

THE FORUM



The Scotland-Russia Forum magazine No. 43, Summer 2020

Quarantine art and online cinema
The Fortunes of Fabergé
Lockdown life in Moscow
and much more...

Contents

Front cover: Moscow during the Covid-19 lockdown (c) Elliot Emery

- p1 Editorial
- p2 SRF news
- p3 'Isolation Art' in Russia—the quarantine phenomenon that stormed the internet
- p6 The Fortunes of Fabergé - by Sophie Law
- p8 A taste of Russia for children—by Jenny Carr
- P9 Svetlana Alexievich: Epic voices of everyday life—by Liudmila Tomanek
- P11 Kino Klassika: classic films online
- P12 Lockdown in Moscow—by Elliot Emery
- p14 Book news

From the Editor

Dear Readers

What strange times we have lived through since our last edition was published. We hope you and your loved ones are well.

Whilst we're not billing this issue as a 'Covid Special', we do have a couple of articles for you that reflect the unsettling period from which we are now beginning to emerge. Many of you will have been aware of the popular Russian Facebook page that was set up at the start of the lockdown encouraging people to photograph their own tableaux vivants of famous artworks, and on page 3 we bring you some of the images that caught our eye. On page 12 Elliot Emery, a teacher of English as a foreign language who lives in Moscow, describes what life was like for him during the lockdown. Meanwhile the KinoKlassika Foundation have been providing us with classic cinema online while we've been stuck indoors, and you can read more about them on page 11. Do support them if you can.

We are delighted that auctioneer and author Sophie Law has written a piece for us about Fabergé, to mark the centenary of his death. Her fascinating article will probably also inspire you to read her debut novel, *Olga's Egg*.

Our former Chair, Jenny Carr, reports for us on the launch of her Russian language and culture education pack for children, which you can find out about on page 8. Do have a look at the weblinks at the end of the article and let Jenny have your feedback.

If you watched the extraordinary television series 'Chernobyl', you may know that Svetlana Alexievich's book *Chernobyl Prayer* provided a big part of the background material for it. We are grateful to Liudmila Tomanek for shedding more light on Alexievich's work (page 9).

We had planned to report in this issue on some of the events taking place to mark 9th May 2020, the 75th anniversary of Victory Day. The huge celebrations planned for Moscow, of course, had to be completely scaled back—though the victory parade later took place on 24th June, just ahead of the controversial vote on constitutional amendments. We were sorry not to be able to cover it here.

As usual, if you would like to suggest future topics for us to cover in *The FORUM*, or indeed if you would like to write an article yourself, do please contact me via the SRF or directly at sheilasim2@gmail.com. I'd be happy to hear from you.

The Editor, July 2020

The aim of the Scotland-Russia Forum is to promote interest in Russia and its neighbours in order to improve understanding of those countries in Scotland.

www.scotlandrussiaforum.org



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SRF News

More information on the SRF: www.scotlandrussiaforum.org

While the current restrictions mean that we cannot all meet up to share aspects of Russia and Russian culture together, our Chair invites everyone to participate in a "sharing group" via our webpage of Russian books, films, anecdotes, personal experiences of Russia that have been helping you through these difficult days.

Margaret says: "Please e-mail us at info@scotlandrussiaforum.org with any suggestions so that your ideas, thoughts, suggestions can be published on our website. These can be named or anonymous - as you wish. We are all united by our interest in and love for Russia and her neighbours, and so this might be a good way of joining together in these days of social distancing..."

Events in the pipeline

We have long been trailing our new series of "Cultural Conversations", which have sadly had to be put on hold during the pandemic. We very much hope to have these up and running soon. Professor Peter France will be our first speaker, providing an overview of Edwin Morgan's translation of Russian poetry.

Our second speaker in this series will be Dr Shamil' Khairov (University of Glasgow) who will deliver a "Meet the Author" session to launch his new book "Russian for All Occasions" which he co-authored with Dr. John Dunn.

Professor Tom Hubbard is no stranger to SRF members and he is one of the great masters of Russo-Scottish connections at many levels. In the third talk in this series he will examine some new translations of Chekhov's short stories into Scots on which he has been working.

Annual General Meeting

We are hoping that our AGM, which was postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions, may now take place at Summerhall in the autumn. Of course we will keep members abreast of any plans.

Getting in touch

Please note that the building at Glasgow University in which our office is located is closed until further notice, and we are unable to collect any mail that is delivered there.

To contact us in the meantime, please email us at the usual address: info@scotlandrussiaforum.org. Emails are checked on an almost daily basis so we will reply to you as soon as possible.

*Sheila Sim,
Editor, The FORUM
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‘Isolation Art’ in Russia—the quarantine phenomenon that stormed the internet

As countries around the world responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by imposing a lockdown, a Russian Facebook page called Art-Isolation, set up by Katerina Brudnaya-Chelyadinova, took shape. Art enthusiasts across the country relieved their boredom and tapped into their creativity by recreating iconic (and not so iconic) paintings from art history. The group’s name, *Изоляция*, combines the Russian words for “visual arts” and “isolation.”

The rules were simple: no Photoshop, post only your own creations done during self-isolation, with materials you already have at home, no politics, and no commentary. The creative challenge quickly became a sensation; hundreds of thousands of people (more than 590,000 at the time of our going to print) have joined the Facebook group since it was created on 30th March.

Yulia Okhotnikova, an actress living in Yoshkar-Ola in the Mari El Republic, has posted several of her own recreations

on the page – “some successful, some not so good”, she says. “The hardest thing is recreating every detail of the original to a tee and capturing it on a mobile phone, without a professional camera or lighting equipment. It’s hard to get the right angle, especially when it’s one of my children rather than me who’s taking the picture. But they got the hang of holding one phone with the original image in one hand, and taking the photo with a second phone in the other hand.”

Her recreation of a painting by Virginie Demont-Breton (below) shows the exceptional care that Yulia took to be faithful to the original artwork; not only are the three figures placed in exactly the same pose, but the choice of a green pan under the left foot echoes the mossy rock in the original. It’s an extraordinary feat of reproduction and a real labour of love!

Evgeny Moskola is originally from Ukraine but now lives in



Recreation of Virginie Demont-Breton’s image ‘Femme de pêcheur venant de baigner ses enfants’ (original on left) by Yulia Okhotnikova (right, with her children)



Queen Ulrika Eleonora of Sweden, artist unknown (original, left) and Evgeny Moskola (right)

Canada. “During the quarantine I was working from home,” he says, “and we found IzoIzoliatsya a very interesting idea. Especially for people who feel loneliness. It helped me to find new friends!”

Ilja Sircenko is from Riga in Latvia, though he currently lives in Brussels. “The Madonna and Child by Bartolomeo Esteban Murillo was our tenth work,” he told *The Forum*.

“We started doing work with the Madonnas, because my wife wanted to make some kind of painting with a baby, and of the medieval paintings the paintings with Madonnas were most beautiful and interesting for us. All these paintings were complex, but each was complex in its own way.

Sometimes it was difficult to distract the child so that he took the right pose. Sometimes it was hard to make clothes. For example, the cloak for Madonna was made from duvet cover. It was also necessary to correctly convey the emo-



Madonna and Child by Bartolomé Esteban Perez Murillo, c.1670 (original on left), and recreation by Ilja Sircenko and his family

tion of the model. It's always harder to do this with children. But the whole process has always been fun and joyful.

We really enjoyed participating!”

Contributors to IzoIzoliatsya come from all over the world. Katherine Encarnacao lives in Boston. She told us, “I have always loved Matisse. One day in 1991 I was in St. Petersburg (I was a dancer on Princess Cruises and this was the Balkan cruise) at the Hermitage. I had no idea my favorite painting was there and I was so excited to see it. It was much larger than I expected. I felt like I had won the lottery! I have a print of it in my apartment in Boston. My daughter, Sofia and I decided to recreate it during the quarantine. We love the Facebook page and are inspired by all the recreated art.”



The Dessert: Harmony in Red by Matisse, 1908 (original, below) and Katherine's recreation (above)





Pushkin in Mikhailovskoe by Pyotr Konchalovsky, 1932 (original inset above), and Lesya Ortynska's recreation with her husband Olivier starring as Pushkin (left)

Lesya Ortynska's recreation of Pushkin in Mikhailovskoye is another work very faithful to the original (see above). Lesya told us, "I am a Ukrainian artist currently living in France with my French husband Olivier, and two kids. Our first idea was to imitate a painting of the great Russian poet Pushkin, because by some miracle Olivier looks just like him. We had a long discussion about which painting we wanted to imitate, and finally we chose this painting, because there was a white shirt, a round table, and a golden blanket available in our quarantine home! At first we didn't realise it could be so difficult to recreate the same picture, to give the same feeling that artist Pyotr Konchalovsky gave to the image. We spent many hours fine-tuning all the details: the direction of the gaze, the shape of the pillows, the angle of the camera, the posture of the poet and the look of inspiration on his face..."

Finally, we leave you with Lena Pavlovich, whose recreation of Three Bogatyrs bowled us over here at *The Forum*. Victor Vasnetsov's 1898 painting depicted three of the most famous bogatyrs: Dobrynya Nikitich, Ilya Muromets and Alyosha Popovich. Lena told us, "I have worked with animals all my life. It started back in my early childhood, when I enjoyed horseriding; later I went to work in a circus. I'm still there now, working as a rider-trainer. I live on the outskirts of Moscow.

I was attracted to the idea of 'Izoizolyatsiya' when I saw it, and eventually we decided to take part. Since one of my horses looks just like Ilya's horse, and another like Dobrynya's, the idea came to me in a flash. The third horse comes from the stables where her owner and I were based during the quarantine.

It took us two weeks to get all the props and costumes together; we made everything by hand, using things that we found in the house or in the shed of the dacha. The actual photoshoot took 30 minutes."



The original Three Bogatyrs by Vasnetsov, 1898 (above) and Lena's recreation (below)



The Editor would like to thank all the contributors for allowing us to use their wonderful images.

The Fortunes of Fabergé

by Sophie Law

Art specialist and author Sophie Law marks 100 years since the death of jeweller Fabergé

One hundred years ago, Carl Fabergé, jeweller to the Russian Tsars, died in Switzerland of a broken heart. I recall being incredibly moved when I first learned the cause of his death according to his family; it spoke to me of a man who fully acknowledged what had happened to his homeland, and this acceptance broke him. While many émigrés harboured hopes of a return to Russia and restoration of the monarchy, Fabergé recognised what had happened: a golden age had come to an end and the Russia he had known and loved was gone.

Carl Fabergé had good reason to mourn what the Russian revolution had so brutally overturned. By 1917 his business had reached heights he could hardly have dreamt of when he took it over from his father in 1872. As well as a flagship shop in St. Petersburg, he had had successful branches in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and London and production had begun on two Imperial Fabergé eggs – eggs which were never finished and never delivered to the man who had commissioned them, the newly renamed Nicholas Romanov. When Fabergé's assets were expropriated by a revolutionary committee, the enterprise he had so shrewdly and keenly built up was destroyed.

While public imagination is very much enamoured of the idea of Fabergé eggs, what I learned when I began my career as a Russian art specialist at Bonhams Auctioneers in 2006, is that Fabergé eggs are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to an understanding of Carl Fabergé and his jewellery empire. Fabergé was a businessman first and foremost, having been given an exceptional international education at the behest of his father, and as soon as he could he increased the output of his firm by establishing workshops headed by highly skilled workmasters who oversaw production of a vast number of objets d'art. It is this huge range of objects made by the firm which regularly appears at auction: frames, bellpushes, cigarette cases, vesta cases and diamond brooches, to name but a few. These small but significant items are what augmented Fabergé's fame; the aristocracy of St Petersburg would summon their servants by pressing the cabochon sapphire in their Fabergé bellpush, while gentlemen would offer cigarettes from stylish two-colour gold cigarette cases. After he

was appointed 'Supplier to the Court of His Imperial Majesty' in 1885, the Tsar and Tsarina became ambassadors of sorts for the firm, bestowing lavish gifts made by Fabergé on visiting foreign dignitaries and travelling with suitcases full of Fabergé as presentation gifts. Consequently, an item from Monsieur Fabergé was the height of fashion and each piece was made to the highest standards with cutting-edge techniques. Indeed, handling these small but beautiful pieces is what makes my job so satisfying: listening to the pleasing 'click' of a cigarette case as it closes firmly and



A Fabergé Imperial presentation kovsh, sold for £236,000 in 2018. ©Bonhams

smoothly, feeling the cold weight of a nephrite paper knife in my hand, or holding the sunburst guilloché enamel on a photograph frame up to the light to enjoy its hologram-like translucency.

The range of Fabergé pieces which appears in auctions of Russian art perfectly displays the broad artistic reach of the firm: one might find a brilliant white guilloché enamel cane handle by Fabergé workmaster Henrik Wigström, a monumental silver kovsh from the Moscow branch in the Pan-Slavic taste with a bogatyr's head chased in the prow, a large silver and cut-glass centrepiece applied with laurel festoons, or any other number of masterpieces. One of the many manifestations of the genius of Fabergé was that he produced pieces for all occasions: brooches and miniature pendant eggs for the fashionable ladies of society, cufflinks and cane handles for the gentlemen, hardstone flowers and decorative kovshi for the display cabinets of aristocratic drawing rooms, silver cutlery and tazzas for the dining tables, and nephrite paper knives and silver inkwells for the desks of the rich and powerful.

The appetite for Fabergé at auction has always been robust, but everything changed when Russian buyers emerged and transformed the Russian art market from



A Fabergé hardstone figure of a bourgeoisie, sold for £1.2 million in 2014. ©Bonhams

2005 onwards. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Fabergé buyers were mostly international collectors – many American, where the appetite for Fabergé was fostered by the acquisitions of rich American heiresses such as Marjorie Merriweather Post and Lillian Thomas Pratt.

However, the new breed of Russian oligarch and its smaller versions fought with their bidding paddles to reclaim what they saw as their lost heritage. Hammer prices would far outstrip estimates, turbo-charging the market with Russian buying power. While the market has adjusted somewhat since 2013 and the ‘Russian premium’ has calmed,



A Fabergé Imperial jewelled silver-gilt and enamel cigarette case, presented by the Empress Alexandra to Nicholas II, sold for £205,000 in 2013. ©Bonhams

demand for Fabergé pieces with interesting provenance is still high, as recently demonstrated by the sale at Bonhams of an Imperial presentation jewelled hardstone kovsh, only 12cm in length, presented by Nicholas II to Victor Albert, Lord Churchill at Balmoral in 1896 for £236,000.

My particular interest lies with the missing Fabergé Imperial Easter eggs, a subject of mystery, intrigue and detective scholarship. In 2014 the discovery of the Third Imperial Egg, the Fabergé Easter egg which Alexander III gave to the Empress Maria Feodorovna in 1887, was announced. The egg was found in extraordinary circumstances by an American scrap dealer who bought the ribbed gold egg which opened to a Vacheron Constantin watch for a few thousand dollars. He had tried to sell the egg on to a buyer for scrap no less than seven times, but was turned down on each occasion. Despondent, one night he began to google the words ‘egg’ and ‘Vacheron Constantin’, and his life changed for ever – it is said that he fainted on receiving confirmation of his discovery in London. Just after the private sale of the egg for an undisclosed amount - but one thought to exceed £20 million - the egg was displayed for a short period at Wartski in Mayfair in 2014 and when I went to see it, I was completely enthralled by this miniature masterpiece. The egg had survived the loss of its identity for almost a century – it could have been melted down or plundered for parts - but this tiny treasure had survived. The miraculous discovery formed the inspiration for my novel about Fabergé eggs, *Olga’s Egg*, as my imagination dwelled on the fact that there are still seven other missing Imperial Fabergé eggs. I couldn’t stop fantasising about what they might look like – there are three eggs with no visual record at all - and so my mind had artistic free rein. The variety of forms and materials which Fabergé used for the eggs is so vast, that we can only wonder at what his genius created for those eggs we have yet to see. *Olga’s Egg* was published in collaboration with Fabergé in 2018 and I like to think that Carl Fabergé himself would be pleased that his artistic legacy still provides inspiration a century on.

Sophie Law is Senior Specialist in the Russian Department at Bonhams and author of Olga’s Egg, published by Clink Street, 2018.



A taste of Russia for children

by Jenny Carr



New on the British Council's Schools website is "Russian Language and Culture Education pack", a colourful race through some aspects of Russian culture designed for primary school children aged 7-11.

The pack is based on material from myself and Marta Tomaszewsky on behalf of the SRF. It has been considerably enhanced with additional material, editing and design by the British Council schools team and their designer. We are grateful to them and to our sponsor, Future of Russia Foundation, whose funding will cover improvements to the original version of the pack as well as its future promotion.

The original, fuller, version of the education pack will suit a slightly older age group and will be published on the SRF website and on my own site soon. Both versions are designed to provide materials for teachers to present information on Russia either as a short standalone course or (more likely?) in sections in connection with other parts of the curriculum.

Topics touched on include the language and alphabet, space, literature and everyday life. There are letters from some Moscow schoolchildren describing their school life and other activities, some simple recipes and a number of fun activities, such as the "balloon rocket challenge" and "make your own Fabergé egg" added by the British Coun

cil. The full version includes more language, more literature, and more information on the other topics as well as a short history section and full slide presentations for each section to make teachers' lives easier.

This is the latest output from my various attempts while an SRF trustee to interest schools in both cultural and linguistic aspects of Russia and provide a starting point (I hope) for the development of interest in the country and region.

The SRF still offers excellent language classes to adults but in February 2019 its wider educational programme moved to my new website www.russiainscotland.com, and I stood down from the committee in order to spend more time on that and in particular on the "Russian Language and Culture" project.

I planned to follow this up by visiting schools to present the course, or aspects of it, but the aftermath of Covid may make that problematical. In the meantime an online course is of course more relevant than ever.

Why do we need to promote interest in Russia among school pupils?

As regular readers will know there is almost no Russian language taught in Scottish schools, particularly since for some years there have been no school exams in the subject.

While there are still GCSEs and A Levels in Russian in England (and a few Scottish private schools) numbers studying the language there are low and falling too. With little Russian cultural content in the rest of the curriculum, tourist travel to Russia a rarity, and relatively few Russians living in most of the UK we are hoping to stimulate curiosity in some aspects of Russia which we hope will interest children, and that they will have some awareness of the country when they hear about it as they grow up.

Please see the links below on how and where to find both versions, and then have a look at them. Let me know what you think, and pass on to any teachers, schools, children or anyone else you think might be interested. Thank you!



Links:

Primary school version: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/russian-language-culture>

Full version: <https://www.russianinScotland.com/new-short-course-for-schools.html>

Jenny Carr is the former Chair of the Scotland-Russia Forum. She continues to work with schools in Scotland to encourage the teaching of Russian.

Svetlana Alexievich. Epic voices of everyday life: Reconstructing ‘homo sovieticus’ for the Scottish reader—by Liudmila Tomanek

I love the lone human voice...
 (Svetlana Alexievich, Nobel Prize in Literature 2015,
 Nobel Lecture “On the Battle Lost”,
 Translation: Jamey Gambrell)

In 2015, the Belorussian writer and journalist Svetlana Alexievich won the Nobel Prize in Literature “for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time”. Her books have been translated into 35 languages and serve as a continual inspiration in the creation of numerous theatrical plays, films and other works of art all over the world. Born in the former USSR shortly after the war, she considers her identity to be divided between Ukraine, the birthplace of her mother and herself; Belorussia, the land of her father, where she grew up and lives; and Russia’s great culture, without which, as she says, she cannot imagine herself.

Her first work, *The Unwomanly Face of War* («У войны не женское лицо»), was initially published in a literary journal in a heavily censored format; and only when Gorbachev came to power did it come out as a book. The writing of Svetlana Alexievich is unique in many ways, not least that her own presence within her novels is deliberately reduced to a minimum. Instead, a sole human voice becomes the centrepiece of the polyphony. The reader is surrounded by a myriad of voices — the voices of “little, great people” as she puts it.

Placed in the historical context, they reconstruct the oral history of the Soviet past, of those who struggled through and survived it, as much as of those who did not make it. Collectively, they recreate for the reader the story of the country that is no more. In the books of Alexievich one will not find a single ideology or angle, not even her own opinion as such. There is no messenger, only a polyphony of human suffering unveiled through a chorus of disharmonious desperate voices that belong to one breed of humans, **identified by her as “homo sovieticus”, a unique creation** innate to the former USSR. While every voice is unique in its own right, they all have in common this specific unifying feature that they are doomed to carry to the day they die.

“I am not alone. I am surrounded by voices... hundreds of them... My journey is a journey from voice to voice.”
(Svetlana Alexievich, translated by Jamey Gambrell)

The voices speak and the audience listens. This first-hand experience allows the readers to find their own personal truth, based on their own individual perception of life and in accordance with their own views and beliefs. That is how it should be and that is how it is — for those who can read and understand Russian. While reading a book in translation, few realise that it is not the voice of the original that is speaking to us. Instead, we are faced with the voice, personality and subjectivity of a translator. The prism that the translator places on top of the text becomes our looking glass through which we are trying to access the message of the original story. Although the invisibility of a good translator is assumed – it is, in fact, an illusion. A good translator will always try to understand the author and reflect this in the translation. However, in doing so, they inevitably add their own voice on top of the voice of the author. While it is not their fault, they retell their version of the story and that is what becomes available to the target audience as the end product.

When translating each individual voice, one is inevitably confronted with the same difficulty as when translating any other narrative. The only difference is that instead of one narrative, a polyphonic novel encounters a clash of multiple narratives which are not embedded into the storyline but are storylines in their own rights. Each voice is a novel within a novel. Thus, in translating each voice we translate culture and context, consider clarifying gaps in understanding and yet try to avoid excessive clarifications, as well as ambiguities that are not intended by the author. In this context, translators have to take into account the lack of

knowledge on the part of the target audience. However, translators are partial and personally involved with the text. Being creative by the nature of their trade, they, at times unintentionally, would add their own touch to the translation, in all their earnestness believing that the result will be an embellishment. Translators are capable of mixing opinions, vision and truth, at times, losing track of the boundary between those concepts. While for the Scottish audience the writing of Svetlana Alexievich is accessible by means of translation, or at least as far as the words go, the question remains as to whether the multitude of sounds of the original voices as well as their individual messages are doomed to stay locked within the culture that produced them. Is translation, in principle, capable of giving us an idea of what the author wanted to say? Do the authors of each voice know themselves what they are trying to say? Is it possible at all to preserve and carry across the cultures this polyphonic chorus?

Surprising as it may be, according to the notable literary scholar Cairns Craig, polyphonic narrative is not that uncommon in post-devolution Scotland. The diversity of dialects and value systems across the country cannot be represented by an organic and homogeneous unitary voice. Instead, they give way to the multitude of unique voices, which is reflected Scottish literature. The debate on the subject of the complex relationship between the voices is directly linked to Scottish identity. In this way, the poetry of the famous Scottish writer Edwin Morgan has been referred to as a form of translating “outside” reality into “essences” of everyday occurrences. Can we metaphorically claim that in the same manner it would be possible to access the meaning of the voices from the novels by Svetlana Alexievich by translating “outside” reality as represented by “homo sovieticus” into “essences” of Scottish everyday occurrences? For Scottish readers of novels by Alexievich will inevitably embed their understanding of the voices into the context of their own reality. Can we dare to assume that multivoicedness of “homo sovieticus” would be comparable to and compatible with the polyphonic complexity under the umbrella of Scottish identity?

Can translation overcome these hurdles and deliver the epic voices of everyday life of “homo sovieticus” for the Scottish reader? The debate is open.

Ludmila Tomanek is embarking on a PhD at the University of Glasgow, researching polyphonic aspect in translation.

Kino Klassika: classic films online — by KinoKlassika

Kino Klassika is a charitable foundation championing film culture from Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Since its launch in 2013, the foundation programme restorations, publications, screening seasons, exhibitions and events to bridge the divide between those cultures and our own. In January this year, in partnership with the British Film Institute, Kino screened *MELODIA! Discovering*



Musicals from Russia and the Caucasus across England. Our audience is constantly expanding and we are eager to find programming partners in Scotland.

When cinemas went dark in March 2020, we took the risk to move all of our programming online. Kino Klassika had previously made a commitment to honouring the 75th anniversary of World War II in a screening partnership with the Institut Français, cinemas and archives in the UK and Russia. The season was called RED FRONT: 75 YEARS OF RUSSIAN WAR CINEMA. The charity, uniquely, made the films freely available to UK cinemagoers and was able to both expand their reach and shine a light on rarely screened classics. Supported by the Russian Embassy in London, the season included remarkable modern and classic titles from great directors of Russian language cinema. The directors chosen were all highly acclaimed but far ranging in style and each piece offered a different perspective on the great patriotic war. Renowned master of cinema Aleksei Germann; Tatiana Lioznova, one of a few female Soviet directors; the prolific Andrei Konchalovsky and Yuri Norstein, considered the greatest animator of all time, all contributed to the season.

Following the strong success of RED FRONT, where each week's film averaged over 1000 views, Kino Klassika continues to screen a film a week free for UK cinema goers. This new season is called Klassiki and the intention is to make classic cinema readily available to audiences in the comfort of one's home. Klassiki films range from early silent cinema, masterpieces of animation, post-war classics to contemporary Cannes winners. To supplement the film experience, Klassiki offers specially commissioned and downloadable programme notes which give biographical, social and political context to each film. This curatorial feature is unique to Kino Klassika. Klassiki (the Russian word for Hopscotch), allows viewers to stream great cinema for free, anywhere, on the hop! If you would like to support this endeavour to showcase please spread the word or consider supporting with a donation.

Aside from screenings, Kino Klassika engages in an ambitious program of film restoration. Through private and public facing sponsorship, we have funded the restoration of four films in partnership with the Georgian National Film Centre, National Cinema Centre of Armenia, Azerbaijan Film Fund and Gosfilmofond of Russia. These films include the Parajanov short films Hakob Hovnatanyan (1967) and Arabesques on the Pirosmanni Theme (1985), as well Jirtan (1969). The uniqueness of Kino Klassika's mission and innovation in programming, screening and restoration has prompted praise across the exhibition and distribution industry. As Peter Bradshaw, Guardian film critic and a major voice in UK film, says, 'Kino Klassika has become a very vital part of film culture.'

We know Scotland and Russia have a long relationship and a vibrant community in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and we would love to build the awareness of KinoKlassika and what we do. Any cinema partners would help spread our reach and we are eager to programme our seasons in Scotland in the future. Equally, we are eager for members of the Scottish-Russia Forum, and readers of this magazine, to find out about our online programming. Meantime, watch our website for details of upcoming films this summer.

To view films online, or donate to Kino Klassika, go to www.kinoklassikafoundation.org

Ducks, Face Masks and Picnics: Lockdown in Moscow

by Elliot Emery

“Are those your ducks?” the elderly woman (known as a babushka in Russian) asked me as I approached a pedestrian crossing in my local neighbourhood of Moscow. My partner had insisted on pausing our walk in order to feed a group of wayward and seemingly food deprived ducks.

“No, they're not mine”, I replied somewhat confused, albeit pleased to use my Russian which had become a little rusty as of late. However, apparently, a man with no ducks was not a man worth knowing, thus the elderly woman instantly shuffled off in the opposite direction. This constituted one of my first proper walks outside our apartment in several weeks, living in a city in lockdown due to the ferocious spread of Coronavirus throughout the country.

I moved to Moscow in January 2019 to start a new life. In the UK, I had studied Law and practised as an immigration lawyer for almost three years. However, for as long as I could remember I had been fascinated with Russia so much that I had embarked on a Russian language course and never looked back. So, when I was offered a job as an English teacher in Moscow, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

I spent last summer (six months into my new life) in the breathtakingly beautiful nature of Karelia (near the Finnish border) followed by a three week trip to the former closed city of Nizhny Novgorod, strolling alongside its equally beautiful Kremlin walls. By contrast, this summer, I have largely spent sat in my small, hot kitchen, teaching children online and simultaneously staring at the fridge and wondering whether it is ever justifiable to end a class early in order to grab ice cream. Quite the change. Nevertheless, life in Russia is never boring, even when its capital city is in lockdown.

Compared to the rest of Europe, Coronavirus didn't hit Russia until fairly late on. In fact, I was still working as usual in schools until mid-March. However, when it did hit, it hit hard. Within a matter of weeks I found myself self-isolating from my kitchen, able to leave my house only to go to the pharmacy or my local supermarket.

Public transport was forbidden without first obtaining a



Enjoying nature in one of Moscow's many parks

QR code on your phone. In order to do so, you had to make an application online specifying the purpose of your travel (there were several permitted reasons). Parks were also closed, suddenly cordoned off. However, predictably, for those who are aware of Russians' love of walking, these cordons were wholly unsuccessful. In fact, I watched in horror as the cordon for my local park lasted a total of ten minutes before it was ripped off by a hoard of unruly teenagers.

Yet, despite such small incidences of disobedience, by usual standards, Moscow's streets and roads were largely empty, an eerie sight. I believe that the principal reason for this was not health but rather, fears of being handed a rather hefty fine by the police who were even more visible than usual.

One of the things which I have learnt about living in Russia is that you need to be prepared for anything and everything. Life can often be uncertain and unpredictable. The government's handling of Coronavirus has been no exception to this.

One day, little over a week into a new regime which had divided the city into six groups, with each group per-

mitted to go for a walk (for leisure purposes), Sergei Sobyenin (Moscow Mayor) made an announcement: all restrictions were to be cancelled within days.



Elliot in Moscow during lockdown

Many Muscovites rejoiced, looking forward to a return to normal life.

However, this U-turn seemed slightly premature. The number of daily infections remained high (around 8,000 per day throughout Russia, around 2,000 of these were in Moscow).

Thus, rather than the defeat of Coronavirus, it seemed hard to avoid the conclusion that the primary motivation for removing said restrictions was perhaps the upcoming referendum on proposed changes to Russia's constitution.



Syrniki

Syrniki

The proposals include a clause which could see Putin in power until 2036. The opening up of parks and shops provided a welcome distraction to this.

In spite of my misgivings, I have cautiously been enjoying a return to normal life. My aforementioned girlfriend is Russian and hence thoroughly enjoys walking for several hours through forests to the point of exhaustion. I don't quite understand the appeal myself but even I'll admit that it's been nice to get some fresh air.

Most recently, we had a picnic at a local park (near the Ostankino TV tower), gorging on my ever improving homemade syrniki (сырники), a popular dessert here made from tvorog (similar to cottage cheese). This was even followed by an evening pint with my friends later on.

What's next? As I have already said, life in Russia is hard to predict so I often try to avoid answering this question. However, I hope that in the weeks that follow, life in the capital (and the rest of the country) will steadily return to normal, enabling me to enjoy the very things which I came to Russia for: the culture, museums, food and the people. However, with a large scale postponed Victory Day parade on Red Square scheduled for 24 June, I remain somewhat sceptical. Let's see what happens!



Elliot Emery has a degree in Law from the University of Birmingham and a Master's degree in Human Rights Law from the University of Nottingham. He worked as an immigration lawyer in the UK representing asylum seekers before moving to Moscow in January 2019 where he currently lives and works as an English teacher. His book "Why are you going there?" (Stories of an English teacher in Russia) is available on Amazon now.

Book news

Unfortunately we are unable to bring you any book reviews in this issue, as the publishers were unable to post review copies to our reviewers. We will try to make up for it next time! In the meantime, here is just a small selection of some of the books that have been published in the first half of 2020 that might be of interest to our readers.

Politics & current affairs

Putin's People by Catherine Belton, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. "A fearless, fascinating account of the emergence of the Putin regime also shines a light on the current threats posed by Russian money and influence" (The Guardian)

Shadow State by Luke Harding, published by Guardian Faber. "An exposé that takes in Skripal, Trump 2016 and the UK's long-delayed Russia report" (Financial Times)

The Return of the Russian Leviathan by Sergei Medvedev, translated by Stephen Dalziel, published by Polity. "This sharp and insightful book, full of irony and humour, shows how the archaic forces of imperial revanchism have been brought back to life, shaking Russian society and threatening the outside world. It will be of great interest to anyone trying to understand the forces shaping Russian politics and society today" (Pushkin House)

Travel writing

The Lost Pianos of Siberia by Sophy Roberts, published by Doubleday. "Once or twice a year or so, a new book makes you think that travel writing is back. [This] is one of those books. It is an extraordinary encounter with a wildly fascinating and astonishingly ill-known region" (The Times)

Food

Beyond the North Wind: Russia in Recipes and Lore by Darra Goldstein, published by Ten Speed. "A magnificent celebration of Russia's enduring culture of hospitality and the tenacious Russian "capacity to celebrate the moment since they're aware that darker days inevitably lie ahead" (Moscow Times)

Summer Kitchens by Olia Hercules, published by Bloomsbury. "Packed with beautiful recipes and photographs of makeshift kitchens that proliferate in veg gardens in her native Ukraine" (Daily Telegraph)

Literature in translation

Three Apples Fell From the Sky by Narine Abgaryan, translated by Lisa Hayden (publ. Simon & Schuster). In an isolated village high in the Armenian mountains, a close-knit community bickers, gossips and laughs. Their only connection to the outside world is an ancient telegraph wire and a perilous mountain road that even goats struggle to navigate.

Fandango and Other Stories by Alexander Grin, translated by Bryan Karetnyk (publ. Columbia University Press). A selection of essential short fiction by Alexander Grin, Russia's counterpart to Robert Louis Stevenson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Alexandre Dumas.

We hope to review some of these in our next issue, and we'll be keeping an eye out for books published in the coming months. On our radar is the forthcoming food and travel book by Edinburgh-based Caroline Eden, entitled Red Sands: "a reimagining of traditional travel writing using food as the jumping-off point to explore Central Asia". Sounds tasty.



The Scotland-Russia Forum

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