



THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE DECEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER



October and November Events Review

Dashkova Open Seminars

At an open seminar on the 30th October, **Robert Saunders** presented a chapter of his forthcoming book on how popular geopolitical representations of post-socialist countries in post-Soviet Eurasia contribute to reinforcing prejudiced attitudes about the region.



Professor Robert Saunders

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October and November Events

Thursday, 30th October
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Friday 12th-Saturday 13th December
International Conference
'Giving Voice to Cultures: Practices of Russia-Britain Cross-Cultural Communication in the 21st Century'

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His analysis focused on the dynamics of pop-culture power, as well as on how humorous and satirical geographies are received and interpreted by consumers in the West. Dr Saunders's examples included *Molvania*, a book parodying travel guidebooks and describing the fictional country called Molvania, an Eastern European nation described as 'the birthplace of the whooping cough' and 'owner of Europe's oldest nuclear reactor'. Dr Saunders also expanded on the concept of positive and negative 'nation branding', supporting his argument with multiple examples of popular misrepresentations of Kazakhstan.

You can find a podcast of the seminar here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/dashkova/media/podcasts/seminars>



Dr Varia Christie

On the 13th of November, Dr **Varia Christie** presented a seminar entitled '«Тэнгэр хүйсрах»: on legislative attempts to control the use of obscenities in works of literature'. The aim of the seminar was to highlight some of the potential difficulties in applying legislative measures to control the use of obscenities to works of literature.

Dr Christie reviewed legislative acts adopted in Russia in order to control 'obscenities', as defined by the Institute of the Russian Language, and focused on the most recent set of amendments to the Law on State Language.

Following on from this, Christie presented an in-depth analysis of obscenities found in Tatyana Tolstaya's most recent book 'Legkie Miry' (2014), which is composed of the writer's Facebook posts and publications in online literary magazines.

Tolstaya's book has now fallen foul of the new law despite its relatively moderate use of obscenities, and, as Dr Christie pointed out, the obscenities in the book are used to fulfil a variety of artistic functions. For this reason, there are serious difficulties with the idea of a blanket ban of obscenities on creative artists and writers.

The Russian Word in Edinburgh: An Evening with Diana Arbenina

The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre in association with Academia Rossica continues to present a fascinating series of large-scale events featuring the guest participation of award-winning Russian writers, performers and intellectuals.

On the 18th of November, we were delighted to host an evening of reading and discussion with the prominent Russian singer, musician, song writer, and leader of the band “The Night Snipers”, **Diana Arbenina**.

In her new capacity as a writer, Diana dedicated the evening to her latest book ‘The Sprinter’, a collection of poetry and prose. Diana started writing what she described ‘rock-and-roll’ poetry in 2006, and she believes that rhythm is as important in her poetry as it is in her music.

‘Poems are like daydreams, they come upon you and you just have to write them down.’ Diana explained. She also lamented that she had a habit of

“thinking too fast, I sometimes wish I could slow down a bit’. But at the moment Diana shows no signs of slowing down. She will be back to the UK in December, this time touring with a concert.

During a very emotional recital, Diana welcomed questions from an enthusiastic audience and shared her impressions of Edinburgh. She felt an affinity with the north and with cold places, she said, having memories of a childhood spent amongst hilly and windswept expanses of the Russian Far East.

‘If I had had the chance to choose where to do my studies, I would have chosen Edinburgh. There is a feeling of freedom here’, confessed Diana.

An interview with Diana Arbenina will appear on the Dashkova website shortly:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/dashkova/home>

November News

In November, Education and Support Centre ‘**Russian Edinburgh**’ celebrated its 10th anniversary.



Diana Arbenina

Dashkova Fellows Scheme

Our Calvert-Smolny Research Fellow, Professor **Denis Akhapkin**, finishes his stay in Edinburgh in December. Denis was working on problems of cognitive poetics, and in particular, ambiguity and the comprehension of bi-stable texts and metaphors as a source of ambiguity.

Postgraduate News

We are happy to report that in November PhD degree has been awarded to **Fraser Tew-Street**. Fraser's thesis is entitled *Discourses and Identity in Russian Republic of Karelia*. Our warmest congratulations to Fraser and best wishes for future career!

Violetta Galitskaya, our visiting Postgraduate student from The University of Tomsk also finishes her stay in Edinburgh in December. Violetta was working on a research project entitled: *'Third Places Materials': The Development of New Public Space in the Cities of Tomsk and Edinburgh*.

November and December Events

Dashkova Open Seminars

Svetlana Adonieva, 'Remembering Rituals and Social Cohesion: Russian Traditions 20th-21st centuries'

Date: Thursday, 27th November, 5:10pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre



Professor Svetlana Adonieva

This open seminar will focus at the act of remembering the dead as one of the main rituals that creates social cohesion in the rural community. The modern practice of remembering the dead will be discussed as a duty which must be performed by the living for their deceased relatives, and memorial communication with one's ancestors as one of the ways in which living people express their relatedness to each other.

Svetlana Adonieva is a Folklorist and Anthropologist, Professor at the Department of the History of Russian Literature of Saint Petersburg State University.

Russkaya Cappella – Russian Choir Concert

UK-Russia International Conference Opening Event organised by the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre as part of UK-Russia Culture Year 2014

‘Russian Choral Music with a Christmas Flavour’

Date: Thursday, 11th December 2014, 7:30-8:30 pm

Venue: Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square, Edinburgh EH8 9AG

Russkaya Cappella is a mixed-voice chamber choir that performs Russian music. Founded in 2009 in Glasgow, it is the only Russian choir in Scotland and one of a very few choirs in Britain specialising in Russian choral music. Russkaya Cappella will be performing a selection of church music by Russian composers from the 19th and 20th centuries (including Bortnyansky, Rachmaninoff, and Kastalsky), some Christmas songs from the 17th century, and traditional carols from Russia and Ukraine.



Russkaya Cappella

Admission free, please register via this link: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ruskaya-cappella-russian-choral-music-with-a-christmas-flavour-tickets-14317815973>

International Conference

‘Giving Voice to Cultures: Practices of Russia-Britain Cross-Cultural Communication in the 21st Century’

Dates: Friday 12th - Saturday 13th December 2014

Venue: Project Room, 50 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JU

The conference sets out to explore practices of cross-cultural communication between Russia and Britain in the 21st century. It focuses on the forms and systems of meaning making in a variety of cultural fields in dialogue. It will address aspects of mutual representation and cross-cultural



experience among the Russians and the British and their expression in the media, literature, films and theatre; cultural “translation” seen in art exhibitions, concerts and other art forms; linguistic and cultural exchange among diasporas, digital communities and on networking sites; tourism practices and discourses (travel guides, blogs, phrasebooks, etc.); questions of linguistic and cultural commoditization, spaces of cultural exchange, and other related themes.

A full Conference Programme may be seen here:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.154601!/fileManager/Programme%20of%20the%20Conference%202012-13%20Dec.pdf

Season’s Greetings

The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre would like to wish all our members and friends a very merry Christmas and all the very best for the New Year!



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