



20 YEARS OF RUSSIANS IN BRITAIN
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR RUSSIAN SPEAKERS





Ready to fall: The Berlin Wall

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION

FOR RUSSIAN SPEAKERS



Smash the wall: Children bring the wall down





20 Years of Russian émigrés in Britain

Supported by HLF London

During 2009/10, the European Association for Russian-Speakers (also known as the Russian Community Association) undertook a research project to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The project was made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, said: ***“This project will combine accounts of a pivotal event in world history with the stories of those personally affected by it and its aftermath”.***

During the project, hundreds of people, both English and Russian speaking, participated in multi-media events to commemorate the fall of ‘The Wall’. The events included dance, folk music, archive footage, and workshops covering themes such as folk dress, traditional cuisine and the art of Soviet times. Guest speakers attended some of the meetings, including representatives from the Russian and German embassies in London.

The events that took place in Berlin during November 1989, symbolising the end of the Cold War and the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’, meant that the people suddenly had much greater freedom of movement. One of the main aims of the project was to collate and accurately portray these culturally important stories; those of Eastern Europeans who have made Britain their home. Through a variety of diverse, intriguing texts and emotive photographs, we hope to vividly describe their life experiences, both here and in the former Soviet Union.

Project volunteers interviewed migrants from the former Soviet Union, collecting artifacts, photographs and documents to build an extensive archive of personal memories. The collected material has been used to create an exhibition at the Europa Gallery, Sutton Central Library. It is hoped that the wealth of information we have gathered will raise awareness of the significance of an event that is etched in the memories of older people but that is still, sadly, seen as remote and unfamiliar by much of the younger generation.

My personal hope is that this project will lead to greater understanding and recognition; that, in time, this will foster a deeper connection between people.

Many people collaborated to make this project possible.
A huge thank you to everyone.

Olga Bastable

Director

European Association for Russian Speakers





THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

BY THE LORD TRUSCOTT OF ST JAMES'S
AUTHOR OF 'PUTIN'S PROGRESS', A BIOGRAPHY OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

Like many people described here, I am old enough to remember the fall of the Berlin Wall on the night of 9 November 1989, just over twenty years ago. With the removal of East German leader Erich Honecker the month before, the Iron Curtain disintegrated before our very eyes. As thousands of East Germans flooded into West Berlin that night, it really did feel like the end of an era; an era that had repressed so many people in the former Soviet Union (soon to collapse) and the entire Central European Eastern bloc.

It was a momentous time, and heralded the demise of the Soviet Union itself. Old central-command-style Communism was dead in Europe. The flood-gates were now open for people to travel freely, experience new freedoms, and engage in cultural exchanges on a scale not witnessed before, even prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Yet with this heady freedom came social dislocation and economic collapse. Millions were on the move either to experience the new possibilities open to them, to escape oppression, or simply to look for work and a new life in the West. Western Europe offered security and unlimited choice; the chance of a far better standard of living. When the Iron Curtain fell, many could, quite understandably, not resist the lure of the West.

Many thousands of Russians and Russian-speakers in the former Soviet Union, including the Baltic States, the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia, came to the United Kingdom. Once here, they often found it difficult, especially initially, to integrate into British society. Groups like the Russian Community Association and its successor bodies (the European Association for Russian-Speakers) helped Russian-speakers adapt by offering training, counselling, support and cultural activities to maintain their individual and community identities. I have watched their work over the years with a mixture of pride and astonishment. The ability of people to adapt, survive and prosper, even from the most inauspicious starting point, never ceases to amaze me. Of course it also helps if they have the right support from the outset.

I commend these stories to you as examples of individual and collective strength, humanity and pride.









I worked for the BBC World Service in the Russian broadcasting department. Let me start with this: firstly, if you don't agree with my facts you may argue with me. Secondly, I should say that my experiences, in relation to this topic, were mainly in connection with my work.

I don't know how many people are aware that the BBC Russian Service and the history of Berlin are very much connected. We started broadcasting in 1946 — a time of great struggle which affected Berlin, in particular, enormously. The capital of Germany, as most are aware, was at that time divided into the Soviet-occupied zone and the British, French and American-occupied zones of West Berlin.

Geographically speaking, Berlin is in East Germany and was technically part of the free corridor that the Soviet Union tried to close in 1946. It was an extremely tense time; it felt like the beginning of World War 3. The western powers organised air-lift support to supply West Berlin, and thereby broke the will of the Soviets. Berlin once again became a free place.

The first time I became aware of problems in West Berlin was when I was a young officer on a merchant ship. I often came into contact with pirates. I remember one saying:

“Of course they had to build the wall. East Germany was losing hundreds of thousands, millions of people, who were defecting to West Berlin.”

By that time they had lost roughly four million. East Germany was haemorrhaging people, too — a ludicrous situation. Seen as a massive blow to Soviet propaganda, the wall was then built.

Now, imagine the effect of a physical structure splitting the city in two. In East Berlin, tensions were reaching boiling point. Similarly, in the Soviet Union only a few select people were allowed to travel to the West.

I emigrated in 1975 and came to work in Great Britain in 1977. At the time, the Soviets hated everyone who was emigrating. This can be illustrated by the fact that they wouldn't give us passports unless we renounced our Soviet citizenship. So we were forced to renounce our citizenship and pay a huge sum of money — then equivalent to three-and-a-half months'





wages. We were forced out of the Soviet Union with just a one-way ticket; proper refugees, or, as the British eloquently used to write on our papers, 'nationality uncertain'.

And so there we were, having just escaped the Soviet system. I was naturalised in 1984; by that point I was playing small parts in film and television and had acquired the role of a Russian dissident. And so, with new British passports, my English girlfriend and I went to West Berlin for the film. After filming was over, we were permitted to go through '**Checkpoint Charlie**'. At that point, I hadn't seen Socialism for some years. Like many I had left the Soviet Union not knowing if I would see my parents or friends ever again.

Tentatively, we passed through the check-point. It's important to remember that we were subjected to extremely vigorous security procedures. They had lists of things to inspect, including things that we were taking out of the country.

There it was: after leaving one system, we were going right back into another. I found you could recognise socialism by many things — like smell. Socialism smells differently to capitalism, you see. I realised this first when I went to Norway as a young sailor. I was amazed to discover that a town could smell of good tobacco and coffee. Because of this, when I went back everything smelt stale.

At that time my girlfriend and I were vegetarians; and so after a while we began to get hungry — headaches, hunger pangs. But in East Berlin we couldn't find a single café or restaurant. Everywhere there were just huge streets and boulevards. It was just a huge and empty place.

Eventually we found a café. But it only sold sausages. And thus we had a moral dilemma — either die of hunger or go against our principles! I'm ashamed to say that we broke our principles, but it was the only occasion in the whole of the last twenty-odd years that I have consumed meat. When I tell you that I had to force myself to eat German sausages you can see why I remember this!

Of course, we went to the Museum of Victims of the Berlin Wall. We saw the various devices that people had used to try and cross the border, including hot-air balloons. One of the most disconcerting things about the Wall was the no-man's land, which was essentially guarded by only automatic, un-manned machine guns. Therefore if someone entered the field of fire he would be shot at once.





During the fall of the Berlin Wall we were talking about Gorbachev and Soviet non-involvement. There were about 380,000 Soviet troops in East Germany; over a million in Eastern Europe. So the Soviets could have easily prevented the fall of the Berlin Wall. Margaret Thatcher and Mitterrand were very much against the reunification of Germany. Thatcher told Gorbachev: ***“We don’t want this”***, and Mitterrand said, famously: ***“I’ve sold out to Germany — I would rather have two than one.”***

It was Gorbachev’s decision not to involve Soviet troops. As I understand the reunification of Germany, the true heroes of the Berlin Wall were the people. They went out peacefully in numbers that were so huge that nobody could control them. So the whole thing collapsed. That’s why it was bloodless. Why today we must celebrate the end of the Cold War, the victory for democracy and everything that we hold dear to our hearts.

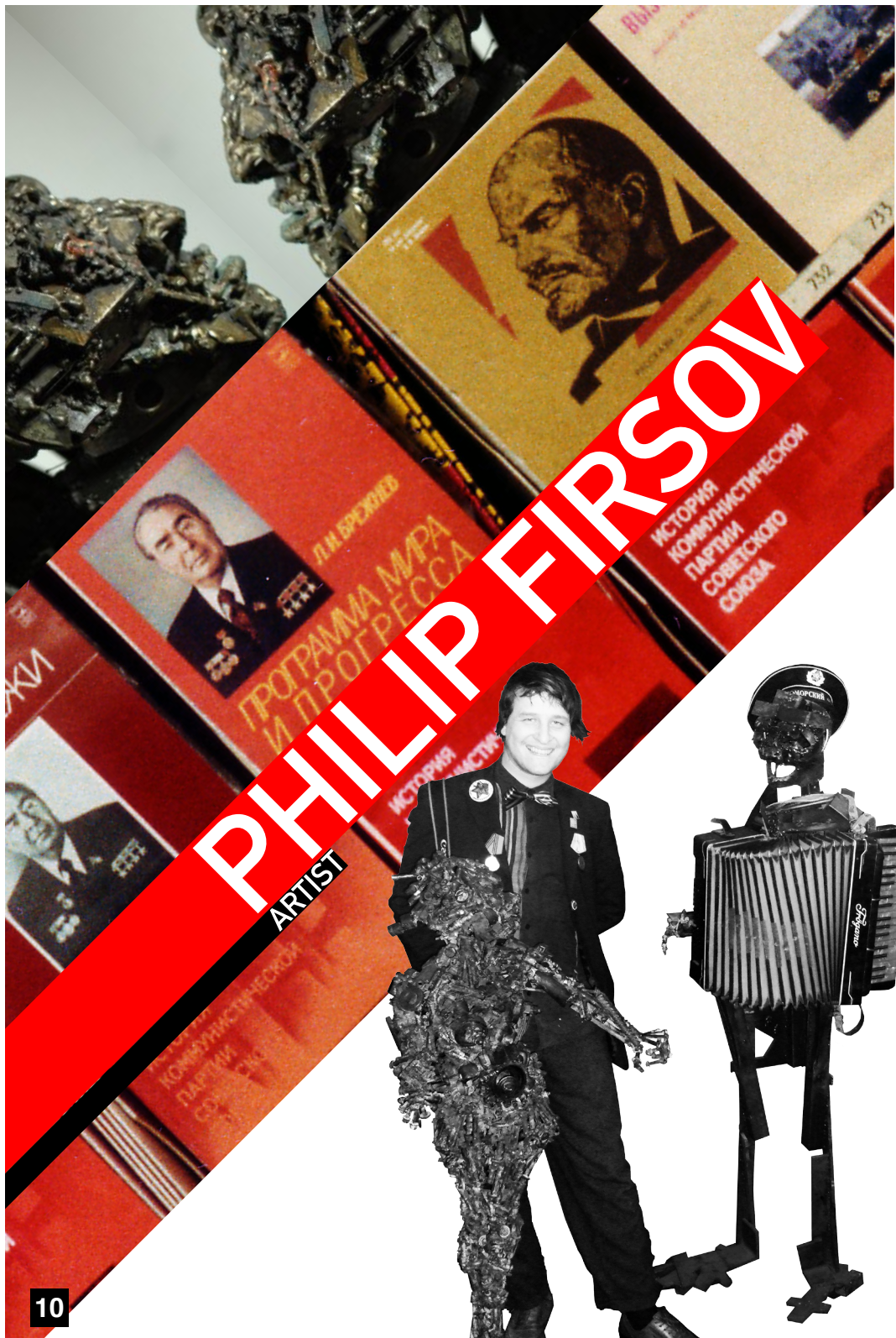
What was your first impression of the UK?

Well, I spent a year in Italy waiting to get to the UK because I was stateless and didn’t have a passport. Italian bureaucracy is probably one of the worst in the world! It took them over a year; first to lose my file and then find it again etc... At this time I was in intense correspondence with the BBC management. In the end, I joked that I was resigned to being a ‘gentleman-in-waiting’.

When I eventually arrived in Britain there was no time for sightseeing. The very next morning, I had to be in the office. My first impression concerned the unreliable number 15 bus service that used to go from my home to the BBC. It was run by a group of cheeky Jamaicans who liked to play dominoes. They enjoyed keeping each other company for as long as possible and then they’d all zoom off... there wouldn’t be another bus for 40 minutes. With a family to feed, I was very nervous. I didn’t want to be late, especially on my first day! In absolute desperation I resorted to cycling. We weren’t particularly financially stable at the time so I went to Portobello Road to buy the only bike that I could afford. And it was faulty! The front brakes were useless. I remember changing lanes, desperately shouting at people not to run me over, and, when I gripped the brakes, my momentum made me crash head-first onto the pavement. That was my first impression of Britain!

Negative things aside, working was fun; at the time the BBC were recruiting anyone and everyone. A real mix: former doctors, sportsmen, engineers, all with different stories. They had belonged to the same stratum of Soviet society that I had. We had all had a higher education; we all spoke English and were interested in British culture. I suppose to varying degrees we were all ***‘anti-Soviet’***, and so it was easy to make friends.







I am twenty-five years old and have been living in the UK since 1991, when my family emigrated to London. Since then we've lived in many different parts of Great Britain. I was six when we moved here, and for the first ten years after that we would travel back to Russia every summer for three months. So I had contact with Russian culture both at home and when I returned to Russia each summer.

My parents were constantly changing jobs and travelling from one university to another, so I attended a number of schools. We started off at Cambridge University and I learned English very quickly. We went on to live in Devon (for the Dartington Music Festival), and then moved to Kew University. Finally, we moved to St Albans and I began to study privately with Russian piano and arts teachers. My parents supported me and took me to many museums across Europe. So ultimately I had a very well-rounded education. When we received British citizenship it became much easier to travel, and so I went on to study a great deal abroad. I finished university at London (UCL Slade School of Fine Art, where I spent four years). Previously I'd done a foundation course at Saint Martin's College of Art and Design; most recently, last year, I completed a postgraduate diploma in Drawing at the Prince's Foundation.

I studied art at SSEES (the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies) as part of my degree, and also had the opportunity to study Russian film. Additionally, I studied sculpture and did drawings — mainly in Florence, Naples and Rome.

The painting overleaf is entitled '**Vauxhall**'. It's written in the middle of the painting — kind of hidden between two figures. It's about the Russian tendency, or perhaps you might say predicament, of being lost in translation — always slightly misunderstanding the world. Whether or not it's a good thing, it's nevertheless an issue that has constantly featured in my upbringing. I was speaking two languages, and my family always made sure that I would retain my Russian culture. At the same time I was also speaking English and discovering English culture. English people would often call me an Englishman.

So the problem of dual identity is really what this painting is all about. It's an oil painting, and I took influence from painters such as El Greco, Titian and Rubens. As a result there are very classical references in the composition of the painting, and I used a lot of different painting mediums. For example, there is a very important difference between the texture of the clothes of the woman in the foreground — lots of wax added to the paint — and the very thin glazes in other parts of the painting, with lots of gloss medium. The materiality, the texture and feel, is very important to the piece. The characters in the painting were all photographed by me in Eastern Europe. For me, they were another example of Russians in immigration. The setting of the painting is Vauxhall, with people stuck in



a large train station. This is where they arrive as immigrants and they are all wearing costumes that are stereotypical of priests — by that I mean traditional Orthodox clothes or military uniforms, any kind of costume that immediately conjures up a form of identification.

As we Russians know, the Russian word '**vokzal**' derives from the English word. Paul the 1st of Russia came here on a visit, and they demonstrated the first train to him — it was on a circular wooden track in Vauxhall Park. He asked them what the name of the place was, and when he went on to copy these trains in Russia he arbitrarily named each and every one of them '**vokzal**'. For me, that is the epitome of Russian confusion! And it is for that reason that I gave the painting this title.

With regard to my piece '**Accordion Skeleton**', I tried to build a motor that would play the accordion. This basically worked for about a day and then broke! But the sentiment was to try and portray a beggar — in Eastern Europe there are many beggars, which is true of London as well. I was thinking about the Second World War and the horror of the '**Terminator**' films, and these machines that are built exclusively to destroy people. I built this skeleton that was completely hopeless. I mean, wherever it is in the world, a gypsy playing the accordion is a very poignant disruption of the atmosphere. So with this sculpture it was much more about what Dubuffet called 'objecthood', which is the value of the actual components making up the sculpture. Someone like Dubuffet, David Smith or Tinguely would actually think more about the individual components of the sculpture, rather than about the sculpture as a whole.

There was a trinity of values, as it were, between the material, the image and the narrative. This is a theory that I always hold dear when making a sculpture. That is, to maintain a balance between the meanings and the story. But essentially this sculpture represents another one of these stereotypes, another one of these archetypal Eastern European characters in London.



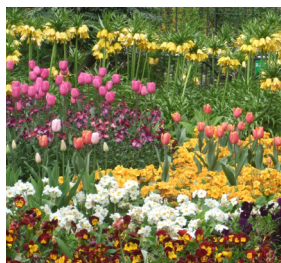


'Vauxhall' by Philip Firsov, 180x180cm 2010





ПОЕТ



«В высоком лондонском кругу»

В высоком лондонском кругу
Мне не кружиться – ну так что же?
Я здесь – прохожий из прохожих,
Я здесь – снежинка на снегу.

Я здесь – одна из русских жён,
Одна из эмигрантских судеб,
А если кто-то и осудит –
То лишь Всевышний. Только он.

Лишь перед ним держу ответ,
Ведя корабль неровным курсом.
Я не забуду, что под Курском
Лежит в бою погибший дед.

И вырастают мужики –
Сыны мои – вдали от детства.
Храня российское наследство –
Язык и снимки у реки:

Рыбалка, кони на лугу,
Да одуванчик с белым пухом...
О том – ни слухом и ни духом –
В высоком лондонском кругу.

Tatiana was born in the Siberian town of Tomsk. She is married with four children, and emigrated to the UK because she could not see a promising future for her children in Russia.

She is both a poet and graphology specialist. Tatiana graduated from the British Academy of graphologists (graphology teaches the technique of asserting a person's character, personality and abilities, through analysis of his or her writing).

“My first poem came to me when I was 7 years old and throughout my teens I wrote many more. However, in the period between 1994 and 2003, due to the negative influence of people around me, I put a ‘ban’ on my creative writing. In the publishing world everyone would say, ***‘Why are you all trying to become poets?’***”

This had a great influence on me and I began to think that I was small and insignificant. It made me suppress my poetry, my inner self. I was preventing my



In London high society
In London high society's gilt
I'm not someone who'll ever shine
Just nobody, just a passerby
A snowflake in a snowfield

Just one of many Russian wives
Just one of numerous aliens' lives
If anyone can judge me, then it's only Him.

For I have spent My entire time in
His regard I've sailed my boat,
its course haphazard,
My dead are back in Kursk as history has it
My memory has it and it won't restart

My sons, they grow big and strong
Remote from their Russian years
But cherishing their rushing tears,
Their mother tongue, grandmother's song

Old photos of a fishing trip
White dandelions, wild horses grazing
But not a word of it amazing
To London's beau monde will ever slip.

poems from being born. This was a tragedy. My rebirth as a poet took place in London, thanks to participation in a poetry competition entitled **'Pushkin in Britain'** (2003). I simply answered an ad in a Russian paper, so it came as a big surprise that I made it to the finals. There were more competitions later and invitations from Russia, Israel, Finland and the USA. My poems were in publications and various internet projects. In 2003 my first edition, **'I've changed three lands'**, was published.

Poetic words can do wonders. I'd like to think that my poetry can lead people away from negativity, war, unrequited love and suffering; that it can bring happiness and strengthen the brighter side of life in terms of giving hope and moving forward.

I am now on the panel of judges for the (London) tournament **'Pushkin in Britain'** and also the international competition **'The Immigration Lira'**. I hold master classes and poetry evenings and am particularly fond of nature lyrics".





Шотландия

Укатана машиною
Обыденности слов,
Закручена пружиною
Невыспавшихся снов,
Оставив жизнь неспящую,
Маршрут свой поверну
Из Глазго в синеглазую
Озерную страну.
Там, где просторы смелые
Свободой налиты,
Пройду овечкой белою
По склонам золотым.
Водицею кристальною
По каменному дну,
Хрустальность первозданную
В ладони зачерпну.
Скребнутся тучи бременем
Над гребными вершин,
Там спит Хранитель Времени,
И некуда спешить.
Ветра, и горы старые,
И запах чистых брызг
Мне залатают ауру,
Прорвавшуюся вдызг.
Озерами прохладными
По сказочной тиши
Я уйду в Шотландию –
Спасение души.

Scotland

When I am sick and tired of
Ordinary themes,
When as a spring – desires
Are straining daily dreams,
I put away my diary
And go – as the road takes –
From Glasgow to the country
Of sapphire lakes,
To heroic places,
That the air of freedom fills...
I'll turn – as white as laces –
The lamb in golden hills.
I'll know the ages shorter,
Than a sculptor knows bronze,
I'll taste the crystal water,
That runs among the stones.
I'll see the heavy clouds
That guard the mountain top –
Time Keeper's rocky house –
He sleeps. And time has stopped.
And with the thread of air
And with the needle of a storm
I'll darn at last my aura
So awfully torn.
I trace my way on pond prints
And through the magic hole
To reach my dear Scotland
To save my poor soul.





Вишня выбросила цвет

Вишня выбросила цвет,
Полный радости и неги.
Через девять долгих лет
Возвращаюсь в белы снеги.

Здесь, у Темзы у реки
Познавала я свободу.
Говорили чудаки:
«Не войти обратно в воду!

Убежало, утекло», -
Эту мудрость знаю, братцы.
В нашем Лондоне тепло.
В нашем Томске- минус двадцать.

Вишня белая кипит
Над Вестминстерским аббатством.
Самолет летит, летит
В край простуженного братства.

Ждет меня моя семья,
Ждут меня мои подруги,
И судьба моя, скользя,
Возвращается на круги...

Cherry Blossom

The cherry blossom hurls out colour
Brimming with joy and zest.

Nine years have I watched this
display

But must go to the white snows of
home.

Here by the grey river Thames
I learned what it is to be free.

And now cynics mock me and say:
"You mustn't get back in the water,
It has passed under too many
bridges!"

Yes brothers – you are wise to say
this –

Our city of London is warm
While in Tomsk it is still minus-twenty
And cherry blossom foams pink and
white

Over Westminster Abbey.

But an aeroplane flies in the blue.

Thoughts of homeland quicken my
blood.

Waiting for me are my family.

Waiting for me are my friends.

And the push of fate is sliding me
Back to the beginning again.





VERONICA



Veronica was born in Vilnius, Lithuania. Now living and working in London, her job as park manager involves looking after 15 parks in the London area, including Hoxton Square and Haggerston Park.

“Gardening was always a part of my life. My parents had a garden at our dacha (second home) and we often helped – digging up potatoes and collecting the strawberries. My mother was particularly keen on gardening and always encouraged us.

Later, the most important thing was having a driving license. To be able to drive was essential for my job and I’m very grateful to my mother for making me get a license. In fact, driving was basically the source of my income. Without my license I would not be where I am today – for me, that was the key to finding a job. My English language skills were not that good at the time.

I never really consciously considered a career in gardening, it just kind of happened. I was working for an agency and my aim was to finish my education. I wanted to improve my language / writing and secure a job in London. This was the perfect opportunity. Admittedly, it was quite a difficult task learning the names of shrubs in both English and Latin.

However, I must have done something right because I now have a permanent position and can go ahead with my Masters. I went to university and gained a degree, but I must admit that my colleagues helped me a lot along the way. My manager allowed me flexibility and even checked my essays. Someone kindly gave me their old computer. So there was a great deal of support within the organisation and I really appreciate all that I received. Aside from that, I was doing a good job because I didn’t like to be criticised. I didn’t want people to tell me that this was wrong or ask why this was not done, etc. It’s a negative form of motivation, but it worked well for me. My manager began to respect me as an accomplished gardener and eventually I had some staff to help me – temporary workers and people on work experience. Right now I am a Charge-hand gardener. This basically means I’m a team-leader. Overall I am in charge of around 15 parks. In addition I am responsible for certain high-profile areas such as the Town Hall in Hackney”.

KOZLOVA





Zinaida moved to the UK in June 2005. A collector of traditional Russian dolls, she is heavily involved in the continuation and popularising of Russian traditions, arts, crafts, and authentic Russian clothes.

“I was born in a village in the Yaroslavskiy region – located 200 km from Moscow. After graduating from the technical college of Mechanical Engineering in Kalyzin town (formerly the Kalinin region, now the Tverskaya region) I was assigned work in the city of Kapsukas, Lithuania, where I settled for 20 years.

Working as an engineer, I also sang in a choir. Later, during the Perestroika period, I dedicated myself to upholding Russian traditions. It was a time of self-identification for people from former Soviet Republics. Then I swapped the engineering profession for an arts-and-crafts business.

As I witnessed the rise of tourism and development of Art workshops in Uglich – a town famous for its Arts tradition – I developed an interest in traditional costume dolls. Soon I began a business venture supplying materials from Lithuania to Russia, exchanging them for arts and crafts objects, then bringing them back to Vilnius.

My national costume and Russian doll collection were used for learning in many Lithuanian primary schools. My collection represents many kinds of Russian national costume from the regions of Vladimir, Tver, Yaroslav, and Moscow.

The unemployment problem in Lithuania was the reason that my eldest son left for Ireland in 1998. My husband and younger son followed. I was the last to join them in the UK. But I soon realised how hard it is to find a job without speaking the native language. Now learning English is my priority and I am registered at the Job Centre.

I feel that I lost my homeland, but rediscovered it by seeing its beauty as an outsider from a different perspective. My work with Russian traditions continues here; I am developing a modern style called **‘sarafan’** (a dress worn in villages) and a Russian head-piece for girls and women called **‘kokoshnik’**.

I am taking part in many festivals promoting Russian culture. I also work as a tutor for costume design and Russian traditions”.

ZINAIDA
PETRUCENIA
20 EXPERT IN RUSSIAN CULTURE







Oxana has lived in the UK since 1996. She is married to a Nigerian, whom she met in Moscow, and works with Russian-speaking immigrants who have problems integrating into UK society. She also provides support to mixed-race families who encounter racial discrimination.

I work as a finance officer for Queen Mary, University of London. I also play an active part in the work of the **'Sputnik' Association of Russian-speaking Women in the UK**; my other role involves the leadership of Intermix Movement for Mixed-Race People and Families.

In the end, my family left Russia as a result of racial intolerance. They faced polarised attitudes ranging from comments like "what lovely children you have" to more disturbing ones such as "go home Blacks!" We chose to move to the UK following advice from friends; there were cultural reasons too (English is the official language of Nigeria – the home country of my husband). Moreover, the UK's liberal democracy was very appealing to us.

Here we are not stared at. Even better, no one points a finger at our children.

This project resonated with me; I feel strongly that it is important to encourage children to be interested in their native culture and to learn the language – Russian in our case – that is so integral to their being.

Often, because it is felt that the woman of the family must learn English, it is forbidden for her to speak Russian at home. This helps her, but it's no good for the children. Picking up the local language isn't a problem for them – what is important is that they remember and maintain a certain level of their native language. One has to find a balance between the two cultures that fits for all.

It is my belief that singing helps people to learn languages. My children and I participate in the choir **'Victoria'** and folk band **'Kumushki-golubushki'** which runs alongside the work of the 'Sputnik' association and kids' group 'Nevalyashki'.

My husband and I have four daughters – the eldest 18 and the youngest (twins) are 3. They are typical British teenagers; interested in music, chatting and Facebook. This is a bit stressful for me, but I don't judge them. I think we are essentially the same, it's just that technological progress has given them different opportunities.

OXANA

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GOULI







Born in Vilnius, Lithuania, at 18 years of age Victoria served in the Soviet Army in Kamchatka, working as a Russian language teacher. She moved to the UK in 1992.

“My first impressions of London: hanging-baskets in Trafalgar Square... and getting very lost. I had no phone and spoke no English. Then I heard Lithuanian...tourists! They helped me, even paid for my bus ticket.

I had to take temporary jobs. Our family of five had to live in a one bedroom flat – very common Soviet conditions. My first job was waitress at the Royal Horseguard's Hotel. My English was zero. My brother said: ***‘when you nod your head, you say Yes, and when you move your head from side to side you say No’.***

My employer paid for my Catering studies at Westminster College. I did well, eventually becoming a Manager. Finally I opened a cafe. Gradually I decided I wanted to leave this; and so I became a practitioner in the art of Feng Shui. Now I understand how silly it was to run away, searching for a better life. Location doesn't matter. Happiness lies within. We should take and love things as they are; when we do, love returns to us”.





VICTORIA KOVALENKO





Alexey Moskvina is in charge of organising various art projects; he is also a freelance photographer and editor at Tate Channel. Leaving St Petersburg in January 2005 and arriving in the UK with no plan to stay, he attended a language school where he studied English for six months. His parents and younger brother still reside in Russia.

“I came to London on my own but made friends straight away. We had an instant bond. Now that we have gone to live all over the world I can go anywhere, knowing that somebody will be waiting for me there. After I completed my English course I decided to stay. I was fortunate. After taking my portfolio to the university I was offered a place.” But he had to wait for around a year to get a visa to come back to the UK. ***“I could not get a tourist nor student visa. When I first applied I trumpeted the news that I was leaving to everyone, but then I was refused the visa. Everyone was upset. When I next applied a few months later, I didn’t tell anyone and I got it”.***

Alexey lived in a flat in Notting Hill but didn’t have a clue that it was a prestigious part of town. ***“It was a bit dirty to me but all right for living. Now I feel fully at home here. It is a big city where a lot is happening on the cultural scene, but it is also cosy.”***

From the age of 12 he was fascinated by photography and completed his first professional training at secondary school. ***“We were given a list of professions for which we could study and there was photography course. The classes took place once a week. So I spent the next two years in the “dark room”.*** Now Alexey lives in a civil partnership with his male British partner whom he met three years ago.

His work is divided into two ventures. One consists of Alexey’s independent photo projects and publications; the other is what he does to earn a living – he has now been working at Tate for two years.

“I joined a one-off project as a volunteer and after two months I was offered a contract.”

His latest project is a photographic journey on a motorbike around the Baltic Sea that will take him from London to St Petersburg and back. It is a project to celebrate his 5-year stay away from home and an attempt to bring things to the cultural scene that normally remain under the wing of a plane. Alexey thinks that Britons have a distinct tendency to preserve their inner selves.

“It’s easy to make acquaintances but not friends. Everyone is terribly friendly but at the same time it’s very superficial”.





ALEXEY MOSKVIN

PHOTOGRAPHER





Yana was born in London in 2001. She's a clever little girl, speaking three languages: Ukrainian, English and Russian. ***"I like drawing very much; a professional artist comes to our house and gives me lessons, and sometimes my pictures go in exhibitions. One of them was sent to Moscow for a competition which commemorated 65 years since the end of World War 2. Right now I am completing the third grade at a Russian school; it's a slightly unusual situation to most English children, as I am also attending an English comprehensive school at the same time."***

My mother says I have many talents, but my main love is to draw. Ever since I was a baby I have to mix colours and doodle as soon as my eyes see pencils or paint. My main themes for drawing are animals and countryside. In the summer I spend a lot of time at my Nan and Grandad's country house in Ukraine; I like it there a lot. It's great for taking inspiration from all the surrounding nature.

My one other big passion is collecting toy cats. At one point I had 35 of them but now we don't bother to count...It's hard to say how big the collection is now!"

YANA MARCHUK

PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPIL







ALLA SOLDATOVA

WRITER

'PATTERNS ON A WINDOW PANE' BY ALLA SOLDATOVA

STORY





My father died exactly one month after his seventy-fifth birthday.

For almost two years he had hardly left his bed, his life ebbing from his body into the unknown ocean from which the unborn draw their strength. After a life overcoming adversity he had much strength to lose.

Father was always a winner — right up until death defeated him. I always see him in my mind as a lively middle-aged man beating his friends in a rope-climbing competition. That three-metre rope saw him climb it more times than any of the others.

At seventeen he lied about his age, joined the army, defended Stalingrad and, although injured, survived. He fell in love with a beautiful nurse in Sochi and married her within a fortnight, and together they brought two children into the world. The shell splinter that tore his foot off in Stalingrad had not defeated him.

My mother took on the burden of caring for my sick father. My own family occupied all my time, and I naively believed that death would never touch a man whose bluish-black hair even the snow had dared not touch. I thought he would rise again after a rest; so you could say that I was completely unprepared for his death. How could he die when I hadn't had time to ask him all the things I'd been meaning to? I had never asked about his dreams: whether he rejoiced when they came true. There always seemed to be time, always a next time. I felt guilty now there was no more time, time I might have spent with my father.

I left my husband, my daughter slowly became an adult, but still I understood nothing about life and death — or about my father. I stood at the crossroads and did not know which way to turn.

One morning the phone rang. It was a friend of mine who lived in London. She told me she was returning to Tallinn and suggested that as I had the appropriate qualifications I could take over her job. I promised her I would think about it, but I already knew before replacing the receiver that destiny had shown me the right direction. Within a week I was in London.

After three days of intensive training and demonstrating my abilities, I started work as a health visitor — face-to-face with aged and disabled people whose whole experience of life and culture was completely unfamiliar to me. Even their English names sounded strange. I visited up to twenty people per day, spending half an hour with each. I had a special folder which told me whom to see, what their problems were, and what I should do to help them. My life became a blur of film-like images: new routes, new addresses, new names and new faces.

I rose at six, and took an hour off for lunch. But instead of eating I lay down and slept. The language was difficult; there was panic in my soul.





I felt I could no longer manage and after three weeks I called home to my friends: ***“I cannot carry on!”***

They answered: ***“It’s just nerves, a crisis of confidence — but we believe in you!”***

But I wondered: could I have got it all wrong?

No sooner had I managed to familiarise myself with the work than I was given a new client: Lila Kaufman. Everyone in the firm knew of her unspeakable character, and nobody wanted to work with her. When I saw her name on my list I was not surprised, for my colleagues, possibly out of envy, had pointed out that I had a very easy list of clients. But I understood that all good things come to an end and I did not call the office to ask her to be replaced by someone nicer. Never mind. I can cope with it, I thought to myself confidently.

Next morning at Mrs Kaufman’s front door I wasted ten minutes of her allotted thirty just ringing the bell. Behind the door I heard the ceaseless barking of her dog, but nobody came. I was cold. I pulled my thin jacket tighter and knocked again, worried that something had happened to Mrs Kaufman. How was I to get in to find out? I took my mobile phone out and was just about to call my office when I heard a strident voice behind the door: ***“Do you think I am deaf? I might be almost blind, but I can hear perfectly!”*** The door opened to reveal a thin crack, as far as the short door-chain would allow. I saw a pale face, tousled hair, and a thin hand holding a knotty stick; below, a yelping bug-eyed creature hardly bigger than a shoe. I was just about to tell her that I had been waiting for ten minutes when she shouted ***“I will complain!”*** It took a huge effort to persuade her to let me in, and another fifteen minutes to convince her to take her medication. All the time her small dog continued to howl as if I had trodden on it. Mrs Kaufman shouted over the noise of her dog that I had no soul and no heart.

Outside I took a deep breath and contemplated the effect of her promised complaint with pleasure. I might be in trouble but at least I’d lose this client. But despite the fact that I was late for my next appointment, nobody complained. Four hours later I was, once again, knocking on Mrs Kaufman’s door with no response. Everything repeated exactly as before. I had no expectations that things would improve on my third visit of the day.

This continued for about a month. Each time I left Mrs Kaufman’s I felt completely exhausted, but I lifted my eyes to the sky and thanked God for temporary deliverance and ran to my car with the pleasure of freedom.

One day, however, the improbable happened. Mrs Kaufman did not torture me at the door; and she accepted her medication without accusing me of





poisoning her. She then picked up her dog and offered it to me, saying:
“Could you take this poor thing for a walk, please? Lolly never leaves the house!”

Dog-walking was not one of my duties, but I cautiously took the small dog from her hands and complied with her request. I realised that it indicated that Mrs Kaufman had finally decided to trust me — something she had not done with any of the other health visitors. After that there were no more scenes when I came to her door, and my walks with Lolly became a daily event.

Once I was five minutes late. ***“Where were you?”*** said Mrs Kaufman, standing at the crack of her door before opening it wide for me.
“It was only the traffic, Mrs Kaufman”, I answered, apologising. I was sure she would complain to the office.
“I was so worried. But please call me Jill.” Mrs Kaufman smiled for the first time. ***“My husband called me that. He was the only one who called me Jill”***.

Entering the sitting-room, she lifted her eyes to a portrait of a man in a beautifully cut suit and black hat. Nearby hung a painting of a girl. A gentle face with large blue eyes was framed by long fair hair, which fell across a precious neck to a mink coat. A famous silent-screen actress was my first impression.

“It’s me”, said Jill, failing to guess my thoughts.

That afternoon I was called into the office. ***“Mrs Kaufman called”***, the manager explained. Well, that’s the end of the story. They will dismiss me, I hopelessly thought. But his eyes looked knowingly at me as he said:
“I’d like to thank you for your professionalism.”

Christmas was approaching. Seeing me off, Mrs Kaufman put a small coin in my hand.

“Could you buy me a bottle of champagne?” she said, and named an expensive brand.

It never occurred to me to refuse her. On Christmas day, noticing the first snowdrops in a glade, I stopped the car to collect a bouquet for Jill. On my arrival crystal glasses were already on the table, filled with sparkling wine. I thought she was expecting visitors, but it wasn’t so. Nobody ever visited Jill. She had been completely alone for many years. Her suspicious independent nature combined with her pride meant she had never made any friends, and she had no intention of leaving her home for sheltered accommodation. No, the wine was intended only for us two. I tasted the champagne, apologised that I couldn’t drink a full glass, and put the





gentle flowers on Jill's knees. She put them to her face, inhaled the fresh aroma of snow, and her almost blind eyes filled with tears. When I was leaving I embraced her fragile shoulders...

"Come to dinner when you are free, dear!" Jill offered a couple of days later. Informal personal relations with clients were strictly prohibited, but how could I say **"no thanks"** to such a lonely woman?

On my next day off I went to the shops and bought some cakes. When I arrived at the agreed time Jill met me at the door looking quite smart. At her feet Lolly joyfully wagged his tail and scuttled around in greeting.

"Let's celebrate our meeting, Ally", said Jill, anglicising my name. **"Let's drink for love".**

Jill went to the refrigerator and retrieved the unfinished bottle of champagne. Then she rose and lifted her glass:

I loved you; and perhaps I love you still,
The flame, perhaps, is not extinguished; yet
It burns so quietly within my soul,
No longer should you feel distressed by it.
Silently and hopelessly I loved you,
At times too jealous and at times too shy.
God grant you find another who will love you
As tenderly and truthfully as I.

She recited Pushkin's words in good Russian, with deep feeling. I could hardly move my gaze from her. When I did my eyes fell on a biography of Stalin on her bookshelf.

"Jill?" I said, confused.

"Yes", she said in English. **"I used to be very interested in Russian culture, but I have forgotten almost everything now."**

Soon our meals became daily. She simply refused to eat without me, and she began to talk about herself, surprising me with the contradictions in her nature: Jill was avaricious yet extraordinarily generous, educated yet narrow-minded, selfish yet loving. The riddle of her personality would occupy me for years.

Over the following weeks she told me about her life; the sad and beautiful story of a girl from a rich aristocratic family. Her first husband had left her for another woman, leaving Jill to raise their son. She married again, but the marriage failed. When her son left home he did not contact her for over fifteen years. She sold the family property in London and moved to the suburbs, losing many friends, none of whom, in any case, would be alive now. We became friends, despite our age difference. But our friendship did not last long.

"Ally! Look! Look!" Jill spoke heatedly, pointing her stick at the





dark-blue carpet. ***“Do you see these shining live points?”***

“There is nothing there,” I replied, worried. ***“Calm down, please!”*** I softly settled her in the armchair.

But Jill’s behaviour became increasingly strange. One morning I found her at the open door of her cold house shivering and weakened after a sleepless night. She was waiting for me to rescue her.

“The woman in black came again last night!”

“What did you say?” I said. ***“It’s only your imagination!”*** And I tried to calm her down.

“No! I saw her!” she said, convinced, ***“She even left her black gloves!”*** Jill pointed to an empty chair.

She refused food. It was hard to persuade her to eat bread or even a biscuit. A couple of days later I met the police as I left her house. Jill, in a moment of madness, had smashed a window during the night and cut her hand. Consequently, a neighbour had called the police. That night I worried what would happen next.

At five thirty in the morning I was woken by a call from the office:

“I have cancelled all your visits this morning. You should go at once to Mrs Kaufman’s. She has to go to hospital but is refusing to leave the house until she has seen you.”

I rushed over there at great speed, hoping to help. Two nurses met me at the door.

“She is not herself, be careful,” said one. I saw her sitting in an armchair in her nightdress, pale and trembling, looking at me with mad, beseeching eyes. I went to her and embraced her, hoping to protect her.

“You are with me at last, Ally! I told them you would let me stay here. I will not go away with them. But why are you so white? Why have you painted your face white?”

I could do nothing for her. I was powerless against this illness. I gathered her things for the hospital with my own hands.

“Care for my Lolly,” cried Jill, stretching her arm out and handing me her keys.

“I’ll visit you there! I will wait for you!” I said, gripping her keys in my hand and holding back the tears. I followed her to the ambulance.

She was taken to another town. I went to the hospital on my first day off. Jill looked at me but didn’t recognise me. And then she closed her eyes.

“She has just had an injection. She will sleep,” a nurse told me.

“Give her a note from me, please! I’m begging you! She should understand, who it was from!”

“Yes, of course.” The nurse smiled. Her smile was wan and sympathetic.





I waited for Jill to wake. A month passed, then a year; not once had Jill woken up.

It was necessary to give Lolly away, and I found kind people to look after her. The small house was repossessed by the bank.

I wish to stop and think. I understand that the destinies of my clients have become part of my own story, have become part of the memories of my family, my life. Together they have created a unique pattern like the crystals of frost on a window pane. I look at them and understand that the destinies of everyone are intertwined. It is unimportant where they live in this world. What is important is only the beauty they create in living their lives and the traces they leave when they depart.

Пушкин (1829)

Я вас любил

**Я вас любил: любовь еще, быть может
В душе моей угасла не совсем;
Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.
Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
То робостью, то ревностью томим;
Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
Как дай вам бог любимой быть другим.**





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Aina was born in Makhachkala (Dagestan, Russia) in 1970. She is presently the Manager of **“Znanye”** – a Russian school in London. “My maiden name is Mamaeva and I have been in the UK for 11 years now. I moved to London on the 23rd of February 1999 from the United Arab Emirates, where I lived with my Afghan husband. In the UAE I opened the first Russian school and nursery. My main reasons for leaving were the difficulties we encountered in buying a property, but also the wish for my kids to have a European citizenship. My husband made the final decision for us to move, but it was not hard for us to follow.

On arrival, we were refugees. We lived in a fully **‘immigrant’** area, in conditions we never thought we would encounter in a civilised country. The first entire year-and-a-half of my life was a nightmare. When my mum visited me, she said that by the end of her visit she would like to see at least one white person.

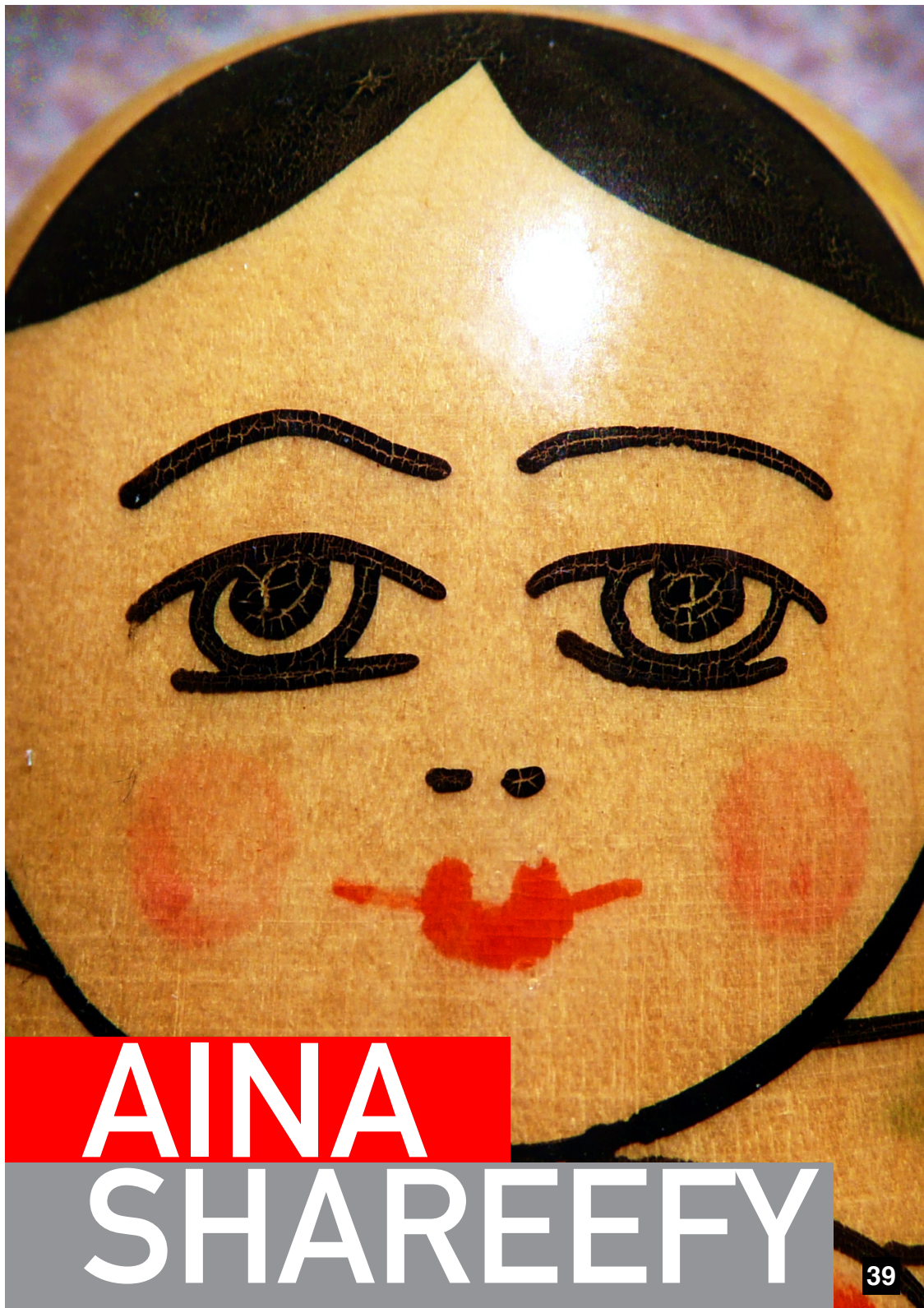
I overcame the difficulties and managed to study English; eventually I achieved a local diploma in addition to my other two degrees. When this country realises that you are a strong person, that you’re not going to put your hands up and just give in, then the sun starts to shine in your direction, I think. The idea of opening a Russian school here first came to me when I was trying to find a similar establishment for my children to go to, but could not find one anywhere in London. The school was opened in 2003; now there are 3 more in different parts of London. Through opening my school I try to give families the help they deserve and need.

I know the difficulties that immigrants face, but many Russians wouldn’t tell you about it. Somehow, it is important for them to hide the negative, to show only the good.

I am very thankful to this country and this city; that I saw all the difficulties. Now, London for me is home. I walk down the streets and I feel that I belong.

My feeling is that Immigration is like the evolution of a human being. I am becoming less and less home sick, and this is not because I love my home country less”.





AINA

SHAREEFY

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ZURAB TSERETEL

'Break The Wall Of Distrust': City of London. Commissioned by Speyhawk Plc October 1989. Unveiled by the RT. Hon. Richard Luce, MP Minister for the Arts on 17th May 1990. A work by Zurab Tsereteli. People's Artist of the USSR.





Elena Tsvetkova, owner of a babysitting & cleaning business, 50 years old
Elena was born in Magnitogorsk, Russia. Before moving to the UK she lived with her family in Estonia. For 20 years she worked as a Nursery teacher.

“The phrase ‘I can’t’ does not exist in my vocabulary.”

I initially came to the UK for a friend’s wedding, with no intention of staying permanently. Everything changed one day ‘na shashlykah’ (at a barbecue) when I came across other fellow Russian immigrants.

In the Soviet Union I had been a Komsomol Party member and it was a serious issue for me, however I decided to repeat their ‘heroic feat’, and ‘surrender’.

After spending a year on benefits, I started to work as a cleaner/ babysitter and went on to set up my own cleaning business.

Here, we are all ***‘cleanershi’ and ‘babysittershi’***. The men are called ***‘buildera’***.

Little by little I started babysitting and helping out friends. They were surprised to notice that their children were much better behaved while I was cleaning the house...

As a true Russian banya (bath/sauna) enthusiast, I was faced with the sad fact that there are no such authentic baths in the UK, and that the British simply don’t share this passion.

One day my daughter and I decided to go to a sauna that was under the guise of a ***‘Russian Banya’***. We used birch twigs (venik) in the traditional Russian way – that is, to whip each other’s backs. However, when a sauna attendant saw me flogging my daughter, she thought that it was child abuse and urged the manager to call the police!

I then had to explain that it is a Russian tradition, and that next it was my daughter’s turn to whip her mother with the birch twigs – ***‘it’s a body massage technique’***, I told them. I am also very fond of baking and always offer my services for occasions such as Russian Community events.

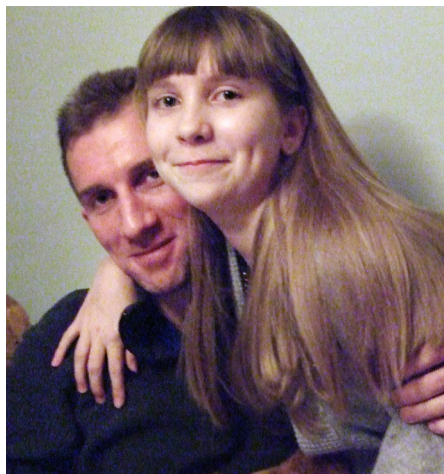
I have two children: a son and a daughter. My daughter lives in London and is married to a Latvian; she recently gave birth to my grandson Roma. My son is also married and lives in Russia.







ANNA SVIRSKA



"I moved to the UK in 2007 from Odessa (Ukraine). I live with my father. My hobby is singing – I love to sing Russian and Ukrainian pop and folk songs.

I have participated in and won many competitions, such as **'Krok do Zirok'**, **'Contemporary view'**, **'These are your talents Ukraine'**, **'Stars'** and others.

I like my new country very much, it's beautiful and warm here. Everything is well kept here, too;

squares are tidy and things are generally simpler. The weather is warm almost all year around (compared to Odessa), which is great.

Even though I had language difficulties to begin with, over the year I have managed to make new friends. When I compare my classmates here with the ones in the Ukraine I find not only similarities, but differences as well. I think children are more spoilt here. Once I saw a mother tying the shoelaces of her 11 year old son.

Having lived in the UK for only two years I don't feel that I am British yet. I guess I am still Ukrainian; my past is still in my mind".







I was born in Noril'sk, Siberia. My mum then moved us far south to Odessa, which was a huge contrast. I lived there until I was seven, when my whole family decided to move to Moscow. It was very unfortunate timing because it was the same year as the cholera epidemic in Odessa. It was a struggle, but I was seven-years old so it was also great fun – we had to stay on a ship for a month before they moved us to a plane!

I was 22 when I met my husband. Two years later we decided to get married in Moscow. I remember it well because my husband's family had never seen anything like it. It was an especially bad year for guests to visit – there was a shortage of food, among other problems. That particular year, organising a wedding was tough! Also, Gorbachev had recently banned alcohol, so we couldn't drink. But we were *"in luck"*, as the English like to say. My mother worked as a doctor and she brought a spirit home that's normally used in medicine...just so we could have something to drink on our wedding night with our English guests!

Sadly, leaving Russia also meant leaving my family behind. My mum, dad, sister and I used to live in south western Moscow on Prospekt Vernadskogo, just opposite the **MGMIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations)**. I remember those times fondly.

When I left Moscow for the UK in July 1988, the Soviet Union was still very powerful. My first impression of London was the smell – a brand-new fragrance. As soon as I got off the plane I was amazed! At first I had thought it was only the smell of the plane, but then I discovered that the





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BASTABLE

whole country had that same floral fragrance. Moving to the UK changes your life completely. I immediately liked the British people. Speaking English made life easier, of course. First I worked as an architect in London and then later I became an illustrator and an artist.

Gradually I went through a change. **In 2000 I became a charity coordinator and then helped set up the Russian Community Association – now called the European Association for Russian Speakers.** Since the charity was established we have been involved in many interesting projects. We are presently involved in a fantastic scheme, sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund. 'Projects for the Russian Community', was another good one; this encompassed '**Living in Britain**' seminars (all over the UK), a day of Russian culture (named: '**The Russian Experience**'), and excursions in London to places like The House of Lords.

I am also leading meditation classes and organising well-being events and workshops, such as Gurjieff dance, Goal Mapping, and other creative seminars. I now live with my wonderful son Jacob, who is currently studying at Wilson's School in Sutton. He's very interested in all sorts of media-related things, as well as acting and drama.







PAST EVENTS, WORKSHOPS, LEARNING

FILMS, WALKING

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Russian cuisine is a colourful blend of eclectic influences. In the 19th century, Russia was enthralled by France, borrowing ideas from Parisian food, theatre, poetry, fashion and architecture. Thick sausages are enjoyed in Russia to this day, as are cream - filled tortes, traditionally eaten at the end of a meal with tea.

Russians can also call upon the spicy tradition of the south in their food. The cuisines of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan – as well as Uzbekistan in Central Asia – make liberal use of unorthodox European ingredients such as fruit and meat (eaten together), walnuts as a spice, chillies, beans and various flavoured breads.

It is the tradition of loading the dinner table in advance with a vast variety of **‘zakuski’** (a word which translates modestly to mean **‘snack’** or **‘starter’**), that Russian cuisine is also known for. In fact, the zakuski are the main event of the meal, which might include red and black caviar, cold meats and garlic sausage, smoked sturgeon, salted herring, salmon,

RUSSIAN CUISINE



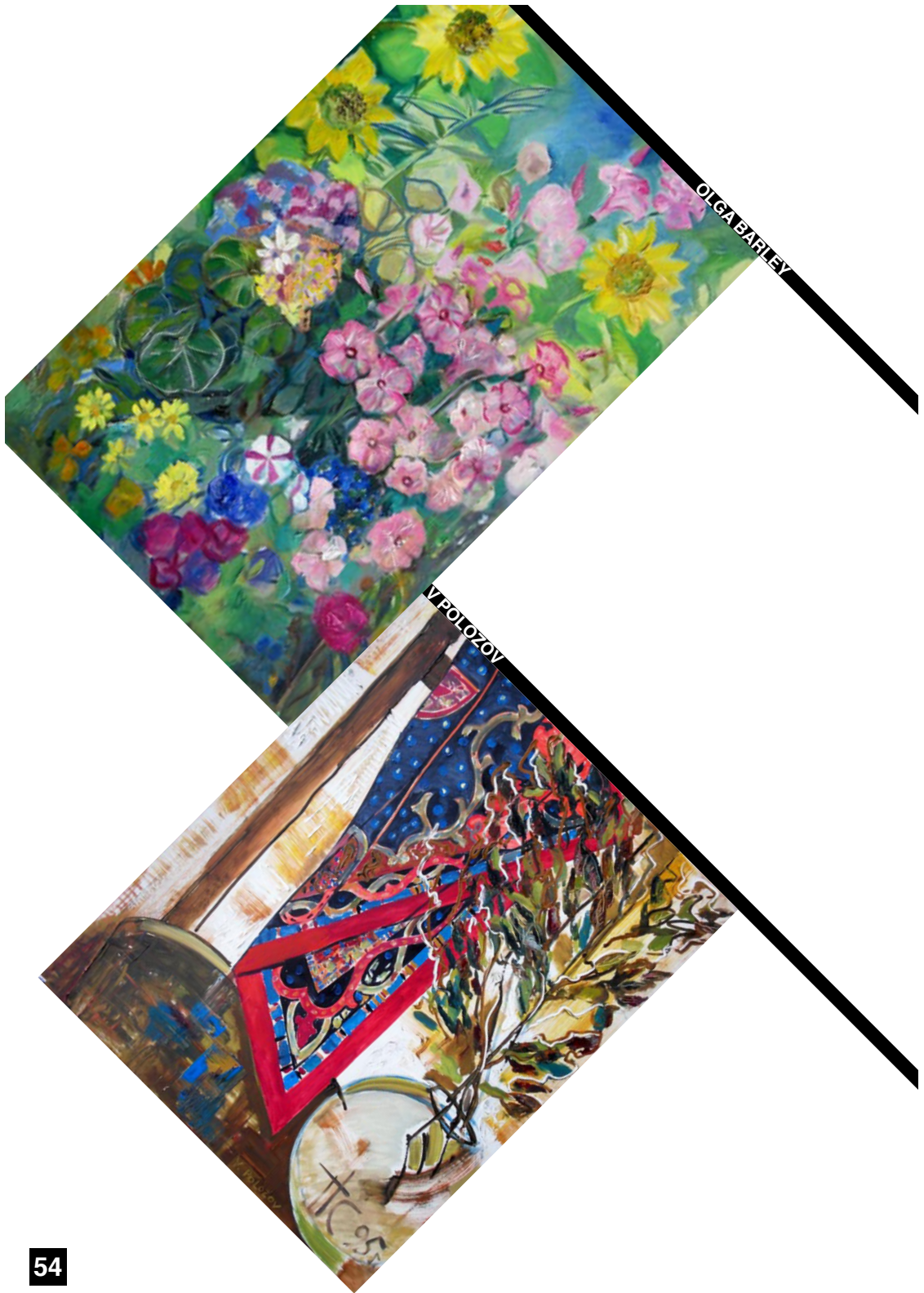


and the distinctive potato-salad called '*Olivier*'. Other favourites are mushrooms in sour cream, pickled cabbage, beetroot vinaigrette and goat's cheese, as well as the usual alcoholic ensemble of deep-chilled vodka, shampanskoye, and syrupy Georgian wines. By the time the second course arrives – usually a simple but bulky dish of meat and potatoes – most diners are already too replete to lift a fork.

All these culinary riches (and many more) were once available for a price in the quality Russian restaurants. The best dishes and finest hospitality does exist now, but the finest, it has to be said, can more often than not be found behind the closed doors of a friendly private home.









ART: RUSSIAN POSTERS AND REALISM

At first glance they are simply enchanting, graphic posters: carefully crafted depictions of stern-faced men and women painted with bold colours and tough, dynamic slogans. But the posters, which first came about at the start of the Russian Revolution in 1917, are, of course, so much more than the sum of their parts. To both contemporaries and later generations, they signify nothing less than a cultural bench-mark — a reminder that people, when strong together, are more powerful and determined than even the mightiest machine.

Using these posters as vehicles for their frustration and suppressed opinions, progressive artists such as V.V. Mayakovsky, V.N. Deni, D.S. Moor and M.M. Cheremnykh delivered important Communist Party messages, campaigns and slogans to the masses, asking the common people to stand up and fight for their rights.

It is no secret that in later Soviet times poster art was used as a form of clever marketing propaganda.

Behind the scenes, in the dead of night, the artists frantically produced

OLGA GEOGHEGAN





posters, often mocking politicians with a mixture of satire and razor wit; sometimes making dozens before the dawn of a new day. With few newspapers available at the time, these iconic images were crucial to uplifting the hearts and minds of the people on the street.

The other movement employed by the Soviet system of the time was that of Socialist Realism — essentially a development of pre-revolutionary aesthetic theories. Established by the Union of Soviet Writers, this became compulsory practice in 1932.

Socialist Realism dictated that artists portray a positive depiction of socialist society in conventionally realistic terms, and Soviet censorship held strong until glasnost was enacted in the mid-1980s. The most famous definition of Socialist Realism was given by Aleksandr Gerasimov, who said: “**Realist in form, Socialist in content.**”

Poster art and Socialist Realism influenced work in Soviet art schools for many years and lie at the roots of many celebrated styles and techniques.

NATALIA SKOBEEVA





WALERA MARTYCHIK



ALEKSANDRAS ALEKSEJEVAS







RUSSIAN TRADITION: DIVERSE ORIGINS

Slavic tribes in the European part of the current Russian territory mark the first known beginnings of Russian folk music and culture.

According to historians, it began roughly in the middle of the first millennium AC – Byzantium and German manuscripts confirm the tribes' love for music, dancing and singing.

The guttural folk singing customs and traditions of the Far East and Siberia date back to a long forgotten age. Though this may be the case, many are still sung, kept alive by those enthusiastic about passing these significant rites of passage on to younger generations. While the central, western, northern and southern regions are all unique, settlements found in the basins of the big rivers – such as the Volga – bear close similarities. Although the dances might seem unorganized and chaotic to those looking in from the outside, Russian folk tradition is steeped in a firm structure: originally, two cycles governed the singing and dancing – one influenced by the time of the year (harvest, etc), the other by family rituals (weddings, births and deaths).

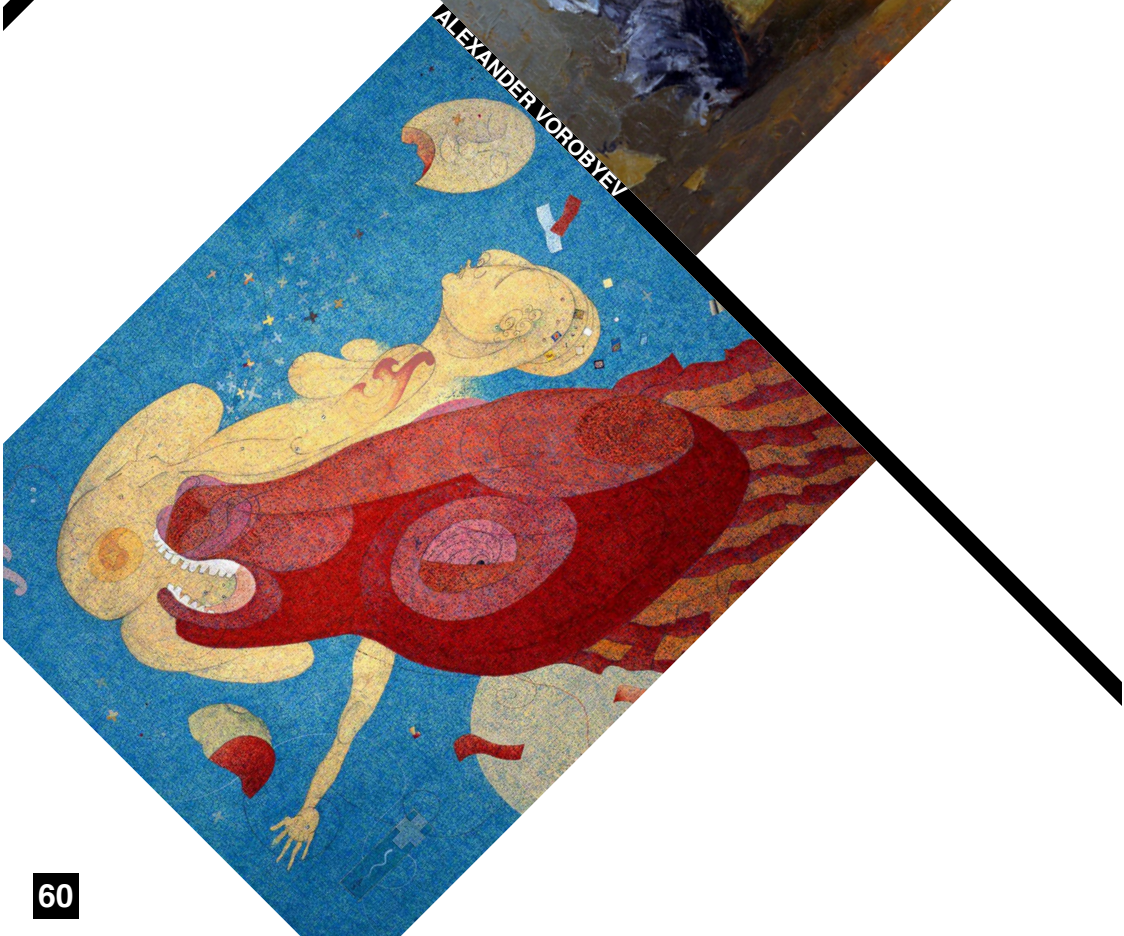
Special regard is held for songs belonging to the calendar-song-cycle; these are defined by their strict adherence to short tones. Their rhythmic formulas are made up of narrow scales and strange sounds which set them clearly apart from any other kind of music.



ALEKSANDRAS ALEKSEJEVAS

Owing to the orthodox views concerning musical instruments not being allowed in church, instrumental music was considered much less important than vocal song. While instruments were only ever used to accompany singing, that is not to say that they did not play their own important role in the evolution of Russian folk culture.

The Doudka was one of the most famous old wind instruments; archaeological digs have unearthed many of these end-blown flutes. Also popular was the '**Kuvikly**' ('**Tsevnitsa**' or Pan-pipe).







Credits and Acknowledgments:

David Talbot, chairman, Russian Community Association

Petr Bosyy, administrator and technical support

Jim Hobbs, artist, 'The Wall' project

Ingrid Ots, translations, technical support

Alla Soldatova, interviews

Jeff Temple, 'Soviet Era' workshop

Leslie Dommett, Secretary of Sutton 'Russian Circle'

Michael Pearson, creative editing, images

Victoria Skudneva, admin support

Marina Grabovskaia, translations

Robert Goldie, editing

Tanya Chuvatkina, consultant, 'Russians in Britain' brochure

Jonathan Bastable, consultant, writer

Kristina Salesnaja, 'Russian Cuisine' workshop

Evgenia Sheshenina, 'Russian Cuisine' workshop

Raya Lobinova, 'Russian Cuisine' workshop

Production team:

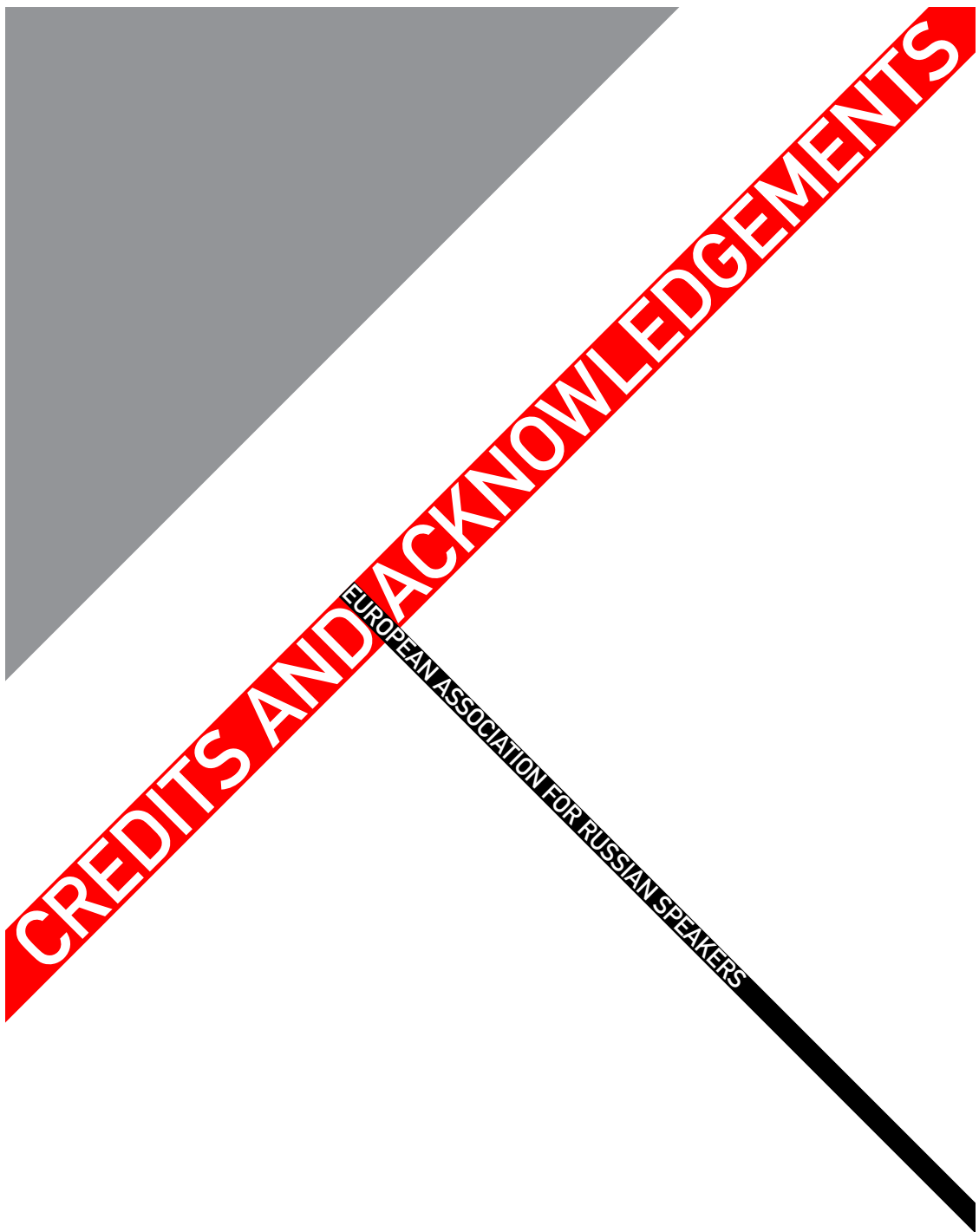
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