

# RUSSIAN MAECENAS



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With  
Russian  
pages



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Road *p. 4*

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The *Manege* Central Exhibition Hall has staged a museum-theatrical project entitled *Keep Forever* to celebrate an anniversary: it is a hundred years since the former suburban imperial residences at Gatchina, Pavlovsk, Peterhof and Tsarskoye Selo were opened to the public.

The initiators of the project were the directors of the four museum-reserves: Vasily Pankratov (Gatchina), Vera Dementieva (Pavlovsk), Elena Kalnitskaya (Peterhof) and Olga Taratynova (Tsarskoye Selo). Their joint venture was supported by Honoured Citizens of St. Petersburg Daniil Granin and Mikhail Piotrovsky. Andrey Moguchy, Artistic Director of the Tovstonogov Bolshoy Drama Theatre, translated the historical facts catalogued by the museums' scientific staff into visual images. The scenery was designed by Vera Martynov and the music was composed by



Vladimir Rannev. Alisa Freindlich was the voice of the project. The result was an innovative biography of the suburban museums told in the language of contemporary theatre, with an organic blend of sound, light and multimedia. The scenery represented historic views from various periods: the audience was transported from the imperial residences to a Soviet park of culture, took part in the mass evacuation of the museum collections during the war and accompanied them on the long road to victory. The centrepiece of the display was the revival of the palaces from the ruins and their subsequent history up to the present day, featuring over 200 authentic objects and photographs from the four museum-reserves.

Photos: from *Parks of Culture and Relaxation*, a series of original scenery sketches by Vera Martynov. Pavlovsk.

*Fair Government  
Strong Business  
Prosperous Citizens*

RUSSIAN  MAECENAS

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**Cover image:**

View of the Grand Palace at Oranienbaum from the courtyard. Barisien,  
Friedrich-Hartmann. 1758. Peterhof State Museum-Reserve.

Welcome!

## Ready for the Forum

This issue of the almanac will come out just before the 7<sup>th</sup> Petersburg International Cultural Forum. A month ago, a session of the forum's organizing committee led by Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodets discussed the preparations for this year's event. Leading Russian cultural figures spoke at the session, including Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, who called upon the committee to ensure that the St. Petersburg forum is no inferior to other world events of a similar stature.

The special quality of our forum, as Olga Golodets explained at the request of *Russian Maecenas*, is determined above all by the unique cultural potential of the Northern Capital. Indeed, the forum's events reflect both St. Petersburg's cultural-historical traditions and its current rich spiritual life. In this sense every cultural institution in the city contributes directly or indirectly to the forum's agenda. As in previous years, *Russian Maecenas* will be among them. In the public flow programme it is planned to show the film



*Let the World Hear!*, based on articles in the almanac, and a panel session will be devoted to the same subject — social inclusion. We have also devised the concept for a round table discussion and an exhibition on the problems of preserving the culture and languages of the Northern Caucasus based on an article in this issue — 'Preserving his Nation.'

Finally, another subject close to our hearts: the forum will include a panel discussion entitled *Philanthropy of the Future* and the awards ceremony for the *Philanthropist of the Year* national prize, which we have done all we can to promote. And this issue features both established philanthropists and those who recently entered this noble undertaking, including those who took part in Maecenas Day in the Hermitage. So we can confidently say: 'We are ready for the forum!'

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





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**The museum has acquired numerous unique exhibits in the last ten years. They include masterpieces by Bakst, Benois, Dobuzhinsky, Goncharova, Bilibin and other famous artists donated by Nina Lobanova-Rostovskaya and costumes, photographs and posters of 21<sup>st</sup> century ballet stars from Sergei Danilian's collection. An outstanding donation will be a reprint of an authentic document of an age — the album of our museum's founder Levky Zheverzheev — financed by philanthropists.**

*Natalya METELITSA  
Director, St. Petersburg Museum of Theatrical  
and Musical Art / p. 12*



# On the Sovereigns' Road

## TVER PALACE IS RETURNING TO THE FAMILY OF IMPERIAL RESIDENCES

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Tatiana Lishchenko, Boris Mikhailov and the Tver Regional Government's Press Office



Catherine II's dress based on the uniform of the Life-Guards of the Semenovsky regiment. 1766. Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.

In a letter to Friedrich Melchior, Baron Grimm in 1775 Catherine II called Tver 'the nicest town in the empire after St. Petersburg'. It is quite possible that she wrote those lines in her beloved residence at Tsarskoye Selo. Now, 243 years later, the Tsarskoye Selo Museum-Reserve and the Tver Regional Picture Gallery have staged a joint exhibition entitled *From the History of the Russian State. From Catherine the Great to Ekaterina Pavlovna*, at the point where lives and eras coincided. Masterpieces of pictorial and decorative applied art from Tsarskoye Selo and the Karisalov family's collection are on display on the Sovereign's road between St. Petersburg and Moscow, in the Tver Palace of Catherine II and the residence of her granddaughter, Grand Princess Ekaterina Pavlovna.

The collector and philanthropist Mikhail Karisalov, a long-standing friend of Tsarskoye Selo, is the driving force behind the project. In the last few years, thanks to his initiative and financial support, several

dozen objects of the historic palace furnishings have been returned to the museum. Karisalov finds items that were lost in the sell-off of valuables in the 1930s or removed by the occupational forces during the Second World War, brings them back and donates them to the museum. But there has never been collaboration of this kind: the exhibition in Tver is the first joint project of the museum-reserve and the philanthropist outside St. Petersburg. Karisalov regards it as an anniversary present: Tsarskoye Selo Museum-Reserve opened its doors to the general public one hundred years ago, in June 1918. The partner for the project was chosen by Iraida Bott, Deputy Director of Tsarskoye Selo for Scientific Work, who admitted that she had long had the desire to work with her colleagues from Tver. Her intuition did not let her down.

Tver Palace opened only in December after many years of restoration. Portraits of members of the imperial family by Vladimir Borovikovsky, Dmitry Levitsky and Johann Lampi, exquisite pieces





of palace furniture, Catherine II's dress based on the uniform of the Life-Guards of the Semenovsky regiment, fine graphic art with views of the parks at Tsarskoye Selo... All this magnificence blends seamlessly into the Tver Gallery's permanent display in the palace's suite of rooms. One really does have the feeling that the thirty visiting exhibits have always been there in the Grand Hall, where Catherine the Great received rapturous deputations from representatives of various classes during her eighth visit to her palace in Tver. The partnership between the two museums and a major collector of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian art has made it possible to compare significant events, names and dates in Russian history. Incidentally, it was in this palace that Nikolay Karamzin first read excerpts from his *History of the Russian State* to Alexander I, who loved visiting his sister Ekaterina Pavlovna in Tver. That was on 11 March 1811, seven years before the *History...* appeared in print. It was here that

the emperor was presented with a *Note on Ancient and New Russia* written by the historiographer.

Tatiana Kuyukina, the gallery's director, says that there are two exhibits that she particularly wanted: a table-chest of drawers with a marquetry composition *Panorama of the City of Tver* (an exclusive piece by Nikifor Vasiliev's workshop in St. Petersburg) and a portrait of Prince George of Oldenburg, Grand Princess Ekaterina's husband, by Orest Kiprensky. From 1809 to 1812 the prince, who received the title of His Imperial Highness after his marriage, was Governor-General of Novgorod, Tver and Yaroslavl provinces, Chief Director of Russian Communications and was actively concerned with the development of shipping in the territories that had been entrusted to him, while having Tver Palace as his residence. When the Patriotic War began, the prince and his wife formed a people's militia and organized field hospitals. It was after inspecting one of these that he died of typhus at the age of 28.



Casket for Catherine II's deeds to the city of Tver. Last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Tver Region Picture Gallery.



A portrait of Empress Catherine II.  
Dmitry Levitsky, mid-1790s.  
Gathering of the Karisalov family.

Portrait of Grand Princess Ekaterina  
Pavlovna. Unknown artist. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.



*Tver Imperial Palace. Built for Empress Catherine II between 1763 and 1778 to a design by the great Russian architect Pyotr Nikitin, its appearance has subsequently changed several times to reflect the styles and tastes of various ages.*

*The Tver Regional Picture Gallery was founded in 1866 as part of the Tver Museum. It became a museum in its own right in 1937.*

*The largest room in the palace, where the exhibition is being held, is now called the Ceremonial Hall. In Catherine II's time it was also called the Throne Room, and in the Soviet period it was the Pink Hall — the colour of its columns and walls.*

There are no portraits of Oldenburg in the gallery's collection, so it will be interesting for the current residents of Tver to see what this extraordinary man looked like.

The exhibition encompasses a limited chronological period: the reign of Catherine II (1762–1796) and the residence of Grand Princess Ekaterina Pavlovna in Tver (1809–1813). That is how it was conceived by the organizers: to highlight the links between Tsarskoye Selo, St. Petersburg and Tver over a relatively short space of time. The connection seemed obvious, the principal figures being Catherine the Great and Ekaterina Pavlovna, who was born in Tsarskoye Selo, but on closer inspection there are many parallels, coincidences and overlapping. Is it not worthy of note that Karamzin, who was attached to Tsarskoye Selo,

rated the Tver merchant Afanasy Nikitin, who went to India, more highly than Vasco da Gama, and that the city of St. Petersburg in Florida was founded by the Tver nobleman Pyotr Dementiev (Peter Demens)?

By sharing their discoveries, the project's organizers are motivating visitors towards a better grasp of Russian history. The only annoyance is that the accompanying catalogue with popular scientific articles by staff members of both museums has been printed in such small numbers.

Catherine the Great, then still Sophie Friederike Auguste, fiancée of the heir to the Russian throne, first saw Tver as the 14 year-old princess of a modest German principality on 8 February 1744 on her way from St. Petersburg to Moscow. In 1762, by now Grand Princess, she gave a complimentary appraisal of the archpriest's house in Tver — it





was partly on its foundation that Catherine's palace was subsequently built. That happened after a fire on 12 May 1763 which destroyed the centre of Tver — on that day the imperial court was in Moscow following the coronation ceremony. The new Tver was built to a unified plan in accordance with a personal decree by the young empress, just as St. Petersburg had been built at the behest of Peter the Great, as a template for other provincial cities, and the Treasury spared no expense in reconstructing and improving the city. In transforming Tver the empress was trying out her enlightened concepts, her ideas on reforming government and improving the lives of her subjects. The dominant building in this model city was to be Tver Palace, at that time the only imperial residence outside the capitals and their suburbs. It was not

conceived as just another transit palace, used only for a change of horses and a short rest for the august personages, but on an imperial scale (a garden, a grand courtyard, a palace church...), magnificent outside and inside, like St. Petersburg's suburban palaces. The builders of the residence coped with the task of enriching the life of the crowned head in the event of 'the unexpected arrival of Her Imperial Highness' — Catherine fell in love with it and contemporaries were entranced by its beauty. The residents of Tver repaid the empress for her concern with worship and respect, material confirmation of which can now be found in the exhibits of the Tver Picture Gallery.

The palace itself, which has undergone a great deal in its two and a half centuries, is a principal character of this exhibition along with the



By a portrait of Alexander I.  
Vladimir Borovikovskiy, 1802–1805.  
Gathering of the Karisalov family.

General's uniform which belonged  
to Emperor Alexander I.  
First quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.

Cavalry officer's sabre which belonged  
to Emperor Alexander I. 1817.  
Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.





Humpbacked bridge in the Tsarskoye Selo park. Mikhail Ivanov. 1792.  
Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.

*There are remarkable intersections in the triangle Tsarskoye Selo — Tver — St. Petersburg of the careers of artists whose works feature in the exhibition: Vladimir Borovikovsky, Dmitry Levitsky, Johann Lampi the Elder and Karl Rossi, who redesigned the palace for Ekaterina Pavlovna and Prince George of Oldenburg.*

empress and her granddaughter. After Ekaterina Pavlovna's departure for Europe it was purchased by Alexander I and its various rooms and wings were inhabited by governors, officers, Grand Princesses' ladies-in-waiting — there was enough room for everybody. The museum first occupied several rooms in the palace in 1896. Then came war and revolution — the palace was used for a workshop making linen for the wounded, staff headquarters, revolutionary committees, the provincial emergency commission for the fight against counterrevolution and sabotage... In peacetime it was like a big communal flat crammed with Soviet institutions.

Tatiana Kuyukina, who has been at the gallery for the whole of her working life and has been its director since 1988, remembers how the imperial palace suffered from its tenants. It was only in 1995 that it was fully given over to the picture gallery. However, until its most recent

restoration the gallery was a sort of iceberg: a small display but a huge collection — over 40,000 items. As Tatiana says, 'we had become a secret museum: nobody actually saw the collection or the palace, which had burst pipes and leaking ceilings and the east tower had almost collapsed (we just managed to catch it in time), so we had either to close the rooms permanently or change the schedule of their use.' But when the restoration was completed the number of exhibits in the display had increased by 10–15 times!

What is even more surprising is that despite the historical cataclysms, the gaps in the palace's furnishings have quickly been filled. For instance, when the palace's inhabitants, who were mostly provincial nobles, took fright at the revolution and took their belongings away with them, a reverse process began to develop — items were transferred to the palace from nationalized estates in Tver, and those estates



## Heritage

were superb, considering the closeness to the capital, tastefully built and furnished. Fortunately, the palace survived, though it suffered again during the Second World War. Reconstruction of the building began immediately after the liberation of Kalinin (the name of Tver from 1931 to 1990) in December 1941, but firstly only for treasury functions and secondly with no account taken of the style of those who had created the palace. The only elements which remained from the legacy of Pyotr Nikitin, the original builder, and his successors Karl Rossi and Alexander Ryazanov were those in keeping with the Stalinist empire style.

A genuine scientific restoration was only possible after the picture gallery took over the whole palace complex. To mark the beginning of the restoration the museum staff published a hundred-page reference work based on archive documents and an album with a similar number of illustrations... For decades the palace's revival had been a painful subject for the people of Tver, but now hopes were beginning to rise. The gallery's director was often stopped in the street and asked: 'How is it going?', 'Will it soon be finished?'. Hopes began to be fulfilled when the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development became involved in the restoration of the building — a monument of national significance, and the remaining expenses (laying pipes, connecting utilities and bringing the rest of the classical ensemble into a fitting appearance) were assumed by the regional budget. A decisive role in bringing in the IBRD was played by Governor Dmitry Zelenin (2003–2011). The museum staff's undertaking is also being supported by the current incumbent Igor Rudenya.

The director and her team are actively concerned with returning to the palace not only its historical appearance but also its original name. In the Soviet period it was called a 'Transit Palace', a socially neutral designation which made no mention of its pedigree. However, calling it the Kalinin Imperial Palace seemed even odder, but at that time it was as if Tver had never existed. In fact, in documents of the House of Romanov it was called the Tver Palace, whereas in docu-



Portrait of Prince George of Oldenburg.  
Orest Kiprensky, 1811.  
Tsarskoye Selo State Museum-Reserve.



Chest of drawers with marquetry panorama  
of Tver. Nikifor Vasiliev. St. Petersburg.  
Late 1770s — early 1780s.

ments of Tver Province it was called the Imperial Palace. 'We have combined the two names and hope in the near future to officially return the palace to its original name: the Tver Imperial Palace,' Tatiana Kuyukina assured me.

The museum's name will also need to be changed. It has long been more than just a picture gallery: its collection of Russian and Western European fine art, which includes works by leading lights of landscape and portrait painting, is only one of its fourteen reserves. The section of Ancient Russian art features unique icons of the Tver school and frescoes dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The section of decorative applied art includes the fullest collection in the country of pieces from the Auerbach-Kuznetsov porcelain-pottery factory, a splendid collection of artistic furniture, some of it original to the palace: suites by Rossi, Voronikhin... Finally, the gallery has three branches





Suite with partridges.  
Unknown artist. Second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century.  
Tver Regional Picture Gallery.

in the Tver Region — the ‘Seagull’ dacha of landscape painter Vitold Byalynitsky-Biruli (a modernist structure dating from 1913), Valentin Serov’s beloved estate at Domotkanovo and the Vladimir Serov Museum in the village of Emmaus... What is that but a Tver Region art museum?!

The restoration of the palace led to the reconstruction of the whole architectural ensemble: the palace park (at one time part of a city garden), the orangery, the officers’ block, stables, coach-house... The museum staff also hope to reconstruct the ramp for carriages which led from Ekaterina Pavlovna’s study to the viewing platform above the Volga. On that spot now is a statue of Alexander Pushkin, who often visited Tver Province and, in his own inimitable way, gave advice to his friends: ‘Order macaroni with parmesan at Gagliani’s or

Cogliani’s and make an omelette...’ The statue was erected in 1974, when Tver was still Kalinin.

As we walked from one exhibit to another, Tatiana Kuyukina reflected on the difficulty and trouble of staging exhibitions these days, especially joint projects. And how necessary they are: you can not only see exhibits from other museums, but you also see your own exhibits in a new light — you begin to get a deeper understanding of them and attempt to convey this understanding to visitors. The support of the philanthropist who helped to organize this exhibition and provided rare items from his own collection is all the more valuable.

The rise of the gallery would also have been unlikely without patronage. It was founded in 1866 as part of the Tver Museum — one of the first public museums in Russia, created on the initiative of



## Heritage



the then governor Pyotr Bagration. It was conceived as a historical, archaeological and industrial museum intended to demonstrate the richness of the area, but even the first display, opened in the presence of the heir to the throne Alexander Alexandrovich (the future Emperor Alexander III), included works of art. Letters of gratitude were sent to all the donors. Even today the gallery would not be able to produce printed publications highlighting the historical and cultural value of the Tver Imperial Palace without patronage or without the selfless assistance of people like Vladimir Galkin, a doctor from Kalyazin who has contributed rare books and old photographs to the museum and the palace library over a period of many years. 'For me he is a district doctor who has miraculously survived from Chekhov's time', says Tatiana Kuyukina. Indeed, it is not the size of a charitable contribution



that is important, but the endeavour to help towards the preservation of Russian culture reinforced by deeds.

Not for nothing did Igor Sorokin, a member of the Karisalov family, speak of the importance of cultural investments to realize the museum's potential. The exhibition *From the History of the Russian State...* is a step towards the inclusion of Tver Palace — as an equal — in the family of imperial residences which have become museums: Tsarskoye Selo, Peterhof, Pavlovsk and Gatchina. The Tver Regional Picture Gallery (still its name for the time being) is already sharing its wealth with the museum community: the presentation of the palace and the updated display is under way and a roundtable discussion has been held jointly with the Russian Museum devoted to the problems of restoring objects of cultural heritage as part of the events of the Union of Russian Museums.

Left to right:

The '18<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Art' room in the Tver Regional Picture Gallery's permanent display.

The Armorial Hall in Tver Imperial Palace. Fragment.

The gallery's director Tatiana Kuyukina.

The Blue Room in Tver Imperial Palace.



# From Zheverzheev's Album

Caricature of Levky Zheverzheev.  
Ekaterina Nozikova. 1928–1929.

*Zheverzheev's daughter Tamara (1907–1997) was the first wife of Georgy Balanchivadze (George Balanchine). She emigrated with him to America, where she made a career for herself as a ballerina, choreographer and actress in musicals and films under the name of Tamara Geva. But that is another story...*

Gennady Yavnik, Natalya Metelitsa and Dmitry Korchagov at the ceremonial opening of the museum's exhibition '100+10'. 19 September 2018.

A UNIQUE JOURNAL OF AN AGE WILL BE AVAILABLE TO READERS THANKS TO *RUSSIAN MAECENAS*

Sergey TEPOV. Photos: Natalya Zakharova

The St. Petersburg State Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art has a unique document of its kind in its reserves: the album of Levky Zheverzheev (1881–1942). He was an extraordinary personality: hereditary factory-owner, bibliophile (his book collection numbered over 20,000 volumes), art historian, patron of the arts (he supported avant-gardists and futurists) and one of the founders of the Theatrical Museum, which is celebrating a double anniver-

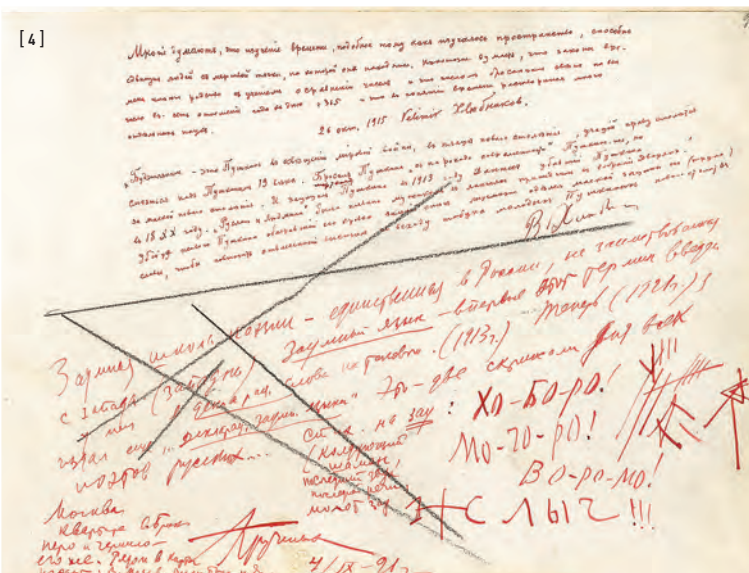
sary this year — 110 years of the museum's collection and 100 years since its official opening. Zheverzheev's album, compiled along the lines of Korney Chukovsky's *Chukokkala*, is a series of autographs by prominent contemporaries whom he knew intimately and who were invited to Friday soirées at his home and afterwards to the museum — scientists and figures from the worlds of art and culture. So it was that one tattered cover contained poems, essays, drawings, notes — hundreds of testimonies of Russian cultural life in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Zheverzheev's album is a mirror of an age and partly also a portrait of its owner, who was conscious of his mission to rescue relics of the national culture at a watershed in history. He remained Deputy Director of the museum he had helped to found right up to his death in early 1942 during the siege of Leningrad.

This invaluable document, which is a museum in itself, is in great demand by researchers, but not everyone is permitted access to the album in view of its extremely dilapidated state. In order to make Zheverzheev's album public property the museum staff have produced a reprint and a separate volume with page-by-page explanatory notes by its compiler and the comments of specialists.

Since the museum did not have the means to cover the expenses of the publication, its Director Natalya Metelitsa applied to *Russian Maecenas* and its partners for support... and received a positive response. Whereas the *Konstantinovskiy* International Charitable Foundation (General Director Gennady Yavnik) is









# Preserving His Nation

A FESTIVAL OF ABAZA CULTURE AND SPORT HAS BEEN HELD IN THE KARACHAY-CHERKESS REPUBLIC

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Timur Turgunov



Some competitors had come to these Games from abroad (Turkey), some from nearby territories — Abkhazia, Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol Region, some from Moscow and some from neighbouring villages. Others did not have to travel at all: they only had to put on their trainers and head for the start. The Abazin Games were held in Inzhich-Chukun, the centre of the Abazin District of Karachay-Cherkessia. A sea of young people, children with their parents, noise, hubbub, the opening parade, colourful flags, an incredible outpouring of emotion in the school stadium and in the adjoining park with the mountains in the background. The competitions were mass sports open to all-comers: pole climbing and stone throwing, archery and rifle shooting, arm-wrestling and weightlifting, running and javelin throwing, volleyball and football, long jump and tug-of-war — all accompanied by rhythmical music, alternating with national dances and delicacies. The whole of the

long sunny day was full of the joy of communication, demonstrations of daring, support for fellow-competitors and the knowledge that all the people around were fellow-countrymen. Also enjoying himself, even though he looked impassive, was an elegant man in a light suit — the St. Petersburg scientist, businessman and philanthropist Mussa Ekzekov. It was he who thought up this festival of Abaza Culture and Sport, held now for the fifth time by the *Alashara* International Association for the Development of the Abazin-Abkhazian Ethnic Group which he heads. He himself is an Abazin.

Who are the Abazins? They are a branch of an ancient, once very numerous Caucasian ethnic group which also includes Abkhazians and Ubykhs (the group was mentioned by Herodotus as long ago as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC). Comparatively recently, during and after the protracted Caucasian War of 1817–1864, the victors did not stand on ceremony with the vanquished, who included not only the



Opening ceremony of the Abaza Games.

Circassians and Chechens mentioned in the works of classic Russian authors. The surviving Abazins were exiled to the Ottoman Empire, and only a few of them moved from the mountains to the plains of Prikubanye. Many current Abazin villages have changed their names and locations (some more than once). Today Russia's population of 150 million includes about 40,000 Abazins, of whom 35,000 are concentrated in thirteen villages in Karachay-Cherkessia. Sometimes the Abazins call themselves the most numerous of the small native peoples. Interestingly, almost a thousand of them are relatives of Ekzekov, who was born in the village of Red East (Gvymlokt).

The traditional homeland of the Abkhazians was also much reduced following the Caucasian War. The Ubykhs were even less fortunate: the Tsarist government deported them all to a foreign country, where they were gradually assimilated. The Ubykh lan-

guage, unique in its variety of sounds (84 consonantal phonemes — sounds of speech that affect its meaning) is now officially considered to be dead after the last native speaker died in Turkey in the 1990s.

In the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger (2010) the Abazin language is one of the first. It is considered that languages of small indigenous peoples without their own statehood are doomed to disappear in the next fifty years. Mussa Ekzekov does not want to see his native language share the fate of Ubykh, which is why he regularly comes home from St. Petersburg, where few people know that he is an Abazin. As he told me: 'I am driven by the faith that we will survive as an ethnic group, and that can be achieved just by preserving the language. I hope I live to see the day when it will be unbecoming for Abazins not to know their native language.' There is no harm in dreaming, of course. The problem is



As Ramazan Borokov, the Karachay-Cherkess Republic Minister of Culture, remarked at the opening ceremony, it is important that the competitors speak two languages: their native Abazin and Russian.













Mussa Ekzekov gave his fellow-villagers of Red East a sports centre: an all-purpose hall for wrestling, boxing and choreography, modern training apparatus, comfortable changing-rooms and showers and a superb sauna. It is open from 11 am to 10 pm six days a week. Nearby is a court for mini-football, volleyball and basketball — that is open every day!

Meeting a fellow-villager. In his youth Mussa Ekzekov took boxing lessons from Zukany Sheremetov. Perhaps that was why he became a Master of Sport in his student days, though in wrestling.

With Mussa Ekzekov's support the garden around the Narzan spring has been refurbished and an ethno-café built over the entrance to the Kuma Gorge — an element of a future park of traditional crafts.

One of *Alashara's* key projects is this annual festival of culture and sport, opened by the Abazin Games which are rapidly gaining popularity. Before the Games started, Fuad Dzhantemirov, head of the village of Inzhich-Chukun, told me with boyish enthusiasm: 'Our team won last year and the year before. We want to win three times running so that the Games will be held here again next year, in the capital of all the Abazin villages!'. Running forward for a moment: it didn't happen — in the final reckoning the team from the village of Elburgan was the winner. But in this case the Olympic principle applies: taking part is more important than winning, especially as this year there was an unprecedented number of competitors and they included, as guests of honour, Abazins who had competed in the Olympic Games, champions and Honoured Masters of Sport. There is a sober demographic point to this mass competition. In a small nation every person counts. As one grey-haired elder in Inzhich-Chukun said, 'if young people's attention can be

switched from ruinous predilections to sport, in a few years we won't be 35,000, but twice that!' The growth of the ethnic group is also part of the *Alashara* programme. The culture of large families is reviving: women's councils created in Abazin villages on Ekzekov's initiative are drawing up registers of fiances and fiancées and are organizing something like an unobtrusive casting of future married couples.

'The Games are not just for promoting a healthy way of life, but a celebration of the unity of our small nation, which is pretty much scattered over the whole world', Murat Agirov told me. 'There are even Abazin families who come from neighbouring republics with surnames that we no longer have here. You are surprised when you hear them.' Agirov is an Abazin from the village of Apsua, a two-time world champion and European champion in sambo and now Deputy Minister of Sport for Karachay-Cherkessia.

Murat was quick to make a proviso — he was not here in his official capacity. He was at the Games until the evening, judging the



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pole climbing and archery competitions. A feature of the atmosphere at the Games: some of the girls were using a bow for the first time, took aim awkwardly and had to be helped during the competition, but neither their opponents nor the judges were in a hurry and were not annoyed. But when an arrow flew into the centre of the target the spectators burst into applause. Everything is comparative: a couple of years ago archery had only just been included in the programme, whereas now the members of various teams had been noticed at training sessions and had come to the competition with their own bows, like 45 year-old Akhmed Kushkhov from Kabardino-Balkaria! Also at these Games a new demonstration sport was tried out — the national Abkhazia-Abazin game of Akhylopakhas (lads racing one another to grab a hat placed on top of a pole). The sport will take root — it has been included in next year's programme.

Of course, the 'home factor' gives the Games a particular slant. Since 2005 the Abazins, as a subject people of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic (along with Karachays, Russians, Circassians and Nogais) have had their own national district! District Head Muzhadzhir Nirov calls its creation the restoration of historical justice, because in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the Abazins had had their own administration in one form or another. Not long afterwards Soviet power hove into view. Umar Kurachinov, one of those who had restored the justifiable status quo, came to the Games as a paterfamilias and was literally everywhere at once: he had to support his daughter Asiat, who was running the 100 metres in the park, and also his son Zurab in the weightlifting competition. However, he stopped for a moment on the way to recall that in the 2000s he, the owner of a small shop, was chairman of the *Abaza* public movement in the village of Kubina, whose residents were incensed by their loss of *Yuzhny*, Russia's largest greenhouse combine, on the pretext of municipal reform. The activists went through court cases, referendums, meetings, an Emergency Session of the Abazin







The Amara (Dream) ensemble of davul drummers from the village of Staro-Kuvinsk (Khvyzhv-Du), was founded at the end of last century and disbanded in 2000, but, as its conductor Rakhmet Cherkosov told me, thanks to a grant from *Alashara* a new group was formed: 'They gave us davuls made by the master of traditional instruments Magomed Khachukov, an Honoured Cultural Figure of the Republic, along with cases, chairs and uniforms for the performers, and they continue to support us'.

A similar grant enabled Zurab Kopsergenov, a graduate of the Circassia School of Culture and Arts, to start the Amara Puppet Theatre from scratch and to stage his own version of *River Zagedan*, a tale of good and evil based on Abazin folklore. The theatre is based in the village of Psyzh (Psyzhv) and is now preparing for its second production. Zurab's son Vitaly is taking part in it alongside professional actors.

nation, tough dialogue with deputies in the republic's parliament building... Justice eventually prevailed with the support of Dmitry Kozak, then Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the President of the Russian Federation in the Southern Federal District — Kurachinov also flew to Moscow to meet him. The district, with a natural border along the River Kuban, included five of the thirteen Abazin villages — more was not feasible, and to achieve a self-contained territory they were given a strip of arable land in the Karachay village of Druzhba, which was between the villages of Karo-Pago and Psyzh. The flag of the Abazin district features an open hand, a symbol of hospitality, and five stars like the ancient Abaza flag, though that flag had seven stars to denote the main places where the Abazin people lived.

What does having their own district mean to the Abazins, besides a sense of legitimate pride? 'Well, pride is the main thing,' said Shamil Takushinov, a Candidate in Sociology who is the coordinator of *Alashara's* scientific programme, taking a break from judging the rifle-shooting (I involuntarily recalled Pushkin's lines 'The Cir-

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cassian is hung with weapons; He is proud of them and comforted by them'). Shamil is from the village of Staro-Kuvinsk, worked as Deputy Minister for Youth in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, was pro-rector of a major further educational establishment and it was if he had returned to his department: 'Of course, the world is driven by economic interests. But when we are talking about a national consciousness, spiritual factors take on special significance, including pride and self-respect, a recognition that you are not an outcast in this abundant land. I can tell you that with the formation of their own district the Abazins have calmed down, moderated their passions. They have even become reconciled to the fact that they have to travel further to the district clinic!'

So what else is there apart from pride?.. Of course, the local administration helps *Alashara* to promote its language programmes in the district's educational establishments, but it cannot resolve the global problem identified by UNESCO. Yury Lander, an expert I met unexpectedly in Inzhich-Chukun, reflected on this problem. Lander is head of a linguistic expedition from the Higher School of





Left to right from top:  
Day of Abazin Culture in the Green Island  
Park in Cherkessk.

Soloists of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic  
State Dance Ensemble.

Many of the participants made their  
debuts at the first Abaza —  
Song of the Year contests, including  
Beslan Mizhaev, the founder of rock  
in Abazin music.

Aminat Napsheva, the 'Abazin Lyudmila  
Zykina', singing.

TV link-up with Abkhazia and Georgia.

Concert participants are introduced  
by Aza Chechenova and Radmir Dzhibabov,  
presenters of Abazin language programmes  
on the Rossiya-1 TV channel  
in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

Performance of the Ridada Children's  
Dance Ensemble.







Schoolteacher Mukhamed Tukov founded a local history museum in the village of Elburgan (Biberdov) with 800 exhibits — artefacts of the life and culture of the Abaza people, from ancient times to the present day. Murat Mukov, the current manager of the *Alashara* office in Cherkessk, has digitized it, so you can now take virtual tours of the museum. The *Abazin Courtyard* ethnographic centre will be created at the museum with a grant from *Alashara*.

Economics, so how did he come to be here? He is not acquainted with Ekzekov — at least, he has no connection with his projects... Just imagine, he too is interested in the Abazin language, which is little known in Europe and not very well described in scholarly publications. The assistant professor from Moscow is so interested in the language that he had come to Inzhich-Chukun for the second year running with students of *Fundamental Computerized Linguistics*. They live in spartan conditions in classes in a local school and are compiling an Abazin primer based on conversations with the

village residents and describing potential grammatic models. Abazin, explained Yuri, like its related Abkhazian-Adyghey languages, is polysynthetic and has two dialects — Tapant (the Abazin literary language) and Ashkhar, which is very similar to Abkhazian. It has simple nouns and compound verbs that are long in comparison with Central European languages — one verb can convey a whole sentence. The result of the expedition will be a series of articles for international publications which will lead to increased interest in the Abazin language in academic circles.

But will it still be spoken in fifty years' time? The linguist was cautious in his reply: Abazin is not doomed like, for example, Udege in the Far East or Ket on the Yenisey, which are spoken by several dozen people (though the number of native speakers of a language does not always correlate with its chances of survival). As distinct from them Abazin is alive and well, and the enthusiasts of whom Lander has heard are making every effort to save it from extinction. However, there are still threats to its future: the two main ones are the migration of people from the villages to towns (they usually abandon their native language and stop speaking it even in the family circle) and TV, where there are few programmes in national languages (the Karachay-Cherkess Republic channel devotes only 70 minutes a week to them).

Outside the school, however, they were running, jumping, chasing a ball and lifting weights, the Games giving them the chance to converse in their native language. Some had forgotten it after moving to a city — like Ruslan Nazadze, an Abkhaz from Pitsunda who is now studying in Moscow. Others, like Aznaur Dzhegutunov, a native of the village of Kubina who is an engineer, Candidate and Master of Sport in wrestling and showed phenomenal technique in climbing a smooth pole, and Ali Pazov, a tax official who was watching with delight as his eight year-old daughter Asiyat competed in the stone throwing, are concerned that their children have stopped speaking Abazin. This is the pattern: children speak Abazin when they are



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small, but when they go to kindergarten or school they quickly learn Russian and Abazin recedes into the background. Ideally, they should learn Russian and Abazin in parallel — it is easy for children to be bilingual. In Finland, for instance, a study has proved that the children of African immigrants who continue to learn their native language at school pick up Finnish better! In order that his city-dwelling children continue to speak Abazin, Aznaur Dzhegutanov gives them cartoons which *Alashara* has translated into the native language — but not all parents are so conscientious.

‘I have two third cousins in Cherkessk’, Aznaur told me. ‘Their parents are Abazins, their wives are Abazins, but they speak to each other in Russian. One of them has four children, the other three. So it all depends on people. Old people read the Koran and preserve the language for themselves, but children need interesting books and new methods, so that even learning the alphabet is a kind of game.’

The golden words are: those who want their children to speak Abazin will receive the utmost assistance from the skilled young people at *Alashara*. They have launched their own YouTube channel: non-stop programmes featuring meetings with interesting people, song contests and lessons in Abazin. As far as cartoons for children are concerned (*The Three Kats*, *Luntik*, *Tsarevich Ivan and the Grey Wolf*) — more than thirty have already been translated into the native language, the words and songs dubbed by actors in a studio. Twice a year free three-month courses in Abazin are held for all age groups (children, teenagers and adults): the publication of methodical textbooks has been financed by Mussa Ekzekov. While bureaucrats go on about the importance of teaching national languages in kindergartens and schools and training teachers for the purpose, ‘one of the Abazins’ has used his own initiative: he has bought a neglected forest park on the bank of the River Zelenchuk for a summer camp: children will play sports, learn the history of the territory and study the native language.

And after all, he is not alone. He has a whole nation behind him.



Mussa Ekzekov:  
‘I was put on a horse at the age of two’.  
On a ride with his son.

Children at the festival.  
Do they really look like a ‘disappearing nation’?



# ‘I Give to What I Love’

NEW PHILANTHROPISTS EMERGED AT THE 13<sup>TH</sup> MAECENAS DAY IN ST. PETERSBURG

Sergey TEPLOV. Photos: Pavel Markin, Svetlana Ragina, Evgeny Sinyaver and Timur Turgunov



Every Maecenas Day has its own special features and the 13<sup>th</sup> celebration for philanthropists and socially responsible companies in the Hermitage, which began with the traditional winding of the ‘Peacock’ clock, was no exception. However, this was the first time that the event had been accompanied by a dance group — the Royal Giraffe Theatre from Estonia, which looked particularly eye-catching on the stage of the Hermitage Theatre. Guests were then able to see the gifts of Sergey Girdin and Yury Abramov to the museum in the theatre foyer. Also by tradition the celebration in honour of the birthday of Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, calculated from a Horace ode, was opened by Mikhail Piotrovsky, General Director of the Hermitage, who presented the latest issue of the *Russian Maecenas* almanac, whose Board of Guardians he heads.

Then Arkady Sosnov, the almanac’s editor-in-chief, demonstrated the effect of corporate patronage with the aid of a slide show, us-

ing the TKG-1 company as an example — it is with the company’s support that the lighting in a number of rooms in the Hermitage and of individual exhibits has been updated. The light of good works is shed not only on Hermitage fine art. Local artist Ekaterina Posetselskaya presented Albert Kotov, an autistic artist under the wardship of the *Perspectives* charitable organization, with her painting with the symbolic title *The First Sunny Day*. In her turn Ekaterina Glagoleva, the director of the Come Mode clinic who is a long-standing friend of *Perspectives*, gave the charity sixteen tokens for free treatment for mothers of disabled children.

The celebration continued with a series of touching speeches. Vladimir Gronskey, director of the Suvorov Memorial Museum, thanked Mussa Ekzekov for his help in the purchase of a unique collection of tin guardsmen. Ruslan Tikhomirov, Head of the Municipality of Shushary, expressed his gratitude to Grachya Pogosyan and his foun-



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dation for their assistance in reviving the memory of the Quaker Daniel Wheeler, who dried out the marshes around St. Petersburg in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Irina Stont, director of the ice-breaker *Krasin* — a branch of the Museum of the World Ocean in Kaliningrad, received from Nikolay Miklukho-Maklay a ritual tagir dish from Papua New Guinea which he had brought back from an expedition in the steps of his ancestor.

At the height of the ceremony a carillon sounded out from the screen. At the instrument was the Belgian musician Jo Haazen, now a professor at St. Petersburg University, who revived the carillon in Peter and Paul Cathedral and is collecting funds for a carillon for the university. He has thought up an original form of fundraising: collecting money for named bells. Deputy Pro-Rector Sergey Goncharov thanked Haazen on behalf of the university, where the Belgian has established a Russian carillon school.

Another school — named after Alexander Gorchakov, a fellow-pupil of Pushkin at the lyceum and subsequently Chancellor of the Russian Empire — has been founded by the inspired restorer Sergey Gutsait. Pupils at the school wrote about its founder in their essays. For example, Arseny Ignatiev, a fifth-year pupil, wrote: 'Sergey Edidovich just wants the world to be a better place. That is what he is working towards. Then others will look and say: oh, he's managed to do it! And they too will begin to do something good.'

With his customary generosity Alexey Zakharenkov, director of the Vita Nova publishing-house, presented a series of books by Eduard Kochergin to the *Nochlezhka* charity for the homeless, and a book from the series *Family Library. Children's Room* to Margarita Urmancheeva, President of the Association of Parents of Disabled Children. He then presented Mikhail Piotrovsky with the book *NARTY. An Adygean Heroic Epic. With an Appendix of 10 Etchings by Hamid Savkuev* for the Hermitage Library.

Chingiz Osmanov, leader of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra and founder and leader of the St. Petersburg Sinfonietta Chamber Orchestra, not only displayed his virtuosity on his beloved



violin but also appeared in his capacity as organizer of the *Colour a Concert* project for children. The aim of the project is for the young generation of musicians to help to educate a new generation of concertgoers in the form of a game.

As soon as an 18<sup>th</sup> century wardrobe with tracery carving appeared on the screen it became clear that it was truly a 'dear much-respected armoire'. Marina Rebrikova, curator of furniture at Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, wrote about it as an essential feature of the interior of the Church Pavilion in our almanac. And on Maecenas Day Svetlana Dobrosolets, Director of the Friends of Peterhof Club, presented a donor's diploma to Oleg Artemenko, Director of ArtClub B.V.

The essence of patronage is that it is voluntary: 'I give to what I love'. The collector and educator Yury Abramov loves the Hermitage and presented it with another genuine masterpiece: a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century French dish with a gilded bronze rim. He also gave Gatchina State Museum-Reserve a table which was once part of the interior of Gatchina Palace, as was described by the museum-reserve's director Vasily Pankratov.



Costume of a Sudanese warrior — one of Sergey Girdin's gifts to the Hermitage.







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### Left to right from top:

Ekaterina Posetselskaya presenting her painting to fellow-artist Albert Kotov.

Ekaterina Glagoleva (left) with her gift to *Perspectives*.

Nikolay Miklukho-Maklay adds to the collection of the Museum of the World Ocean.

Ruslan Tikhomirov thanks Grachya Pogosyan for his assistance.

A 'delegation' from the Alexander Gorchakov School with its founder Sergey Gutsait.

Maestro Jozef Haazen (right) receives the thanks of St. Petersburg University.

Publisher Alexey Zakharenkov handing over books for *Nochlezhka*.

Awards ceremony for the 'AdMIAOWrable People of St. Petersburg' prize. The first winners: Galina and Sergey Makarov and Maria Khaltunen (holding Achilles).

But no one could be a more constant lover than Sergey Girdin, who continues to add to the Hermitage collection of African art with the active support of his family and work colleagues. Since the last Maecenas Day he has contributed a further 22 items. One of his latest 'instalments' was displayed in the theatre foyer: the armour and equipment of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Sudanese warrior. Mikhail Piotrovsky presented letters of thanks to him and to other long-standing donors for their recent gifts to the Hermitage: Vladimir Levshenkov (rare porcelain tableware) and Mikhail Suslov (armchairs in the 'second rococo' and 'oriental' styles made in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). The most unusual gift was presented by Olga Khlopova, director of the I-Gallery in Paris: *Intelligence* (six full-size models of horses for the display in the Knights' Hall).

A miniature by the Royal Giraffe Theatre preceded the award of a new prize to 'AdMIAOWrable People of St. Petersburg.' The founders

of the prize — Anna Kondratieva, the family doctor of the Hermitage cats, and Arkady Sosnov, editor-in-chief of *Russian Maecenas*, spoke about it. The Hermitage cat-oracle Achilles took part in the ceremony. The first prize-winners were the physiologist Alexander Nozdrachev, an Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Sergey Makarov and his wife Galina (Sergey heads the Committee for the Control, Use and Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments, but still retains his love of cats) and Maria Khaltunen, a Senior Researcher at the Hermitage.

The star-studded concert featuring Chingiz Osmanov, the brilliant pianist Alexander Rubinov and Royal Giraffe actors Stanislav Varkki, Larisa Lebedeva and Anna Varkki will live long in guests' memory. Regular attendees of Maecenas Day declared that there had never been such a bright, rich and dynamic programme and that it was hardly likely to be surpassed. They may be right, but we will try...



The magical violin of Chingiz Osmanov.

The finale of the 13th Maecenas Day performed by the Royal Giraffe Theatre.





# Meeting with Misfortune

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THE FIRST CHILDREN'S HOSPICE HAS OPENED IN THE LENINGRAD REGION

Ekaterina AUDMAN. Photos: the Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg archive, Ksenia Kosolova



Address in VKontakte:  
[vk.com/det.hospis\\_lo](https://vk.com/det.hospis_lo)

A hospice for children opened this year in the grounds of the Archangel Michael Cathedral parish in the village of Toksovo. It has been organized by the Vyborg Diocese and the Leningrad Region Government with the support of philanthropists, including the *Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg* company.

The hospice is the first establishment of its kind in the Leningrad Region. It has more than twenty beds for seriously ill children and their families. Besides a modern intensive care department, there are excellent facilities for patients — comfortable wards, a playroom and computer class, a pool and a hydromassage bath. Parents can be with their children constantly (there are extra sleeping facilities for them in the wards). The patients are cared for by qualified medical personnel with extensive experience in providing palliative and psychological assistance and by members of the





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clergy. The hospice has two teams of doctors with various specialties and nurses who provide outside medical consultations to the region's residents — they are currently caring for around 400 seriously ill children.

All the hospice's services are financed by the Leningrad Region budget and are free of charge to patients and their families. However, as was the custom in Ancient Rus, the whole world comes to the aid of people meeting with misfortune. Volunteers hold yoga, pilates and remedial gymnastics sessions at the hospice. Natalya Nikandrova, the headmistress of a local school, has taken it upon herself to organize lessons for the young patients.

The parish also has a geriatric medical-social centre (old people's home) named after Empress Maria Fyodorovna which can accommodate 100 patients.



*The speakers at the opening ceremony were Alexander Drozdenko, Governor of the Leningrad Region, Lev Neroda, Senior Priest of the Cathedral, Elena Larina, Deputy General Director of Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg for Maintenance and Capital Construction, and Valeria Tovpyga, Acting Director of the hospice. The governor expressed his gratitude to the companies which had provided philanthropic assistance in the building of the hospice. In her turn, Elena Larina said that it was extremely important for Gazprom Transgaz St. Petersburg, as a socially responsible company, to take part in such significant projects. She wished the staff of the children's hospice success in their noble and very necessary work.*



# Never Despair!

THE FILM *LET THE WORLD HEAR!* HAS BEEN PREMIERED IN TWENTY CITIES IN FOUR COUNTRIES AND HAS BEEN SEEN BY SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE. AND THAT'S NOT ALL

Sergey ARKADIEV. Photos: Andrey Konev and Dmitry Pesochinsky



A showing of the film in the Presidential Library.

*'When we started thinking about the film we never suspected that it would get such a response from viewers, but now with the passage of time I realize that it could not have been otherwise; after all, it is the story of the lives of people who have experienced a miracle cure and have been helped not only by doctors but also by teachers and family; most of all, though, they have helped themselves'.*

Natalya Konyushenko,  
Producer of the Film

At the showing in the *Manege* Central Exhibition Hall in St. Petersburg.

Right:

The film's main characters Dmitry Uvarov and Nikolay Kuznetsov, with his mother Irina, answer questions from the audience.

It is a film about people who have overcome the barrier of alienation with the aid of unique medical technology — cochlear implantation. It is returning hearing to people who seemed doomed to total deafness and, as a consequence, is helping to discover their individual abilities for the benefit of society. There are already hundreds of thousands of people with implants, enabling them to enjoy the wonderful and varied world of sounds. They study, work, play sport and just live like anyone else and do not even know of one another.

On Maecenas Day in April 2017 we introduced two young men from St. Petersburg and a girl from Kazakhstan to the elderly couple Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair, who developed the first multichannel cochlear implants. It was a touching meeting and it suggested an idea:



to trace how people's lives sometimes intersect in a fantastic way. And that is how the idea of the film *Let the World Hear!* was conceived.

The characters in the film — engineers, teachers, parents, doctors and patients — all agree that this technology should be spread around the world to help all those in need of it, and there are far more of them than those who have already had their hearing returned. Hence the title *Let the World Hear!* But the film has an even more important aim: to demonstrate to society that today deafness is not a life sentence. And as soon as the makers of the film realized this, the film became an international documentary video project with its own website (<http://filmosluhe.ru>), a schedule of premieres



## Effective Practice

in Russia and the CIS and a plan of interaction with interested enthusiasts at the venues.

All the premieres were attended by doctors, social workers, volunteers, journalists and, of course, by those whose families were affected by the problem of deafness. A key part was played by specialists from the St. Petersburg Ear, Throat, Nose and Speech Research Institute, particularly its director Yury Yanov, an Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, its leading otological surgeon Profes-



sor Vladislav Kuzovkov and the guru of oral-aural rehabilitation Professor Inna Korolyova. They joined the project because they saw its promotion as their professional duty. Needless to say, they were asked some very pertinent questions after the screening of the film — not how the film was made (though the audience was also interested in that), but how the disability can be cured.

The first screening of the film, which was made in less than six months, took place literally hot off the press: on 20 September in the *Illusion* cinema in Moscow, equipped with infrared transmitters for the comfort of those with hearing defects. And, of course, the film had subtitles for the same purpose. And when the lights went on

after the film, one of the characters appeared as though he had come straight out of the screen — Nikolay Kuznetsov from St. Petersburg, who lost his sight and his hearing as a result of a childhood illness. It has not been possible to restore his sight, but his hearing has returned thanks to a cochlear implant. He is now studying in the Law Faculty at St. Petersburg University, enjoys music and writes poetry, some of it inspired by the works of Ludwig van Beethoven, who suffered from progressive deafness...



Inviting the film's main characters to the public screenings was the project's trump card, as they were able to share their experience of returning to a normal life. In St. Petersburg it was Nikolay Kuznetsov and Dmitry Uvarov, in Almaty and Aktobe — Aygerim Tutova. If none of those three was able to make a long journey, the project's authors invited people with implants from that region and members of their families as speakers. There was an important social aspect to this — to encourage the self-assertiveness and public acknowledgement of those who were able to prove that deafness can be overcome.

The discussion after the premiere in the St. Petersburg House of Journalists was initiated by Lyudmila Kostkina, Assistant to the Chair



Showing in the St. Petersburg House of Journalists.

Left to right:  
Inna Korolyova, Yury Yanov,  
Lyudmila Kostkina.

Thanks to the film, otological surgeon  
Vladislav Kuzovkov was introduced  
to the world of cinema and TV.







At the showing  
in the Presidential Library.

of the Federation Council. As a recent Vice-Governor of St. Petersburg for Social Policy and subsequently a senator, she was, you might say, *au courant*. She mentioned that the first cochlear implant operations were carried out in St. Petersburg at the insistence of doctors and with the support of the then Governor Valentina Matvienko: in 2007 funds for the surgical treatment of the first 27 young patients were allocated in a separate section of the budget. It is the joint action of the authorities, the specialists and the parents' organization that have made this area of medicine so effective.

In the Yeltsin Centre in Yekaterinburg this theme was developed by Hiyir Abdulkirimov, Head Otorhinolaryngologist of the Ministry of Health for the Sverdlov Region and the Ural Federal District: the costly operations are absolutely free for patients; doctors in the Urals carry them out on a state quota system or send the patients to profile centres in Moscow and St. Petersburg. However, the potential of cochlear implantation has by no means been exhausted. Many people of various ages are in need of the operation but sometimes are not even aware that such a progressive method of relieving deafness exists. Other parents consider the operation dangerous, which is not surprising — an electrode is implanted in the cochlea in the child's inner ear. But, as the film clearly shows, at the St. Petersburg Ear, Throat, Nose and Speech Institute it is a routine operation which takes only 30–35 minutes and is even carried out on year-old babies.

The emotions shared by viewers after the premieres in Kazan, Minsk, Nalchik, Chelyabinsk, Chita and other cities showed that success stories are always in demand and that the people who have won the dramatic struggle with their disability are real success stories! Dmitry Uvarov has fulfilled his teenage dream to drive cars, has graduated and taught, and now devotes his leisure time to Latin American dancing, which requires a keen ear and a sense of rhythm. 'He is deaf and he dances like that!' exclaims Inna Korolyova in the film — it was she who taught him to speak again after the operation. Aygerim Tutova sings professionally, but after experiencing the magical power of medicine she

has chosen a different path — she has a university diploma as a defec-tologist. In general, the example of the characters in the film proves that people with implants can sometimes achieve far more in life than absolutely healthy people! It was no coincidence that the highlight of Nikolay Kuznetsov's chat with the St. Petersburg audience was a poem about 'a world alive, fascinating and unsteady,' superbly declaimed by the author.

In many respects the film was aimed at a specific audience. In St. Petersburg it was shown as part of *Contact*, an inclusive exhibition at the *Manege* Central Exhibition Hall. One member of the audience, whose daughter has an implant (the whole family had come to the screening), asked what parting words the characters in the film could give to people in a similar situation. And Nikolay, wise beyond his years, replied sincerely: 'The most important advice, my dears, is never despair, don't lose heart and keep working! Then everything will be fine!'

So why can such a spiritually uplifting film not be shown on one of the national TV channels, to reinforce its informative and educational effect? Surely viewers would receive a boost from the energy of people who had risen above circumstances! Alas, social films do not bring in the ratings with which TV companies are obsessed!

The fact that the film evokes a response from a wide audience was confirmed by the premiere in the Yeltsin Presidential Library. Those who came to watch it were ordinary readers, artists, Russian and Chinese students, as well as wards of the *Perspectives* charitable organization with their teacher. Viktoria Lavruk and Mikhail Goncharko are preparing for independent life outside the psychoneurological home by studying in a training flat. As Viktoria said, meeting the characters from the film will help her to believe in her own strength, that no difficulties are obstacles if you want to become a fully-fledged personality. Incidentally, after the screening the film was included in Presidential Library's National Fund at the suggestion of the library's Acting General Director Valentin Sidorin: [www.prlib.ru/item/1164477](http://www.prlib.ru/item/1164477).

It is partly for the benefit of viewers like Viktoria that the video project *Let the World Hear!* will continue its tour of Russia and the CIS.





The initiator of the screening of the film in Aktope (top right) was Marzia Mukhambetyarova (seated in the centre), the mother of many children, one of whom — a daughter — has an implant. Marzia is the founder and head of the 'Kuanysh dybysta' Public Association which supports people with hearing difficulties. Thanks to her efforts the idea developed into a major conference 'Life without Borders' on the subject of cochlear implantation and subsequent rehabilitation. The film was shown as part of the conference. It was viewed and discussed by parents, children, specialists, representatives of the Aktope Region Department of Health and also by Kuralay Baimenova, Adviser to the Akim of Aktope Region on Matters Concerning the Disabled. In this way the 'Let the World Hear!' project helped to create a platform for a constructive discussion by all interested parties in the region, accompanied by musical performances by children with cochlear implants and a generous Kazakh-style spread. (Standing in the centre — Aygerim Tutova, one of the characters in the film)



Where the film has been shown (left to right from top):  
Krasnodar  
Aktope (Kazakhstan)  
Yekaterinburg  
Chita  
Moscow  
Nalchik  
Elista



The film has also been shown in St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Grozny, Surgut, Chelyabinsk, Almaty (Kazakhstan), Innsbruck (Austria), Kazan, Izhevsk, Podolsk, Minsk (Belarus), Kurgan, Omsk, Volgograd, Tyumen, Orenburg, Tver.



# For the Benefit of Turkey

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THE ST. PETERSBURG PETER THE GREAT POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY IS TRAINING SPECIALISTS FASCINATED BY THE ATOM

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Natalia Dönmez, Timur Turgunov and Mikhail Chernov



‘Turkey has become closer’ — that is what they are now saying in the Peter the Great Polytechnic University in St. Petersburg. Its rector Andrey Rudskoy, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, is President of the Society of Friendship with Turkey, and the university has been commissioned by the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources to train specialists for the *Akkuyu Nükleer* nuclear power station, a major Russian-Turkish joint project. As part of the contract with Rosatom 24 Turkish students are receiving instruction in the university’s Institute of Energy and Transport Systems, specializing in *Nuclear Energy*.

The Polytechnic University was not handed this prestigious commission on a plate. It was carefully assessed: its experience in teaching foreign students and, in particular, its targeted training of specialists for energy installations under construction were closely



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examined. A delegation from Turkey which visited the university in June 2015 took an interest in everything: the auditoriums, laboratories, student hostels, sports facilities, the student canteen, the library and, most importantly, the curricula. Andrey Rudskoy showed the visitors the university's innovative infrastructure — the Engineering Centre, the new Scientific Research Centre and the Supercomputer. The delegation also visited the Institute of Energy and Transport Systems, which trains personnel for the design, installation and operation of nuclear power stations. The Turkish visitors were satisfied with what they had seen. They were especially impressed by the unique programme of specialization in Russian (after all, Russian will be the *lingua franca* at *Akkuyu Nukleer!*) with a course of study of 5.5 years, after which graduates are awarded diplomas as nuclear engineers. Two groups from Vietnam were already studying under this programme.

Necati Yamaç, the Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources who headed the delegation, remarked that the Turkish energy industry needed at least 3,500 specialists and called for the intensification of Russian-Turkish links in the field of scientific education — for example, to consider establishing joint educational programmes between the Polytechnic University, the Istanbul Technical University and Hacettepe University. And on 1 September of that year (2015) a group of Turkish students who had been selected from approximately 5,000 contestants on the results of a two-stage competition commenced a course of study at the Polytechnic University.

They were very different people who had studied for a year or two at various universities in Turkey. Their level of training consequently varied: at first some of them had to do a bit of catching up and 'reduced to the common denominator' (the Russian educational standard), but none of them are here by chance. These students are absolutely convinced that Turkey should have its own nuclear power station (it is currently obliged to purchase electricity from neighbouring countries) and this motivates them in their studies. As the



head of the group Emre Beki told us: 'Nuclear power is a tough but interesting specialization. I chose it because I am fascinated by physics and I reckon that energy will be man's most important requirement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Another factor which influenced my choice was that my father, who is now retired, was a technician in a state energy company and very much wants me to work at the first Turkish nuclear power station. That is also what I want to do.'

Before studying nuclear energy, they had to learn Russian, which took a whole year at the Polytechnic University's Institute of International Educational Programmes. All the Turkish students were agreed: learning Russian from scratch is not easy, but it is possible! For example, Burak Pekşen was so successful that at the 15<sup>th</sup> All-Russian Olympiad in Russian as a Foreign Language he was placed third out of more than 80 competitors from 31 countries, and his fel-

Questions for the lecturer.  
Assistant Professor Vladimir Polonsky  
with Turkish students.

**Page 34:**  
Turkish students by the model  
of a nuclear power station.

*Akkuyu Nukleer, the first nuclear power station in Turkey and Asia Minor on the shore of the Mediterranean in the province of Mersin, is being built to a Russian design which provides for four energy blocks with VVER-1200 reactors with a total capacity of 4,800 megawatts.*





A practical session on the *Heat Exchange in the Equipment of Thermal Installations* course. Assistant Professor Ekaterina Kitanina by the blackboard.

Mehmet Sariarslan solving a problem.



*During the opening ceremony in Ankara in April 2018 by video link Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave a start to the construction of the power station, the cost of which is \$22 billion. It is the first nuclear power station in the world to be constructed on the BOO (build-own-operate) principle. Russian contractors will be responsible for the design, construction, technical servicing and operation of the station. All the equipment (reactor, steam-powered and electrical) will also be Russian.*

low group member Cihan Açıkgöz came sixth! This is a remarkable success for lads who two years ago did not even know the Russian alphabet and a testimony to the teaching of Russian at the Polytechnic University. A lot depends on the students themselves, of course. Burak did not miss a single lesson and tried to practise his Russian at every opportunity: he listened to songs and arias in Russian, watched films with subtitles and chatted to native speakers.

Studying at Russia's leading technical university is no walk in the park. The first two years in the Department of Nuclear and Thermal Energy were the hardest — the students were bombarded with fundamental knowledge, mostly in maths and physics. As Professor Nikolay Zabelin, Director of the Institute of Energy and Transport Systems, says, this is the base of the pyramid of knowledge and the means of breeding engineering thought. Confident mastery of Russian is necessary in order to be 'poured' into the flow of lectures. Emre Beki admitted that he experienced difficulties in studying theoretical disciplines and taking oral exams: there are no such exams in

Turkey — you write what you know and are given a mark, but here you have to talk to the teacher who exposes the depth of your knowledge. However, he added, they have very competent teachers who help them to master the subject.

The theory is reinforced in independent creativity. As part of the new *Basics of Design* discipline the students are split into small groups to design various things: the group headed by Emre Beki made a model of a nuclear power station, Şahin Can Tipi and his group studied the possibility of making a car that would run on nuclear fuel, Mehmet Sariarslan designed a model of a robotized tank...

After the general education disciplines come general technical subjects, which lead to specialized technical disciplines — a study of the equipment of a nuclear power station, which the current third-year students are now embarking upon. The teachers change, but the group's specially invited guest tutor remains: Natalia Dönmez lived in Turkey for several years, is fluent in Turkish and, also importantly, in English. With her alongside it is easier to fit into the university



## Over the Barriers



environment and enjoy the culture of St. Petersburg. The Turkish students regularly go on excursions with their tutor, visiting theatres, museums and, of course, organizations in their specialization. They have already visited the South-West Thermal Power Plant, the Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant, the Nevsky Plant and the Izhorsky Plant, where the core of the first reactor for *Akkuyu Nükleer* will be built. Their acquaintance with the fuel-energy complex is broadening: during the current academic year they will visit the Gazprom compressor station in Yukki and one of the Gazpromneft installations.

One senses that the role of excursion members does not now suit them. As a professional, Şahin Can Tipi appreciated the standard of production and safety at the Leningrad Nuclear Energy Plant, which has four RBMK reactors and a new-generation VVER-1200 reactor at the initial operational stage — four similar reactors will be installed at *Akkuyu Nükleer*. This was just an acquaintance visit: next year the students will undergo practical tuition at the Leningrad Nuclear Energy Plant and will learn a great deal more about it. But even now



Turkish students get acquainted with Russian energy companies.



In addition to nuclear energy, Semih Uçar is keen on history and literature, now also of Russia.





**Left to right:**  
Black Kiss performing  
with Julia Kamzina.

Mustafa Elaldi in the Museum  
of Applied Art at the Stieglitz State  
Academy of Industrial Art  
in St. Petersburg.

Burak Pekşen advises foreigners  
coming to study in Russia not to miss  
a single lesson — otherwise it is  
very difficult to catch up with what  
you have missed: 'Lead an active  
way of life, converse with people  
and learn Russian. When you have  
learned it, everything will be simple!'

On an excursion to Pavlovsk State  
Museum-Reserve.





## Over the Barriers

they are gratified that Turkey will have its own similar nuclear power station. It should be noted that the organization of practical tuition at enterprises in the industry, like the courses of study themselves, is undertaken by the Polytechnic University in close contact with Rosatom as one of its feeder establishments.

‘Turkish people know little about nuclear energy. Some think it is mortally dangerous and best avoided. The reliable information which I want to bring them will help to dispel those fears’, said Nurberk Sungur, the only girl in the group. She has written a series of popular articles about the structure of the atom, nuclear energy and nuclear medicine for the Turkish website <http://kadinbilim.com> (literally — science for women). Well, Nurberk’s name obliges her to do this: in Turkish *nur* means light and *berk* — strong, confident.

As it turned out, Nurberk fell in love with St. Petersburg thanks to *Kurt Seyit ve Şura*, a book by the well-known Turkish writer Nermin Bezmen (it was subsequently made into a serial) about the relationship between an officer of a Crimean cavalry regiment and a young lady of the Russian aristocracy which develops in the capital of the Russian Empire. She has not been disappointed: ‘I now love St. Petersburg even in the cold and slush’, smiled Nurberk. Her friends in the group also think they are very lucky to live in such a beautiful city with its rich cultural-historical heritage and wonderful museums, most of which are free for students. Semih Uçar said that great Russian literature is respected in Turkey, where Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are read in translation, and every stroll through the city seems to bring him closer to the originals. Emre Beki summed it up: ‘We will really miss St. Petersburg when we return to Turkey’.

In short, everything is great for the Turkish students, except... the climate — they would like a little more sunshine and a little less rain. Only Mustafa Elaldi sees no problem — he is not from warm Antalya like his friend Saygi Kaya, but from Ankara, where it can also be quite cold. In general, however, they have become used to bad weather and have also found a recipe for combating it — an ac-



tive way of life. Burak Pekşen and Ege Mert play in the university’s basketball team for foreign students. How did they get into it? On the recommendation of lads from the Russian team, who spotted them at a training session in the gym at the Institute of International Educational Programmes and introduced them to the trainer. Two years ago they went to a streetball competition in Ivanovo and won it. Cihan Açıkgöz goes to the gym three times a week, Şahin Can Tipi founded the rock group *Black Kiss*, in which he plays bass guitar, Furkan Arslan drums, Ege Mert vocals, Can Avidzba (a lad from another group — there are over fifty Turkish students and postgraduates in various departments of the Polytechnic University) guitar and Zahid Akin keyboards. Their concerts in the university’s student club and at other venues have been very well received. They have performed with Yulia Kamzina, a soloist from St. Petersburg State University’s *Polyhymnia* Choir. They sing in Turkish, English and Russian.

‘Which songs do you prefer?’ I asked Şahin Can Tipi.

‘Let me first tell you which Russian groups we like — DDT, Bi2 and Kino, which is why we choose songs from their repertoire. Our favourite is Viktor Tsoy’s *Cuckoo*. I also like Russian romances very much.’

President of the Society of Friendship with Turkey Andrey Rudskoy, Turkish Ambassador Hüseyin Lazip Dirioz, Head of Rossotrudnichestvo Eleonora Mitrofanova, General Secretary of RAIC Vladimir Polozkov.

*This summer an evening of Russian-Turkish friendship was held in Moscow to mark the 26th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey. It was organized by the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Russians Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Russian Association for International Cooperation (RAIC) and by the Turkish Embassy in Moscow.*

*Andrey Rudskoy, Rector of the Peter the Great Polytechnic University in St. Petersburg and President of the Society of Friendship with Turkey, spoke at the event. He set out the main aim of the Society: to facilitate the development of relations between the two countries, including in the fields of science and education, embodying them in mutually profitable projects. One of these projects is the joint creation of Akkuyu Nükleer, the first nuclear power station in Turkey, and, in particular, the training of specialists for it at the Polytechnic University.*

*Rector stressed that young students would have a special role to play in the dialogue between the communities of Russia and Turkey. Festivals and summer schools would be organized for them at leading higher educational establishments in Russia. Student grants would be available to talented Turkish youngsters in leading Russian universities. The fact that 2019 had been officially announced as the mutual Year of Culture and Tourism in Russia and Turkey would give a powerful impulse to the development of bilateral contacts. All this would raise the dialogue between the cultures of the two countries to a new level, and the University would undoubtedly take an active part.*



Abdulkadir Kocer and Professor Marco Savini from the University of Bergamo (Italy), a lecturer at the masters' summer school.

One of the participants in the Turbo-Mechanical Engineering module at the masters' summer school was Abdulkadir Kocer from Koc University in Istanbul. Abdulkadir said he had dreamed of coming to St. Petersburg as an admirer of Russian literature and was fascinated by the way it is interwoven with the city's history and architecture. As far as his professional interests were concerned, it was important to communicate with people with various levels of training. Before he came to the Northern Capital turbo-mechanical engineering was for him only one segment of the large market of machines and mechanisms, but after broadening his knowledge at the lectures and visiting major companies in the field he is now leaning towards a career in turbines when he graduates from university!



We were talking after a lecture in the *Components of Machines and Basics of Construction* course given by Assistant Professor Vladimir Polonsky. Two blackboards were covered with formulae and graphs and there was still not enough space. The lecturer explained the importance of these principles — for example, to calculate the endurance of shafts, as a supplement to computer modelling. They have generations of experience and a huge experimental centre to fall back on, occasionally forming a trade secret but also relying on their own personal experience. Quite naturally, several Turkish students went up to Polonsky immediately after the lecture — they were obviously after the secrets. And the questions they asked were entirely professional.

Page 41:  
By the statue of a Polytechnic student.

'Turkey has become closer' also because the country is satisfied with the progress of its emissaries' studies and intends to send another group of students to the Polytechnic University for training — not only for the nuclear power station. As Professor Nikolay Zabelin explained, 'our partners are interested in a range of technologies and equipment connected with the conversion and use of nuclear energy — steam turbines, heat exchangers, electricity generators, right down to the supply of energy to the end consumer, and we provide them with a whole range of possibilities.' He then broke this range into its individual components.

Besides this speciality, the Polytechnic University may introduce a master's programme in nuclear energy taught in English — Rosatom shares this approach. There is the possibility of studying a master's programme in Russian on *Nuclear Energy and Thermal Physics* in the same department, but it has a fairly tough entry requirement in the form of an interdisciplinary exam. It is also possible to study for a bachelor's degree in the same subject — that route is even preferable, as it provides fundamental preparation for future study for a master's degree. There is another form of study for foreign students — three-week masters' courses in summer and winter. At last year's summer school a new *Nuclear Energy* module was introduced. And this year saw the introduction of a *Gas and Oil* module: around 250 masters from 35 countries, including Turkey, came to the Polytechnic University, as well as 25 foreign lecturers from leading European higher educational establishments. Finally, a joint programme has been devised between the Polytechnic University and the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, also to train personnel for *Akkuyu Nükleer* but aimed at the servicing of the reactor.

It is planned to install the reactor blocks at *Akkuyu Nükleer* gradually, at intervals of one year beginning in 2023, so by the time the first block comes into operation the advance guard of specialists educated at the Polytechnic University will be ready to work on it.







# Once there was a gardener...

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HOW HEIKKI LAAKSONEN HAS TRANSFORMED KOTKA IN FINLAND INTO A CITY-PARK

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: the author and from City Development and Communications, Kotka



The city's head gardener Heikki Laaksonen was waiting for us in the central square by a column which proclaimed Kotka's status as a national city-park of Finland. Neither Helsinki nor Tampere has such a title. According to the guidebooks, Kotka, with a population of just 53,000 (near the bottom of the top twenty cities in the country), has twelve parks, fifty children's playgrounds and other 'green' territories — beaches, stadiums, boulevards... In all, Heikki and his team have about two hundred hectares of plantations to look after, plus 1,200 hectares of forest-park within the city limits. Nobody would ever have imagined that this small city, previously known only for its port and cellulose-paper combines (Kotka Mills, which manufacture high-quality paper and recently also cartons for fast food, and the Sunila factory with its residential complex designed by Alvar Aalto himself in the 1930s), could win such recognition. And Heikki's handiwork can be seen at Kotka Mills too: around the factory fence, against the background of

dunes of sawdust and wood chips (known as the Sahara in the city), he created silhouettes of camels and their driver made of laminated pellicles of cardboard produced from those waste materials.

Today dozens of delegations of specialists in landscape design from various countries come to Kotka. Last summer the city hosted the national landscaping seminar with the expressive title *Change* and Heikki spoke about the green renaissance of his native city. It is not just the number of parks that is important, but their diversity. There are lots of parks in the world, but most of them are dull. Go to any city and you will see splendid tulips and other bulbous flowers everywhere, but identical flowerbeds and lawns. It is easier to work on a flat surface — simple solutions are always to hand, but transforming it is more difficult. Heikki reckons that if there is a drop of about two metres in a hectare of land it is a bonus. In Kotka he is fortunate in this sense. The city has not only the capricious outlines of the Gulf of



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Finland (the central part is on an island), but also a legacy from the Ice Age — an abundance of granite boulders, which a self-respecting gardener is obliged to blend into the park landscape (apart from those which enterprising citizens have used for the foundations and ground floors of buildings).

Heikki used to spend the school holidays in his parents' summer house on Hevossaari (literally Horse Island), half an hour from the city by boat. That is where he carried out his first botanical experiments: after watching a film about Tarzan, he and his brother planted oaks so that they could practise swinging through the trees when they had grown. 'The oaks grew more slowly than we did,' laughs Heikki, 'and now they have grown our climbing days are over.' After graduating from the Häme University of Applied Sciences, specializing in landscape design, he spent two years at the University of West Virginia (USA), combining his studies with work at Oglebay Park in the town of Wheeling, where he gained experience in enriching the natural environment with leisure and entertainment functions. And before returning home he spent a year improving private gardens in Oslo and Holmenkollen in Norway.

Heikki returned to Kotka full of good intentions and began his transformation of the city with the Sapokka Water Park (the pond that borders the park, which was once connected to the sea, is shaped like a boot), not far from Kotka Mills. Sapokka, with its numerous self-made wooden docks, was a typical stagnant, silted-up reservoir. In spring, when the days became warmer, it was covered in duckweed. Now an artificial waterfall runs down from the granite slopes overgrown with pines — the water is piped from the sea and enriched with oxygen as it falls, bringing life with it. The unpleasant smell that residents used to complain about has disappeared.

However, when the gardener took up this 'dead' corner of the city they also complained. They wanted it to change more quickly, considering the substantial sums from the municipal budget that were being spent. Heikki — an active, impulsive man in Finnish



terms, explained that parks cannot be made in a hurry. It is not like running the 100 metres — sometimes three, or even five years are not enough, and to transform a city into a park can take a marathon twenty! But nobody listened, and the young specialist did not yet have any proof that he could work a miracle. For three years his draft project lay on the shelf. It was a good thing that the first large tranche of finance for the park was issued before the economic crisis of 1990–1993! The change in public opinion can be traced through back issues of the local *Kymen Sanomat* newspaper. As the work progressed, the paper admitted that 'the improved Sapokka Park is impossible to ignore', that the landscapes already gladdened the eye when viewed through a car window, and that not much more needed to be done before you would want to get out of the car and enjoy the beauty of this jewel. In 1992 the same newspaper proclaimed that Sapokka Park had demonstrated its might, and in

Heikki Laaksonen,  
Head Gardener of Kotka.



The local press has been keeping a close eye on Heikki's innovations.

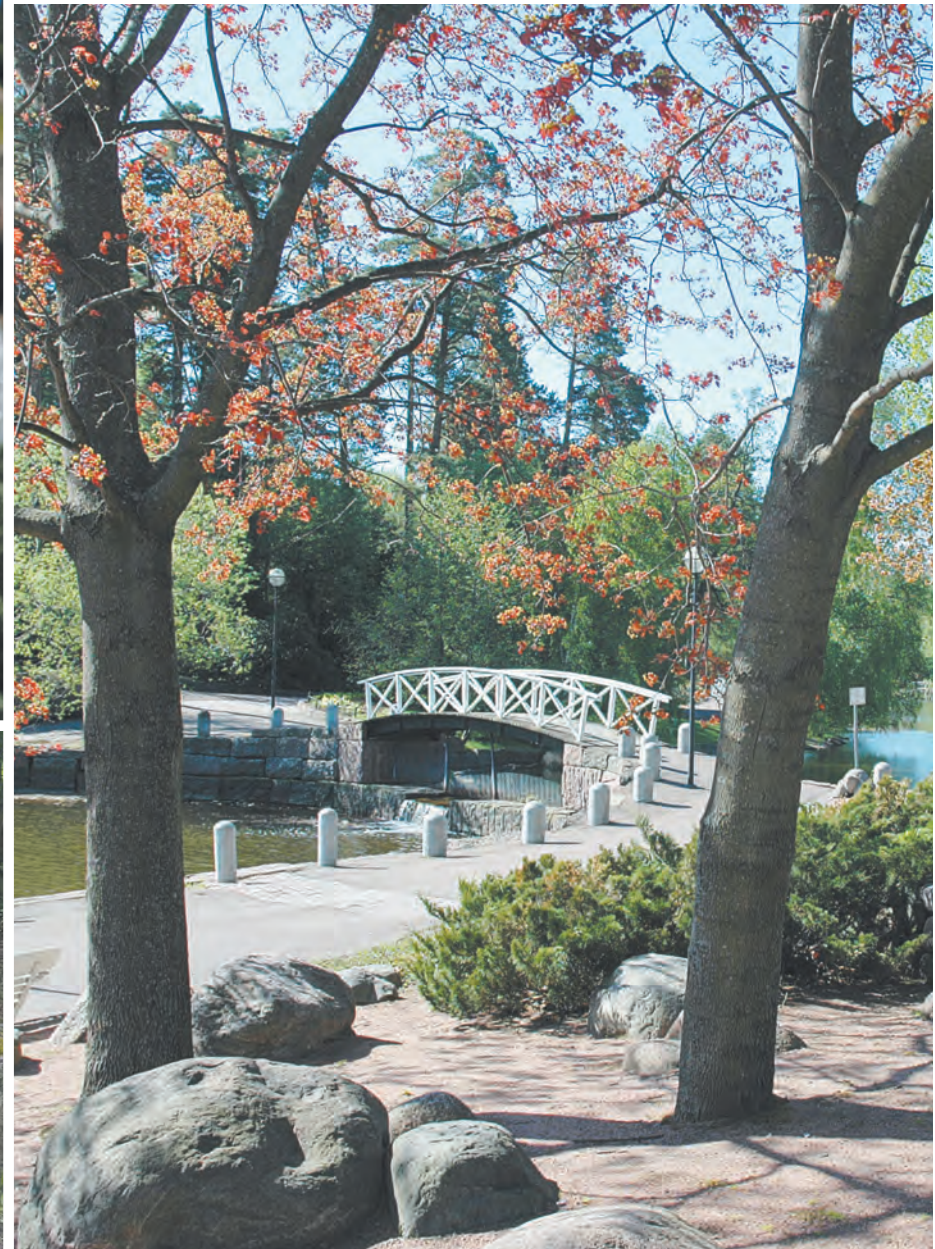
Page 42:  
A bronze addition to the Sculpture Promenade in Isopuisto Park.



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Sapokka Park today and 25 years ago.





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subsequent issues it reported the awards won by the park: for artistic lighting, as the best ecological structure and the best stone construction. Sapokka is now the most titled park in Finland.

These scrapes took their toll on Heikki's health — he had several operations at the age of 33. During the first operation (the most complicated one, lasting seven hours) his future wife rang the hospital to ask how Heikki was. In all seriousness the surgeon's assistant replied: 'He's still alive'. Heikki did not want to remember that time and asked that we change the subject to something more cheerful — luckily, there are plenty of those subjects.

For 70 years the city's oil terminal was on the site of the present Katariina Seaside Park. Heikki went to the reservoir, carried out a reconnaissance and thought: well, this is a fine mess. When the last tanker had left, a major operation began to clean the bottom, which took over a year. The Shell company showed social responsibility: the top layer of earth was removed down to the rock foundations and annealed in a special installation. Now the flat coast is unrecognizable: streams and backwaters, a children's village, a bird-watching tower, a maze with 1,050 metres of paths based on a 12<sup>th</sup> century French church, picnic sites above the gulf — for example, a table made of slabs of various shades of granite which can accommodate a whole busload of visitors. Another attraction for tourists is the Katariina Pathway, which links sites in the fort of the destroyed Ruotsinsalmi Fortress. An authentic anchor and cannon from warships are reminders of the battle between the Russian and Swedish navies in 1789–1790. Continuing the marine theme are models of old lighthouses in the Gulf of Finland made by a local craftsman at Heikki's request, including the Söderskär lighthouse which Tove Jansson loved as a child and where she housed the Moomins in her book...

As he showed me the park, Heikki shared a fantasy of his: to put sheep in it. I had my doubts, but when I came to Kotka with friends shortly afterwards sheep were already grazing by the shore and a plaque on the enclosure read: 'We are here for the summer to eat



grass in the park and delight you all, especially the children.' Needless to say, the text was composed by Laaksonen. He has also taken up an initiative from local lovers of astronomy: to construct a planetarium in the park. A bronze Sun will be installed on a stone pedestal at the end of the promontory, and then heavenly bodies will be arranged in proportion to their size and distance from the sun. Pluto will be in the city centre, not far from the mayor's office, but most of the planets will be lined up along the coast and Kotka will have an outer space feel...

Kotka's residents have plenty of ideas, but it is the gardener who decides which of them to adopt. And he is also thinking up ideas himself. He saw a xylophone at an exhibition of musical instruments, ordered one in stainless steel, installed it on the coast for pleasant

Katariina Seaside Park.

*Other parks include: one named after the writer and academic Toivo Pekkanen, author of the iconic book *In the Shade of the Factory* with a detailed description of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kotka; the Great Park around the city's oldest building — St. Nicholas Orthodox church, built in the English style; Kympparepuisto Park with artificial hills, popular with winter sports enthusiasts; and 'Fire Brigade Park' near the port — until 1911 there was a fire observation tower there which, by an irony of fate, burned down...*





Fuksinpuisto Park, which it would be more correct to call Azalea Park.

sounds to be heard at the edge of the gulf and placed five drums from Britain next to it — almost a whole orchestra! He also heard the wishes of young mothers for more amusements in the park for their little ones less than a year old (!) — alongside the training apparatus for adults there are now swings with tiny seats and trampolines at ground level where children can jump in safety.

An arch has been installed at the entrance to the park to record the number of visitors. Since 1 January this year there have been 165,000, and about 250,000 are expected before the end of the year. 'If you took one Euro from each visitor you would bring about a quarter of a million Euros into the treasury!', I told him. 'Not possible', he shook his head, 'city parks have to be free.'

Esa Sirviö, the new mayor of Kotka elected for a seven-year term, shares this conviction. The city's parks indirectly help the city's economy: in the first place, tourists who come to enjoy them stay in hotels, spend money in cafes and restaurants and buy souvenirs in Kotka; in the second place, there is a trend of immigration to this green improved city by prosperous elderly people who are accustomed not to deny themselves anything...

Visitors and residents like strolling in the Sibelius Park and along the avenue of lime trees (Keskuskatu Lindenale) that leads to it. During the four-kilometre walk they can admire objects of street sculpture — sixty works by forty of Finland's best-known artists. Heikki totally renovated the avenue and the park in accordance with the

**Page 47:**  
Above — Sibelius Park.  
Below — Jokipuisto Park.



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1932 plan, leaving only the famous fountain with eagles encircled by tall poplars, though he did replace some of the old trees which were out of condition by the same variety *Populus Tremula Erecta*, which is naturally slender like bamboo and does not need to be pruned. In addition, he made sketches of all parts of the park which had not been recorded.

Laaksonen's trademark style is a reflection of his character — enterprising, but with no airs and graces. A minimum of pompous flowerbeds. He much prefers concealed bushes with low-key garden sculpture (you cannot immediately make it out): a duck on a rock or a cat frozen above a stream. He has unobtrusively added decorative fruit trees to the range of city greenery: apple, pear, black rowan, walnut — they have beautiful blossom in spring and fade in the autumn. He likes combinations of natural and manmade elements: ferns were already growing in Sapokka and magnolias have been planted there. It is as if he is producing a drawing, placing lilies against a green wall of thuja which protects them from the wind — these are the small details which go to make up park design. Sometimes plants





## Over the Barriers



are arranged so thickly that there is no room for weeds! In Fuksinpuisto (Fuchsia) Park he chose varieties of yellow, orange and bright red azaleas and various shades of white hydrangeas to guarantee continuous flowering from May to October.

So why fuchsia? A stupid name, Heikki agrees — it comes from the German Fuchs family who once owned a farm nearby. It would be much more accurate to call it Azalea Park. It contains various hybrids of azaleas and Japanese Judas-trees which it was thought would not take root in Finland. However, the breeder — Professor Emeritus Peter Tigerstedt from the University of Helsinki University — developed frost-resistant varieties tested in the Mustila arboretum near Kouvola, for which Kotka is an experimental ground. Heikki remembers Tigerstedt phoning him unexpectedly: ‘We have four hundred azalea bushes for you in our greenhouse, are you ready to collect them?’. The absent-minded professor had reserved them for Kotka but at forgotten to warn the gardener! Heikki rushed to the place between two quarters that he had already earmarked for the azaleas, made a sketch of the park the same evening, and within two days the soil was already prepared for planting. Later a sculptural composition appeared there: three butterflies, to which the artist added, at Heikki’s suggestion, a dragonfly — for variety.

This advocate of diversity also dreamed up the *Redoubt* herb garden, which includes around a hundred varieties of medicinal and spicy plants: from exotic examples to the familiar lavender, mint and dill. Heikki got the idea from Mikkeli and immediately decided that a more original garden of fragrances could be organized in Kotka — in one of the redoubts of Ruotsinsalmi Fortress. The Finnish Museum Department was initially opposed to the idea, thinking that it would make it more difficult to see the redoubt as a defensive structure. But not for the first time Heikki managed to overcome the opposition. In the end the Finnish Minister of Culture made a speech at the opening of the garden. It is now the only park in Finland for the blind and partially sighted, who acted as consultants in its creation and for whom a special braille booklet was issued. When we visited





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Kotka at the end of July the *Redoubt* seemed to have no soul, the plants ‘wasting their sweetness on the desert air’. Breathing deeply, we treated ourselves to the fragrance of ripe cherries. Heikki explained that he had planted cherry trees ‘to give the garden bulk, shade and sweetness for those who visit it at the right time’.

A really special place is Jokipuisto Park in the Karhula district on the bank of the Korkeakoski, a tributary of the Kymijoki, the longest river in Southern Finland. You can get to the park by car or by boat — there is trout and salmon fishing there. In the centre of the composition is a pond with waterlilies with an elegant Japanese bridge over it and a spherical willow bush hanging over the water. Heikki literally imported the pond and the bridge from Claude Monet’s estate at Giverny in France and from the artist’s landscapes. Alongside he placed an avant-garde installation with a waterfall to muffle the noise from the nearby highway. Heikki says that it makes him happy to see artists painting or drawing the pond. He has dabbled in painting himself for a long time, but no longer paints from nature — he creates imaginary pictures ‘with a glint of nature’ on canvas.

You would think that this man has achieved everything he wanted. He has beautified his city and brought its people happiness. He is the country’s only Gardening Counsellor (an honorary title bestowed by the President of Finland) working in municipal service. What more is there? It turns out that he has yet to create a natural park with rapids and a waterfall and a small forest-park with a boat station on a tributary of the Kymijoki, two kilometres upstream from the former dacha of Alexander III. And then will there be harmony?

“No”, smiles Heikki, “harmony will begin when I retire. I’ve got two years to go”. He plans to become a private landscaping consultant, spending more time on his island (he has a work camp there, tending the apple trees planted by his parents and experimenting a little with plants — for his own amusement) and painting (the oil paints and canvas are tired of waiting). He has also extended and heated his summerhouse so that he can live there all year round.



*The promontory in Katariina Seaside Park is also an official place for sprinkling the ashes of the deceased. Permission for this delicate procedure was given by the city authorities, which own the water. Iron railings have been installed on the granite steps leading down to the sea. This way of bidding farewell to relatives is becoming more and more widespread in Kotka. An old anchor on the coast symbolizes the link between past and present. The inscription on a granite boulder reads:*

*As the years come to pass  
I steer my boat towards  
The bright sea.  
The wind carries me alone  
And under a cloudless sky  
The waves offer oblivion.*

*Olavi Heino, 2017*

The maze in Katariina Seaside Park.

**Page 48:**  
An old anchor and models of lighthouses  
in Katariina Seaside Park.



# Football United

Text and photos: Eva FEFILOVA

This summer, as if by the waving of a magic wand, St. Petersburg was caught up in the atmosphere of a dramatized sporting masquerade. There has probably not been such a colourful mass of humanity on the city's streets since Peter the Great's time — they had come from all ends of the earth especially for the World Cup.

The focus for this variegated crowd was undoubtedly the Fan Zone in Konyushennaya Square, where all the visitors without exception felt at home — this was evident from the expression on their faces and their warm words. Russian fans happily joined in this football extravaganza. Whole families came with their faces painted in the colours of the Russian flag, some of the men wearing caps with ear flaps and the women peasant headdresses. Of course, it was hard for them to find the words in English to tell the foreign visitors something about themselves, about their trips to other tournaments or simply about life. Many of them rued the fact that they had not learned a foreign language. The conversations continued even in the queue for the toilet, which, amusingly, faced the screens where the matches were shown.

The visiting fans kept their most eye-catching outfits for the matches at the stadium, but even in the city one would come across supporters who left no doubt as to their allegiance. Each of them had their own dress code: some strolled about in their team's shirt, some wrapped themselves in their national flag, while others recalled the stereotypes of their countries. For example, the Australians carried an inflatable kangaroo around with them, the Icelanders strutted around in helmets with horns, the Mexicans could easily be picked out from the crowd by their wide sombreros, the Egyptians wore pharaohs' headdresses and the Colombians walked along in splendid crowns of feathers. No behaviour looked extravagant in this atmosphere of a football-based masked ball.

Volunteers got involved in the Brownian motion of this mass of football fans, helping them to find their way around the Fan Zone which could accommodate 15,000 people, all radiating joy, posing for



group photos, singing songs and shouting their chants. The chance to chat and share emotions was a bonus to watching the matches. In that sense the World Cup achieved far more than it seemed. I noticed that the foreigners were surprised at how quickly they were able to find common subjects with Russians. I sometimes had to translate some words in their conversations, as a result of which I myself was drawn into the conversation. It was an amazing community of people from different countries, all united by their love of football.

