

RUSSIAN MAECENAS

April 2016

Issue 4/23

**With
Russian
pages**

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and Decorations *p. 8***

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Lost Items *p. 16***

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of Hospitality *p. 34***



*Fair Government
Strong Business
Prosperous Citizens*

RUSSIAN  MAECENAS

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View of the Stock Exchange building —
the future State Hermitage Museum of Heraldry.
Photo: Evgeny Sinyaver.

The Chinese Palace in Oranienbaum —
the jewel of Peterhof Museum-Reserve.
Photo: the Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg Press Office.

Welcome!

Regeneration of Emotions

Last December at the St. Petersburg Cultural Forum I spoke to the well-known drama teacher Mikhail Borisov, the curator of a production of *Carmen* in Moscow in which people with development peculiarities perform alongside professional actors. And he very precisely diagnosed the disease that infected not only the actors: 'They sometimes have a very sloppy attitude to the theatre — always in a hurry, tearing about at full tilt from one film shot to another with no time to immerse themselves in anything, so you start to relate to them as to a passing train. But here they have to stop and concentrate. I think it shook them to see people who exist on a different physical plane. I myself experienced a regeneration of long-forgotten emotions.'

Shortly afterwards I met one of these people, the deaf-blind-mute lad Alexey Gorelov, who had come with his fellow-actors to see how *Carmen* would work in the Hermitage Theatre. The Hermitage had organized a tour of the museum for them. An interpreter was relaying the guide's words by placing his fingers on Alexey's palm. Alexey was touching the subjects which are allowed to be touched, and then — something amazing: he started taking photographs! 'Who are you taking the photo-



graphs for?' I asked him through the interpreter (with the unspoken thought: 'if you can't see'). 'For my wife', he replied via the interpreter's palm. 'It's such a beautiful room. She'll look at it and will want to come.'

I felt exactly how Borisov said he had felt: a regeneration of long-forgotten emotions. How many times had I passed through these rooms and had never found the time to stop and concentrate, though I remember many of them from childhood? How little we appreciate the opportunity to apprehend the beautiful. No, when we are in a sombre mood we look for answers, comfort and stimuli in books, music, paintings, the theatre... But how insignificant our misfortunes seem when compared with Alexey's problems! Our receptors are worn to shreds by a constant stream of crazy news. A regeneration of emotions is really necessary to touch a stone, stretch out a hand to those close to us and scrutinize the imperceptible. Otherwise we rush past the beauty that will save the world within us.

*Arkady Sosnov,
Editor-in-Chief
of Russian Maecenas*



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NO LIMITS TO UNSELFISHNESS

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The initiative to institute a Patron's and Philanthropist's Day in our country is interesting and justified. Incidentally, although there are specific differences between patronage and charity, the most important thing that unites them is unselfish service to the country, to society, to people.

*Valentina MATVIENKO,
Chair of the Federation Council / p. 4*

No Limits to Unselfishness

VALENTINA MATVIENKO TALKS ABOUT THE REVIVAL OF PATRONAGE OF THE ARTS IN RUSSIA

Photos: the Federation Council Press Office and the St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum Press Office

*Interview with Valentina Matvienko, Chair
of the Federation Council, for Russian
Maecenas — Information Partner of the 4th
St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum.*



IV SAINT-PETERSBURG
INTERNATIONAL
CULTURAL
FORUM

— **The Patron of the Year prize was awarded at the St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum in December 2015. Is patronage of the arts becoming more prestigious in Russia?**

— Patronage of the arts is a long-standing tradition in Russia. Eloquent evidence of that is the fact that it did not cease entirely in the Soviet period. Even at that time people provided unremunerated support to young talents and sometimes to established artists who were out of favour with the authorities and had fallen on hard times. Of course this they did this in a conspiratorial way, you might say, without reckoning on public recognition and gratitude, but at least they did it! There have always been people in Russia who have realized how important the spiritual side of life is for the country, for its future, and have lent their support. In this sense patronage of the arts is in our blood and is an integral part of our national character.

In modern Russian legislation the subject of patronage was first designated in 1992 in the Fundamental Legislation of the Russian Federation on Culture, in which it was stated that the state should 'facilitate the development of charity, patronage and sponsorship in culture'. In 1995 the Federal Law 'On Charitable Activity and Charitable Organizations' was adopted, and several regions in the Federation passed similar laws. Until 2014, however, Russia, unlike most other countries, had no relevant federal law and there were no mechanisms for the economic stimulation of patronage.

And even in society, to put it bluntly, there was no particular interest in the identity of the people, companies and organizations who were involved in patronage, what it consisted of and on what scale. There was even a kind of prejudice that it was a way for businesses to pay something back to atone for their

In our Power

sins, as though there was something dishonest and shameful about it. However, that has never stopped genuine patrons of the arts. I know personally that their patronage runs into billions of roubles. It was in this connection, in drawing up plans for the main events of the Year of Culture in the Russian Federation, that it was decided to include an All-Russian award for Patron of the Year of Culture.

The initiative was continued in 2015. The award of Patron of the Year was conferred on the Russian businessman Alisher Usmanov. There is no need to list his merits — there is no doubt that the prize was awarded to a deserving person.

There were more candidates for the award than ever before. Nominations were put forward by almost every region of the Russian Federation and reflected a wide range of cultural and charitable projects: restoring and ensuring the upkeep of historical and cultural monuments, staging exhibitions and concerts, supporting talented young people, improving the material base of cultural institutions, holding city festivals. And by no means every project aspired to the national prize. It is clear that, despite all the problems currently facing our country, charitable activity is not only not fading away but, on the contrary, is increasing in scale all the time.

— At the very first St. Petersburg International Forum you spoke warmly in favour of the adoption of a law on charitable activity, which at that time seemed to have been put on a back burner. The apparent opinion among the elite was that patrons of the arts were not poor people and would manage somehow without public recognition and would pay their taxes. However, you were enthusiastically supported by people in the cultural field and by those same businessmen. Now though, when the law has been adopted, we hear complaints that it is window-dressing just for effect, that it bestows economic advantages...

— You are right — the law on charitable activity can be called window-dressing. But it is extremely important even in the



form in which it has been adopted, as there is now a legal basis for patronage of the arts. It means that philanthropy in our country is not a spontaneous activity — it is recognized as a significant public function in both socio-cultural and moral terms.

In this connection I must mention the decree signed by President Putin, in accordance with which from 1 January 2016 people engaged in active and fruitful public activity, including the formation of a culture of philanthropy and patronage, can be awarded the State Prize of the Russian Federation.

It is important to continue to move in this direction: to create additional apparatuses — what are normally called economic stimuli — for the development of charitable activity. I can say that in the development of this law there is a draft law at an advanced stage concerning the attraction of non-budget funds

Concert in the Federation Council by the 'Virtuosi of Moscow' orchestra under People's Artist of the USSR Vladimir Spivakov. 2012.

Award of the Patron of the Year prize for 2015. Maria Krasnikova, Director of the Alisher Usmanov Charitable Fund 'Art, Science and Sport', received the award.





Left to right:
Valentina Matvienko with Ilya Glazunov
at a young artists' exhibition
in the Manege, 2014.

At the ceremonial opening of the east wing
of the General Staff Headquarters
after restoration, 2010.

Valentina Matvienko at a meeting
with directors of national and regional
museums, 2014.

Valentina Matvienko at an exhibition
of sculpture in the Federation Council.
2015.



into the cultural sphere. It envisages tax breaks and preferences designed to facilitate the further development of patronage in Russia.

— **The basic principle of any charitable activity is that it is voluntary. When you were Governor of St. Petersburg you initiated the 'Duty' programme to assist veterans of the Great Patriotic War and siege survivors. One can recall the reconstruction of the Catherine Cathedral in Pushkin, which you supervised and which was carried out by the whole world. How do you determine the extent of your participation in such projects — the line between private and administrative resources?**

— There is a well-known aphorism that says: 'I am human and nothing human is alien to me'. Of course I will not conceal which cultural, charitable projects are dear to me personally, because I enter wholeheartedly into this process with a high

degree of energy and involvement. That is what you call my private resources. The main criterion for me is the state and social significance of a project. If it is needed by a region or by the country, if the decision to proceed has been taken, I will do all I can to ensure that the project is completed, regardless of my personal preferences, sympathies or antipathies. Nothing personal, as they say — only importance, necessity and accordance with the law. That is my iron principle, with no exaggeration. I have followed it all my life.

— **At the 4th Cultural Forum in St. Petersburg it was once again proposed that 13 April, when Patrons' Day is celebrated annually in the State Hermitage on the initiative of our magazine, should be made the All-Russian Patronage and Charity Day. On this occasion the proposal was actively supported by Irina Antonova, President of the Pushkin State Arts Museum. In your opinion, is such a**

In our Power



day necessary for Russian philanthropists, patrons, donors, collectors and everyone interested in the needs of culture?

— The calendar of memorial and other significant dates in our country is actually very full already. Surely we do not want to overload it? Seriously, though, the proposal at least deserves attention and public discussion. Patronage of the arts is a humane, noble activity. It is the spiritual enlightenment of society — not in the form of appeals but through genuine good works. Even more so in Russia, where, as I have already said, philanthropy is an integral element of the national character.

The names of really outstanding patrons of the arts such as Pavel and Sergey Tretyakov, Savva Morozov, Savva Mamontov, Alexander Bakhrushin and Stepan Ryabushinsky are legendary. It would also be unjust to exclude the businessmen Ivan Morozov and Sergey Shchukin, whose collections of Impressionists and

Post-Impressionists form the basis of the Pushkin Arts Museum's collection. In recent years the museum has received paintings, drawings and other works of art as gifts from the major art expert Ilya Zilberstein and the great pianist Sviatoslav Richter. And the list goes on...

The Russian Museum and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg also have many treasures donated by patrons, including members of the imperial family and the aristocracy, in particular Prince Nikita Lobanov-Rostovsky, Prince Sergey Shcherbatov and Princess Maria Tennisheva, as well as industrialists, merchants and contemporary philanthropists.

In short, I would repeat that the initiative to institute a Patron's and Philanthropist's Day in our country is interesting and justified. Incidentally, although there are specific differences between patronage and charity, the most important thing that unites them is unselfish service to the country, to society, to people.



The 2015 Patron of the Year prize for regional projects is received by businessmen Sergey Avakyan (top) and Alexey Shkrapkin (bottom).

Round-table discussion on the development of Russian patronage at the Cultural Forum. Moderator Mikhail Bryzgalov, Director of the Ministry of Culture's Department of Cultural Heritage, with a copy of *Russian Maecenas*.

For Emblems and Decorations

WHAT THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM OF HERALDRY IN THE STOCK EXCHANGE BUILDING WILL LOOK LIKE

Georgy VILINBAKHOV, Deputy General Director of the State Hermitage and State King-of-Arms of Russia

Illustrations from the State Hermitage. Photos: Svetlana Raghina, Evgeny Sinyaver



Before talking about the Museum of Heraldry in the Stock Exchange building it would be appropriate to begin with an explanation of the word 'heraldry'. Most people have only a general impression based on the novels of Sir Walter Scott. In actual fact heraldry is far more important and serious than beautiful emblems on knights' armour. Heraldry is a type of language, a means of communication that predates the origins of writing. In the process of the formation of society people had to distinguish their own people from others. That is why heraldry was initially based on symbols — family and military, and subsequently national and state emblems. The same process has applied to various historical-cultural regions throughout the history of civilization — Africa, Asia and America. It is interesting that Japanese heraldry was copied from the European

tradition that originated in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Japanese heraldic symbols (mons) were depicted on weapons, on household objects, facades of buildings, banners, clothing — they are different in style from European symbols, but not in meaning. In the same way Japanese script differs from European alphabets — Latin and Cyrillic.

The social function of heraldic symbols has been studied and discussed for many years at heraldry seminars in the Hermitage. And as soon as the opportunity arose to present the subject of these discussions to the general public, the Hermitage set up a display in the refurbished Konstantinovsky Palace at Strelna which was then (in 2004) already called the Museum of Heraldry. This essentially experimental display area also included a Museum of Decorations. The project in the Konstantinovsky Palace came to an end, but the

Heritage



idea remained and materials were accumulated. The Hermitage has retained its status as a unique repository of heraldic collections and a centre for the study of heraldry.

When the Stock Exchange, a historic building with a complex history, became available after the transfer of the Naval Museum, various alternatives for its use were put forward. The one that was approved was the Hermitage's all-embracing plan to make a museum of state symbols a place for holding official ceremonies. The background of the Hermitage's huge collection of heraldic relics will enrich these ceremonies, giving them a patriotic and educational concept. At the same time the new functions will ensure a solicitous attitude to the memorial building of the Stock Exchange under the aegis of the Hermitage, which has vast experience in the preservation of our cultural heritage.



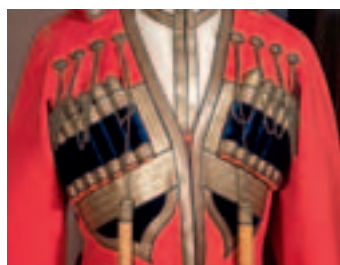
The city hands the Stock Exchange building over to the Hermitage. 18 April 2014.

The Museum of Heraldry will house displays not only from the Hermitage. It is intended to allocate one room to the Museum of Political History for a display of heraldic symbols spawned by the revolution and another to the Naval Museum for a display of naval heraldry.

Page 8:
The State Emblem of Russia on the curtain of the Military College. 18th century.



Uniforms of the Russian Army and the Imperial Court.



Most importantly, however, the Hermitage will be able to show the range of heraldic symbols in a wide historical and geographical framework. The display will include paintings, works of graphic art, silver and porcelain objects, numismatic items, books, banners, weapons, uniforms — everything that can describe the functions of heraldry. There are no other such museums in the world, and the Hermitage is, perhaps, the only museum in the world that could stage such a display on account of its encyclopaedic collections, the variety of its departments and its highly qualified staff.

One might say that the Hermitage has always been involved in heraldry. Baron Bernhard von Koehne, Curator of the Numismatic Department, was the author of the heraldic reform of 1857. He submitted designs for the state emblem of Russia, as well

as large, medium and small coats of arms for members of the imperial family in Alexander II's reign — this was the forerunner of the Presidential Heraldic Council in the early 1990s. During the Provisional Government Sergey Troynitsky, Director of the Hermitage from 1918 to 1927, was a member of the commission on the state emblem and flag and previously published the 'Gerboved' magazine.

Although heraldry was far from the most popular discipline after the revolution, if not a *persona non grata*, the staff of various Hermitage departments dealt with heraldic artefacts. The first book on Russian and foreign decorations, the first research on uniforms and the first collections of articles on heraldry were all published by the Hermitage during the Soviet period.

Heritage

Decorations of the Russian Empire
and the Russian Federation.

The idea of holding ceremonies in the Stock Exchange did not arise out of nothing. The Hermitage is the only institution in Russia, including even military circles, to celebrate Russian Guards Day on 2 September (representatives of units in the Leningrad Military District take part in the ceremony in the Field Marshal's Room), the Day of the Expulsion of the Enemy (during the Patriotic War of 1812) on 25 December and St. George's Day on 9 December. These are not just celebrations for the sake of them, but the revival and enhancement of traditions. We devise them, inform the relevant ministries and departments and stage them not only in the Winter Palace and the General Staff Headquarters building but also in other locations (the celebration of the anniversary of the installation of the Alexander Column and the 200th anniversary of the Horse-Guards Regiment with the bearing of its standards in Palace Square and in Zakharyevskaya Street). The mechanisms of collaboration with the authorities necessary for holding ceremonies in the Museum of Heraldry are already largely in place.

Ceremonies such as Russia Day, the Day of the State Flag, Russian Guards Day and the award of state decorations, the taking of the oath by students at military colleges and the graduate ceremony for officers will blend perfectly with the interior of the Stock Exchange building. Many people will remember the rooms from the time when the Naval Museum was there, but we did not even imagine how huge and beautiful was the central room which used to be full of stands, tables and models. We envisage it as being as empty as possible: just battle paintings on the walls and standards, banners and flags around the upper perimeter. The room will be full of history, giving rise to communication between ages and concepts and the ceremonies that are held here.

It is intended that the ground floor should be devoted to Russian heraldry — family, state, departmental, military and territorial.



Heritage



Banners and standards of the Russian Army
18th – 19th centuries.



The Museum of Decorations will be located in four of the southern suite of rooms on the first floor. It will trace the history of the development of the Russian system of decorations from the time when coins, ladles, weapons, banners and silver trumpets were awarded. And alongside them it will be logical to feature portraits of people to whom they were awarded. I should add that the Hermitage collection of decorations is very extensive: it includes the very earliest ones before Peter's time, imperial decorations, decorations of the Provisional Government, the White Movement, the Soviet Union and modern Russia. Last year the Hermitage was presented with a full set of decorations from each of the power structures for the future Museum of Heraldry.

In the northern suite of rooms on the first floor it will be possible to take a trip into the world of international heraldry — Ancient, Islamic, Oriental and Western European. On the second floor we plan to have a conference hall and a library and to stage temporary exhibitions.

The creation of a museum is a lengthy process. The next stage after the original concept is the preparation of the technical job. The difficulty is that the Stock Exchange building has been quite neglected, with no major restoration or refurbishment for decades. It is heated by what is probably the oldest existing coal-fired boiler room in the city. A modern alternative has been found, but it requires the laying of pipes, and the territory around the Stock Exchange building is already full of pipes and cables. When we have resolved these problems we can start on the restoration of the building. It would be great if the Museum of Heraldry could open in 2019, but it will require a great deal of hard work!



Left to right, top to bottom:

The ceremony marking the transfer of the Alexander Column to the jurisdiction of the Hermitage. 2009.

The Military Gallery in the Winter Palace. Ceremony marking the 200th anniversary of the Patriotic War of 1812.

Moving the figures of knights on horseback from the Knights Room to the Armorial Hall.

Russian Guards Day in the General Staff Headquarters.

The State Hermitage's concept of a Museum of Heraldry in the Stock Exchange building was discussed at a round-table entitled 'Heraldry as a Means of Communication' at the 4th St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum. The participants were leading specialists from Russia, France, Denmark, Sweden, Canada and Belgium. They stressed the special significance and importance of setting up a museum of heraldry.

Reliability of Origin

A DONOR IS HELPING TO FORM A COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART IN THE HERMITAGE

Dmitry LIDIN. Photos: Evgeny Sinyaver and from Sergey Girdin's personal archive

Mikhail Piotrovsky:

'We have received remarkable pieces that mean we can now say that there is African art in the Hermitage... The whole collection can clearly lay claim to a place not far from the Cubists in the General Staff Headquarters (Rossi Wing).'

Left to right:

The banner of an 'asafo' armed sub-unit: an unusual combination of traditional British banners and original African motifs.

Figure of a dancer in ritual costume and a 'mukinka' mask. Salampasu tribe, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Magic figure. Wood. Kundu tribe, Cameroon. From Anton Handl's collection.



Philanthropists

This February Sergey Girdin, Head of *Marvel* (one of the major Russian IT distributors) presented the State Hermitage with a small but exquisite collection of African art from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As Sergey says, his long-cherished wish to help the Hermitage became a firm intention in 2014 when he was appointed Honorary Consul of the Republic of Guinea in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region. The selection of African art objects started after the signing of a cooperation agreement with the museum and was conducted in close collaboration with its specialists. The result is a collection that satisfies the ambitions of both parties.

The nine items currently on display in the General Staff Headquarters are the first to be acquired under the terms of this project. They include the figure of a dancer in ritual costume and a 'mukinka' mask, a 'colon' puppet — an example of the depiction of a colonial official in uniform that was popular in Africa, and an anthropomorphic ivory pendant from the collection of the



French artist André Derain — direct evidence of the influence of traditional African art on the Fauvists. By the way, the Hermitage owns the world's largest collection of Derain's works.

The donated artefacts are distinguished by what Hermitage Director Mikhail Piotrovsky called 'reliability of origin' — they were all part of well-known colonial collections and were purchased at auction: for instance, the examples of the court art of African kingdoms and magic sculpture from the collection of the military doctor Anton Handl (Munich, Germany), collected during his service in Cameroon.

Another characteristic of the donated pieces is that they all come from regions adjoining the Republic of Guinea; there are currently no examples that come directly from the country that Sergey Girdin represents in St. Petersburg. There is a very good reason for this — it is connected with the spread of the Ebola virus. Since the Guinean government has now given assurances that the epidemic has entirely subsided, Girdin is organizing an expedition this year in search of new gifts for the Hermitage. Meanwhile, he has acquired a further ten items at auction to add to the museum's collection of African art.

Left to right:
Sergey Girdin at the ceremonial unveiling of his gifts.

Pendant. Ivory. Luba tribe, Democratic Republic of Congo. From André Derain's collection.

Magic figures. Wood. Bamileke tribe, Cameroon. From Anton Handl's collection.

'Colon' marionette (from the French *colon* — colonist). The typical style of tropical African art for depicting European officials and soldiers, as well as local employees who adopted their way of life. Wood, carving, painting. Ibibio tribe, Nigeria. From the collection of Peter Sloane (London, UK).

Vadim Vilinbakhov from the State Hermitage and Anna Moskvitina from the *Kunstkamera* (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences) took part in the selection and description of the artefacts.

Bringing Back Lost Items

TSARSKOYE SELO HAS BEEN LUCKY TO FIND AN ENTHUSIASTIC COLLECTOR-DONOR

Iraida BOTT, Deputy Director for Scientific Work at the Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve. Photos: the Tsarskoye Selo archive



Kidney bean table. Russia. 1790s.

Collecting in Russia is a long-standing tradition and there are outstanding examples of selfless devotion both satisfying the aesthetic demands of collectors and making the objects of their passions available for study. In such situations the owner inevitably has the desire to share the joy of his acquisitions, and works of art from private collections are frequently included in museum exhibitions, researched and published.

Significantly, the genuinely enthusiastic collector often becomes a sponsor, helping museums to swell their reserves by returning pieces to their historical locations, as he realizes how important it is that a work of art should be seen in its natural surroundings.

Mikhail Karisalov is just such a sponsor for Tsarskoye Selo: he has successfully managed to bring back to the museum pieces that had been removed from the palace rooms for one reason

or another. All these gifts add fascinating details and expressive features to the people and events in the history of Tsarskoye Selo. The friendship began in 2007, so the dialogue between the collector-sponsor and the museum-reserve already has its own history and may serve as the subject of a short narrative.

The first items to be returned were two dishes from the Tsarskoye Selo Imperial Farm — part of a 32-piece dairy service made at Josiah Wedgwood's celebrated factory between 1820 and 1835. All the pieces were made from a chocolate-coloured stone mass and magnificently decorated with chrysanthemums and flowering prunus. This unusual and eye-catching decor placed the service in the unique category: the exquisite moulded ornament was never repeated.

In 1912 the vases and one dish from the farm service were transferred to the Imperial Hermitage; they were followed in

Philanthropists

1934 by five more pieces, including another dish. The two dishes brought back to Tsarskoye Selo by Mikhail Karisalov were discovered in the antiques trade on account of their markings: it is likely that they had passed into private hands in the years before the war during the mass sale of museum property. Paradoxically, the transfer of the Wedgwood pieces to the Hermitage and their sale in the 1930s saved them from destruction during the wartime occupation of the town of Pushkin, as there had been no time to evacuate items from the park pavilions.

Museum people know that the 'circulation of objects in nature' has its own legitimacy. This was proved once again by the situation with the Creaky Chinese Gazebo, whose restoration in 2008 was preceded by many questions concerning the finishing, the decorative details and even the colours of the paint. It was at that moment that Mikhail Karisalov presented the museum with a landscape of the Catherine Park featuring the Creaky Gazebo. It was the work of the French painter and lithographer Ferdinand Perrault, who spent the last years of his life in Russia, where he painted a number of canvases with views of St. Petersburg and the imperial residences in the hope of pleasing Nicholas I and receiving imperial commissions. Perrault had no time to fulfil his dream: he died in 1841 at the age of 33. The Tsarskoye Selo landscape, recording the aspect of the park in 1841, was one of his last works, and the iconography of this most beautiful corner of the Catherine Park is a valuable source of information for our researchers.

Mikhail Karisalov's next gift, a portrait of Aristarkh Kashkin, was of interest to every member of the museum's staff, since Kashkin was Chairman of the Board at the Tsarskoye Selo Palace and a confidant of the empress. We found out what the 'gracious master Aristarkh Petrovich', whom Catherine II was constantly giving commissions, looked like in 2010, the year of the palace's 300th anniversary, when the portrait became part of the Tsarskoye Selo collection.



The year 2012 was marked by a veritable cascade of gifts: we staged an exhibition entitled 'Treasures of a Private Collection at Tsarskoye Selo', presenting the Karisalovs' collection in a museum environment for the first time. The 300 items included paintings, furniture, bronzes, porcelain and objects carved from bone. There were many genuine masterpieces that had previously been unknown to the general public.

One of the exhibits was a Jacobean mahogany table bearing numbers and labels of the Tsarskoye Selo Palace Board — it had once been part of the palace furnishings and had left the museum probably in the 1930s. Today the kidney-bean table is back at Tsarskoye Selo. Also remaining in the palace after the exhibition were three vases made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory which had once graced Alexandra Fyodorovna's bedchamber in the Alexander Palace. The fact that they came from Tsarskoye Selo was indicated not only by the surviving numbers, but also by

Ferdinand Perrault.
The Creaky Chinese Gazebo. 1841.



Two dishes from the Dairy Service
for the Tsarskoye Selo Imperial Farm.
Wedgwood factory, England. 1820–1835.

Philanthropists



a mid-19th century watercolour by Eduard Gau depicting the empress's bedroom.

To complete the account of the 2012 gifts mention must be made of the museum's participation in the Olivier Coutau-Bégarie auction at the Drouot Auction House in Paris, made possible by the support of Mikhail Karisalov. At the auction we acquired a photograph of the Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna with her autograph, a desk punch with the gilded bronze figure of Hussar — Nicholas I's favourite poodle, a lacquered box with a miniature and children's books with illustrations by Ivan Bilibin. Funds allocated by Karisalov also helped us to purchase some unique autochromes from 1917 showing the palaces at Tsarskoye Selo immediately after Nicholas II and his family had left their residence.

In the following year Mikhail Karisalov presented the museum with another unique object from the former Tsarskoye Selo collection: a vase decorated with moulded flowers made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory. It became clear from archive documents that it was one of a pair of vases that had been commissioned by Nicholas I as a Christmas present for Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna in 1836. Before the war both vases had been on the mantelpiece in the Chinese Blue Drawing Room. Evidence that they had belonged to the Catherine Palace was provided not only by inventories and photographs from the 1930s but also by the numbers on the bronze pedestal.

This vase stands out from other porcelain from the 1830s on account of its moulded decor in the form of an extremely delicately worked garland of flowers — a token of the high degree of skill of the modellers at the Imperial Porcelain Factory.

Another anniversary was celebrated in 2013 — 400 years since the accession to the throne of the first member of the Romanov dynasty — and it was marked by yet another very symbolic gift. The museum's collection of paintings was supplemented by a



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portrait of the Tsarevich Alexey taken from a photograph by the artist Pyotr Pershin in 1913. It was found during the restoration of the house in Tsarskoye Selo where Evgeny Botkin, the surgeon in ordinary to the Emperor, lived in the early 20th century. The portrait, which was rolled up in newspapers from 1917 and 1918, had probably been hidden by the imperial family at that troubled time so that it could appear before their descendants almost one hundred years later. The new life of the portrait of the heir to the throne will now forever be linked with the museum.

Thanks to Mikhail Karisalov's efforts two paintings from Alexander II's collection — works by one of his favourite artists Karl Friedrich Schulz, were recently returned to the palace: 'A Platoon of the Regiment of His Majesty King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia' (1849) and 'Military Camp' (1851), which had been removed by the occupying forces during the war. They were purchased by the sponsor at an auction in Germany and returned to Tsarskoye Selo in 2015.

At the end of last year we learned that another five items from the original Catherine Palace collection had been discovered and would soon be coming home: two armchairs and two chairs of curly birch from the early 19th century and a painting that is very important for Tsarskoye Selo: 'Alexander I Praying at the Tomb of Alexander Nevsky prior to his Departure to Taganrog' by Grigory Chernetsov. It is known that before leaving St. Petersburg the emperor prayed for several hours in the Holy Trinity Cathedral at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, and it is this episode that was recorded by the artist. The original painting was at Tsarskoye Selo before the war. It became clear that it had not perished but had been removed during the occupation when it came up for auction in Berlin. It was not possible to purchase the canvas immediately; it took Karisalov over a year to find the possibility of returning it to the museum.

The event that rounded off last year was an exhibition entitled 'A View from the Past' in the Catherine Palace, featuring portrait



Pyotr Pershin. Portrait of Heir to the Throne Alexey Nikolayevich. 1913.

Karl Friedrich Schulz.
A Platoon of the Regiment of His Majesty King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. 1849.

Grigory Chernetsov. Alexander I Praying at the Tomb of Alexander Nevsky prior to his Departure to Taganrog. 1825.



Page 18:
Anonymous artist.
Portrait of Aristarkh Kashkin. 1780s.

Vases from Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna's
Bedchamber in the Alexander Palace.
Russia, Imperial Porcelain Factory. 1840s.

Items purchased at an auction
at the Drouot Auction House. Paris. 2012.

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Mikhail Karisalov speaking at the opening of the exhibition 'A View from the Past'.



Portraits from the Karisalov Family Collection (left to right from top):

Vladimir Borovikovsky.
Emperor Alexander I. 1802–1805.

Georg Groot. A noblewoman. 1742.

Jan Kupecký. Emperor Peter I. 1711.

masterpieces from the Karisalov family collection. Around thirty portraits by Russian painters and foreign artists who worked in Russia in the 18th and early 19th centuries adorned the palace's Great Hall.

The quality of the works in the collection is evidence of the culture, artistic taste and intuition of the Karisalovs. In addition, Mikhail Karisalov has the respectful attitude to professionals that is essential for a serious collector, always being prepared to listen to their opinions and recommendations. For this reason there are no chance works in his collection and most of them would not be out of place in the best-known state collections. A separate section of the exhibition was devoted to paintings, furniture, stone

and porcelain items that had been presented to the Tsarskoye Selo Museum-Reserve with the support of Mikhail Karisalov, a member of the museum's Friends Club.

Over the years of our contact with the sponsor it has become clear to us that he is not a man for flowery speeches or for bringing attention to himself. He is genuinely interested in the life of the museum and always visits new exhibitions and displays incognito. Karisalov informs us by e-mail of pieces from the historical collection of Tsarskoye Selo that have come to light, and when he receives confirmation that we have been able to purchase them with his help, he simply writes: 'Excellent! So they are coming home.'

Page 21:
The First Antechamber in the Catherine Palace.
Exhibition of items presented
to Tsarskoye Selo by Mikhail Karisalov.



A Subjective Interest

A VASE FROM A SERVICE MADE FOR THE IMPERIAL SUMMER RESIDENCE HAS RETURNED TO PETERHOF

Sergey TEPLOV. Photos: the Peterhof State Museum-Reserve archive



It seems our mass media can feature the good deeds of philanthropists! The St. Petersburg TV Channel reported that *one of the museum's visitors* had bought for the Peterhof State Museum-Reserve a vase that had once graced the Grand Palace. The report described how this unnamed person happened to be walking past an antiques shop in Nevsky Prospekt when he saw the vase and thought: why not bring the museum a little happiness?.. I made enquiries and had no trouble in finding that the visitor has a name, surname and biography that he does not conceal: Vadim Bordyug, a graduate of the Faculty of Physics at St. Petersburg State University, who after three years' work in his specialization changed his profile in the austere 1990s and became a businessman, and a successful one at that. The gift cost him several million roubles. Bordyug did not immediately disclose the reasons for such generosity: 'I help lots of people,' he said in a detailed interview in his office. 'On what principle?' — 'When they ask'

I learned that among those who had asked for help and received it were the Bonch-Bruevich University of Telecommunications — for an IT competition, the Svyatogor Children's Wrestling Club and the Ilyinsky Religious and Folk Music Festival. Bordyug provided the funding for a memorial plaque in Vienna to the Russian paratroopers who saved the Imperial Bridge over the Danube in 1945 (the Germans had intended to blow it up) and paid for two war veterans who had taken part in the operation to attend the unveiling ceremony. He has a soft spot for paratroopers after the heroic exploit of the 6th Company of the Pskov Airborne Division in an unequal skirmish with rebels in the Argun Gorge and now also helps the Pskov Division.

'And what happened in the case of the vase?' — 'It was a spur of the moment decision. A week before the presentation ceremony at Peterhof I hadn't even seen it.'

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It turned out that Bordyug, the owner and director of the *Lindfors* chain of pie shops, had been approached by the Friends of Peterhof to provide refreshments for a special occasion in the museum. Little by little he was asked to help in the purchase of a vase from the Banquet Service that had been made for Peterhof at the Imperial Porcelain Factory: staff of the museum had happened to find it in an antique shop in *Passage* on a bottom shelf among ordinary items. They were staggered by the price — the museum had nothing like that amount of money. They had even taken the vase for a three-month period in the hope of finding a donor, but alas! They were preparing to launch an online appeal for contributions on the museum's website in time for the Grand Palace's 300th anniversary. However, the Euro exchange rate rose sharply and with heavy hearts the vase had to be returned to the shop, where it was put on display at a new price — two million roubles more than the previous price.

'At that moment I realized that we had lost the vase', recalled Tamara Nosovich, Peterhof's Deputy General Director for Inventory and Conservation.

When Bordyug heard about the vase, he unhesitatingly agreed to help.

'Why, Vadim Mikhailovich?'

'My grandfather was awarded two decorations for the liberation of Peterhof in January 1944. When my son was writing an essay about him, I showed him the award certificates. And my father as a military man would certainly have approved of what I have done.'

The vase's history is worth recounting. On 28 September 1853 the administration of the Imperial Porcelain Factory announced the completion of 'a new rich blue service with flowers and gilding for 250 persons'. It was made taking into account the fashion of the time and the imperial court's growing demand for official receptions in the Grand Palace at Peterhof. It therefore came to be called the Banquet Service. It was based on the 'Feuilles de Choux' service purchased from Sèvres for the palace storeroom, with a pattern in the form of cabbage



leaves. However, the shapes of the items were original and the sketches were submitted to the emperor for approval.

The service included fifteen vases 75, 55 and 31 cm in height decorated with floral compositions. Olga Volkova, a gardener at Peterhof, studied the painting on the vase from *Passage* and found that in one bouquet there was a hundred-petal rose, dogrose, poppy, fuchsia, galangal, sweet tobacco and cornflower. In the other bouquet were dogrose, aster, morning glory... And whereas in the 1830s the vases had been filled with artificial flowers, in the 1840s they had been replaced by fresh flowers. In that way the real bouquet had corresponded to the painted one, giving the service a special charm.

According to the inventories, there were fifteen flower vases among the 7,353 items in this service in the porcelain storeroom of the Peterhof Palace before 1917. After the revolution artistic valuables began to be removed.

Elena Kalnitskaya, General Director of Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, and businessman and patron Vadim Bordyug at the presentation ceremony.

Elena Kalnitskaya:

'A gift of such magnitude as a vase from the Banquet Service is a significant event in the life of the museum. Meeting a man with Vadim Bordyug's perception of the world was an important landmark in the history of the Friends of Peterhof. In presenting the museum with this valuable work of art he has not only filled a substantial gap in our collection but has also paid tribute to his grandfather, who defended Peterhof during the war. Is that not a link between ages?'



The vase against the background of a portrait of Maria Fyodorovna, wife of Paul I. Unknown Russian artist — copy of a portrait by Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842).

Tamara Kudryavtseva of the State Hermitage has established that the vases were designed by Alexander Novikov, one of the leading artists at the Imperial Porcelain Factory.

Page 25:
The Banquet Service in the Blue Room of the Grand Palace at Peterhof.

In 1924 most of the tableware was taken out of the collection and put at the disposal of the Committee for the Inventory and Sale of State Reserves for subsequent sale and transfer to various institutions. Most of the items taken from the collection were sold. Only 462 pieces of the Banquet Service remained, and they were used for a display in the Blue Room in the Grand Palace — a table laid for 24 persons. The museum staff managed to save only eight of the fifteen vases.

During the war most of the service was evacuated to Novosibirsk, but some of it was kept in Leningrad, apparently in St. Isaac's Cathedral. The pieces that remained at Peterhof were hidden in grottos but discovered and taken away by the Germans. At the end of the war they were discovered in one of the towns in East Prussia captured by the Red Army and sent back to Russia. There was one amusing incident: the boxes marked 'Peterhof' ended up by mistake at a distant station in Siberia. In total only 337 pieces of the service were returned to Peterhof via the Central Repository of Museum Reserves. However,

the vases, candelabras, pedestal tables and a number of other items that had not been evacuated from the museum were lost during the period of occupation.

After the war, thanks to the tireless work of the museum's staff, Peterhof State Museum-Reserve recovered numerous relics that appeared to have been lost forever. Between 1976 and 2001 24 pieces of the Banquet Service were reacquired, including a pair of 75 cm flower vases. Vadim Znamenov, the then Director and now President of the Museum-Reserve, told me that he had found them... across the ocean, in an antique shop on Third Avenue in New York and had, of course, immediately recognized them. Back in St. Petersburg he asked an antique dealer he knew: 'Try to buy them urgently, and we will buy them from you.' The dealer agreed, and shortly afterwards Znamenov saw the vases in his shop window in Bolshaya Konyushennaya Street. 'But you promised to buy them for us' — 'And that's what I've done' — 'So why have you put them in the window?' — 'Because they're so beautiful!'

Every such find is a rescue from oblivion. Having learned that a piece from the Banquet Service had been identified, Tamara Nosovich dropped everything (she was actually in the process of writing an article on the 'Feuilles de Choux' service for a French magazine) and rushed off to *Passage*. It was a vase of medium height with the stamp of the Imperial Porcelain Factory in the reign of Nicholas I but no inventory number (the paint had probably been washed off), so it was not possible to establish when it had left the museum — shortly after the revolution or during the war. However, there was no doubt of its authenticity, which was confirmed by an expert examination. I can imagine how painful it must have been for Tamara and her colleagues to return for sale a museum piece that had almost been theirs. And then, through the efforts of the Friends of Peterhof, they found Vadim Bordyug, a respectable physicist who had organised the modern production of pies. 'I don't know if I can manage it, but I will do everything in my power,' he told them over a cup of tea. The



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The elegant decorative effect is achieved by the blue indented ornament around the edge and the bright painting of the bouquets of flowers which adorn the cabbage leaves on all the items.

museum staff inspired him: 'You will definitely manage it'. Two weeks later he phoned and asked the experts at Peterhof to be present at the purchase. It is still hard for them to believe that the vase is finally back where it belongs.

We went to visit the beauty in the Blue Room, the jewel in the crown of the formal suite of rooms where tables were laid in times gone by (most frequently in the White Dining-Room, the Throne Room or the Ballroom) where there is now a display featuring the Banquet Service. One's attention is immediately caught by the similarity between the tableware and the vases, underlined by their similar style and themes of the painting.

'I'm sure you will agree that there is something animate about it,' said Tamara Nosovich. 'I think it is even more elegant than the large vases. And to think it might have remained on the bottom shelf in that shop and eventually been bought by somebody else. But we found a man who said: 'I'll buy it, it's yours!' Most importantly, it was not the result of a request 'from above', but of his own goodwill. We have discovered how effective a private initiative can be. If the donor had been a large corporation, the negotiations could have dragged on for months.'

When the documents concerning the handing-over of the vase were being prepared, one of the museum staff, who obviously did not know about Vadim Bordyug's grandfather who had fought for Peterhof, told him: 'Just don't think that you'll be given permission to sell pies in the parks'. He modestly replied: 'I don't need to'. However, it so happened that after the donation the *Lindfors* chain of pie shops has seen dynamic growth in St. Petersburg and in Moscow, which shows that good deeds do not go unrewarded.

A Gift of Sculpture

A BUST OF JOSEPH BRODSKY HAS BEEN INSTALLED IN LONDON

Nobel prize-winner Joseph Brodsky 'caught the English bug' as a youth in the Soviet period on account of his love for English poetry and his affection for the British — their lifestyle, behaviour and humour. These feelings are reflected not only in his verses based on the works of English poets that he started writing while in exile in the Arkhangelsk Region (he did not even know English very well then), but also in his aspiration to get to Britain — an impossible dream at that time. The dream became reality only after Brodsky's expulsion from the USSR on 4 June 1972. Less than a month later he flew to London with W. H. Auden to take part in an international poetry festival and from then on visited Britain almost every year, sometimes twice a year, for poetry readings and lectures and to travel around the country with friends. It was in London in October 1978 that Brodsky heard he had been awarded



the Nobel Prize for Literature (he was dining with John Le Carré in a Chinese restaurant in Hampstead).

Until recently, however, the memory of Brodsky's visits and his close links with English poetry (in his later years he wrote outstanding poems in English himself) had never been immortalized. The breakthrough came last August when, with the support of the Russian Embassy, a plaque was unveiled on the wall of the house (20 Hampstead Hill Gardens) where Joseph Brodsky lived and worked when he was in Britain.

The next step was taken as part of the Year of Language and Literature in Britain and Russia: on 30 March a bronze bust of Brodsky by the young Russian sculptor Kirill Bobylev was unveiled at Waterstones bookshop in Piccadilly. Bobylev is a graduate of the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow, took a course at the Russian Academy of Arts, has taken part in exhibitions in Russia and abroad and has won international competitions, but, most importantly in this case, he is a passionate admirer of Joseph Brodsky, whom he calls a 'philosopher-prophet'.

The bust was put on display in the bookshop before being transported to its permanent resting place at Keele University in Staffordshire. Russian is taught at the university and for many years it has had a Russian Poets Foundation headed by Valentina Polukhina, a Russian-British expert on literature who specializes in the work of Joseph Brodsky. The poet visited the university at her invitation. The active pursuits of the foundation and its head have given British people an idea of contemporary Russian poetry and have influenced the research of foreign philologists and linguists in this field. (Prepared by Lara KALASHNIKOVA).



Joseph Brodsky in London. 1972.

The bronze portrait of Joseph Brodsky is a gift from the sculptor Kirill Bobylev. Its installation is a joint project between Russian Maecenas magazine and the organizing committee of Russian Heritage in Britain, supported by the Russian Embassy and the Russian Poets Foundation.

Not Interrupted by the Crisis

GAZPROM TRANSGAZ ST. PETERSBURG IS GUARANTEEING THE CONTINUITY OF ITS SOCIAL POLICY

Sergey ARKADYEV. Photos: the Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg Press Office



‘We realize how difficult it is for everyone at the moment and pray for those who help us,’ says Varvara (Ivanova), Mother Superior of the Syandema Assumption Convent deep in the forests of Karelia. Turning her attention to earthly matters, she expresses her sincere gratitude to Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg for its support in the revival of the holy abode founded by St. Afanasy of Syandema in the early 16th century. A small church named after the Assembly of the Twelve Apostles and a convent house have been built in this amazingly beautiful spot (Syandema means ‘sacred land’ in Karelian), as well as a boiler-house — it would be impossible to live here without heating. Plans for 2016 include the construction of a panelled framework for a nuns’ block. The convent’s website features a full range of urgent needs: from building materials and chainsaws to felt boots, batteries and gardening tools.

‘The company is our only benefactor,’ says Mother Varvara. ‘Its resources are not unlimited, but what they are doing is pleasing to God: there will be churches, cells, monasteries — Russia will stand on her feet.’

The economic situation in Russia is indeed difficult, forcing companies to ‘draw in their horns’, reduce non-earmarked expenditure and concentrate on their own business dealings. And in the case of Gazprom’s St. Petersburg subsidiary those dealings are very extensive: the servicing of 10,000 kilometres of gas mains, the uninterrupted supply of hydrocarbon raw materials and fuel to the whole of the Northwest Region, supplies of natural gas to the Baltic States, Belarus, Germany, Poland... Nevertheless, the company’s principles of reliability and dependability extend to the social sphere in the whole of its region of operation.

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25 January saw the opening of the Alexander Nevsky Prayer Room-Chapel at the Transfiguration Monastery on the island of Valaam, which also receives assistance from Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg. The officers and civilian specialists quartered in the village of Kalama had asked for the chapel to be built, as it was a good 50 kilometres to the nearest church from where they were stationed. The Valaam Monastery passed on the request to the company's general director Georgy Fokin, who agreed to help. 'We believe that the Lord will grant His mercy to our benefactors in the future', wrote Father Parfeny (Shapanov), the monastery's Assistant Father Superior who consecrated the chapel, in a letter to Fokin.

On the strength of this and other examples it is instructive to trace how the continuity of partnership is being guaranteed: even taking into account the current economic realities, no project has been mothballed or left to the mercy of fate once it has been started.

This year, with the support of Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg, it is proposed to finish building and open a Religious Education Centre at the Cathedral of the Veil in Gatchina, with conference halls, a Sunday school, a museum and a library. The cathedral itself has been restored with the active participation of the company. As Gennady Bogdanov, Chairman of the Cathedral Parish Council, says, it is not only a restored building, but also restored people with a new spiritual pulse. It is an unusual formula, but an accurate one. Of course, the company's social policy is part of Gazprom's corporate strategy aimed at improving the quality of life in all respects in its area of operation, which includes assisting the development of the material and spiritual sphere, culture, education and science. This means that people are at the centre of attention.

Having said that, the company based in St. Petersburg has its priorities. An important priority is undoubtedly its



A service in Valaam Monastery's new chapel.

The Syandema Assumption Convent.



Page 28:
A gift to St. Petersburg: a plaque on Voskresenskaya Embankment in honour of the first Russian battleship *Poltava*, whose design and construction was supervised personally by Peter I.



The Entrance Hall of the Chinese Palace was adorned by four carved gilded tables in the chinoiserie style from the historical collection of Oranienbaum. Many pieces of decorative applied art were acquired for the display by the Friends of Peterhof Society, of which Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg is a member.

The company actively collaborates with colleges and universities, including Gazprom's priority educational institutions in St. Petersburg: the Peter the Great Polytechnic University, the National Mineral Sources University and the State Economic University, enabling them to introduce new courses and departments in line with the company's requirements.

involvement in the preservation of our cultural heritage. An example of Gazprom's systematic approach to this is its financial support of the restoration of the Chinese Palace at Oranienbaum (project operator: Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg), where seven rooms have been restored in stages, including the unique Bugle Study. Last summer, speaking at the reopening of the Entrance Hall (so called because in the 18th century the entrance to the palace was in the facade), Georgy Fokin said: 'Eight years ago this place was a ruin — there is no other word for it, but now this jewel of Oranienbaum shines with a new light.'

The rebirth of Antonio Rinaldi's masterpiece, thoughtlessly built without foundations, required a huge amount of not only restoration but also complicated engineering works underground. 'The Empress's favourite toy', as contemporaries used to call Catherine II's summer residence, had fallen into a parlous state,

but is now once again delighting visitors, who cannot resist peeping into the rooms that have yet to be restored.

'We are in daily contact with the company', says Andrey Fyodorov, Head of the Oranienbaum Branch of Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, 'and we hope, with Gazprom's assistance, to complete the restoration of the Damask Bedroom, Paul's Study and the Boudoir by the end of 2017.'

There are projects in which interruptions are absolutely unthinkable and which those who have taken responsibility for them pursue to the end — otherwise their conscience will not permit them and their associates will not understand. One of these good works has been the assistance given to the St. Petersburg Children's Hospice. When it opened in 2010 it was Russia's first state institution for the palliative care of young patients with serious and incurable diseases; it was intended to provide them with relief, to prevent and ease their suffering. In the same year the first donation from Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg reached the hospice's account. Since then its constant support has ensured that the hospice's patients are provided with medicines, care products and dietary food, as well as medical-social and psychological rehabilitation.

Another constant feature of the company's social policy is the development of the infrastructure of popular sport. A typical example is the 6,700 square-metre 'Strelets' sports & fitness centre at Velikiye Luki in the Pskov Region, which has rooms for group sessions in aerobics and on training apparatus and all the necessary facilities for basketball, volleyball, five-a-side football and, to the particular delight of local sportsmen, archery. When he opened 'Strelets', Georgy Fokin reminded his listeners that Velikiye Luki is renowned for its archers and hoped that the tradition would be continued. There are already six such centres built under the 'Gazprom for Children' programme in towns and villages in the Northwest Region.

Effective Practice

Land sailing and water motorsports are becoming popular thanks to the company's long-standing support. This has been helped by the staging of the 'Optimists of the Northern Capital. Gazprom Cup' series of regattas for children and youths, the largest-scale Optimist class races in Russia. Last year's event featured over 150 young yachtsmen from St. Petersburg, Moscow and other cities in Russia, as well as from Minsk in Belarus.

The most colourful stage took place on the Neva opposite Peter and Paul Fortress in front of a large audience: the race under sail with the architecture of the historic centre in the background was a splendid sight. And there was an added incentive for the youngsters: the winners of the series were awarded certificates for a training course with the celebrated Slovenian specialist Mauricio Benčić and the right to compete in the Euromed 2015 international regatta.

The company assists the St. Petersburg Yacht Club's Sail Academy in holding children's regattas. By the end of the 2015 season the number of the Academy's young yachtsmen in the 'Optimist' class had increased substantially. The 'Malyshev' training group has been established for the most promising pre-school sailors. They will be defending the city's honour at future 'Optimist of the Northern Capital' regattas!

The company's devotion to the marine theme is becoming more and more visible. On a special historic shipbuilding wharf Gazprom and Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg are recreating the *Poltava*, the Russian Navy's first battleship that was built in St. Petersburg and launched in 1712, and have presented the city with a plaque depicting the legendary flagship.

A literal deepening of this subject has been the support of the National Submarine Research Centre. Its specialists collate the archive, 'paper' history of sea battles with details of sinkings and descriptions of the remains of ships that sank in the Baltic



The Children's Hospice is intended to bring bright colours and positive emotions into the lives of the little patients.

A new career guidance programme for senior pupils is to be introduced at the beginning of the next academic year. Special 'Gazprom classes' will be held at Secondary School No. 330 in St. Petersburg for intensive profiled training of schoolchildren by teachers from the St. Petersburg State Economic University and other universities in the city. Graduates will be able to continue their studies at Gazprom's priority educational institutions with the aim of future employment in the gas company.



Effective Practice



basin and raise valuable artefacts from the seabed for museum conservation and restoration. This research has made it possible to pinpoint the exact location of the Battle of Hango in 1714 and to establish the course of the major sail battle in the Gulf of Vyborg that decided the outcome of the Russian-Swedish War of 1788–1791.

Thanks to the company's support the number of the Centre's expeditions has noticeably increased: last year there were ten expeditions lasting a total of 109 days. And it would even have been possible to take a breather on the basis of 'optimization of expense': the ships have lain on the bottom for 300 years — let them lie there a bit longer. However promising research should be continued.

When the ice on the gulf near Kronstadt started to melt, Andrey Lukoshkov, Scientific Director of the National Submarine Research Centre, could not wait to get out to the place where the battleship *Portsmouth*, built to Peter I's plans, was lying and to continue the salvage operation (two old

cannons were raised last November). He and his colleagues argue reasonably that these are not just the rusty wreckage of past glories but an important part of the country's historical and cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and displayed in a museum. So it is a combination of enthusiasts' passion and a patriotic undertaking of national importance that Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg has decided to support.

It is no coincidence that numerous partners have thanked the company for its civic, socially responsible stance, and religious people also pray for its well-being. Businesspeople who care about Russia and can see its future prospects are investing funds in eternal values. The difficult times will pass, but the values will remain. That is why they are eternal.



Left:

Georgy Fokin, General Director of Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg, Alexey Miller, Chairman of the Board of Gazprom, and Vladimir Lyubomirov, Commander of the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, at the opening of the 'Optimists of the Northern Capital. Gazprom Cup' children's sailing regatta.

Page 32:

The most colourful stage of the 'Optimists of the Northern Capital. Gazprom Cup' regatta.

The decisive move.

Last year the St. Petersburg Chess Federation held over 100 competitions of various types with the company's support. Veterans, people with disabilities and children competed in the art of the ancient game. A record number of competitors — 373 — took part in the Mikhail Chigorin Memorial Festival, one of the five strongest open tournaments in the world. Stages of the Russian Cup in speed chess and classical chess were held and — for the first time! — a stage of the Russian Children's Cup, in which over 200 young players took part.

A Harbour of Hospitality

‘MARINE FACADE’, ST. PETERSBURG’S PASSENGER PORT, IS INCREASING THE CITY’S POTENTIAL AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

Sergey TEPOV. Photos: the St. Petersburg Passenger Port Press Office

Visiting countries and cities on cruise liners is a significant part of the tourist industry. A cruise combines the comfort of a five-star hotel with a rich cultural programme and a variety of locations that can be encompassed during one holiday only on board an elegant liner. Baltic cruises attract people from all over the world, for which the region is largely indebted to St. Petersburg — statistics show that the overwhelming majority of tourists choose this route only if it includes a visit to the Northern Capital.



Effective Practice

St. Petersburg is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with countless attractions. There are good reasons why its unofficial titles include 'The Northern Venice', 'The Cultural Capital of Russia' and Peter the Great's 'window on Europe'. One also remembers Pushkin's phrase: 'All flags will visit us': the city was conceived by Peter as the country's marine gateway. St. Petersburg still performs the functions laid down by its founder, primarily on account of its importance as a port — importance that has visibly multiplied with the coming into operation of the Passenger Port at the western tip of Vasilievsky Island.

It is now almost forgotten that before 2008 the city had no dedicated terminal capable of handling modern passenger liners: cruise ships used to be moored in the freight port. Work on the construction of a new passenger port on Vasilievsky Island began in 2006 — the location was chosen taking in mind its convenience for the navigation of vessels and its closeness to the city's historic centre, an important consideration for tourists. The project was unique: it was the first time in Europe that a port had been built on newly reclaimed alluvial territory with an area of 460 hectares. By 2011 the 'Marine Facade' Passenger Port had been completed and handed over to the city government.

Other construction projects are in full swing on the adjoining land a little distance away from the port: residential buildings, the Western High-Speed Diameter, the new Zenit-Arena stadium, the Lahta Centre, the St. Petersburg Tercentenary Park... The outer harbour is becoming an integral part of the city's new appearance before our very eyes.

What is a modern passenger port? Above all, a developed infrastructure. And here the St. Petersburg Port has plenty to be proud of: four comfortable marine terminals, over two kilometres of moorings that can handle up to seven cruise liners and steamships at any one time, a huge parking area for cars and coaches and even a helicopter pad. It is the largest specialized passenger port in Europe. Buses run from the terminals to the nearest Metro station 'Primorskaya'. The port is equipped with a total of 116 passport control booths, even more than at Pulkovo Airport. This means that travellers can complete the



border formalities as quickly as possible; even when all the moorings are occupied and up to 15,000 passengers are disembarking, the process will take no more than an hour.

The marine terminals offer maximum comfort: from cafes and souvenir shops to taxi desks and post offices. Covered walkways ensure that passengers can walk from the vessel to the terminal building and back without going outside. The port meets the requirements not only of passengers but also of companies operating in this field — cruise lines, agents, tour companies and other services connected with the cruise business. In 2010, as a mark of recognition by the international cruise community, 'Marine Facade' was given the prestigious Dream World Cruise Destination award for 'the most modern port facilities'.

One of the most important factors influencing a tourist's decision to visit St. Petersburg as part of a cruise is the possibility of entering

Thanks to the well-coordinated work of the design team and the support of the city authorities the Port was ready to receive its first vessel in just two years. 2008.

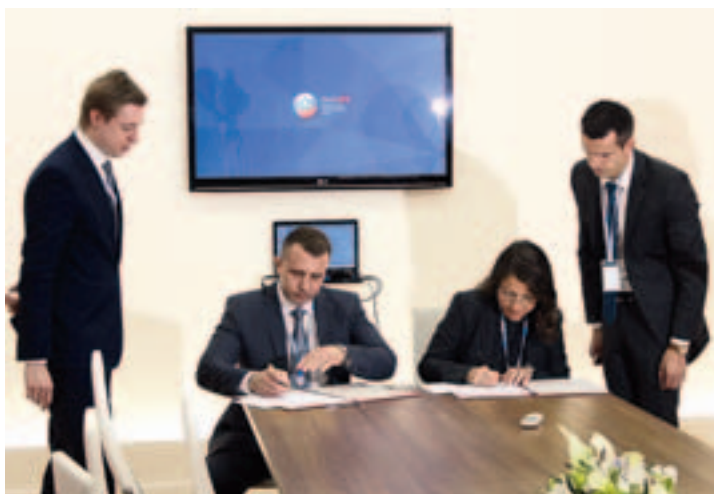
The Port has applied to the St. Petersburg Toponymic Committee to name the street leading to the terminal after Admiral Ivan Krusenstern (the 'first Russian to sail around the world' studied at the Naval Cadet Corps on Vasilievsky Island and later became its Director). This would underline the Port's inextricable link with the city and the sea and the link between history and modern times.



Effective practice

Russia for up to 72 hours without a visa. As Serik Zhusupov, Director of the St. Petersburg Passenger Port, pointed out, without that concession the prospects for developing the cruise business in Russia would be very bleak. Obtaining a Russian visa is a long and time-consuming process, but foreigners arriving by sea can avoid this rigmarole and spend three days enjoying the beauty of St. Petersburg in the company of a professional guide.

According to Mr. Zhusupov the port is capable of increasing its passenger capacity by an extra 25–30%. Last year the port, in conjunction with the St. Petersburg Committee for the Development of Tourism, launched an initiative to extend the visa waiver to passengers arriving by other means of transport in order to join a cruise ship at 'Marine Facade'. If the legislators react positively to this initiative, Russia's Northern Capital will be able to substantially increase the passenger throughput not only by sea but also by air and rail. The city already has the necessary transport infrastructure: the radically modernized Pulkovo Airport, rail and bus terminals and the Western High-Speed Diameter, which, when completed, will reduce the journey time from the airport to the Passenger Port to fifteen minutes.



Serik Zhusupov:

'We plan to saturate the territory of the Port with events of social significance. In the period between navigations it will be used for exhibitions, festivals and motor shows; the park will be used for artistic performances.'

As already stated, this initiative, like many others aimed at increasing cruise tourism in the city and in the whole country, is actively supported by the St. Petersburg Committee for the Development of Tourism. On 18 June 2015 at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum an agreement was signed between the Passenger Port and the Committee. The purpose of the agreement is to improve the coordination of information, the organization of and joint participation in high-profile conferences, exhibitions and other events. The agreement is already bearing fruit: the Port and the Committee have taken part together in tourist forums and exhibitions in Russia and other countries.

Sea voyages can be made on steamships as well as on cruise vessels. The provision of all year-round steam navigation is an important part of the Passenger Port's future policy. The city is just as attractive in winter as in summer and the cultural programme on 'white days' is no less rich than during White Nights. And whereas cruise liners can bring tourists to St. Petersburg in winter only with the help of an ice-breaker, steamships can operate all year round. The Port already has special moorings for steamships, but a few more steps still need to be taken in order to handle full-scale steam navigation. Additional

Since 2008 the port has handled more than three million tourists from over 180 countries. During the 2015 navigation period the passenger throughput was more than 490,000, the busiest day being 1 July with 15,000 passengers.

Left:
SPIEF-2015: the signing of the agreement between the Passenger Port and the St. Petersburg Committee for the Development of Tourism.



The Port's spacious terminals symbolize the openness of Russia.

facilities for Customs authorities are being introduced and the completion of the central section of the Western High-Speed Diameter is not far away.

It is planned that these steps should be completed in time for the beginning of navigation in 2017, following which the steamship operators will be able to increase the number of vessels leaving the St. Petersburg Passenger Port for various destinations. According to Serik Zhusupov, the World Cup in 2018 will mean a growth in the number of people wishing to combine a visa-free visit to St. Petersburg with one of the matches, and this 'football tourism' will lead to a 5–10% increase in passenger throughput, so ferries will be required.

Unfortunately, there are not many people in Russia or even in St. Petersburg who know that they can embark on a Baltic cruise from the city not only by ferry but also on a comfortable cruise liner. There is a varied choice of destinations: from nearby Helsinki, Stockholm and Tallinn to Norway and even Barcelona. Russians currently account for only 2% of passengers, but the popularity of sea voyages is growing. Visitors from abroad can combine a stay in the city with a cruise on their favoured route.

The statistics are reassuring. Since 2008 the port has handled more than three million tourists from over 180 countries. During the 2015 navigation period the passenger throughput was more

Effective practice



than 490,000, the busiest day being 1 July with 15,000 passengers. 'Marine Facade' is one of the three leading ports in the Baltic in terms of the number of passengers arriving and is the undisputed leader in terms of the average length of time vessels are moored. It is planned to double the passenger throughput with the introduction of ferries. A great deal more could be said about the positive dynamic of the Port's statistics, but there is something that is even more important — the impressions that remain in the memories of visitors who arrive in St. Petersburg and set sail after their visit via the city's marine gateway. Those impressions are certain to be wonderful!



The Port regularly organizes and participates in commercial, cultural and public events in St. Petersburg. It runs guided tours for students and schoolchildren and provides direct assistance to war veterans.

Left to right:

The initiation of students of the Institute of International Transport Management at the Makarov State University of Maritime and Inland Shipping.

The 'Nautical Mile' sports festival, supported by the Vasilievsky District Administration, has been held on the territory of the Port for four years.



The Return of Ciniselli

THE ST. PETERSBURG CIRCUS ON THE FONTANKA: FLYING UNDER THE BIG TOP FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Alexandra VINNAK, Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Elena Blednykh and the Museum of Circus Art

Photographs for this article were taken by Elena Blednykh, winner of the Russian Maecenas Prize in the 'Culture' nomination at the 5th Karl Bulla International Photography Competition — 'Visible Features of an Age'.

Left to right:
'Special Gala Show' at Ciniselli's Circus.
15 December 2015.

Veniamin Smekhov as Gaetano Ciniselli
and Oleg Popov as... Oleg Popov.



Contemporary memoirs

The Circus at No. 3A Fontanka Embankment was the first stone circus in Russia. It was built in 1877 through the efforts of the Italian horseman and great entrepreneur Gaetano Ciniselli. Having been met with refusals from functionaries, he managed to obtain permission for the construction from the Emperor himself.

Vasily Kennel, the architect whom Ciniselli employed, used innovative technology: the big top was constructed without a single supporting column, creating an unusually spacious effect.

Horse circuses were all the rage at that time. The nobility came to see pedigree horses just as events like the *Geneva Motor Show* attract visitors today. People took lessons in advanced riding from the trainers and the Circus's stables were the pride of its founder: 'The stables for 100 horses are notable for their elegance; they have mirrors, marble, asphalt floors and fountains!'

The interiors of the Circus were no less sumptuous than those of the Mariinsky and Alexandrinsky Theatres. A luxurious Tsar's Box was installed, for which the Emperor rewarded Ciniselli with a diamond ring.

Right up to the 1917 revolution Ciniselli's Circus, by that time run by his sons, featured the best artists in Europe and staged new shows almost every day. Besides the usual circus acts they put on large productions with special effects, filling the arena with a pool or an electric fountain.



When the Circus was nationalized its repertoire was adapted to conform to the new ideology. The building itself underwent reconstruction: the auditorium was extended and the partition separating the seats for the aristocracy from the galleries for ordinary people was removed. It can be seen from 20th century photographs of the Circus that the mouldings and caryatids disappeared from the facade and the interior was simplified. Ciniselli's Circus became part of the state monopoly Soyuzgostsirk and the itinerant life of the artists became a 'conveyor belt', as circus people called the system of hiring shows.

From top:
The Circus on the Fontanka today.

The St. Petersburg Circus.
Watercolour by Vasily Kennel. 1877.

Poster for the pantomime
'The Four Elements'. 1892.

A restored element of decor.



Left to right:
The rebirth of Ciniselli's Circus.
15 December 2015.

Interiors of Ciniselli's Circus.
Drawing by S. Chamotte. Late 1870s.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union the circus became independent once again and gradually regained its former appearance. However, owing to the increased weight of the lighting and sound equipment and the machinery it became difficult to stage contemporary acts and it was clear that major repairs were required: reinforcement of the foundations and walls and renewal of the big top. It was decided to restore the interiors and the Tsar's Box that had been lost during the Soviet period.

The foyer and the auditorium were restored based on drawings and photographs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the oilskin seats were replaced by comfortable armchairs. Thanks to the big top's new girders and roof the most fantastic flights have now become a reality.

Ciniselli's Circus has now been born again and can be compared with St. Petersburg's academic theatres. So the casting of Veniamin



Smekhov as Gaetano Ciniselli in the 'Special Gala Show' on the occasion of the Circus's reopening after refurbishment in December 2015 was no coincidence. The noble Athos from 'The Three Musketeers' was one of the leading lights in Yuri Lyubimov's Taganka Theatre and took part in his great productions.

In February Ciniselli's Circus was accorded the honour of staging the first performances of the 'sunny clown' Oleg Popov after his many years' absence from Russia. He is accompanied in the programme 'May There Always Be Sunshine!' by leading artists from Rosgostsirk, the largest circus company in the world, many of whom the audience remember from their childhood.

Traditions form the basis for future development. The Circus on the Fontanka is soon to become part of the Rosgostsirk system, which will determine its future repertoire and the hopes and expectations of artists and audiences.



Left to right from top:
A Jango Edwards master-class
in the Circus at Avtovo.

'Around the World on Elephants'
with Taisia Kornilova.

The Royal Circus under Honoured Artist
of Georgia Gia Eradze.

Oleg Popov in the ring.

Tightrope-walker Andrey Tsaplin.

Vadim Gagloyev, General Director of
Rosgostsirk, and Honoured Artist of Russia
Alexander Oleshko celebrated the premiere
of the show by sharing a drink of kefir from
Oleg Popov's magic basket.

Contemporary memoirs



In the circus salon.

Meanwhile, Oleg Popov and his wife Gabriela spent their day off visiting an old friend, the clown and bear trainer Vladimir Deryabkin. They first met on tour in Krasnodar in 1972 and, although they rarely performed together, Popov followed Deryabkin's career and praised his originality in an interview. They became friends on account of their shared passion for old things, i. e. collecting antiques. Deryabkin senior has now retired from the circus in favour of Deryabkin junior, while he visits his native Cossack village on the Seversky Donets, writes short stories, composes songs and, most importantly, has opened a gramophone museum on the Petrograd Side, which was where he welcomed his celebrated colleague. Popov was astonished by the number and variety of trumpets, boxes, handles... He knew Deryabkin was an inveterate collector (as he is himself), but not to that extent! What's more, he has opened a tea-room with old samovars in his unique museum, as well as a circus showroom: an orchestra box, a table resting on five acrobats' rolling boards, ropes, a unicycle on a wire...

They ate Don borshch, made by Lyudmila Deryabkina to the special order of their German visitor, and pancakes with honey, drank

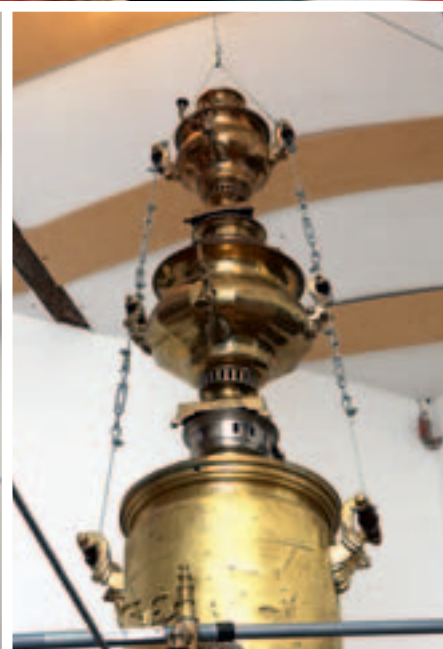


A clown's working shoes.

tea and, of course, recalled their adventures together. They were once driving along a Moscow street in Popov's Zhiguli — he asked his friend: 'Deryaba, do you want to hear a tram's bell?', then went and cut up a tram. Once Popov was carrying a carriage wheel for Deryabkin's clowning on the roof of that same Zhiguli from Tula to Moscow and had an accident. On another occasion, also in the Soviet period, they were sitting on the shore of the Adriatic after a show in Split and Popov asked: 'Deryaba, if a golden fish appeared before you, what would you wish for?' — 'My own private circus!' — 'Ha! Ha! Ha! Deryaba', he said, opening his eyes wide like a fish. 'I can do anything, only not that.'

Popov's sweet wife Gaby smiled at these stories. Her life story is quite incredible: she was a pharmacist in Germany when she met the 'sunny clown', and despite the opinion of her relatives (to them he was just an old circus artist from Russia) she became not only his wife but also his professional partner, travelling with him around the big tops of Europe. She unobtrusively takes care of her husband, who is thirty years older than her. When we moved from the tea-room into the circus room, she said 'There's a step just ahead. And lower down there's another step.' Their meeting at Popov's show in Austria was a godsend for them both.





Oleg chatted easily, didn't blow out his cheeks and was constantly acting — not for show but for himself, only occasionally glancing at the assembled company. He was just amusing himself: he made a pince-nez out of ring-shaped crackers and a smoking pipe from half a bread roll, he moved the weights on some old scales, looked around and weighed everything he could find. In the end he looked for a barrel-organ for his act. That is his style: he once saw in a hospital how instruments are sterilized before an operation. And shortly afterwards a gag appeared in his programme 'Laughter, the Best Medicine': Popov the surgeon pulled out from the tank for sterilizing syringes... a sausage, which he proceeded to eat with relish.

At the end of the visit the crafty Deryabkin boasted that he was the only person in Russia to have received five letters from the great Oleg Popov: 'You sent me six letters in your headed envelopes!' — 'Hang on, then where's the sixth?' — 'I swapped it for a gramophone.' That's the circus for you!

Lost among the gramophones.



'Yours sincerely, Oleg Popov'.

‘Carmen’ as never seen before

THE *SO-EDINENIE* FOUNDATION HAS CREATED AN INCLUSIVE THEATRE LABORATORY

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Nikolay Germanov



How can you live if you cannot see or hear? Those in the care of the *So-edinenie* (Connection) Foundation for the support of the deaf-blind answer this question on stage in *The Touchables*, a unique joint production between the Foundation and the Theatre of Nations in which *seeing-hearing* actors play alongside deaf-blind people, overcoming their fears, doubts and difficulties of mutual understanding. Chulpan Khamatova, whose performance brings to life the script of Olga Skorokhodova, a deaf-blind defectologist, teacher and writer, admitted that she had been unable to apply this strange word to herself immediately: ‘We all live in the same space, regardless of our differences. And reuniting these two worlds that are somehow differentiated from one another is normal, how it should be. It is especially great when people

whom society in its ignorance considers to be damaged in some way find the strength to help others.’

Indeed, since 2015 all the money from ticket sales for *The Touchables* has gone to charities — *ORBI, Actor, Faith...* For the deaf-blind, who are accustomed to pity and condescension, it is a fantastic opportunity to feel useful, strong and needed by society.

‘Whenever I was asked ‘How do you find it with them?’, I would take offence: why are they called Them. We are one whole, this is our play’, says actress Ingeborga Dapkunaite, producer of *The Touchables*. People in Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg and Chelyabinsk will soon be calling the play their own — the regional versions will feature local actors and their lives will be reflected.

Creativity

The Touchables is part of the *So-edinenie* Foundation's extensive theatrical programme. Another project, supported by the Russian Ministry of Culture and assisted by leading drama schools, is studying the collaboration between professional actors and people with special abilities (sensory, mental and physical) in productions of world literary classics. The Foundation has created an inclusive theatrical laboratory for this purpose. Three groups — from the Moscow Art Theatre's School-Studio, the Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute and the Russian University of Theatrical Art — have each approached the project in their own way and have produced sketches based on *The Seagull*, *The Marriage* and *Carmen*. It is a risky undertaking, of course but, as the project's originators said, even if the productions don't work, the inclusion will still be there. In fact, however, it has been the interaction of such a variety of people that has led to the birth of new art forms and new methods of stagecraft.

It is planned to perform *The Marriage* at the Theatre of Nations, and the *Carmen* sketch, which has surprised experts by its brilliance, imagery and expression, has been finalized, on the initiative of *Russian Maecenas*, for the Hermitage Theatre, designed by Giacomo Quarenghi in the 18th century.

This is how Mikhail Borisov, a professor at the Shchukin Institute who is the curator of the production, explained the decision to stage Merime's novella with the deaf-blind actor Alexey Gorelov in the principal male role: 'As Jose is in love, he truly is blind, deaf and dumb, but Alexey creates a complex figurative pattern on stage. And the role of the narrator is played no less convincingly by the heroic Sergey Prushinsky in a wheelchair. They actually both play Jose! The most difficult task was to get the special actors to interact with the ordinary ones and with each other. And the young director, my student Svetlana Opalenik, has managed to create a fantastic atmosphere in the group. For me it is the regeneration of long forgotten emotions. And what a great *Carmen* we have, how brilliantly she dances! She is a graduate of my class at the University



of Theatrical Art: Anora Khalmatova is an ordinary actress, but with extraordinary beauty and charm.'

This atmosphere can be sensed at rehearsals: complete trust, equality and no allowances made on either side. It was at first not possible to find ordinary actors — many of them were afraid of the responsibility and of stepping into the unknown, but those who agreed to take part and stayed have gone through an incredible metamorphosis. They have discovered new talents in themselves, rejected clichés and, like Mikhail Vidyakin, have learned sign language in order to communicate with their deaf-blind fellow-actors. The explosive Anora, who has to measure every step and touch in her fiery dance, realized the absolute usefulness of people whom it is politically correct to call special. This is how Kirill

The takings from the recent performance of *The Touchables* at the Meyerhold Centre during the Golden Mask Festival (the production was nominated in the 'Experiment' category) went to *Gift of Life*, the charity run by Chulpan Khamatova and Dina Korzun for children with oncological diseases.

Dmitry Polikanov, President of *So-edinenie*:

'We want to show that deaf-blind people everywhere are talented and capable of changing their lives for the better', explains. 'And these are not just pretty words. When we look at our actors we can see that they are now much more self-confident and better orientated, they speak better and many of them have already taken root in the theatre...'



Byrkin put it: 'In passing on my experience to them, I am freeing up space in myself for something new'. And Dima Senin, star of the Theatre of the Simple-Minded who was not given a major role in *Carmen*, is unusually attentive and responsive to the director's wishes. Svetlana Opalenik has done an enormous amount of work with them; just a few months ago Alexey Gorelov was living in a quite static, closed world, but now he is capable of expressing a full range of emotions — from tenderness to rage. He is showing how his character develops and the director is bringing out the performer's creative potential — goals worthy of the theatre.

However, the delicate Svetlana is a tough maximalist. She is striving to raise the production to the standard of a professional theatre's repertoire, so that people buy tickets for it not out of 'humanism' but because the acting is top-class and the action is gripping. And so that the action does not revolve around people with special characteristics (on no account should they be pitied!) and that all the cast are a tightly-knit group. After all, that is what the theatre is all about.