# THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE MARCH 2016 NEWSLETTER

14 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN, Edinburgh, Tel: 0131 650 99 02

2 March, 2016, Issue 1-2

## Forthcoming Events, March 2016

The Russian Word in Edinburgh. A Poetry Evening with Dmitry Vodennikov Time: Monday, 29 February, 6:00 p.m. Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

Red Africa Festival: Black People in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia: An evening with TV journalist Yelena Khanga Time: Wednesday, 2 March, 6:00 p.m. Venue: David Hume Tower, Lecture Theatre B

'Things Fall Apart': A Presentation by Exhibition Curator Professor Mark Nash Time: Friday, 4 March, 6:40 p.m. Venue: The Project Room, 50 George Square

#### Dashkova Open Research Seminars

Dr Andrea Gullotta (The University of Glasgow)
'Towards a New
Understanding of the Gulag and of its
Literature through the Prism of Auto-Biographical Studies'
Time: Thursday, 17th
March, 5:10 p.m.
Venue: The Princess
Dashkova Russian Centre,
14 Buccleuch Place

Professor Sergei Zenkin (Russian State University for the Humanities) 'Russian Formalism and the thought of/from outside' Time: Thursday, 24th March, 5:10 p.m. Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place



## Forthcoming Events, March 2016

The Russian Word in Edinburgh. A Poetry Evening with Dmitry Vodennikov

'Мне нравятся стихи, что на трамвай похожи'

Time: Monday, 29 February, 6:00 p.m.

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN

Poetry will always be a unified field. Your poems are not drawn from thin air. They come from other people's verses and other people's voices. You are a kaleidoscope of someone else's lyrics. This must always be remembered. And be thankful, for without another, there would be no you'.

Dmity Vodennikov is a Russian poet and essayist. Born in 1968, he graduated from the Philology Department at Moscow State Pedagogical University. He went on to be the author of seven collections of poetry, and is celebrated as one of the Russia's best living poets of today and at the forefront of the 'New Sincerity' movement in Russian literature. He also contributes to several Russian magazines and hosts two radio shows dedicated to poetry: 'Free Entry' (Radio Kultura) and 'Poetic Minimum' (Radio Rossii).



#### Workshop: Writing and speaking from the Prison Camp

In co-operation with DELC's Language and Violence Research strand Time: Friday, 18th March, 1:00-2:00

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

#### Reporting on our Events, January -February 2016

The Scots in Russia': A Presentation of the BBC radio series by writer & broadcaster Billy Kay

Illustrated Chronicles of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible gifted to Edinburgh University

#### Dashkova Open Research Seminars

Professor Mika Lähteenmäki (Jyväskylä University, Finland) 'The construction of national unity through language ideology in contemporary Russia'

Professor Nancy Ries (Colgate University, US) 'Voices of Apocalypse: Russian Military News and the Horizons of Future War'

## **Students' Performance** of Anton Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal*

## Marriage Proposal Winter 2016 News:

Dashkova International Trainees

Welcome a new Doctor: a successful viva for Katarzyna Aleksiejuk

#### Obituary:

Emilia Ivanovna Vosnesenskaya (1928-2015)

#### **Red Africa Festival**

Black People in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia: An evening with TV journalist Yelena Khanga

Time: Wednesday, 2 March, 6:00 p.m.

Venue: David Hume Tower, Lecture Theatre B, EH8 9JX



Possibly the most recognisable face of black Russia, Yelena Khanga epitomised the liberal wave that swept Russian television in the 1990s.

As the host of a popular chat show about sex –'Pro Eto' ('About That') she has opened up a new chapter both in Russian journalism and in the country's tumultuous history of race relations. She is the daughter of Lily Golden, the prominent

African-American social activist, and the author of the critically-acclaimed book *Soul to Soul: A Black Russian-American Family 1865-1992*.

Yelena Khanga is coming to Edinburgh as part of a series of events organised by the Dashkova Centre in collaboration with Calvert 22 Foundation. She will speak about her life and career as a black journalist in the Soviet Union, the United States and modern Russia.

Please book your free tickets for this event at https://khanga.eventbrite.co.uk

### 'Things Fall Apart': A Presentation by Exhibition Curator Professor Mark Nash

Time: Friday, 4 March, 6:40 p.m.

Venue: The Project Room (1st floor), 50 George Square, EH8 9JU



The art and film studies expert Mark Nash will give a presentation on the London-based exhibition 'Things Fall Apart', organized by Calvert 22.

Curated by Mark Nash, 'Things Fall Apart' gathers the responses

of contemporary artists to different aspects of Soviet interests in Africa, and those of related nations, focusing particularly on attempts to influence the development of political structures through film and art.

The exhibition takes its title from Chinua Achebe's 1958 classic of post-colonial fiction, seen by many as the archetypal modern African novel

in English, which reflects on the devastating impact of colonialism in Africa. The exhibition uses this association to focus on a similar loss of



utopian perspective following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.

Mark Nash's presentation is accompanied by the screening of Abderrahmane Sissako's 'October/Октябрь' (1993), a near-silent black-and-white short film that tells the story of Idrissa, an African student, and Irina, his Russian girlfriend, and depicts the difficulties of forming a relationship across the racial and cultural divides of the 1980s, between Mali and Moscow.

Please book your free tickets at <a href="http://marknash.eventbrite.co.uk">http://marknash.eventbrite.co.uk</a>

## Dashkova Open Research Seminars

Dr Andrea Gullotta (The University of Glasgow) 'Towards a New Understanding of the Gulag and of its Literature through the Prism of Auto-Biographical Studies'

Time: Thursday, 17th March, 5:10 p.m.

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The concept of 'Gulag literature' is still rather obscure. Although some outstanding works have been published on the topic, scholars still refer to Gulag literature in vague terms, to mean anything that 'has to do with the Gulag'. My research over the last few years has been aimed at finding a new understanding of the literature of the Gulag by considering a wide corpus of texts, including those which have been less studied to date (e.g. oral poems composed within the camps). The target is to provide a new critical framework based on the study of common characteristics (e.g. narrative strategies, stylistic features, common structures). A consistent part of this work is devoted to auto/biographical studies. In this seminar I will discuss some of the features I have identified over the years in a wide range of texts, and towards the end I will also highlight other aspects related to non-literary texts.

Professor Sergei Zenkin (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow) 'Russian Formalism and the Thought of/from Outside'

Time: Thursday, 24th March, 5:10 p.m.

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN

## Workshop: Speaking and Writing from the Prison Camp

In collaboration with DELC's 'Language and Violence' Research strand

**Time:** Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1-2 p.m. (lunch is served from 12:30)

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place, EH8 9LN

## Reporting on our Events, January - February 2016

'The Scots in Russia': A Presentation of the BBC radio series by writer and broadcaster Billy Kay

Thursday, January 21

We may surely be indulged to take a little rational pride, in finding no action of consequence performed in which Gentlemen of this nation are not in particular manner distinguished for their bravery and resolution: At the head of the Russian fleet we find a Gordon; in the highest rank of the army a Keith, and Douglas, Lesley, and many more, send their names from the extremities of that vast empire'. (The Scots Magazine, 1739)



In January, The Daskova Centre hosted the launch of the new BBC Radio Scotland series 'The Scots in Russia' by Scottish writer and broadcaster Billy Kay. The Centre was involved in the making of the programme: Lara Ryazanova-Clarke and Vera Zvereva gave interviews that were included in the series.

In his presentation, Billy Kay talked about the substantial contribution made by Scots to Russia from the 17th century to the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. The talk was accompanied by clips from Billy Kay's BBC series.

Billy Kay explored the role of Scots architects, industrialists, admirals and intellectuals in 18th and 19th century Russia: Scottish soldiers of fortune Patrick Gordon and Tam Dalyell of the Binns in the reign of Peter the Great; one of the staunchest Jacobites and Peter's personal physician, Robert Erskine, the first of a group of Scots doctors who led the Russian medical services for more than 150 years; and the Admiral Samuel Greig, who headed the Russian navy and forged links with the Carron works in Falkirk, from where came the people who industrialised Russia.

One of Billy Kay's interviewees, the historian and author of *The Jacobites and Russia 1715 – 1750* Rebecca Wills, explained that in the 18th century, the Scots community increased as Jacobites who had been out in the 1715 Rising sought a haven where their military, medical and intellectual skills were welcomed with open arms. In Moscow, Billy Kay spoke to Olga Lesley, a descendant of another influential Scottish soldier, Alexander Lesley, whose family enjoyed a close relationship with the Tsars right up until the Revolution in 1917.

From textile barons to industrialists, Scottish enterprises had a substantial presence in pre-Revolutionary Russia with even the biggest department store in Moscow, Muir and Mirrielees being Scottish-owned. Billy Kay also explored Scottish-Russian relations in the 20th century and celebrated the cultural connections which persist till the present day. For Billy Kay, there is also a personal connection with Russia and this is how he recalls his first visit:

'I'm in Red Square in Moscow - it was here aged 16 on a school trip in 1968 that I heard the story of the Red Clydesiders - nearby, on the Kremlin Wall is a plaque to one of them, Arthur McManus, and the mausoleum containing the body of Lenin who described the most famous of them along with Karl Liebknecht as one of those 'isolated heroes who have taken upon themselves the arduous role of forerunners in the world revolution.' It was the first time I had heard of the great John Maclean, and his radical cry, 'All hail the Scottish Workers' Republic.'

The ties that bind Russia and Scotland for hundreds of years are uncountable: they include the Russian love of Scottish literature, the Moscow Caledonian Club, the Tsars' Scots and Gaelic speaking nannies, and many other things discussed in the programe.'

## Illustrated Chronicles of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible are gifted to Edinburgh University

Friday, February 12



Staff of the Dashkova Centre joined the University's Principal **Timothy O'Shea** in the Main Library's Treasures Room to receive a lavish reproduction of an epic medieval text gifted to the University by the Russian Consulate.

A newly created copy of *The Illustrated Chronicles of Ivan the Terrible*, also known as the 'Tsar Book' was presented by the Russian Consul General in Edinburgh, Andrey Pritsepov.

The original 10-volume work was created between 1568 and 1576. The Chronicles, or The 'Tsar Book' is the most extensive account of history ever to be produced in Medieval Russia. It was

commissioned by Ivan the Terrible for the education of his children.

With 17,000 illustrations, the text will be held in the Centre for Research Collections (CRC) of the Main Library of the University of Edinburgh and is expected to become a key resource for staff and students seeking to better understand one of the most turbulent periods in Russian history.



Mr Andrey Pritsepov and Professor Timothy O'Shea. Photographed by Ms Anastasia Iliinskaya

Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke's interview to STV's 'Live at Five'on the Chronicles is available at: <a href="http://player.stv.tv/episode/37sr/live-five/">http://player.stv.tv/episode/37sr/live-five/</a>

You can read more about this event in The Scotsman:

http://www.scotsman.com/news/education/russian-chronicles-gifted-to-university-of-edinburgh-1-4030537

and on the STV site: <a href="http://news.stv.tv/east-central/1342848-university-gifted-landmark-medieval-text-from-russian-consul/">http://news.stv.tv/east-central/1342848-university-gifted-landmark-medieval-text-from-russian-consul/</a>

## Dashkova Open Research Seminars

### Professor Mika Lähteenmäki (Jyväskylä University, Finland)

'The construction of national unity through language ideology in contemporary Russia' Thursday, January 28



The paper explored Russian language discourse in contemporary Russia and its role in the promotion of national unity.

In contemporary Russia, the concept of the unified language serves as an important tool that can be used to create and maintain the shared experience of belonging. On the state level, the ideological language discourses emphasize the universalistic significance of the Russian language as a semiotic resource shared by all nationalities in the Russian Federation. Official state rhetoric highlights the

fundamental role of the language in shaping the civil nation and expressing the 'Russian mentality'. The language is treated as a public symbol and a guarantee of the existence of the Russian state.

At the same time, Russian is a 'world language', and in the public discourse it has been presented as a unifying force, which should bring together Russian-speakers and diaspora from all parts of the globe, creating a specific linguistic and cultural space, the 'Russian world'. While the Russian language and the 'Russian world' are seen as translocal phenomena, transcending state's boundaries, the state's discourse on language reveals concern about the need to protect the Russian language from globalization, 'foreign linguistic expansion', and to treasure its purity. The idea of linguistic purity entails arguments about the uniqueness of the Russian state and the significance of its own path and the mission it has been assigned by history. Hence, foreign words are being treated as a Trojan horse representing danger to the Russian culture. Intertwined discourses of greatness and threat show that the Russian state's conception of language is characterized by a fluctuation between the local and global points of view.

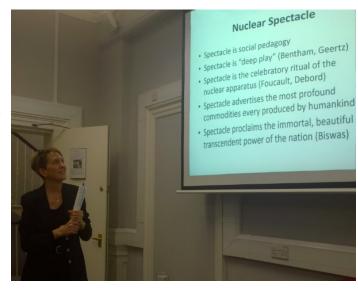
### Professor Nancy Ries (Colgate University, US)

'Voices of Apocalypse: Russian Military News and the Horizons of Future War' Thursday, February 18

This public lecture explored the transnational phenomenon of 'Nuclearism' and analysed its manifestations in the Russian news. According to Critical Nuclear Studies, 'Nuclearism' can be seen as a constitutive element of modern societies, and the rhetoric of the nuclear war has become an inseparable part of global political discourse. Being 'sexy and fun to use', the nuclear language has

become an important tool with which to 'domesticate' mass destruction and violence, capable of reversing human values and cultural meanings.

Using Guy Debord's concept of 'the spectacle', this talk analysed a collection of military news and entertainment videos, some of which highlighted contemporary tools and forces (Tupolev bombers over Europe, opolchentsy in Ukraine, bombing in Syria, Russian nuclear modernisation) and some of which warned of a 'Third World War' initiated by the US and NATO.



Though this kind of spectacle is rather old,

its contemporary global version employs multimedia techniques. The recent cancellation of the taboo on talking about using nuclear weapons has dramatically transformed the Russian media landscape. Apocalyptic headlines, jokes about the Third World War and celebration of 'our' nuclear weapons on TV have led to casualization of the nuclear in the everyday language and stimulated public consumption of this discourse.

## Students' Performance of Anton Chekhov's The Marriage Proposal

Tuesday, February 23

## Anastasia Lopukhine

- Sophia Stepanovna Chubukova Deana Davis - Natalia Stepanovna Chubukova Robin Veale – Ivan Vassiliyitch Lomov



The Russian Section (DELC, The University of Edinburgh) and Princess Dashkova Russian Centre were delighted to present a performance of Anton Chekhov's The Marriage Proposal by students studying Russian.

Directed by Robin Veale (Year 4 student of Russian Studies) and performed in Russian, this 30-minute sketch revived the traditions

of the students' theatre and presented an experimental reading of Chekhov's short classical play.



#### Robin Veale comments:

'Many language departments in the DELC have understood the importance of theatre as a linguistic opportunity for students to practice while working on a creative project. Our idea was to bring back the Russian play. We believed it would be a fun and creative way of bringing Russian speakers and Russian students together to practice the language and discover what Russian theatre has to offer. We sincerely hope this project will be taken up in the years to come, progressively including more people, and bigger plays for wider audiences.'

### Winter 2016 News:

## Dashkova International Postgraduate Trainees

We are very happy to welcome two postgraduate trainees, Valentina Pudano (University of Bologna) Valentina Verzeni (University of Milan), who joined the Dashkova team in February. Valentina Pudano and Valentina Verzeni will stay at the Centre for 3 and 6 months respectively.

## Welcome a New Doctor

Our warmest congratulations to Katarzyna Aleksiejuk, who has had a successful viva for her PhD 'Names on the Internet: Towards Electronic Socio-Onomastics'!

## Obituary: Emilia Ivanovna Vosnesenskaya (1928-2015)

### Lecturer, Department of Russian, University of Edinburgh (1956-1992)

Emilia Ivanovna Vosnesensakaya was born in the Soviet Union. Emmie was brought up in the former imperial village of Tsarskoe Selo some 15 miles south of Leningrad, which, at that time, housed the Academy of Sciences where her parents, both geneticists, were employed.

Emmie's mother, Klavdia Petrovna Vosnesenskaya, born near Pyatigorsk, was from what Emmie described as a church family whereas her father, Ivan Fillipovich Bachmeier, was a descendant of Rhineland Germans who had been encouraged by Catherine the Great to come to Russia to build up its vineyards. Interestingly, Ivan Filippovich's research specialism was in diseases of the vine.

Emmie spoke of a happy childhood with summers spent in and around Sochi as her father's institute had a research station close to vineyards in that area. While in the south Emmie would visit her maternal grandparents. On one such visit she was sent by her grandmother to fetch a pot of jam from another part of the house. Emmie was horrified to discover that the family's jam supply was being stored in her grandfather's coffin. Having obtained a fine piece of oak her grandfather decided to fashion a fitting coffin for himself and until it was required for use, he used it as a larder.

In 1938 Ivan Filippovich was arrested. Emmie remembered how her mother would stand for hours in a long queue with hundreds of other women who, like her, were seeking news of loved ones. The family was informed that Ivan Filippovich had died. In fact he had



been arrested, tried and then shot within a matter of days. Emmie was to discover that all of her Bachmeier uncles had been arrested at the same time in various parts of the Soviet Union, as had a young female orphan who had been taken in by one of them and given the surname Bachmeier. In the late 1990s Emmie was able to obtain copies of official papers, which stated in detail what had happened to her father. The loss of her father was a scar she carried all her life.

Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Emmie and her mother found themselves captives behind enemy lines in Tsarskoe Selo. Klavdia Petrovna had refused the offer of evacuation to Leningrad. Emmie said on more than one occasion that had they gone to Leningrad they would most certainly not have survived the siege, as was the case of friends and neighbours who had gone to the city. In 1942 Emmie described seeing soldiers from the Spanish Blue Division (División Azul). Despite Spain's neutrality in the war, Franco had permitted volunteer units to serve in the German Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front to fight against Bolshevism. These soldiers were poorly equipped for winter clothing and used to wear anything they could scrounge or steal, including female attire. Later, Emmie and her mother were taken away to work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute near Berlin along with many others from the locality. Whilst there the-16-year old Emmie was employed by a German army officer to write love letters to a girl he had fallen for in Odessa. Emmie said that the officer had managed to get the girl back to Germany and that they survived the war and went to live in South America. As the war raged and the tide turned against the Nazis the workers were moved to other areas further west. In the ensuing chaos Emmie and her mother were advised to leave and save themselves. With great pride and a sense satisfaction Emmie would tell friends how she and her mother had had to clamber over a bombed and seriously damaged bridge in Germany in order to reach a place of safety. When war ended Emmie and her mother sought refuge in a camp for displaced Ukrainians in Germany.

Emmie and Klavdia Petrovna were given permission to come to Great Britain, where they were sent to work in a tuberculosis hospital in Wigan. Emmie's reminiscences of their time there were amusing but also shocking. Emmie said she felt that there was an expectation that, as refugees, they should feel grateful and put up with their lot. However realising the potentially dangerous situation in which they were working Emmie plucked up the courage to knock on the Matron's door. Emmie told the Matron that she and her mother would rather be sent back to Germany and take their chances there than risk dying of tuberculosis in England. Matron could not believe her audacity but sometime later they were transferred to work in a maternity hospital. Emmie told the Matron she was delighted as she had already helped deliver babies in the camp.

Her education having been disrupted by war and the occupation Emmie needed to think about what she would do with her life. She got herself to university and naturally studied Russian. As part of her degree course Emmie was required to spend time with native speakers of the language. Despite being a native speaker herself and Russian being the language spoken at home Emmie was sent to the Russian émigré community in Paris where she found herself as a guest of the Princesses Lvov in Clamart. Emmie's stories of those times were highly amusing as she described the sisters and their elderly staff. They looked upon her as their little Soviet curiosity and were amazed she could use cutlery properly. Having little money Emmie walked the length and breadth of Paris in order to save spending on transport. In this way she had enough to buy herself a coffee and savour it and savour being in Paris.

In the early 1950s and back in Cambridge Emmie found herself a teaching job with the Joint Services School for Linguists. The JSSL was an extraordinary initiative to push about 5000 of the best and brightest of Britain's National Servicemen through intensive training as Russian translators or interpreters, to meet the needs of its intelligence operations. Its fascinating and colourful story is told in 'Secret Classrooms' by Geoffrey Elliot and Harold Shukman. Emmie features in their account where she is referred to as Miss Voz or Emochka. In 1952 some of the students and their teachers performed 'The Cherry Orchard'. Emmie played the part of Anya.

Emmie came to teach in the Department of Russian at the University of Edinburgh in 1956 and this is where she spent her working life until retirement. One of her former colleagues, Dr Svetlana Carsten, remembers Emmie from that time: 'I joined the Russian Department at the University of Edinburgh in 1981 as a Teaching Assistant where I met Emmie Vosnesenskaya who soon became not only a respected colleague but a mentor and eventually a trusted friend. As it happened we shared some of the dark experiences that our country of origin had thrown at us.

The Department of Russian of the early 1980s had a vibrant and stimulating atmosphere and Emmie was very much part of its success. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Emmie and her colleagues were the first role models in my future academic career and undoubtedly contributed to my personal professional successes. There are few people one meets in one's lifetime who make a significant difference to professional life decisions and Emmie was one of those. I remember Emmie as a linguist-purist, whose mastery of wit won the admiration of her students. She was very supportive of them. Where she spotted a talent, initiative and a mind that was inquisitive and open to learning, she would give her time and energy to ensure that students succeeded on the course and in their future careers. Some of them completed their doctorate thesis under her supervision and went on to become distinguished academics in their own right.'

Emmie was active within the Orthodox community in Edinburgh in an unassuming manner. She sang in the choir for many years, she served on the Parish Committee and taught the newly arrived young Greek priest how to pronounce Church Slavonic for use in the Divine Liturgy.

Emmie was witty. She enjoyed telling a good story and her stories were long, fascinating, humorous and at times risqué. She was a great observer of people and would mimic their mannerisms. She would speak of the eccentricities she had observed in the English with whom she and her mother had come into contact in the early post-war years. She lovingly poked fun at the dowager ladies of Drummond Place in Edinburgh where she first lived when her feral tom cat Pushka ran amok and despoiled their pedigrees. She would quote passages from Russian literature or throw a Russian proverb into a conversation. She was fun to be with.

In older age and declining health Emmie was able to maintain her independence and remain at home with her beloved pug dogs thanks to the day-to-day help given by two Russian- speaking Polish sisters, firstly by Anya and then for many years by Nina who cared very lovingly for her, provided companionship and that vital link with the Russian language.

Emmie's life ended on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2015. It was a full and fruitful life. It was a life that was imbued with her Russian heritage and with the profound experiences that made Emmie who she was. Her funeral service was held in the Orthodox Church of St Andrew in Edinburgh. Emmie is remembered with affection and appreciation. May her memory be eternal! *Vechnaya pamyat*!

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Please note that in 2016, the Dashkova Centre Newsletter will be issued four times a year.

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