite gathered for the gala opening ceremony of the Millionaire Fair Moscow. Thousands of luxury world admirers came to witness the global sensation, the brand new Benarrow supercar, the makers of which kept all its specifications top secret till the Moscow exhibition opening. 500 horsepower, unique design, perfect luxury under the hood, limited release—that night the dream with “super” prefix was unveiled to admiring guests and leading luxury market players. **P**

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"So, show me the new house," I said, trying to lighten the atmosphere.

It was warm inside, with the gas central heating switched on. True, the doors and fittings were cheap but they could be changed. The three rooms were all wallpapered in inoffensive pastel shades. The house had potential, as the estate agents would say.

"It feels like living in Germany," said Pyotr. "I don't like the fact that the houses are all the same."

"On the other hand, we have infrastructure now," said Antonina, "water, gas, cable television and asphalt on the

Ordinary Heroes

Helen Womack

Antonina Gololobova is in no hurry to enter her new house. Rather, she lingers outside in the garden, pointing to where the old garage, banya and vegetable store used to be. Eventually she and her husband Pyotr, a businessman, do invite us inside. But now Antonina's talking about lost family photographs and heirlooms. She's still not concentrating on the new house.

The Gololobov family—Antonina, Pyotr and their two grown-up sons, Gennady and Alexei—are grateful to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, of course, that he's kept his promise to the victims of this summer's wildfires and built them new houses. They have received a three-room bungalow on an estate of identical houses, built on the ashes of the old village of Laskovsky, just outside Ryazan.

"Frankly, I didn't expect it," said Pyotr. "A politician actually keeping a promise, well!"

"It's a pleasant surprise," agreed Gennady, a nanotechnologist at the local university, "although I haven't decided yet whether Putin will get my vote."

Before the fires, the Gololobovs had an old, four-room wooden house, into which they'd put 25 years of effort and loving energy. It wasn't just a dacha but a home in which they lived all year round.

While Uzbek guest workers put the finishing touches to the bathroom and kitchen of their new bungalow, they laid out sandwiches and mandarins on the

living room windowsill as an impromptu housewarming. Pyotr cracked open a bottle of vodka and after the toasts came the still-vivid memories of the inferno.

"All summer, we'd seen the smoke from camp fires down by the lake," said Antonina. "We thought, with the extreme temperatures, the authorities would close the forests to campers. We thought surely someone would put the fires out. Then one evening, the wind got up and blew the fire right over our village. The sky went dark. It was like a nuclear explosion."

"We phoned for help but nobody came," she continued. "The firemen arrived only after three streets had already burnt down. It was crown fire (in the tops of the trees), impossible to put out. The birches were like candles."

The family fled in their own cars. Along with Antonina, Gennady and Alexei were 93-year-old blind grandmother Yekaterina Ustinova and Alexei's young wife Natalia, seven months pregnant. Like the captain of a sinking ship, Pyotr stayed behind to fight the flames and try to save the house. Antonina was convinced he had perished.

"The heat was indescribable," Pyotr said. "I couldn't go on; in the end I too had to run. I saw our dog Polkan and let him off his chain. 'Go lad, take your chance,' I said to him but I'm afraid, you know..."

Pyotr broke off, ostensibly to check on the progress of the workers in the bathroom. He was close to tears.

pavements. The village girls will be able to walk to the bus stop without getting mud on their high heels."

From a sociological point of view, the new housing has created some interesting issues.

"As I mentioned, we were quite well off before," said Pyotr. "We had a big house into which we'd invested years of effort. So you could say that for us, these standard, lower-middle class bungalows are a step down. But many in the village were living in rough shacks. Now they will have to learn how to be modern homeowners, maintaining their property and dealing with legal matters like insurance."

Back in July, four families in Laskovsky considered themselves lucky because their wooden houses escaped the fires. Now they look on enviously at the new homes of their neighbours. "One woman in the old houses was so upset, she took an overdose of sleeping tablets," said Antonina.

She sighed. We were back outside again, looking at where the Gololobov's duck pond used to be, now just a pile of fresh top soil. I sensed that Antonina would happily swap places with the people in the old wooden houses—or rather, she simply wanted her own wooden house back again.

They survived the fires with incredible bravery. But now Antonina and Pyotr, on the verge of retirement, face an even harder task—letting go of the past and truly entering into their new home. **P**

Dare to ask Dare



Photo by Maria Savelieva

Ex-pats and Russians alike ask celebrity columnist Deidre Dare questions about life in Moscow.

Dear Deidre:

My boyfriend left me for another woman (he says he loves her and no longer loves me) and I am so depressed I can't get out of bed. What should I do?

Dear Longing Over Lover ("LOL"):

What you've done, my dear, is make your love affair the centre of your life. That amuses me.

Personally, I think we should take our love lives the same way we do our sour cream at Pushkin: on the side.

Good luck, LOL. Time heals all wounds, even in Russia. And if time doesn't help, drop by the EMC on Spiridonevsky, they're liberal with the valium there. And valium, my dear, will help you whether your problem is too much bad love or, indeed, too much sour cream.

xxoodd

Dear Deidre:

I'm scared to death of all the ice and snow, especially when I'm wearing heels! I fall all the time. And falling is so embarrassing! Last year I even slid into a man and knocked him over too. How do you get around in the winter without slipping and falling down?! I am Russian, by the way.

Dear Spazzy and Mortified ("S&M"):

Alas, S&M, I don't.
xxoodd

Dear Deidre:

What is the best way to get around Moscow? We just moved here from Hong Kong and are wondering. Is it by subway, walking or bus?

Dear Missing Entirely The Route Overlooked ("METRO"):

Bus? Are you for real?

There's only one good way to travel in Moscow, METRO, and that's by gypsy cab.

Of course, I didn't realise this when I first moved here. I spent my first week in Moscow trying to negotiate the subways (haven't been back on them since then, actually); my second week trying to negotiate walking (haven't been back on that, actually, since realising sky-high heels were de rigour in this city); my third week hiring taxis from the Aurora Marriott (haven't done that since paying \$40 to go two miles, actually) and my fourth week working at home "sick".

And never, never, never have I been on a Moscow bus. Really? Are you for real?

Then one night after dinner at Cafe Marguerite (and en route to Propaganda), an English mate of mine flagged down a gypsy cab. (Hint: I wasn't really sick.)

I was in awe of her. I never thought I'd be able to be so brave.

Now? Well, let's just say my imminent hot date is with one of last night's gypsy cab drivers.

As long as you know how to say "na-lyevo," "napravo" and "pryamo," (quick lesson: "left," "right" and "straight") and have a decent map you'll be fine.

NB: it also may be useful to know "tee prikrasno vyglyadish." That is, if you want a hot date.

xxoodd

Dear Deidre:

Doesn't living in such an unsafe city ever scare you? The crime rate here is really off the charts. I heard it's higher than anywhere.

Dear Muscovites Are Dubious, Dangerous ("MADD"):

My darling MADD: I am a dangerous woman, so I should live in a dangerous city.

In fact, I like living in a dangerous city.

Interestingly enough, I am now musing, when I tell men what a dangerous woman I am, they all fall madly in love with me.

Maybe Moscow should advertise its high crime rate...

Hey: you never know.

Xxoodd

Dear Deidre:

I moved here with my husband when he was transferred from London for his work. I absolutely hate it. I'm lonely, lost and intimidated by the whole Moscow scene. What can I do?

Dear Obsequious Married Gal ("OMG"):

Every (and I mean every) bad decision I ever made was because of some dude. Some smokin' piece of ass.

You astound me, OMG. You really do. But only because you remind me of myself.

What can you do? From my vast experience, I can suggest: well, nothing.

But one day your husband will leave you for a young Russian girl and you'll act and feel like S&M, but, secretly, as you board your flight back to London, you'll be relieved.

Xxoodd

Dear Deidre:

I hate you. And all my friends do too. Women like you should be raped and quartered.

Dear Perfectly Clear ("PC"):

Sorry, PC, I really can't answer you. I have that date tonight and I'm already late for it. And I still have to pick up cigarettes! (This isn't such an easy thing to do now that the new mayor has razed my local kiosk.)

PS: don't tell MADD about your criminal fantasies. She'll just freak out.

xxoodd

Do you have a question for Deidre Dare?

If so please email her at Deidre_Clark@hotmail.com.

Christmas Family Pages

Illustrations by Catherine Hunter





The Twelve days of Christmas



On the first day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
A Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the second day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Two Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the third day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Three French Hens
Two Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree



On the fourth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Four Calling Birds
Three French Hens
Two Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the fifth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the sixth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree



On the seventh day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the eighth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Eight Maids a Milking
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying

Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the ninth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Nine Ladies Dancing
Eight Maids a Milking
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

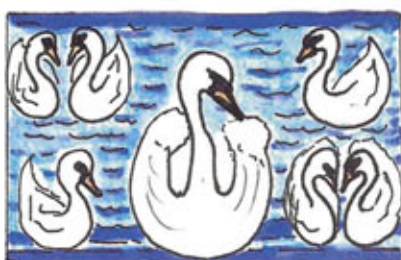


On the tenth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Ten Lords a Leaping
Nine Ladies Dancing
Eight Maids a Milking
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree



On the eleventh day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
Eleven Pipers Piping
Ten Lords a Leaping
Nine Ladies Dancing
Eight Maids a Milking
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

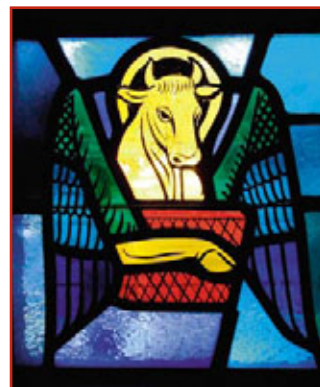
On the twelfth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
12 Drummers Drumming
Eleven Pipers Piping
Ten Lords a Leaping
Nine Ladies Dancing
Eight Maids a Milking
Seven Swans a Swimming
Six Geese a Laying
Five Golden Rings
Four...
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree



Puzzle page

Compiled by Ross Hunter

Saints and Symbols. The story of Christ's birth was told by the four evangelists, the Gospel writers: St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke and St John. Each is usually associated with a symbol. Can you work out which is which?



Great Churches Below are photos of four famous cathedrals, each in a different country. Which Saint, which city?



Christmas and religions. In each list, which is the odd one out, and why?

- | | |
|---|--|
| A Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam | D Oranges, Bread, Wine, Fishes, Oil, Water |
| B St Matthew, St Peter, St John, St Mark, St Luke | E Herod, Moses, Cain, Noah, Pontius Pilate |
| C Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, Rome, Jerusalem | |

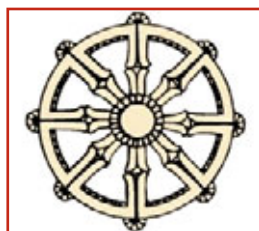
Religious symbols Which symbol is often associated with which religion? Christianity mostly uses a Cross, but also a symbol here. Can you explain its meaning?



Islam



Hinduism



Christianity



Judaism



Buddhism

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Mini Sudoku Usual rules: 1-6 in each row, column and box.

		5			
	4			3	5
1			2		
					4
	2				1
5		6		2	

Answers to November puzzles

Art: Monet, Picasso, Van Gogh, Golovin

Animals: lemur, racoon, badger, meerkat, panda

Odd place out: Haiti (not a full island), Sudan (not landlocked), Spain (not part of the Andes), Panama (an isthmus, not a peninsula), Matterhorn (not the highest mountain in the country), Caspian (not a fresh water lake)

Mini Sudoku: see www.englishedmoscow.com

The Russian Word's Worth

Ian Mitchell

This Christmas's "must buy" for expats in Moscow struggling with Russian has to be *The Russian Word's Worth*, the newly-published collection of writing about the language by *Moscow Times* guruette, Michele Berdy. Michele has been publishing weekly articles about how to speak idiomatic Russian for the last eight years and close to half of these have now been collected in book form, neatly edited and provided with a comprehensive and extremely useful index.

Michele's life story gives hope to all of us who struggle with the complexities, subtleties and ambiguities of Russian. She is not a linguist, a philologist or even a polyglot. She claims no special facility for languages, and she is not one of those who, as she says in the Introduction, "knows everything about 16th century verb usage in Rostov". She is simply an American lady who studied Russian as a second language at Amherst College in Massachusetts in those distant days when you could not get rich in Russia, and therefore took such courses simply for the love of them.

Michele is, in the best sense of the word, an amateur. Yet she is also a professional in that she subsequently acquired a sufficiently deep understanding of the language, and therefore the mind of Russia, that she has been asked to interpret for Boris Yeltsin and Nancy Reagan.

Michele moved to Moscow in the late 1970s and has lived here most of the time since, working in various branches of the media and also as a teacher. "Since Brezhnev was in his dotage," she writes, "I have been pondering, discovering, contemplating, positing, theorising and occasionally arguing about what makes Russia so, well, Russian, and how that differs, or doesn't differ, from what makes Americans so American."

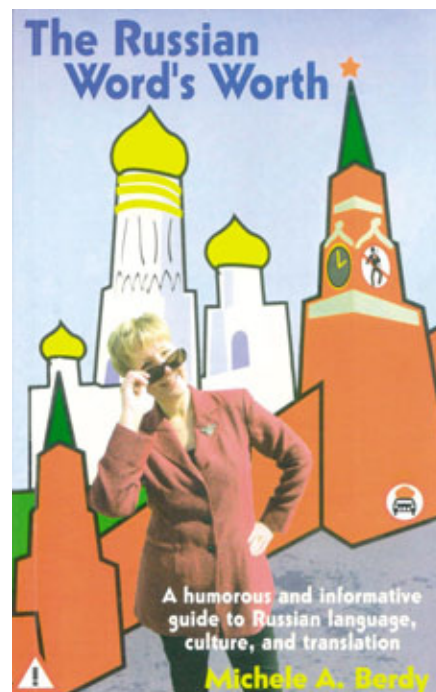
That is what makes this book so interesting. It is a series of lessons interspersed with socio-political observation and a lot of human-interest stories which would be worth reading in their own right, even if they were not used to sugar the pill of language learning. Each

section is graced with an introductory page or two which sets that part of the book in a personal context.

For example, in the chapter on religion and the famous "Russian soul", Michele says that that was one of the things which first attracted her to Russia. But when consumerism hit, suddenly the country had less soul. Worse still, in the early 21st century Russian spirituality came to be used as a weapon. Russians were now said to be spiritual people while the rest of the world, especially Americans, were "money-grubbing, mercantile, Moloch-loving swine... No matter that the malls were packed with consumption-mad Muscovites, clients were reneging on fees, dark-skinned foreigners were being beaten up and killed, innocent people framed on trumped-up charges, minor criticism of the government on a blog resulted in death threats, and corruption was spiralling completely out of control. Deeply spiritual? The whole nation? I don't think so."

Combined with a willingness to look Russia in the face and report candidly what she sees, Michele's writing I also distinguished by a gentle wit which is very appealing. I cannot believe she did not chuckle when she wrote about the words for luck, both good and bad. She starts by saying: "You know what it is like. You oversleep; your car won't start; the 140 roubles in your wallet won't cover the taxi fare; your company is down-sizing, starting with you; your significant other has found someone else; and just when you decided to drown your troubles in a six-pack and a night in front of the tube, the entire apartment block is plunged into darkness. This, ladies and gentlemen, is чёрная полоса (chornaya polosa), a 'losing streak', literally, 'a black stripe'."

Then she goes on to describe the word for good luck, везение, after which she writes: "It is almost impossible for English-speakers to use this next word, but a synonym for везение (vesenye) is фарт (fart). This is originally underworld slang that made its way into colloquial Russian particularly



Michele Berdy
Glas £12.00

and—to the dismay of parents—youth slang. You could say, Ему фартит (yemu fartit), meaning 'He's lucky', or exclaim happily, Ну тебе и подфартило! (Nu tebe i podfartilo!) Meaning 'You had a nice piece of luck!'"

There are sections about grammar, technical words, children, Russian foibles, animals, politics, food, nature, slang, jokes and even old Soviet expressions which Michele says she misses now that there are no shortages, queues or black-marketeers to talk about—though 12-hour traffic queues help her explain the ways Russians express "frustration".

Another piece of history I found interesting was her discussion of the language of politics, especially that of then-President Putin. (Most of these pieces were written before 2007; presumably another book will follow in a year or two.) The flavour of political discourse is noticeably different from today's. Putin is aggressive, commanding, haughty, legalistic and self-assured: quite unlike the Lada-driving self-publicist who would be unlikely to say: "The secret services shouldn't stick their noses into civil society." We have moved on from that innocent idea.

It is hard to imagine anyone in Russia who would not find something to savour, something to learn or something to chuckle at in this unprecedented book. Ask Дед Мороз to put a copy under the ёлка for you. And if you don't know what that means, you really need Ms Berdy's book. **P**

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