

RUSSIAN MAECENAS



April 2021

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

Issue 33



With
Russian
pages

12+

**Her Inseparable
Valechka** *p. 12*

**Wings
for Flight** *p. 22*

**In Diaghilev's
Circle** *p. 38*



Fair Government
Strong Business
Prosperous Citizens

12+

RUSSIAN MAECENAS

Sosnov A. Y. — Editor-in-Chief
Igor Domrachev — Art Director
Timur Turgunov — Photographer
Elena Morozova — Copy Editor
Irina Hicks — Translator
Ksenia Afonina — representative in Britain

Editorial Office: 5 Universitetskaya nab, flat 213,
199034, St. Petersburg. Tel. +7 (921) 909 5151,
e-mail: sosnov@pressa.rus.net
Website: www.rusmecenat.ru

Chairman of the Board of Trustees: M. B. Piotrovsky

Founder: Arkady Sosnov, e-mail: sosnov2003@yandex.ru

Publisher: *Journalist Centre LTD*
Address: 15 Kronverkskaya st, flat 7,
197101, St. Petersburg. Tel. +7 (921) 958 2463

**Distributed to the leaders of government agencies,
companies, cultural institutions, and charities.**

**The issue was prepared with the support of the St. Petersburg
Polytechnic University Media Centre**

The almanac is registered with Roskomnadzor, the Federal Inspection Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media in the North-West Region. Registration number and date of decision: series ПИ № ТУ78-02163 of 2 October 2019. This issue was submitted to publisher 01.04.2021, published 05.04.2021.

Printed at 'Premium Press', 4 Optikov St. 197374, St. Petersburg.
Circulation: 1500 copies. ©Russian Maecenas, 2010.
Price arbitrary

The use of this material is only permitted with the written approval of the editors. The opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors. The editors have no responsibility for the contents of the advertisements. All advertised products and services have the required certificates. All rights reserved.

On the cover:

Roman Shustrov (1959–2020). *Sorrowful Angel*. On the initiative of Galina Artemenko and Irina Maslova, the sculpture was installed near the First Medical University in memory of the medical staff who have died in the fight against coronavirus. Photo: Timur Turgunov.

The Christmas play *Yurochka*, marking the 60th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's flight into space and the 80th anniversary of the State University of Aerospace Instrumentation. Staged by the parish of the Chesma Church in St. Petersburg. Photo kindly provided by Archpriest Alexey Krylov, the Senior Priest of Chesma Church.

Welcome!

The Benefits of Isolation

This enforced isolation has been a fruitful time. Some people have read a book, or even more than one, even though they had not previously been so inclined. Some have written a book or drawn a picture. Some doggedly, almost secretly, have rehearsed a play and later staged it. Some have achieved harmony in their family relationships, while others have realized that they could not go on in that way. Everyone has had the opportunity to look at themselves and acquire a clearly defined personal space that had been eroded by attendant circumstances — meetings, journeys and simply the pace of life.

Of course, there has been a serious lack of personal contact. It has had to be replaced by walks in the forest (where possible) and the diversions of Facebook. The arteries and veins of the Internet have swelled mightily — never before has there been so much candid, sometimes confessional posts, full of topical information. Walks in the forest have also provided food for thought. For example, some lines of Pushkin have often come to my mind: '...and indifferent nature / is radiant with eternal beauty'. There's genius for you! Nature is indeed indifferent, however we may revel in our imagined dominion over it. We will pass on, but nature will continue to be radiant.

As for study and work, they have been no less intensive than in pre-Covid times. You can move mountains with Zoom and a modem, without spending time on journeys and casual conversations. The leader in the amount achieved in the virtual domain has perhaps been the Her-



mitage, which has derived maximum benefit from 'intellectual isolation', as the period has been described by the museum's director Mikhail Piotrovsky: a fantastic increase in the number of virtual visitors. Even our joint celebration, the postponed Maecenas Day 2020, was held on social networks as a precursor to the actual Maecenas Day 2021.

Life is cautiously returning to normal. The dates for the St. Petersburg International Economic and Cultural Forums, which were not held last year, have been announced. We are more often able to get to excellent concerts and exhibitions that creative people have patiently been preparing.

So isolation has been great in its own way, but let us hope it will soon be over!

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



EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

UNDER THE BURDEN OF THE VIRUS

An Isolation Hospital during the Pandemic / p. 4

MEMORY

HER INSEPARABLE VALECHKA

The story of a little passenger on a train of Leningrad children and her doll from July 1941 to the present / p. 12



Contents

ARCHIPELAGO OF THE SIEGE

A museum that everyone should visit / p. 21



TERRITORY OF SUCCESS

WINGS FOR FLIGHT

How to guarantee a university's innovative development / p. 22

HERITAGE

PRESERVING THE SPIRIT OF VICTORY

The military past and aerospace present of Chesma palace / p. 33





PHILANTHROPISTS

IN DIAGHILEV'S CIRCLE

How patrons of the arts helped the first Russian producer to stage his ambitious projects / p. 38

THE THEORY OF 47 STRINGS

A little harpist from a magazine cover became a great artist / p. 42



ALWAYS BE HAPPY!

An international photography competition offers its view on life without limits / p. 46



'It has to be said, in recent times there are been a lot of grievances towards medicine, many of them unfounded, and the importance of a doctor for society has unjustly diminished. But every cloud has a silver lining — in the period when medical staff were working without days off or holidays, people's attitude to them changed... I hope that this new attitude will last a long time.'

*Denis GUSEV,
Chief Doctor of the Sergey Botkin Isolation Hospital / p. 7*

Under the Burden of the Virus

AN ISOLATION HOSPITAL DURING THE PANDEMIC

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Timur Turgunov, the Botkin Hospital Press Office



The red zone at the Botkin Hospital consists of boxes where patients are accommodated.

The Sergey Botkin Hospital is the largest isolation hospital in Europe: 32 sections, 2,500 employees and 1,147 beds. It was the first hospital in Russia to face the insidious coronavirus and has borne a heavy, virtually never-decreasing workload. Its chief doctor Professor Denis GUSEV, Doctor of Medical Sciences, describes how counteraction against the new infection was organized and of the channels of communication between the hospital and society.

Denis Alexandrovich, now the second wave is receding, it is possible to look back to this time last year. Did you realize then the threat that was coming?

Nobody realized the scale of the problem at that time. When we had our first patient on 4 March, then a second, it was obvi-

ous that they would not be the last, but we thought it was like a flu epidemic that would recede when the warmer spring weather came, but at the end of April there had been no fall in cases — the number of patients was snowballing. There was another sharp rise after the May holidays, when we were admitting 20–40 patients a day. It was then that we finally realized that this infection was not seasonal, like a flu epidemic, and that environmental factors did not influence the spread of the new infection. We saw how things were developing in Italy — it was already hot there, but Covid was rampant. Cases reduced slightly in July, but in September came the second wave, which has lasted until this spring.

How did the hospital deal with the pandemic? What was lacking: staff, beds, personal protective equipment, treatment protocols?

Effective Practice

As far as beds, sections and staff are concerned, we were entirely prepared. That is because we have an isolation hospital with the full infrastructure of a multi-profile hospital (a fully-fledged maternity wing and specialized departments: haemodialytic, surgical, including endoscopy, CAT and MRI diagnostics, laboratories...). The organization of reception, the accommodation of patients in isolation boxes and the diagnostic-treatment process is aimed at helping patients with any infections, including highly contagious ones.

Of course, there were difficulties when the demand for biological protective costumes increased tenfold. I have to pay tribute to our specialists in the purchase of medical equipment, who managed to procure all the necessary bit by bit. There was never a day when our doctors, nurses and orderlies went into the red zone without proper protection.

Did you already have a red zone at that time?

Our red zone consists of boxes where patients are accommodated. All contact with them is through a sanitary protection area which separates them from the green zone. This is a cast-iron principle in the organization of assistance to infectious patients. It was more difficult for hospitals which changed their profiles to deal with Covid — they had to set up as a red zone a section with all its wards, or a floor, or even the whole hospital.

By the same principle, we never had queues of ambulances here. When an ambulance brings a patient, he is first examined by a doctor from the reception unit and then sent to a section or to intensive care. After that, the patient is taken to a lift along an open gallery, then accompanied by our staff to his box. Queues of ambulances formed outside those re-profiled hospitals where there was only one entrance through the reception area and patients had to wait in turn there to complete the documentation.



Did you treat your first patients according to ‘the Ministry of Health methods’?

At that time there were no recommendations from the Ministry of Health, nor treatment protocols. We decided everything ‘on the hoof’, based on our own experience and conceptions of the effect of the virus on the human organism. Moreover, there are no definitive protocols in the world even now. All the prescribed preparations — with their supposed, possible effect — have been adopted from the treatment of other aetiological viral diseases, particularly flu and Ebola fever, and literally thrown into the fight with the new coronavirus infection.

The argument is this. In most aetiotropic infections, therapy aimed at eliminating the causes of the disease is of value only in the early stages. If it has not been prescribed in the first five to seven days, there is no point to it after that. The virus has already done its worst and often is already not playing that role itself. Consequently, with our treatment measures we are not so much fighting with the virus as with the patho-

Professor Denis Gusev:
‘The organization of reception, the accommodation of patients in isolation boxes and the diagnostic-treatment process is aimed at helping patients with any infections, including highly contagious ones’.

Since 1 March 2020 11693 patients diagnosed with Covid-19 were admitted to the hospital and 10447 have been discharged. On 30 March 2021 there were 518 such patients in the hospital.

Effective Practice

hepatitis — only tick-borne infections remained at their usual level. The most surprising thing is that the number of serious respiratory infections reduced — in autumn we did not see flu at all! And now, with the approach of spring, there is still no flu. The flu virus usually comes from the East, but it has not appeared there. Natural competition has probably had an effect: coronavirus has simply forced its rival out and turned out to be stronger in evolutionary terms. They compete for our organism as a place of habitation.

This is the first pandemic in living memory. There are enormous expectations of medicine and, at the same time, fear of it (for some you are still ‘Botkin’s shacks’). Society has, on one hand, been given a fright, and on the other hand has mobilized, realizing that if we do not help the doctors, we are done for. Have you sensed this help?

I’ll say! It was necessary and somewhat unexpected, because nobody really asked anybody for help. The initiative came from people and organizations. I could not possibly name all the donors and I should not like to pick anyone out, so as not to offend the others. Restaurants phoned us: we want to bring hot dinners for your staff. And they delivered the meals in containers right to the hospital entrance. Companies brought protective suits, respirators and masks, sometimes several times. As soon as the opportunity arose, our partners bought us extra apparatus for haemodialysis.

Did you control the process, to ensure that you were given what you needed?

It is difficult to control a sincere impulse — it came from hundreds of companies and private individuals. They phoned our call centre, heads of sections, our chief accountant, chief economist, deputy chief doctor... This now all goes on more or less calmly, but then it was all buzzing like Smolny in the film *Lenin in October*. My heartfelt thanks to the people and organizations that have



In Intensive Care Department No. 1.

logical processes it has instigated. In the coronavirus infection these are a systematic inflammatory reaction and the syndrome of hypercoagulation of the blood, which determine the severity of the course and outcome of the disease.

Yulia Veselova, neonatologist
in the department for new-born babies.



When you realized the scale of the coronavirus invasion, did you have to reorganize the hospital’s work?

The most important thing was to define our priorities: if we gave over our northern complex totally to coronavirus (here we had 589 beds, plus intensive care, and pregnant women with Covid also came here), where could we treat other infections? After all, they had not gone away. Fortunately, our second complex in Mirgorodskaya Street in the city centre was able to cope with this task. What is more, because of the anti-epidemic measures, we had much fewer patients with intestinal infections and chronic

Effective Practice

helped us and are still helping us. It is pleasant that they remember us and appreciate us, as — it has to be said, in recent times there are been a lot of grievances towards medicine, many of them unfounded, and the importance of a doctor for society has unjustly diminished. But every cloud has a silver lining — in the period when medical staff were working without days off or holidays, people's attitude to them changed. A movement started in the country with the characteristic catchphrase 'We are Together.' I hope that this new attitude will last a long time.

As for 'Botkin's shacks', you know, patients who were in the old hospital, in those shacks, as children, cannot believe their eyes when they come into our ultramodern, international class clinic.

What do you remember about your first day as chief doctor of the Botkin Hospital, a legendary medical institution?

I was appointed to this post on 5 March, the day after the first patient with the coronavirus infection was admitted. I had not known about my appointment in advance, so there was no time for reflection. It was an urgent personnel decision: the hospital was left without a chief doctor and the situation could not allow that. It was nice that I was introduced to the staff by Vice-Governor Oleg Ergashev, as we had known each other when we were working at the Kirov Military Medical Academy. There were also some familiar faces among the staff: for the previous five years I had headed the Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of AIDS and naturally, as colleagues in the city's infection service, our paths had frequently crossed. On the day of my appointment I called the administration and managers of subdivisions together and said approximately this: 'Dear colleagues, we must cast off any sympathies or antipathies and work hand in hand as professionals. There is no time for arguments.' I think people have responded to this appeal. After that, as far as I am concerned, a whole year has flown by like a single day, a week at the most. When the work

is difficult but extraordinarily interesting, you are not aware of the passage of time at all. I did not even notice that my first day off after my appointment was on Russia Day (12 June).

Your career has taken you from student to Professor of the Military Medical Academy, you served in the navy, headed the St. Petersburg Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of AIDS... How far has your previous experience helped you in solving new problems?

Any professional experience is beneficial. At the Academy you learn and teach. At sea, as the head of a ship's medical service, you are responsible for the health and lives of a crew of 350, as a rule, but there can be up to 500 people on board. In emergency situations it is up to you whether the ship carries out its mission or returns to base. The AIDS Centre (by the way, it was once part of the Botkin Hospital) is a single-themed institution focused on the HIV infection, but we concentrated more on matters of prevention, as is evident from the centre's title. In a hospital, of course, the work is totally different — in volume, in types of work and in the range of interaction.

In general, the pandemic has shown how close the links are between the Botkin Hospital and the city, which is important. That means that the hospital is under very close supervision, and this year we have not simply been watched but put under the microscope.

One by one, hospitals under city and federal jurisdiction have been reorganized as Covid centres. Has the Botkin Hospital provided them with staffing, methodological or other assistance?

We have helped almost every hospital in terms of epidemiology. Our specialists have gone there and advised their colleagues how to organize patient flow correctly so there would be no in-

Graffiti appeared in one of the hospital's transformer cabins, portraying doctors and volunteers united in the fight with coronavirus. The creative idea was supported by representatives of the All-Russian Popular Front, in conjunction with the Krasnogvardeysky District Administration and 'Rosseti'.





By the apparatus for extracorporeal detoxification of blood. Elena Kashirskaya, Head of Intensive Care Department No.2, Denis Gusev, the hospital's chief doctor, and resuscitator Natalya Belyaeva discuss the use of the apparatus for the treatment of patients with COVID-19.

tersection of the red and green zones, and where to place the sanitary inspection rooms. They had no specialized knowledge, of course. As a rule, the chief doctors telephoned and asked that one of our experts provide consultation, which was done. No directions from higher authorities were necessary. The medical community showed a high degree of self-regulation. I must say that all the 'rebranded' hospitals have resisted this new infection in a fitting manner. The Botkin Hospital certainly could not have coped with it alone. It was important to find and observe a balance between the necessary number of beds available and the organization of aid to patients at home. The pressure on the ambulance service was huge — many times greater than at the overflowing hospitals. I think the polyclinics and hospitals have endured the ordeal of the pandemic.

Last spring, even before the peak of the first wave, the head of one rebranded hospital complained that some doctors could not endure it, were resigning or going on leave (though he took his words back afterwards). Did you have similar conflicts?

No. The staff of an infection hospital understand what may be required of them in an epidemic or pandemic. Moreover, when staff over the age of 65 had the possibility of taking paid sick leave, virtually all of them declined. We have no casual employees because the work is hard — it separates and leaves only those who are dedicated to our speciality. It was good, of course, that material support was offered to medical staff, but our people were working nonstop even before the extra money was forthcoming. Where it was necessary — for example, when staff members were living with elderly parents, they were provided with rooms in the Okhtinskaya Hotel. The City Health Committee helped with that.

And in the fully rebranded hospitals the staff often not only worked but lived in specially allocated accommodation. That was not necessary here — the red and green zones inside the hospital are demarcated. After their shift, staff can shower, change and return to normal life.

Last September you quoted some statistics: 350 of your hospital's staff had caught the virus — most of them, fortunately, were not seriously ill and were asymptomatic, but it is still a lot. Was that unavoidable?

Of course. Medical staff have been ill, are ill and will be ill with coronavirus. There are now around 800 of our staff on that list and some of them have become patients of the Botkin Hospital. We are well protected at work and can extremely rarely be infected in the red zone — as the result of an accident or through the incorrect use of PPE. However, outside the hospital the staff mix with other people: in shops, cafes and public transport, where

Effective Practice

infection most frequently occurs. If they had been infected in the hospital, all 2,500 staff would have fallen ill. Take the spikes that occurred in the other hospitals — one member of staff was infected and the whole department or even the whole hospital was closed for quarantine.

Did you catch the virus yourself?

No, though there were several times when I was 200% sure that I had. I had been in contact with people who on the following day were admitted to this or another hospital, and the last days of incubation of Covid and the first days of its clinical appearance can vary greatly. Last autumn I had the 'Sputnik V' vaccine, the antibodies were in a good titre and I felt calmer. In fact, you feel concerned not for yourself but for your loved ones. As soon as isolation was recommended for people over 65, I told my parents: 'This is very serious, let's restrict contact'. They grumbled that I stopped letting them see their grandchildren, but they reacted with understanding. And in May, when the schools closed, I sent my wife and children to the dacha. Well, what was the point of them staying in the city when I spend almost all my time in the hospital?

A surgeon who removes a patient's appendix doesn't catch appendicitis and a dentist who gives you a filling doesn't get toothache. Your colleagues catch the same coronavirus as the patients they are treating. Does this somehow draw them together?

When a doctor has fallen ill himself and has experienced all these severe symptoms, his decisiveness in treating patients is reinforced by his inner feelings! But besides feelings you need to know (and research is being conducted all over the world) why the disease progresses in such a specific way, when one person catches a mild form and another becomes seriously ill; why this differ-

ence? What determines the genetic predisposition of our response to the invasion of the virus? After all, this disease is based on a hyperimmune response to infection. A chain of pathological changes in a person's organism is triggered by his own immune system — by his own interleukins, leucocytes, macrophages...

On the other hand, the biological properties of coronavirus itself are being actively studied. One can draw a parallel with HIV, which also replicates itself. We have seen the emergence of new strains from Britain, South Africa and Latin America. On the cusp of these two processes — the study of viruses and the specifics of the immune response — there will certainly very soon be discoveries deserving of Nobel prizes.

We as health operatives also take note of the virus's selectiveness. For instance, of a family of five, living in the same apartment, three fall ill and two do not. We can clearly see a triad of diseases that accompany the unfavourable course of Covid: obesity — diabetes — and hypertonic illness. They produce serious pneumonia like making a carbon copy, often leading to a fatal outcome. Patients in the high risk category are those with chronic kidney diseases that require systematic haemodialysis, cancer sufferers undergoing chemotherapy and patients with HIV who are not receiving therapy for suppressing the virus. These patients require special attention as soon as they are admitted.

Let's talk about patients. Two radical groups have appeared: Covid deniers (who have nevertheless caught the virus) and those who believe in non-traditional means of tackling coronavirus: from wrapping in hot sheets to destroying the virus with strong drink. I'm sure you have come across both these groups...

That is just human nature — to shut the eyes to a problem as though it does not exist, or to suggest an easy solution. With HIV deniers it was all very simple. We told them: if you do not be-

FROM PATIENTS' OPINIONS

Positive:

I was admitted to the Botkin Hospital on 25 September 2020 with coronavirus, complicated by pneumonia affecting 50% of my lungs. I was most surprised by the atmosphere of home-like comfort and the concern shown by the staff. I was particularly touched by the fact that breakfast, lunch and dinner were served with the words: 'Bon appetit, my sweethearts!' There was a complete sense that all the medical staff were concerned for you specifically, from the orderlies to the treating doctor and the head of department. The treatment was also effective, took only twelve days and left no after-effects from coronavirus (no weakness, shortness of breath or cough), despite the background of the effect on my lungs. I have never seen hospitals like it and did not even imagine that they existed in Russia.

Negative:

It is difficult to say anything bad about people to whom you owe your life.

Kristina Urtaeva, nephrologist
in the haemodialysis department.





The haemodialysis department provides specialized medical assistance to patients suffering from serious kidney damage and chronic kidney disease. During the pandemic this is the only department in St. Petersburg to accept this type of patient with the coronavirus infection.

lieve that this virus exists, let us give you a transfusion of blood from somebody with HIV. None of them agreed! Such denial is of two types. The first is pure PR, typical of media personalities. The second arises from lack of knowledge, bordering on aggressive ignorance. There were so many insinuations that Covid had been invented by the manufacturers of PPE, artificial respiration units and pharmaceutical products, that the aim of vaccination was to implant chips in people. However, I have not seen one denier who would stand by his prejudices after being admitted to the Botkin Hospital. When calamity comes into their homes, people's attitude to this infection changes dramatically and they rigorously convert the deniers. That is what the famous martial arts champion Habib Nurmagomedov did when his father died of Covid.

Another trend has emerged: a mass of contradictory recommendations from authoritative scientists, experts and officials of various departments. The logical question is who to believe?.. (When we fell ill at home, we did not have much choice — we trusted the local doctor who visited us once a week for 2–3 minutes with a treatment protocol on a piece of paper). From the point of view of a doctor and scientist: is such 'pluralism' justified?

Expressing an opinion is OK, but there really is a glut of information about Covid. Personally I have an inner filter about what is worth reading and what is not. I view with suspicion information presented as the gospel truth, especially where new medicines are concerned. They say a miracle drug has appeared and present it as a panacea, it rapidly increases in price and soon disappears from chemist's shops. Or the press extols a sensation: it turns out that the same drug used to treat some tropical fever is effective against Covid. Then it also disappears as people terrified by the pandemic strip the shelves bare. Of course, no two pieces of information are alike, I can only advise: don't dive headlong into it, measure out the dose and trust reliable sources. You were right to trust your local doctor, though he cannot devote close attention to everyone.

We now have clinical recommendations from the Ministry of Health for treatment of the new coronavirus infection — it's already the tenth version. It is a detailed document that contains everything medical staff need: diagnosis and treatment protocols, rules for admission and discharge of patients, standards of prevention. It is available to the public — anyone can see it. There is a lot of useful information on the health committee's website and we are also launching a new website of our own. In general, as our knowledge about this virus increases, the divergence of opinions will subside and the field of information will gradually become more civilized.

Effective Practice

The statistics are just as ambiguous. A few days ago I read on a popular radio station's website: 'There are far more deaths per 100,000 Covid sufferers in St. Petersburg than in other regions'. That is hard to believe. What are your hospital's statistics?

I can tell you the hospital's fatality rate, i.e. the number of deaths from the number of patients admitted. It is about 5.5%, which is naturally lower than many hospitals in the city and in other regions on account of our specialization. As far as total fatalities are concerned, the chairman of the City Health Committee has explained on several occasions that the final figures depend largely on the method of calculation. With a speculative, politicized calculation the result may be like the joke about the accountant for whom 2×2 was not 4 but 'as much as was needed'. Attributing a high mortality rate from coronavirus to St. Petersburg is not serious: the organization of treatment of Covid patients in our city is at the requisite standard. I speak to colleagues from other regions and know what the situation is there. And another thing: statistics should be honest, and we corroborate them by objective data from our pathological-anatomic service.

To sum up: what has your first year as chief doctor of the Botkin Hospital brought you in professional and human terms? Do you hope that next year will be easier?

It has brought me experience, knowledge, confidence in myself and in my staff and confidence that we can overcome any infection that may arise. I don't know about 'easier'. This is a hospital and we have to work; we were the first to enter this Covid story and we will be the last to leave. We are looking forward to a quick end to it. The return of other hospitals to their normal profile will lead to us having to work flat out to cope with the number of patients. Judging by the speed at which people are falling ill and how the vaccination programme is going, I think we will be living with

Covid all this year. There may be a slight rise in cases in spring, but we are much better prepared for it than we were a year ago.

What would you call what medical staff have done in the past year: a heroic deed?

Why so pathetic? It is our job, our vocation, what we studied for. A heroic deed is survival in the siege, victory in the Great Patriotic War. My colleagues and I have simply worked conscientiously.

Have you managed to take any leave?

No, I don't see any possibility of that at the moment. It's not a big deal.

Professor Denis Gusev:

'It is our job, our vocation, what we studied for... My colleagues and I have simply worked conscientiously'.



Her Inseparable Valechka

THE STORY OF A LITTLE PASSENGER ON A TRAIN OF LENINGRAD CHILDREN AND HER DOLL FROM JULY 1941 TO THE PRESENT

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Timur Turgunov, Irina Zimneva's personal archive



The doll's name is Valechka, though judging by a stamp on her porcelain shoulder she was made in Germany in 1878 and she is twelve centimetres tall. Little Valechka lives in a cosy three-roomed flat in Rzhevka. The house was built by a construction battalion after the war as temporary accommodation, with no foundation. The ground floor flat was cold, especially in winter, until Irina Zimneva's younger son refurbished the flat, installing insulation in the floor and walls.

When the family moved here, to the outskirts of Leningrad, in the early 1980s, they could not have been happier: a birch grove, fresh air and nightingales singing. Since then a car scrapyards has grown outside the windows. Buses used to run along Lesoparkovaya Street, where they live, every fifteen minutes, but now they are only once an hour. Nevertheless, Irina goes out every day on her social pursuits and always takes Valechka with her.

Valechka reminds her of herself as a small child: the round-faced girl with plump lips loved to kiss her, babbling 'You are alive' and putting a nappy on the doll over her dress. And just imagine, the dress did not crease — a red chiffon ball gown with white polka dots, three rows of flounces and short puffed sleeves. The dress has gone now — hardly surprising, considering how much water has flowed under the bridge!

Nobody now knows how this fashionable doll came to be in an ordinary Leningrad family. It was probably through Irinka's grandmother (Irinka was her mother's pet name for her). Varvara Zherekhova, her grandmother, sang in the choir at a church of which Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna was a trustee and would bring home small items of jewellery: a cameo, a ring, a gold bracelet. The most expensive gift was a wonderful pair of earrings with a sapphire surrounded by ten small diamonds. One of the earrings went to Irinka's

Memory

mother Nadezhda, the other to her brother Nikolay. When her mother died in 1984, her daughter sold six diamonds from her earring to pay for the funeral.

It is not certain that the doll was also a gift from the empress — her grandmother may have bought it herself. She and her husband Vasily had a house on the corner of Nikolayevskaya and Ivanovskaya Streets (now Marata and Sotsialisticheskaya). After the revolution the house was expropriated and later became the office of the Krupskaya factory. Vasily disappeared without trace, Varvara ended up in hospital, Nadezhda and Nikolay were sent to a children's home. Irinka's uncle Nikolay, who started work as a blacksmith at the Kirov plant, climbed the career ladder to be Deputy People's Commissar. Her mother graduated from the higher technical school at the Metal Works and would frequently say that the most important science was the study of the resistance of materials. It certainly stood her in good stead: during the war she tested steel for tanks for resistance at the Kirov plant. She also exhorted Irinka: 'Look after Valechka, she saved your life.' She knew something, but concealed it from her daughter, as if she was afraid to speak it aloud.

At the beginning of July 1941 Irinka and Valechka set off on a strange journey. Her mother took time off work; in the hurly-burly of the station platform she hung a medallion round her daughter's neck with her photograph and her home address, kissed her and stuffed the doll in the pocket of her pinafore dress, so that she could at least have her little friend with her when there were no relatives around. The girl was two years and nine months old — parents, how could you let a little one like that go? But what else could they do? Her father, a regular soldier, Captain Alexey Bocharov, was at the front; her mother was told that the children were being evacuated temporarily and would be back in a week or two when the war was over. It was the same for the other children. Identifying patches were sewn on to clothing; one three-year-old boy's mother had written the surnames of his parents and their address on his back and stomach in Indian ink. Moreover,



the area around the station at Lychkovo (then in the Leningrad Region, now in the Novgorod Region), where the train was headed, had been a customary holiday destination for Leningrad children before the war.

Now everything was different. The carriages with seats each accommodated 50–60 children, though without complaint, but no less than 200 were crammed into the goods trucks. Irinka and Valechka were in the first goods truck, where it was even difficult to breathe. It took eight days to reach their destination and they were permanently hungry (those who had been given supplies to take with them were the lucky ones), but at stations nannies ran out with kettles and string bags to dispense boiling water, bread or potatoes. A few of the little ones did not make it...

During the journey, children from nearby nurseries and pioneer camps were placed in the carriages, with no lists or documents —

The following shared their recollections:

Irina Zimneva, Valentina Lazareva, Alexander Smirnov, John Fedulov, Nina Orlova, sisters Irina Turikova and Veronika Kirilova, Dmitry Ermolov, Mikhail Maslov, Viktor Alexeyev and his daughter Elena Tsvetkova.

Page 12:
Valechka in a new dress designed by Stas Lopatkin, a friend of Russian Maecenas.



Irinka's parents:
father (1942), mother (1935).

Irinka's great-grandmother with her
daughters. 1898–1901.
Her grandmother, Varvara Zherekhova,
is standing on the right.

Page 15:
Viktor Alexeyev, a participant in the
Lychkovo tragedy, returned to Leningrad
after evacuation and became an artist.
His last painting was a group portrait of
children whose souls are flying away into
eternity. His daughter Elena Tsvetkova gave
the painting to the Museum of the Defence
and Blockade of Leningrad.

there was no time for papers when the Germans had already captured Pskov and had reached the borders of Luga. The train took about two thousand children away from the war, including those unaccounted for. At Lychkovo they had their first organized meal. Some children had arrived earlier, from Molvotitsy and Demyansk, and they described how they had seen SS soldiers in black uniform. Others were from Staraya Russa and Borovichi. According to various assessments, from 3,000 to 12,000 children had assembled in Lychkovo and it was abundantly clear that they could not be left in this 'remote district of the Leningrad Region.'

At noon on a cloudless day (18 July), when the order 'To the carriages!' had been given, the first German plane appeared, followed by four more. A little boy's shout: 'Look, leaflets are flying!' was drowned in the noise of exploding bombs. Within an hour the train of

twelve carriages with white crosses on the roofs had been reduced to a pile of smoking wreckage. Those who had run off to hide in bushes, haystacks or a potato field were picked off by machine guns as the Luftwaffe aces hedge-hopped. The passengers — scared to death, scratched and dirty, gathered together till morning in forests, fields, huts and yards. The train was re-formed — the surviving children and teachers were sent further away from the front and the wounded returned to Leningrad. Irinka and her doll were not among them.

The residents of Lychkovo who ventured to the station saw a picture that remained in their memories till the end of their days: warped metal, the charred sides of the carriages and a bloody mass of bodies, their entrails and scraps of clothing on the branches of trees and telegraph wires.

The remains of the dead were taken on carts to the local cemetery. There was fierce fighting in the area; the front line passed through Lychkovo, which was fully liberated only at the end of 1943... Times changed, a new century began, but two witnesses of the tragedy, Praskovya Timukhina and Tamara Pimenko, along with Lidia Zhegurova, Chairman of the Lychkovo Council of Veterans, continued to tend the mass grave marked by a wooden pyramidal obelisk with a red star and the inscription 'Leningrad Children', which none of the parents ever visited. In 2002 Alla Osipova, a journalist from Novgorod, made a TV film about the 'Lychkovo old ladies' that was shown on Channel One. A national fund was instigated to perpetuate the memory of the young Leningraders; Sergey Mironov, Chairman of the Federation Council, received the modest women from Lychkovo in Moscow and called them saints...

In autumn 2003 a solemn sculpted gravestone by the academician Alexander Burganov, People's Artist of Russia, was installed next to the mass grave. When she first saw it, Irina Zimneva exclaimed: 'It's a celebration of death!' She caught herself thinking that she could also have been lying in that grave had it not been for her beloved doll. She has now imagined what happened to her and Valechka





The civilian cemetery in Lychkovo. Monument to the lost children by Alexander Burganov.

after the bombing of the train, which had been forgotten like a child's nightmare.

...In 1985 she and her husband bought a house in the village of Aleshonka in the Demyansk District of Novgorod Region and about two years later had a banya installed. As is the custom, they invited the carpenters to celebrate the completion of the new building. One of them, Alexey Osokin from the village of Bely Bor, related that a train with Leningrad children had been bombed in those parts during the war. Irina broke in to say that she had also been in a train that had been bombed somewhere near Staraya Russa — her mother had told her about it. Alexey elaborated: it was in Lychkovo! He was twelve years old at the time but had been regarded as a man. He was sent to the station the day after the bombing to help clear the blockages. Under the wreckage of the first carriage, which had suffered the most, he saw in the heap of dead bodies a doll in an elegant dress. He reached for it, thinking it would do for his sister Taisa. The doll would not come out, because a little girl was pressing it to her chest. He pulled harder — the girl came to, but would not let go of the doll! He called the adults, who said: 'Since you found her, take her home with you.'

Irina Zimneva admitted that she had never parted with Valechka during the siege and had kept her as an amulet. Alexey also recalled: while the girl was living in their family, he had argued with her about the doll. In attempting to grab the porcelain beauty to look at her better, he had accidentally broken her arm. And the little girl had burst into tears, for the first time since she had arrived there. He had said to her: 'Don't howl!' and had wound black electrical tape around the arm... Later, when he visited Irina in the flat in Rzhevka and asked to see Valechka, he could make out a particular mark — the imprint of electrical tape that had grown into the porcelain. After half a century the tape had begun to unwind, and the sequence of events became clear.

When the fascists were approaching, the Osokins moved to a cottage on a marsh, closer to our troops. The family consisted

of grandmother, mother and five children, plus the little girl from Leningrad. There was not enough food for them all, so they ended up eating half-rotten potatoes. Two of her own children died, and auntie Ksenia, Taisa's and Lyosha's mother, afraid for a child who was not her own, handed over the little girl with a Leningrad address in a medallion to the Red Army. There was a small aerodrome near Bely Bor. She was collected from there by her uncle Kolya, the same Nikolay Zherekhov who had become Deputy People's Commissar for the tank industry and frequently flew from Moscow to Leningrad as the curator of defence factories. The little aeroplane pitched and tossed, the little girl was violently sick — that is her earliest memory of her childhood. Her uncle wanted to take Irinka to Moscow, but her mother said she would not part with her again — if they were to die, it would be together. So she returned to Leningrad, probably in October, just before the severest winter of the siege: wrapped in a shawl (most likely given to her by auntie Ksenia) over a trophy helmet from the 'Death Head' division and clutching her precious Valechka. It was like jumping from the frying-pan into the fire. She endured a great deal during the siege, was frozen and hungry; since her mother was out at work, she often spent the night in a 'hearth' — a round-the-clock kindergarten; she was seriously ill with scurvy...

Irina Zimneva is now 82. She has four children (two sons and two daughters), five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. After graduating from the physics faculty at the Herzen Institute, she was a schoolteacher for almost her whole life. She devised an original method of teaching gifted children — her pupils made visual aids and won numerous competitions. She creatively interpreted and used the developments of the Donetsk innovative teacher Viktor Shatalov and made the effort to visit him to gain experience.

As a result, children from her ordinary, non-mathematical school took the general city examination, which was inspected and marked by teachers from other schools. Of the 28 pupils in Zimneva's class 24 were marked 'excellent' and the other four 'good'. She gave lessons

Memory



in physics on the Leningrad TV channel. She became a Doctor of Pedagogics for her scholarly works and achievements. She became keen on photography, published around twenty colourful albums and held a series of individual exhibitions. She is the soul of the patriotic movement 'Forever Alive', which she founded along with Fyodor Turkin, Head of the RosStroyInvest Group of Companies, and the theatrical figure Isaak Shtokbant, who served at the front. She is a very active, radiant woman with a love of life. Since we met, I receive a video or postcard that lifts the spirits from her every morning on WhatsApp.

Many of the characters in this story are no longer with us: the boy Lyosha Osokin from the village of Bely Bor, who reached out for a doll and dragged a tiny girl from a pile of bodies, his sister Taisa, who remembered her pinafore dress with a flounce on the chest and a pocket, the women who prayed for the souls of the children and tended the mass grave in the Lychkovo cemetery — Praskovya Timukhina and

Tamara Pimenko. One after another the children who travelled that drastic route pass away. 'I live for them,' says Irina. 'I realized that God gave me life so that I could serve people.' Life is seething around her, and she is the source of it.

Thanks to the film on TV, the country learned about the tragedy at Lychkovo. The passengers from the smashed children's train, now no longer young, met like the characters in the film *Belorussian Station*. Why, in spite of perestroika and glasnost, was this heartrending episode from the Great Patriotic War not discovered for six decades? The explanation may be expressed in a single phrase: 'At first talking about it was prohibited, and later society ceased to care.' Today there is a lack of people who care. Irina Zimneva questioned her fellow-passengers from long ago: who and how, in what carriage did they travel to Lychkovo, how did their lives work out in evacuation and in general after the war. And she wrote her own story in the general context.

They wanted to give the small amount of money left over after Burganov's memorial to the old women of Lychkovo for their many years of service, but the women refused. It was decided to install another monument in the station square — not a sorrowful tragic one, but one bearing hope for life. They invited People's Artist of Russia Viktor Fetisov to work on it — the Volgograd sculptor is the co-author of the memorial complex on the Mamaev burial-mound; his childhood was also singed by the war. Zimneva and her husband first visited the sculptor when he had made a plaster model of the monument, and they subsequently exchanged regular visits. The ceremonial unveiling of the monument to all the children who died during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 took place on 4 May 2005. Irina prepared for the ceremony as best she could: she 'procured' paving slabs, lampposts and seedlings to decorate the square. Valechka was with her, as usual. It turned out that the girl in Fetisov's composition was very similar to the photograph of Irinka from the medallion, though the sculptor had not seen this photo

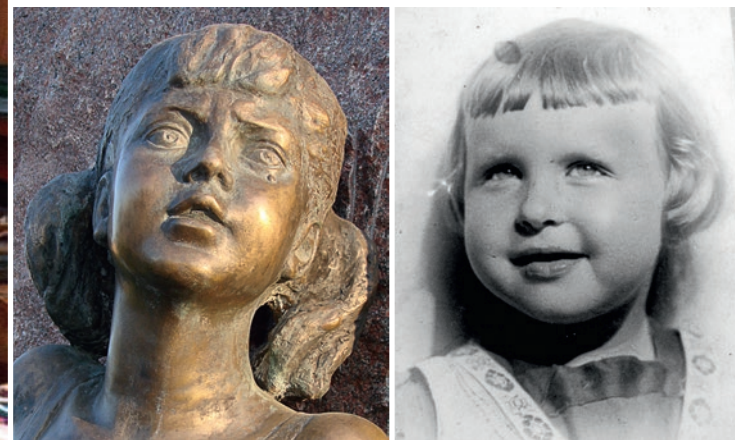
Left:

Irina as a first-year student, with her cousin Natasha. 1957.



We must aim at there being monuments to all those little Piskarevki, those who we know and those we as yet do not know. We create beautiful memorials, but they often lack names. They are depersonalized. It is essential to discover archives, apply to those archives and to the living witnesses of events and their relatives, in order to establish and preserve the names of the children who were killed at Lychkovo and at other stations.

Alla OSIPOVA, film director, journalist



With sculptor Viktor Fetisov. 2006.

Fragment of the sculptural composition.
The girl's face with a tear.

This photograph of Irinka
at 2 years 9 months was taken
on the day she was evacuated. July 1941.

'Our city has taken this memorial under its patronage and, unprecedentedly, has allocated a million roubles from the city budget for its restoration... There is a suggestion that a branch of the Museum of the Defence and Blockade of Leningrad could be opened in Lychkovo'.

Alexander RZHANENKOV,
Chairman of the St. Petersburg
Social Policy Committee

before. And an accidental drop of bronze on the girl's face, which had set after casting, resembles a tear.

Sixteen passengers from 1941 came to the unveiling of the monument. Now there are only eleven: eight in St. Petersburg and one each in Novgorod, in Moscow and in Canada. And while they are living, Irina Zimneva wants to put right an obvious injustice. Those who returned to their native city by various routes after the bombing, as she did, were awarded the badge of honour 'Resident of Besieged Leningrad'. Those who were evacuated to the Kirov Region received nothing. As children they took the first stunning blow of the war, a terrible burden to bear for their whole lives and — nothing. Irina is convinced that every child who passed through Lychkovo or was evacuated from the city in other trains merits the title of participant in the Great Patriotic War with all the appropriate privileges. This is a moral duty for the state, and in financial terms — a drop in the ocean.

On Irina Zimneva's initiative and with the support of the philanthropist Idris Gakhramanov, a badge 'In Memory of the Tragedy at Lychkovo' was introduced. It was presented to the surviving victims of the tragedy and to those who will not let it be forgotten. The latter include Ekaterina Suschenko, a teacher at School No.79 in

St. Petersburg and head of the 'Memory of the Heart' Association of Children and Teenagers. The volunteers organize searches for graves from the Great Patriotic War all over Russia, returning the names of the dead from oblivion and helping to trace their relatives. Their project 'Little Piskarevki' included the cemetery at Lychkovo, where in documents on the mass grave is written: 'The number of those buried here and their surnames has not been established.' The bodies had been burnt to such an extent that it was sometimes not possible to make out whether they were boys or girls. The mission appeared to be impossible, but Suschenko has managed to identify a few names and has forwarded them to the archive at Piskarevskoye Memorial Cemetery.

Of course, the 'children of the Lychkovo tragedy' (now an accepted term) ask themselves questions: who is to blame for their evacuation being so poorly organized? Yes, they underestimated the Germans and did not expect them to penetrate so quickly into the heart of our country. But how did they contrive to send a train with small children to the thick of the fighting, to encounter the troops of the Wehrmacht? It was only two weeks after the beginning of the war, and what a mess! They remember that when the children were being put on the train



Who knows that in bloody fighting in the Demyansk district on 24 September 1941 Nikolay Sosnovsky covered the embrasure of a machine-gun nest with his body, long before Alexander Matrosov? Many have heard the name of Nikolay Gastello, but who knows about the exploit of Ivan Struzhkin, a pilot who was killed on 6 April 1942 in an unequal fight in the sky over Lychkovo district and was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union? Their deeds are described in the display at the museum of war history in Lychkovo, but that is not much. Incidentally, Irina Zimneva gave the trophy German helmet she was wearing when she was taken back to Leningrad to the Lychkovo Museum.

The survivors of the bombing at Lychkovo meet at the station every year on the anniversary of the tragedy.

Showing and discussion of Alla Osipova's film *Leningrad Children. The Tragedy at Lychkovo Station* at the House of Journalists in St. Petersburg.

at Warsaw Station, the carriage attendant was indignant: 'Where are they taking them, there's bombing there, I've just come from there!' She was told: 'Don't spread panic, the government knows better than you.' Yury Kolosov, who took part in the defence of Leningrad and is an authoritative historian of the siege, gave one reason in Alla Osipova's touching film *Leningrad Children. The Tragedy at Lychkovo Station*: 'Lack of contact between military and civil leaders... We did not know what the situation was at the fronts. The military did not tell us. Perhaps we would have sent our children to the south and the south-west...'

Those that experienced the hell of Lychkovo feel sorry for the parents who were not told what had happened to their evacuated children and were even prohibited from looking for them (alarming information nevertheless leaked out from those who returned to Leningrad). It was callousness that cannot even be written off to the laws of wartime. However, it is typical that the passengers of that train into the valley of death do not entirely blame the country and its leadership — they are Soviet people, after all. Irina Zimneva agrees that serious errors were made in the preparations for war, but she prefers to remember the heroes of the Great Patriotic War who are not given the renown they deserve.





Irina Zimneva — prizewinner in the 'Woman of the Year — 2020' competition in the nomination 'Public Figure'.

Reflections on the sources of pride in their country and the people who created its heroic history form the basis of the 'Forever Alive' movement. When she addresses young people, Zimneva encourages them to appreciate the beauty of the city on the free-flowing Neva and the selfless labour of those who revived it after the war. 'So little is said about them, as though the city rose from the ruins by itself. You know, by 1953 there was not a single destroyed building: they had either been restored or demolished and replaced by a garden!', she exclaims. She is also releasing a film in which pre-war views of Leningrad are juxtaposed with their modern appearance, accompanied by the music of Georgy Sviridov and songs by the *Russian Army Choir* ensemble. Irina's love of culture and art was inculcated by intellectual neighbours in the family's communal flat and by her father, who had returned from the front after being seriously wounded and had been appointed Director of the 'Progress' House of Culture. In her youth she met Ben Bentsianov, Lyubov Orlova and Igor Gorbachev, and now she involves young talents in her patriotic projects.

One of the projects of the 'Forever Alive' movement is the creation of a monument 'To the Children of Leningrad during the Siege'.

Larisa Dmitrieva. Model of a monument 'To the Children of Leningrad during the Siege'.



Students of schools of architecture will enter the competition alongside professional architects. There are already four models. Irina Zimneva proposes to install the monument in 'Malinovka' park, not far from the square where parents put their children on lorries before sending them into evacuation across the Road of Life. She is convincing the head of Krasnogvardeysky District, public officials and her colleagues in the movement: 'What is good about this park? It has a church, beautiful trees and a pond with weeping willows. There are a lot of schools nearby. Teachers and children with their parents could go there after school, sit on the benches and imagine what it was like during the siege.'

In parallel, Irina is arranging a trip for St. Petersburg schoolchildren, war and labour veterans to Karachay-Cherkessia, following the route of a train with Leningrad children that was destroyed by the fascists in 1942 at Armavir. The envoys of people's diplomacy, with books, presents and a concert programme, will visit the village of Beslenev, whose residents took in 32 orphans from the besieged city and raised them as members of their own families. And Valechka is always with her — it is best for them not to part.

A few years ago, a neighbour of Zimneva's asked her to give her the doll, promising to sew a new dress for it. She took it and did not return it for one week, then another. 'I was concerned: I don't need the dress, give the doll back! The neighbour finally admitted that a boy in her flat had smashed Valechka's head with a hammer. The doll had to be sent to be restored. Her face was put right, but there was no longer the sense that she was alive, that her skin breathed and that her veins were visible'. She made hair for the doll from a curly lock of her younger son Kirill, which in due course had to be replaced by a wig of artificial hair. But for Irina Zimneva she is still the same Valechka, who came from her grandmother and saved her life at Lychkovo. She will not give her to anyone ever again.

This suits Valechka perfectly. She is still prepared to go with Irinka to the ends of the earth. If only there is no war.



Archipelago of the Siege

A MUSEUM THAT EVERYONE SHOULD VISIT

Photo: Timur Turgunov



Elena Lezik, Director of the State Memorial Museum of the Defence and Blockade of Leningrad



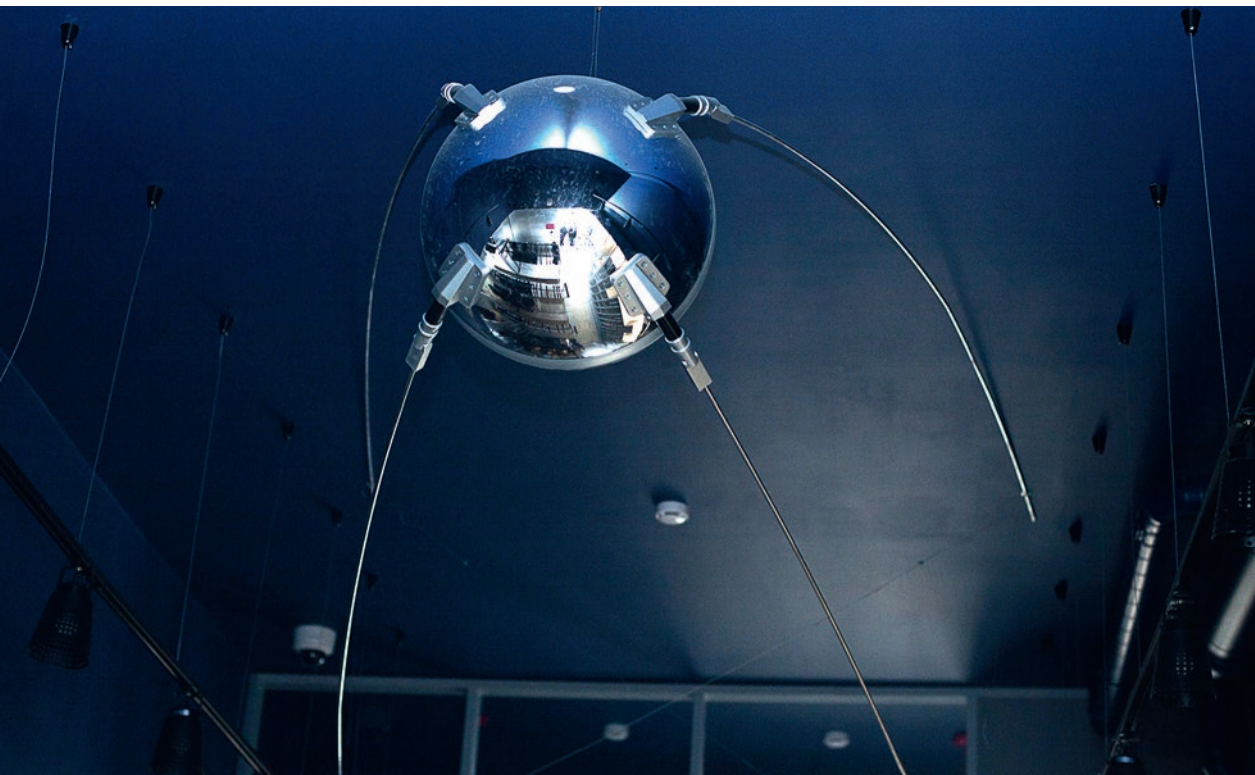
At an exhibition by the siege artist Elena Marttila



Wings for Flight

HOW TO GUARANTEE A UNIVERSITY'S INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT

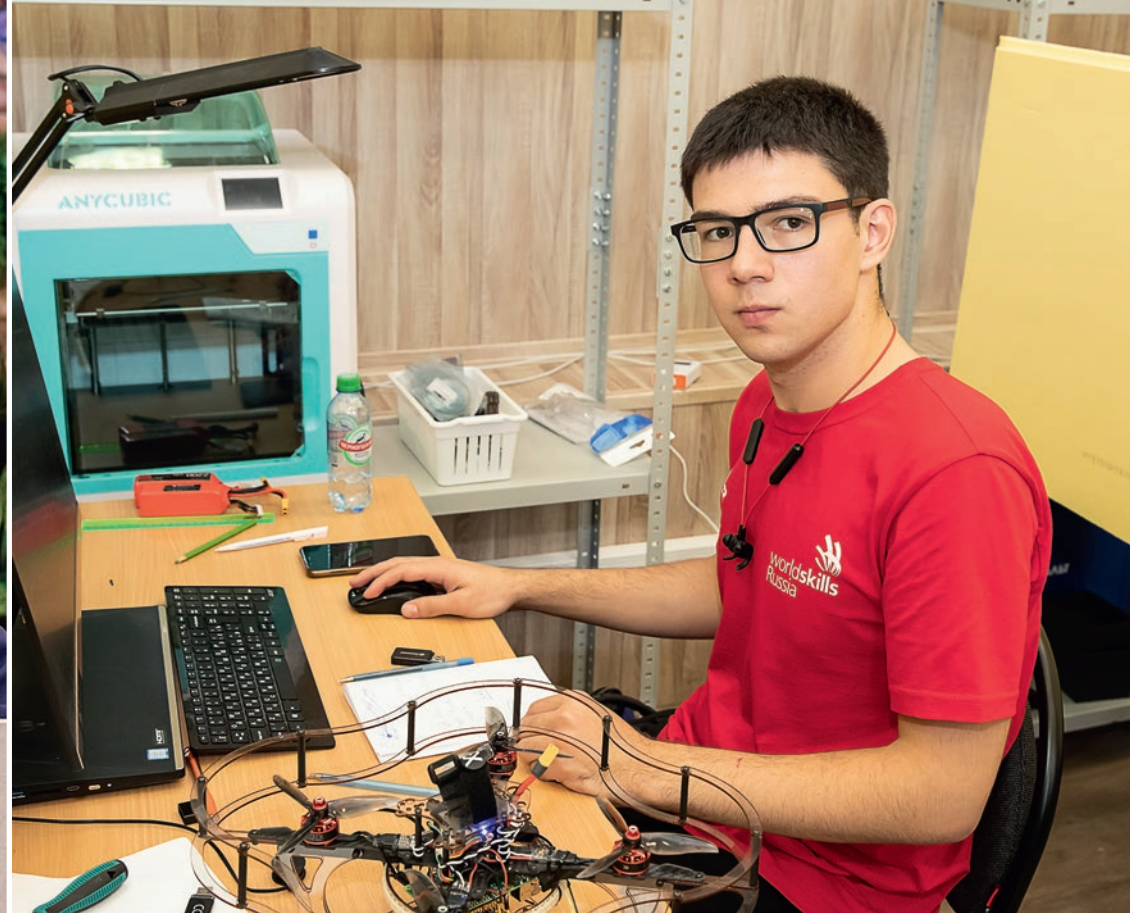
Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Timur Turgunov, SUAI Media Center



Professor Yulia ANTOKHINA, Doctor of Economics and Rector of the State University of Aerospace Instrumentation (SUAI), talks about the phenomenon of the transformation of a specialized college into a multi-profile scientific-educational centre.

Yulia Anatolyevna, on the day of our meeting the final of a competition with the intriguing title 'Flying Robotics' was being held in the university. Explain the essence of the competition to somebody not familiar with the concept.

You happened upon the student part of the competition of a Study Group under the National Technological Initiative. The finalists in this profile, which is in great demand, have to monitor a warehouse remotely with the aid of our drones, mark in colour and arrange various types of goods, then upload the re-



sults of the inventory on to a terminal for consumers. It is a task that requires technical vision, recognition of colours and calculation of objects' coordinates. The finalists were holders of bachelor's and master's degrees from the country's leading universities, and the winner was the 'Buran' team from our university.

Congratulations! I am beginning to understand the language of the modern SUAI — how the market economy in the heart of a planned economy began with new terminology, as is the case here: an Engineering School with an accelerator — an Engineering Garage, a laboratory for the Internet of Things and unmanned aviation systems, the regional 'Boiling Point' — unique for the institutions of a higher school, the WorldSkills movement, the 'Cosmo-

Start' forum... How do you search for new niches which other universities do not have but are taking root here?

I will say straightaway that no innovations infringe the spirit and traditions of our university — the strategic decisions we take are not spontaneous. When I became Rector in 2014, the university was operating with stability and quality, which is to the credit of my predecessors. It is very difficult to take a dispassionate view of your university when you have been here since your student days, so I decided to bring in outside experts. I also derived valuable help from a course at 'Skolkovo' under the ministerial programme 'New Leaders of Higher Education', where I was sent by the then Rector Anatoly Ovodenko. I was fortunate to be in the first 'launch' (to use space terminology) — there were a hundred of us from all over the country, including the current Minister of Education and Science Valery Falkov and Deputy Minister Dmi-

Yulia Antokhina, Rector of SUAI, and Dmitry Peskov, General Director of the 'National Technological Initiative Platform', sign a collaboration agreement.

In the Unmanned Aviation Systems Laboratory at SUAI.

Page 22:
An artificial satellite of Earth — part of the interior of 'Boiling Point' — St. Petersburg. SUAI'.

Territory of Success



The university's main building.

try Afanasiev. I started that ten-month course as the university's Pro-Rector for Economics, but while I was studying I became First Pro-Rector. About 30% of the graduates from that course are now rectors and I am still in contact with many of them. So when the time came for taking a decision on the future of the university, the first step, prompted by 'Skolkovo', was to apply to independent experts.

The experts were scientists, representatives of the business community, including our graduates, and, naturally, members of staff from our founder — the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. They gave their assessment of the current state of the university based on specific indicators — 'nothing personal', you might say, and I realized: however painful it may sound, the university was lagging behind the demands of Industry 4.0, which meant it was becoming less attractive to the teenage generation. We have to do all we can to make it interesting for young people

'The SUAI teaches students the capability of grasping new things that have not even been taught. I hope we will continue our joint flight further, higher, faster'.

Sergey KRIKALEV, astronaut, Hero of the Soviet Union, Hero of Russia, Executive Director for piloted space programmes at the 'Roskosmos' State Corporation, participant in the 'CosmoStart' forums of 2019 and 2020

to study here and to have the desire to stay on after graduation as teachers or researchers. They should be able to see a line of growth, and the management is simply obliged to define the areas in which we will develop in order to be successful. So thank you to 'Skolkovo' for the science!

By the way, the programme for training leaders of higher education is continuing. There have already been sixteen intakes and as Rector I have already sent potential managers from our university to 'Skolkovo'. One of them was Valery Matyash, who is now Pro-Rector for Education.

Is there not a contradiction here? According to you, the university was operating with stability, but could not continue in that way!

Of course, I love my university passionately and could not imagine life without it. I have always thought that our staff is the best and I discuss any changes with them in the first instance. Under Anatoly Ovodenko the university was already expanding from a narrow profile with two elements — instrumentation and aviation machinery — to include a module of humanitarian disciplines to provide personnel for the business world (economists, lawyers, sociologists, specialists in technical translation). In that sense it was easier for me, but a manager should not be complacent, convincing herself and others that everything is going swimmingly. I insisted on checking the main areas of our activity with leaders of technological companies. We selected the specializations and competencies that would enable the university to be a powerful player on the educational services market. The model of a 4.0 University actually presupposes a network partnership in which the university and companies are links with equal rights in the chain of the creation of innovative technologies and training personnel for the new economy.

Territory of Success



It is important that the new titles also reflect the new content. I am sure you were told that by certain colleagues who doubted the necessity for an Engineering School. Did you have any doubts on that score?

No, because in that case the recommendations of the experts coincided with my own experience. I studied 5.5 years for the specialty of radio engineer. Then I progressed from my specialty to the three-level educational system (bachelor's degree, master's degree, postgraduate studies). I am convinced that it is impossible to train a fully-fledged engineer at bachelor's degree level. The Engineering School offers all-round training for six years, beginning from the first year, its aim being that graduates will have the competencies of an engineer with elements of management. I like the idea that as a result we will obtain not managers of individual production cycles, but an engineering elite, specialists with a profound comprehension of business processes, with skills in tech-

nical entrepreneurship and business administration, potential company managers. There is an acute shortage of such managers in modern business. I do not know whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, but I do not have the habit of working at a desk, putting my ideas off indefinitely. Over several months we decided on the location, the teaching staff and the structure of the Engineering School, and it had its first intake in 2016.

If the bachelor's and master's degrees remain, what is substantially new in this structure?

We have opened a number of new laboratories — for unmanned aviation systems with their own flight zone, cyber-physical security, the Internet of things, electrical engineering, robotics and artificial intellect, plus a student design office in conjunction with the 'Power Machines' company. They actually are laboratories, not departments, and each of them has a cu-

Professor Yulia Antokhina, Rector of SUAI:
'...I do not have the habit of working at a desk, putting my ideas off indefinitely'.

'You continue to develop new study formats and improve your standards of training specialists every year'.

*Georgy POLTAVCHENKO
Graduate of the Leningrad Institute
of Aerospace Instrumentation
Chairman of the Board of Directors.
United Shipbuilding Corporation*



A master class in unmanned aviation systems at the SUAI Engineering School for participants in the Academy of Digital Technologies.

The airfield in the SUAI Unmanned Aviation Systems Laboratory.



rator that is a progressive hi-tech company, so providing a design-orientated approach in higher education. The companies include COEX (Copter-Express), AVT & Co (charging stations for Russian-made electric cars), Vega-Absolute (the theory and practice of making innovative products), PTC (platform of the 'Thingworks' Internet of things), National Instruments, KUKA Roboter...

The Engineering Garage is an integral part of the School. First-year students and even school pupils can come there with their ideas. It opened later, in 2018 (we had to prepare the accommodation) and was immediately filled with specific content, because it is a comfortable place to visit, where you can work with your hands and where there is no strict demarcation between teacher and student — these boundaries are blurred, as in our 'Boiling Point', which is also a barrier-free creative environment. It is especially pleasing that the backbone of the Engineering School's staff is made up of former master's degree and postgraduate students from our university.

How does the WorldSkills Russia movement, of which SUAI is an active participant, fit into the system of training the engineers of the future? You have created a centre for this movement in the university, are introducing new FutureSkills competences, and are developing and advancing your own champions. Can victories in championships serve as an indication of the quality of engineering education?

The simple answer is that subdivisions of SUAI were in at the beginning of the FutureSkills project for advanced training: the Institute of Information Systems and Protection of Information and the Faculty of Secondary Professional Education, and the categories in which our students win in inter-university championships are 'Internet of Things', 'Programming Solutions for Business' and others — essentially educational disciplines. We started with a competence that is very important for the labour market, developed it and raised it to international standard — it is 'Corporate Protection from Internal Threats to Security of Information' (our partners were companies in that sector: 'Infotex' and 'Infovotch').

Territory of Success

There are now sixteen competences and each of them has a hi-tech partner.

Yes, you might get the impression that the 'Young Professionals (WorldSkills Russia) Union', with which SUAI has signed a collaboration agreement, is only concerned with organizing tournaments at various levels (college, university, region, country, continent). There is nothing wrong with that — young people like competing. But what attracted me in this movement? The new method of disseminating and reinforcing knowledge through practice, alternatives for the effective transformation of educational plans. You can spend a whole semester gnawing at the granite of science, or you can, during the five days of a championship, analyse business cases suggested by companies that are constantly becoming more complicated.

Naturally, in competitions we have chosen the engineering sector, the design of new competencies that are in demand in the digital economy. And our pedestals (for example, a prestigious second place in the final of the WorldSkills national inter-university championship in 2019) are an indicator of the formation of skills of the future, which also means the quality of our university's professional training. As Vladimir Knyagin, Vice-Governor of St. Petersburg, said when congratulating the SUAI on this success, in an ordinary university the educational standard is confirmed in five years, in others ten years, but everything connected with WorldSkills is renewed every six months. This is a different speed of the process, comparable with the renewal of software and the evolution of technological systems!

Agreed, but does it not work out that only the cleverest students take part in competitions and the others have to settle for the role of supporters? How inclusive is the movement?

Let's have a count. There are at least sixteen categories with five teams in each and five people in each team. Anyone can apply



to take part — all they have to do is send an application by email to the university's centre for the WorldSkills development of competencies. There are training courses for every competence, with extra training for novices. The trainer might be the same teacher from the Engineering School. There are no star professors there — the instructors are not much older than their pupils, so there is no 'suppression'. The training for professions of the future is currently conducted by 54 experts from eight institutes and faculties of SUAI. My idea is to offer each of our 15,000 students the prospect of personal and professional growth for six years ahead — that can be achieved partly in this way.

Meanwhile, another task is being achieved — the search for talented school-leavers to attract to the university. There is an Academy of Digital Technologies in St. Petersburg — its students bring the city many victories in the junior category of WorldSkills. We take note of these youngsters and hold master classes for them, which they always find interesting. Another source of personnel is our Faculty of Secondary Professional Education, where students are trained in nine engineering-technical specialities.

The WorldSkills Championship in the 'Engineering of Space Systems' competency.

'Our university is a unique instrument for shaping new leaders and scientific-engineering teams. "Leninets" allots a million roubles for the future development of the university'.

Anatoly TURCHAK, graduate of the Leningrad Institute of Aerospace Instrumentation, President of the St. Petersburg Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Head of the 'Leninets' Holding Company, member of the SUAI Supervisory Board



The ceremonial opening of 'Boiling Point — St. Petersburg. SUAI'. 2020.

Page 29:
The 'CosmoStart' Forum.

Top left — pilot-astronaut Andrey Borisenko, Hero of the Russian Federation.

'The SUAI is becoming a national leader in professions of the future'.

Alexey DEMIDOV, Chairman of the Union of Rectors of Higher Education Establishments in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, Rector of the St. Petersburg State University of Industrial Technology and Design

They also take part in WorldSkills and after graduating from the faculty almost half of them go on to study for a bachelor's degree. These students are, as a rule, better than school-leavers who enter in the first year and this is evident from the results of the first examinations. And here are a few more figures: in March 2021 we held the 5th qualifying championship in WorldSkills standards, the largest in St. Petersburg: sixteen competences, 170 participants and 177 experts.

According to one definition, a 4.0 University is a global, open, dynamically developing platform, an institute of society and a provider of knowledge about the future. As a result of this, it was vitally important for you to set up a regional 'Boiling Point' at SUAI. How did you manage to find and open an absolutely new 'collective work space' for city communities when you are confined to these historic buildings?

It was a real challenge, taking into account the acute shortage of space! It would have been simpler to accommodate a local 'Boil-

ing Point' in our building in the Moskovsky District, but the centre of St. Petersburg is another matter altogether — the prospect of filling an urban environment with new functions in this beautiful place. We narrowed down our area of search and carried out what might be called an urgent inspection of rooms in the main university building in Bolshaya Morskaya Street. We looked at the repair and construction section. I have to admit that I had never gone in there when I was a student, but we had to reconnoitre it and assess how effectively the 500 square metres were being used. Having established that they were not being used effectively, we moved some of the old machines to another room and disposed of the rest as scrap metal. And just imagine — during the reconstruction, which took exactly a year, we not only reduced but even increased the study space.

We gave our students five extra auditoria of various formats — for lessons, discussion of projects, for having a coffee with a laptop or a book. We also got a large imposing area where lectures and meetings on a city scale can be held. It has one great advantage: a separate entrance in Truda Street. We uncovered and preserved the brickwork from time when this was the Life Guard Horse Regiment's barracks, so you can literally get close to history. The installations give the place a special flavour of outer space, especially the wall of real flowers called 'Per Chlorophyta ad Astra' — one of the symbols of the unity of technology, ecology and contemporary art. The architects, artists and designers, together with the university's creative team, all did excellent work. Not for nothing did Dmitry Peskov, the President's representative for digital and technological development, call our 'Boiling Point' a style icon! The opening ceremony went on for two days in nonstop co-working mode with the participation of competent guests and was accompanied by an exhibition of the university's scientific developments — I would make so bold as to say that it resounded over the whole of St. Petersburg.

Territory of Success

When we began this work, we never suspected the coronavirus pandemic, but when it happened, and the university went over to a remote format of education, 'Boiling Point' took on a new meaning. It is an ideal venue for combining online and offline work, video conferences with authoritative speakers, experts and opinion leaders. Because of its openness and technical equipment, it draws into its orbit far more people than it is physically capable of accommodating. The calendar of events, signed and sealed when 'Boiling Point' opened, included 333 events, and almost all of them took place, including two that were very important to us — the 'CosmoStart' forum and a special session of the scientific council to mark the university's 80th anniversary.

I was going to ask you about 'CosmoStart'. It was your fifth aviation and space travel forum. It has become an international event with more and more participants, including astronauts. What can one say, it is an attractive PR project! Is the university seeing specific results from holding the forum?

We conceived 'CosmoStart' in order to revive the prestige of the space industry, making it attractive for young people again. 'Roskosmos', as the forum's co-founder, shares our aspirations; we have excellent relations with the North-West Space Federation. Many of the university's structures are geared towards interaction with the industry, the training of personnel and the conducting of substantial research for it. Against that background, 'CosmoStart' may seem to be purely an image-polishing exercise. It is not! We see the university as a gateway to the field of space-rocketry and aviation, and we show our current and potential students how accessible it is to them.

During the previous forum in the Park Inn Hotel (there were sixteen simulators provided by 'Roskosmos' in the hotel's huge lobby) there was an amusing incident: one of the guests, a test pilot who was preparing for a space flight and was supposed to be





The SUAI Engineering School.
The 5G Laboratory.

The SUAI Engineering School.
The Robotics Laboratory.
Baxter the robot.



giving a lecture to children, disappeared. He was found... in the queue for a simulator that replicated working in outer space, i.e. a genuine piece of equipment from the Astronaut Training Centre. We have three such simulators in SUAI and master's degree students are trained on them. You sit in the cabin, start the computer program and hover in virtual weightlessness. We show schoolchildren these simulators, but on one condition — learn and fly!

So it was logical for the university to sign a collaboration agreement with 'Roskosmos' at the fifth 'CosmoStart' forum. And my recent visit to the corporation was absolutely to the point — we spoke about specific orders for which the selection process is already under way. Our staff can resolve applied tasks of advanced difficulty, and for students it is immersion in their specialization.

A sensitive subject for any university is the staff of professors and lecturers. 80 % of your staff have higher degrees and over sixty dissertations have been defended in the last five years. In student slang, that's cool. But when the staff is so senior, are they not tempted to use by inertia only the baggage they have amassed. Do the professors adapt to the new rhythm of university life?

Ever since my student days, a professor has been for me an extraordinary person, something like an artist. He is a personality who shapes personalities. His main mission is to convey to young people his knowledge and his vision of the world. It is a huge responsibility — not only to the students, but also to the nation. That may sound pompous, but that is the way it is. A professor will grow old and his pupil will take over the running of the department. And, of course, the university's most valuable property is its scientific-teaching schools, which must not be harmed in any circumstances. This April we will be holding the 16th readings in honour of the outstanding electrical engineer and Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Dmitry Zavalishin.

A member of his laboratory's staff at the Leningrad Institute of Aviation Instrumentation was the young scientist Igor Glebov, who went on to become an academician, Director of the Institute of Electromechanical Engineering and Head of the Leningrad Centre of the USSR Academy of Sciences. And the initiator of the Zavalishin readings was Glebov's daughter Lidia Chubraeva, a Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences who is Head of the Institute of Innovative Technologies in Electrical Engineering and Robotics in our university. We value this succession as it prepares the ground for the growth of promising young scientists.

At the same time, changes inevitably affect everyone. There is no staff of a technical institute or humanities faculty that have not responded to them. Everybody wants to be involved in the university's modernization, but for that they have to move out of their comfort zone. In sections such as '5G Radio Engineering' and 'Robotics' there is a symbiosis of young but already mature staff and specialists of 'silver age'. Or take the Laboratory of Water — it is a new structure, but the personnel are proven, with several years of work in the university.

In SUAI projects one senses an almost physical pull towards integration, whether it be the sphere of industry, higher education or initiatives of social significance. How does the university choose its partners?

It is not only we who choose them — they also choose us. The dialectic is simple: we look for partners with whom we can achieve results — for me that is the main criterion, and others judge us on those results. At the end of last year, on my initiative, we signed a contract with the United Shipbuilding Corporation. We may seem to be worlds apart — we have the sky and they the water, but why not organize student practice in the corporation's enterprises? Why not offer them our competencies? The SUAI is engaged in

Territory of Success

instrumentation and systems of relaying information, which are necessary for both the military and civil sectors of shipbuilding. One of the corporation's 42 companies, 'Northern Shipyard', has already shown a lively interest in our developments. We are negotiating with a major airline that wants to establish a scientific subdivision in St. Petersburg. We may soon have another partner of high status, and our graduates in 'Operation of Aircraft' have a promising field of activity.

Let us hope that happens! When you were a student and later when you worked at the university, did you ever think that one day you might become Rector and change the life of your alma mater for the better?

I had no ambitions of that kind in my student days — far from it! In my second year I went to work in the trade union committee, so by the time I graduated the university administration knew me and suggested that I stay on as an assistant in a department and as a leading economist in the Financial Planning Department. I enjoyed planning, dealing with the university's economy, making it balance rationally, calculating the expediency of one option or another. My engineering specialization helped me in that. It all came naturally: I lectured to students in three economic disciplines and gradually made my way up the employment ladder. I became Head of the Financial Monitoring Department, where the range of interests were different. It was then that the thought crept into my mind that there was probably no better candidate for Pro-Rector in Economics in the university. I saw it before me and took that step. Then came the course at 'Skolkovo'...

Yulia Anatolyevna, we all like to recall our student days. Now, when you launch new university programmes, do you put yourself in the place of the students, weighing up wheth-



er they will be interested to study them; would I have coped if I were in their shoes, would I have mastered this course, this practical task?

I think not only is it not shameful for a rector to 'lapse into studentship' — it is simply essential. Look, the SUAI has about a thousand partners. Two-thirds of our 132 training courses are in technical specializations, fundamental and applied. Is it easy for a student to plot a course in this ocean of possibilities? The creation of the Engineering School and the participation in WorldSkills is actually connected with the idea of transforming study plans so that each student up to the 3rd or 4th year can make an informed decision about his or her professional future: stay in the university and become a teacher, go into science or business (in which case their first start-up could be their graduate qualifying work) or go into manufacturing, choosing a qualifying work to suit its profile.

How can we help a young person to decide? By reorganizing the four-year bachelor's degree programme on a 2+2 basis. In other words: the first two years, when you understand little about

The Laboratory of Water.

The airfield in the SUAI Unmanned Aviation Systems Laboratory.





The 'Panda' student team from SUAI was rated the best in St. Petersburg.

Professor Yulia Antokhina. The process of the university's modernization began with her appointment as Rector.



life (I judge by myself at 17), are spent in general education disciplines, choosing a specialization, acquiring communication skills, working in a team and so on. The fifth semester, at the beginning of the third year, is the key time when a student must realize who and what he or she wishes to be. Depending on this, a study plan is chosen and an individual educational trajectory is plotted.

Of course, this is a lengthy process that requires trial runs and polishing, but it is already part of the programme adopted by the scientific council for the university's development up to 2030. We have embarked on the first five-year plan of transformation. There is a road map — the sequence of steps towards its implementation, there is finance, but the most important prerequisite is personnel who are prepared to make changes, reappraise classic educational technologies and methods. We are conducting this work both with our traditional partners ('Leninets', 'Rubin', 'Granit-Electron' and others who have base departments) and with representatives of the new economy, curators of the Engineering School. We are organizing fast-track courses to train personnel for Industry 4.0 with its basic technologies, including artificial intellect and digital doubles. We are looking forward to the adoption of the state programme of strategic academic leadership (Priority 2030), so as to adjust our guidelines for moving forward in accordance with the programme.

You have already progressed appreciably. During these years did the Rector of SUAI have many moments of happiness, a sense of sincere pride in her university?

The first and, probably, the happiest moment was the gathering of graduates to mark the university's 75th anniversary. I remember it down to small details, even though it was exactly five years ago in the Ice Palace, in my second year as Rector. I never expected that there could be an atmosphere of family-like warmth in that enormous hall, that so many respected talented people of various gener-

ations would be there. I felt pride in our university, which has produced worthy citizens and fine specialists, and that I was part of it.

In the last couple of years, the stand-out impression has been the opening of 'Boiling Point', a two-day relay of events. There are projects that are not immediate but require painstaking preparation, but there is an outpouring of emotion when they come off. You experience particular satisfaction when you know what used to be in that place and compare it with what it has become. The same applies to the laboratory of unmanned aircraft with its gimmick in the form of an airfield — we spent a long time refurbishing the accommodation and selecting the team, but the result is just what we intended.

I cannot help feeling proud that during my time as Rector our university and its teachers have been included for the first time in the QS EECA and ARES international ratings, where they occupied a decent placing; that we have opened the Engineering School — we are looking forward to the results from it. A few days ago I was informed that by a decision of the Ministry SUAI has been included in the list of federal innovation platforms — it is a magical feeling and I am proud of our team!

I am proud of the beautiful stadium we have built in Moskovsky Prospekt, financed by the university. It is used not only by our students but also by local residents, who initially did not particularly approve of the project.

And the very latest cause of pride: the Governor of St. Petersburg's Banner of Honour for the best student team in the city for 2020 has been awarded to our university's 'Panda' service team! The students spent all summer in children's health camps where their assistance was needed, were actively involved in volunteer activity and are taking part in the All-Russian patriotic promotion 'Day of Hard Work', contributing part of their salary to the refurbishment of flats of Great Patriotic War veterans...

I hope there will be many more grounds for pride!

Preserving the Spirit of Victory

THE MILITARY PAST AND AEROSPACE PRESENT OF CHESMA PALACE

Elena PYATLINA, Deputy Director of the Institute of Computer Systems and Programming at the St. Petersburg State University of Aerospace Instrumentation (SUAI)

Photos: SUAI Media Center

Chesma Palace, a once forgotten pearl in St. Petersburg's necklace of palaces and one of four imperial palaces in the Northern Capital, took on a new life eighty years ago when it became the cradle of the Leningrad Aviation Institute (LAI). Today students in the junior classes of the State University of Aerospace Instrumentation (SUAI) flock to the palace as if it were their home. A path to an absorbing engineering profession, acquaintance with Russia's heroic past and participation in the preservation of historic values — what a lucky combination!

Any of our students can speak about the remarkable defeat of the Turks by the Russian fleet in Chesma Bay in the Aegean Sea on the night of 25/26 June 1770 — about the fact that the enemy suffered colossal losses: all its ships were sunk and over 10,000 seamen were killed, while the Russians lost only eleven men. This victory was of enormous significance for Russian and world history. The Battle of Chesma predetermined the outcome of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, which





A student from SUAI gives a lecture for visitors to the palace and brings pages from the glorious history of Russia to life.

Author of the article Elena Pyatlina in front of Anastasia Nikolaeva-Berg's portrait of Admiral Grigory Spiridov from the palace's museum collection.

ended with the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji on terms favourable to Russia, which obtained the right to maintain its fleet in the Black Sea and to move its ships without hindrance through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles into the Mediterranean Sea and beyond into the world's oceans. The Crimean Khanate gained autonomy and became part of the Russian Empire in 1783.

In honour of the victory, Catherine II ordered the building of a Chesma architectural ensemble 'on the 7th verst of the Moscow highway' — a palace and a church. It was a transit palace — a place for the empress to rest on journeys to her residence at Tsarskoye Selo, for ceremonial receptions and celebrations. The architect Yury Felten designed the palace along the lines of 14th and 15th century English castles in the False Gothic style that was rare in Russia — narrow first-floor windows, a flat central dome resembling an ancient English crown, corner towers and a jagged frieze. It was a fairytale palace, an enigma, faced with the same Pudost



Heritage

stone that was used in the construction of Gatchina Palace, the colonnade of Kazan Cathedral, the Cameron Gallery at Tsarskoye Selo...

The area where the palace was situated, at that time on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, was very boggy and was called 'Frog Marsh' or 'Kik-eriki'. Catherine II christened it 'the Palace on the Frog Marsh' and gave it a comical coat-of-arms: a bright green frog on a shield. The empress's joke turned out to be successful — following the coat-of-arms came various adornments, shoe buckles and crockery with the characteristic label, including the famous 'Green Frog Service', ordered from the English ceramicist Josiah Wedgwood especially for Chesma Palace. The frog became the custodian of the building.

The palace was not large: there were no living quarters in it — only formal rooms and a picture gallery. Catherine II filled it with exquisite works of art — portraits, bas-reliefs and porcelain. Fortunately, they have almost all survived and now grace the collections of the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the Moscow Kremlin museums...

The palace has changed ownership frequently in its relatively short history. When it became too cramped for the imperial court, Catherine gave it to the military Order of St. George for its collections, treasury and archive. In 1830 Russia's first state almshouse opened in Chesma Palace for invalids from the Patriotic War of 1812. It was subsequently used as an institute for noble girls and, in the Soviet period (from 1918 to 1923), as a corrective camp for political prisoners — Chesmenka. The palace itself has also changed. In the 19th century it was reconstructed by the architect Alexander Staubert, who added three two-storey wings for the needs of the Chesma almshouse. In short, if Yury Felten saw his creation today, he would have difficulty in recognizing it. However, the circular staircase and the ceremonial throne room (now the reading room) are just as majestic, and the circular rooms in the western and eastern towers are almost fully preserved.

So the alma mater of students of the LAI — LIAS — SUAI has a rich history, and those who inhabit the palace today value every page of that history. Students come and go, there are changes in the teaching

staff. How could the history of this legendary building be preserved and handed down from generation to generation? The answer was obvious — set up a museum.

In 2014 a display devoted to the victory at Chesma and Chesma Palace opened in rooms on the first floor. It was assembled by teachers at SUAI. Its 25 stands tell the story of the creation of the palace ensemble, the architect Yury Felten, the heroes of the Battle of Chesma, the Order of St. George and its holders, the works of art that graced the palace, the years of the Great Patriotic War and the SUAI today. The showcases feature souvenir porcelain made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory by staff of the SUAI and the artist Svetlana Romanova based on the 'Green Frog Service'. The thematic books and booklets include my own book 'The Fate of a Palace. Chesma Palace in History and Legends', published by the university.

A special place in the display is occupied by information about the Siege of Leningrad. The students and teachers of the LAI were evacuated and many of them joined the militia. The palace was on the edge of the city's line of defence. Workshops for the repair of aircraft engines operated throughout the war, organized by staff of the LAI. Students returned to the palace in 1945. It had suffered from bombing and shelling, but had not been destroyed — only no glass remained in the windows. However, the old books in the library had survived — they had not been burnt in the cold winters of the blockade...

Another object that could be considered as a museum exhibit is the bronze frog sitting on a grey stone in the St. George Hall. It is the work of the animalist sculptor Vladimir Petrovichev, who also made the famous hare at Peter and Paul Fortress. Our students have thought up a legend: if you place a coin by the frog's legs and touch it with your hand, your wish will come true. This is only a game, of course, but they find its romantic history interesting, sense their involvement in it and are proud of their university.

It is true that not every student has the chance to climb the same staircase that Catherine II once trod, sit over their books and listen to lec-



The restored interiors of Chesma Palace. The St. George Hall.

The frog is the symbol and talisman of the palace.





Student guides share their knowledge of Russian naval history.

Part of the palace's display.



tures in auditoria where Suvorov, Kutuzov and Potemkin — all holders of the Order of St. George — sat, look through the windows of the laboratory in the tower at the church visited by the hero of the 1812 war Denis Davydov. One could say that the spirit of victory hovers in the rooms and corridors of the palace that has become the cradle of the university.

For several years, students at the SUAI have been working on a virtual image of Chesma Palace, and this has been the subject of their course work and diploma dissertations. The models, made with the aid of computer graphics, make it possible to imagine the palace as it was designed and built by Yury Felten. One can see how the external appearance of the palace has changed over the centuries, 'walk' through the underground passage from the palace to the church, 'climb' the central staircase, 'enter' the audience room hung with portraits of European monarchs and peep into the dining-room that features the celebrated 'Green Frog Service'.

Time marches on inexorably — the historic interiors require constant care, and this is undertaken by the university administration. Lengthy restoration of the room beneath the central dome — the



Throne Room, later the St. George Hall — was completed in 2012. The university met the cost of the restoration from its own funds. Places of honour on the walls are accorded to portraits of the palace's first owner Catherine II, heroes of the Battle of Chesma Count Alexey Orlov and Admiral Grigory Spiridov and copies of bas-reliefs by the self-taught Russian sculptor Fedot Shubin.

What else can be restored in the palace's interior decoration, what historic relics can be copied in museums and accommodated in its rooms? These questions are impossible to answer without the aid of specialists, without qualified scientific research. This is why students from Moscow University's Department of the General History of Art, future art experts and restorers, have spent their summers here for several years for their practical experience.

We welcome a wide range of visitors: ambassadors of foreign countries, heads of industrial enterprises in St. Petersburg, schoolchildren from the Moskovsky District... Graduates of the university also come to visit — to admire the interiors once more and to remember their student days. Professional interest in the Chesma legacy is shown by art ex-



perts — curators of collections at the Hermitage and members of the St. Petersburg Society of History Lovers. The palace opened its doors during the 'Open City' project of the Committee for State Control, Exploitation and Protection of Monuments, receiving about 500 visitors in two years.

Our students have been involved in guided tours for visitors since 2018. Since the opening of the 'Chesma Ensemble' route in the university's Welcome Centre, the students have held tours for groups and individuals and have received about a thousand visitors. Here are a few of the numerous comments: 'The students know the material wonderfully well and obviously like what they are doing. Thanks to those who train the guides and to those who are preserving the history of the building!'

'I get enormous pleasure from working in a harmonious team and from the opportunity to reveal the palace's secrets to visitors. Besides, that, it is a great honour to be part of such a history', says Dmitry Kuslin, a student in the Radio-Technical Faculty.

'As a guide I have discovered a lot of interesting and little-known facts. I am not a historian, so all this was new to me. And the more

I learn about the palace, the more I want to learn', says Maxim Ivanov, a student in the Economic Faculty.

The SUAI has enjoyed friendly relations with Chesma Church for many years. The university has given the church several rooms in one of the palace' wings. They have an educational function: lectures, presentations, exhibitions and lessons for children. Alexey Krylov, the senior priest, speaks to his parishioners in a modern comprehensible language. As a physics graduate, he is fully competent in the field of aviation and astronautics. It was no surprise that a priest with such a background suggested staging a Christmas play in 2021 to mark the 60th anniversary of the first manned space flight. The audience saw the miracle of Christmas through the eyes of Yuri Gagarin...

The history of the 'the Palace on the Frog Marsh', which celebrated Russia's victory in a major sea battle and has lived through the brilliance of Catherine's glory, the bitterness of oblivion, the cruelty of political repressions and the severe days of the siege, has not been forgotten. Because we, the students and staff of the SUAI, see ourselves as part of that history, its heirs.

Professor Yulia Antokhina, Rector of the SUAI, at the opening of the museum in Chesma Palace.

The palace is the subject of constant attention by the SUAI management, both as a cultural monument of national importance and as a focus of the university's social activity. Rector Yulia Antokhina and President Anatoly Ovodenko are both graduates of the university and are fully conversant with all aspects of the Chesma theme.

In Diaghilev's Circle

HOW PATRONS OF THE ARTS HELPED THE FIRST RUSSIAN PRODUCER TO STAGE HIS AMBITIOUS PROJECTS

Alexandra SHTARKMAN, Deputy Director of the St. Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music. Photos: the museum's archive

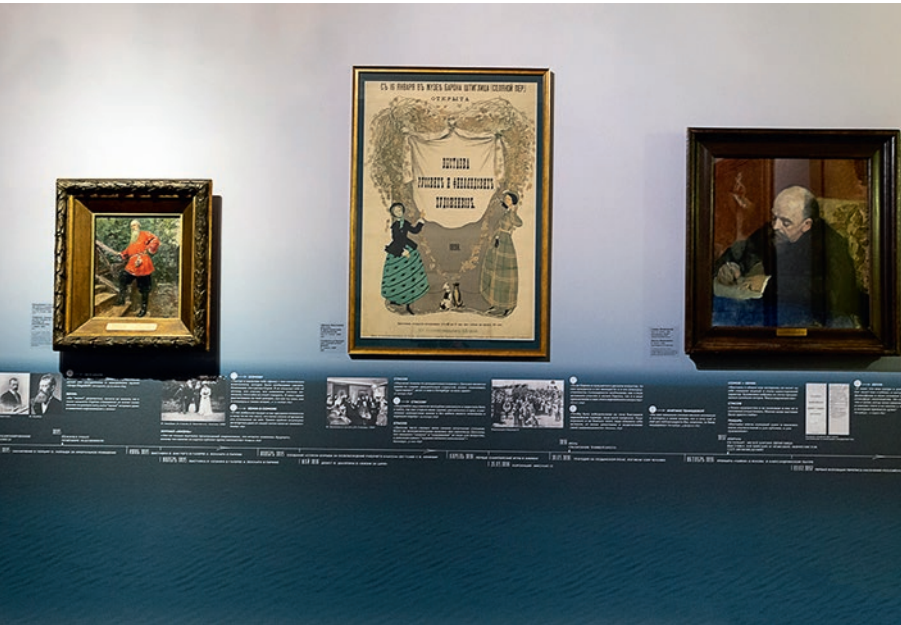


The year that has just passed, full of obstacles, restrictions and forced dissociation, did not prevent the St. Petersburg Museum of Theatre and Music staging an international exhibition project that was exceptional by any standards: 'In Diaghilev's Circle. Intersections of Destinies'. In spite of closed borders and the ubiquitous lockdowns, 135 members of Diaghilev's circle from 26 museums and private collections in Russia and Europe were assembled in the Sheremetyev Palace on the Fontanka — opposite the windows of the apartment where Diaghilev himself had lived while working in the management of the Imperial Theatres. It would have been impossible to organize the exhibition without the aid of patrons. In attracting them, we were inspired by Diaghilev's example!

His name is a synonym for the boldest ideas and most innovative concepts. However, in order to bring them to fruition, he needed substantial financial assistance and patronage. While still a

young man, Diaghilev made the acquaintance of such celebrated contemporaries as Lev Tolstoy, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, Emile Zola, Jules Massenet and Oscar Wilde. Many of these connections proved invaluable in his future undertakings. Occasionally this 'charlatan and charmer' (his own characterization of himself) acted as a patron of the arts himself. For example, having become keen on collecting paintings, he bought three works from the star of the Munich art world Franz von Lenbach, earning the autograph 'To the patron'. In the late 1890s Diaghilev, endeavouring to 'bring Russian art and world art together', organized a series of exhibitions that were revolutionary for their time. These projects required no small amount of investment. Diaghilev, who had a rare talent for persuasion, enlisted the support of such influential personages as Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich, and through him — Nicholas II.

Philanthropists



At the turn of the century, Diaghilev and his circle — Dmitry Filosofov, Lev Bakst, Alexander Benois, Valter Nuvel and Konstantin Somov — founded the ‘World of Art’ magazine and art association. Its publisher and editor-in-chief, the 26 year-old Sergey Diaghilev, attracted benefactors: Princess Maria Tenisheva and Savva Mamontov. At a critical moment, when Mamontov suffered financial ruin, Princess Tenisheva withdrew her support and the magazine was on the verge of folding, the situation was rescued by Valentin Serov, who managed to obtain a subsidy from the emperor. Nicholas II became the principal ‘financier’ of the publication — a mouthpiece for advanced artistic ideas!

In 1904 Diaghilev staged an unprecedented ‘Exhibition of Russian Portraits’ in the Tavrichesky Palace, literally opening the eyes of his contemporaries to 18th century Russian masters. Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich, who was President of the Acade-

my of Arts, recognized Diaghilev’s talent and supported his projects until his death in 1909.

In 1906, as part of the Autumn Salon in Paris, Diaghilev and his ‘World of Art’ colleagues staged an exhibition entitled ‘Two Centuries of Russian Painting and Sculpture’ (750 works). The organizing committee included, in addition to Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich, the doctor and art collector Sergey Botkin, Prince Vladimir Argutinsky-Dolgorukov, the Russian ambassador to France Alexander Nevidov and Countess Elisabeth de Greffulhe. So it was that Diaghilev managed to make important acquaintances among influential Paris intellectuals. This helped him a great deal in his future enterprises — the ‘Russian Historical Concerts’ at the Grand Opera in Paris in 1906 and 1907.

In Russia the new idea was supported by Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich and Leopold van der Pals, the Dutch owner of

At the exhibition ‘In Diaghilev’s Circle. An Intersection of Destinies’.

Page 38:
Sergey Diaghilev.
Artist Michel Georges-Michel.
© CHANEL Patrimoine Collection, Paris.

Philanthropists



Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich.
Artist P. Vosnovsky. 1903.
'Tsarskoye Selo' State Museum-Reserve.

Duchess Edmond de Polignac.
Artist Jacques-Émile Blanche.
1913. Museum of Fine Arts, Rouen.
© Réunion des Musées de la Métropole Rouen
Normandie / Photo C. Lancien / C. Loise.



a rubber factory in St. Petersburg. The selection jury for the concerts included Glazunov, Rachmaninov and Rimsky-Korsakov. The star of the programme was Fyodor Chaliapin. The first concert on 16 May was attended by four Grand Princes from the House of Romanov, Richard Strauss and the French beau monde.

The May concerts, though warmly received by audiences and critics, were not successful financially, but Diaghilev acquired new patrons and admirers. The society celebrity and 'devourer of geniuses', pianist Misia Sert, went to every performance of the subsequent 'Russian Seasons' and bought up all the unsold tickets to distribute to friends. Her salon in Paris was a favourite haunt of bohemian artists. Misia was Diaghilev's devoted friend to the end of his days.

The concept of the first opera and ballet season in 1909 was truly grandiose: four ballets and the opera *Ivan the Terrible* (*The Maid of Pskov*). Diaghilev had counted on the customary subsidy from the imperial court, but the sudden death of his patron

Grand Prince Vladimir Alexandrovich, the Kshesinskaya scandal, the displeasure of the Imperial Theatres Management Board and Nicholas II's inclination to alter his decision deprived Diaghilev of the Hermitage Theatre for rehearsals and scenery just three days after the emperor's approval of the performances in Paris. And in spring 1909 the emperor left Diaghilev's enterprise totally without state support.

However, Diaghilev had no thoughts of capitulation and enlisted the support of two beautiful Parisiennes — Misia Sert and Countess de Greffulhe. He ran the first season brilliantly, proving himself a talented producer who understood the demands of the European theatrical market.

Despite the resounding success with audiences, Diaghilev's debt to his partner, the well-known French impresario Gabriel Astruc, amounted to the fantastic sum of 85,000 francs. Diaghilev showed incredible resourcefulness in this difficult situation: he agreed a new season with the Grand Opera, bypassing Astruc, then, having paid his debt to the impresario who had been citing him for libel and renewing their partnership, he eschewed expensive opera productions and concentrated on ballets. Some financial assistance came from Russia: from Savva Morozov, Mikhail Kalashnikov, Baron Dmitry Ginzburg and Nikolay Bezobrazov.

Diaghilev's creative audacity and charm was particularly appreciated by female members of the European aristocracy. He was helped by Countesses Chevinier and Béarn and the Marquise de Tanay. Diaghilev's faithful guardian angel was Duchess Edmond de Polignac, daughter of the 'sewing machine king' Isaac Singer and owner of a music salon in Paris. She not only provided him with money, but also used her family's connections with the royal family of Monaco to come to an agreement for the 'Russian Ballet' to be based there and to perform regularly at the Monte Carlo Theatre. In England the patron of the 'Russian Seasons' was Lady Ripon, the wife of one of Covent Garden's wealthy trustees.

Page 41:
Premiere of the play 'Diaghilev.
The Last Days' at the 'Diaghilev P. S.'
Festival in the Sheremetyev Palace.
Misia Sert — Polina Osetinskaya,
Sergey Diaghilev — Mikhail Nikolayev.
Scriptwriter and director Roman Gabria.

Philanthropists

During the First World War, an unusual patron of the company was King Alfonso XIII of Spain, a great lover of ballet. In those years neutral Spain became the centre of international bohemia. The company frequently toured cities in Spain. According to the recollections of contemporaries, the king once asked Diaghilev: 'You don't conduct the orchestra, don't play a musical instrument, don't paint scenery and don't dance. So what do you do here?' Diaghilev is said to have replied: 'You and I are similar, Your Majesty! I also do nothing. But nothing can be done without me.'

That is how he lived: he amazed audiences and conversed with kings, but never became rich. From his wardrobe we have only two suits and a 'luxury' fur coat; Misia Sert and Coco Chanel paid for his funeral...

And today, a hundred years later, when we were organizing the international exhibition devoted to Diaghilev, we felt that the magic of this extraordinary man enabled us to enlist the support of enlightened patrons and the state. The project was supported ideologically and financially by friends of the Theatre Museum — the art collector Nina Lobanova-Rostovskaya, one of the first to popularize the phenomenon of Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes in the Soviet Union, Sjeng Scheijen, author of the book 'Russian Seasons Forever', Viktoriya Shamlikashvili, Tatiana Nikitina, Pavel Rosso, Julia Fortunata, Paola Cioni and Larisa Zerkova. The project was financed by the Russian Federation Ministry of Culture, the Russian Cultural Foundation and the St. Petersburg Cultural Committee, the VTB Bank, the Nor-nickel company, the Delzell Charitable Foundation, the Mikhail Bazhenov Foundation, the Italian Cultural Institute in St. Petersburg, the French Embassy and French Institute in Russia, the Sennheiser company and the Indigo Hotel. The museum expresses its profound gratitude to all of them who assembled 'in Diaghilev's circle'.



The Theory of 47 Strings

A LITTLE HARPIST FROM A MAGAZINE COVER BECAME A GREAT ARTIST

Arkady SOSNOV. Photos: Ivan Barra, Bella Rabinovich, Gogol Centre Press Office, 'Leonid Art', Alexander Boldachev's personal archive



The cover of the first issue of 'Maecenas, Patron of Arts and Sciences' (2005), the predecessor of our almanac, features a little boy from St. Petersburg sitting at a harp next to an elderly Italian against the background of Tiepolo's painting 'Maecenas Presenting the Liberal Arts to Emperor Augustus.' The composition is symbolic. Victor Salvi's company makes the best harps in the world. The Italian patron gave one of them to the talented youngster Sasha Boldachev. We told his story in that same issue: the first and, at that time, the only boy harpist in the Conservatory's special secondary school, who had composed his first piece — 'The Hurricane and the House' — at the age of six. A few years later he had won first prize at the Valery Gavrilin Young Composers Competition for his compositions for harp. A rare hobby for a teenager!

This exquisite and expensive instrument was decidedly not in harmony with the atmosphere of those years. Alexander's first harp

was cobbled together by a master at the Conservatory from the remains of Soviet harps, since the Lunacharsky musical instrument factory had perished in the market economy. There was an acute shortage of harps, but after the publication of the magazine the charitable foundation of its publisher Alexey Kalinichenko helped Sasha to go to the World Harp Congress in Dublin, where he performed his own compositions on the instrument given to him by Victor Salvi.

I next met Boldachev in the autumn of 2009 and in dramatic circumstances. After the result of the 'Golden Harp' competition was announced, I saw the winner — the Chinese girl Cheng — sobbing and the well-known harpist Anna Makarova, a member of the jury, trying in vain to comfort her. It turned out that the reason for her tears was jealousy: the board of the 'Russian Harp' Foundation had decided to present just such a beautiful instrument that

Philanthropists

she had been given to the another girl who had shared second place with Boldachev. But there were not enough of these valuable prizes for him. I sought out Artyom Nikitin, owner of the 'Selena of Harps' factory in Moscow, called Sasha to him, then approached the chairman of the jury Maxim Shostakovich, who unexpectedly went down on his knees before the businessman: 'Give the young man a harp!'

Artyom promised to remedy the injustice by reserving a harp from the next batch for Sasha. The young man had no visiting card, so I handed him a notepad: 'Write down your address quickly!' He wrote down his mother's address and said: 'There she is now, come and meet her'. His mother Irina Sharapova, Honoured Artist of Russia and a Professor at the Conservatory, made a slight bow and modestly moved away to one side, saying: 'Sasha's only shortcoming is that his mother makes no efforts on his behalf'. I said: 'But for the sake your son, whose principal teacher is you, Maxim Shostakovich went down on his knees!'

We met again two years ago, when Alexander Boldachev, now a star harpist (winner of international competitions, guest soloist at the Bolshoi Theatre, official artist of Salvi Harps, founder of the Zurich Festival and World Harp Day) was performing at the Ambassador Hotel in St. Petersburg. We recalled the past. It turned out that he was not given a harp after the competition in 2009, but had maintained friendly relations with the Salvi family for all those years. Victor died in 2015, but his son is continuing his father's business, making several thousand first-class harps a year. And in the best traditions of patronage he is supporting his Russian protégé.

In the concert at the Ambassador Hotel Alexander not only played but also talked enthusiastically about the harp. I managed to write down some of what he said:

'A vibrating string is, perhaps, the source of the most beautiful sounds on Earth — an eternal companion of mankind. Since the

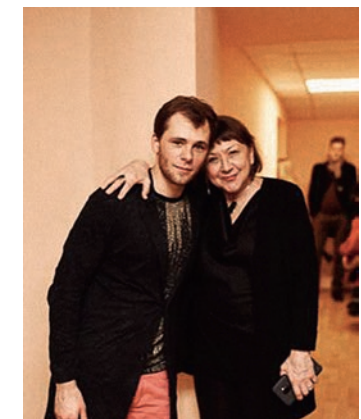


time of the first hunting bow, which was the primogenitor of the harp, numerous amazing stringed instruments have appeared. Even our vocal cords are the strings with which we can speak and sing. Vibrations even form the basis of one of the concepts of the universe — the theory of strings... The modern 47-string harp is the most modern product of an evolution that has taken tens of thousands of years. You can play the music of Chopin and Rachmaninov on it, but also the songs of Nirvana or the Scorpions, though not everyone guesses it, and I am doing all I can to increase the harp's popularity in the 21st century. I want it to sound as natural as it did in palaces and estates in the 18th century, so that it will find a response in people's hearts and teach them to appreciate art without any obtrusive stereotypes, not serving as a reflection of life's problems and animal instincts'

After that, Alexander and I discussed the progress of his journey 'per ardua ad astra' several times, both online and offline. He paid tribute to genuine patrons, whose only condition is 'Create the

Alexander Boldachev,
harpist-innovator.

With his mother. 2018.





With Catherine Michel, 2004.

With Marco Salvi and Janet Harrell, Director of Lyon & Healy Harps, after Alexander's debut concert at Carnegie Hall on 21 January 2020, his thirtieth birthday.



future and I will help' and who regard their support as participation in art. He was lucky to catch the wave of growing activity by musical patron-artists. Concert projects, stipends and grants from Yury Temirkanov, Valery Gergiev, Sergey Roldugin, Vladimir Spivakov, Irina Nikitina and other masters aroused zeal in young people and their foundations encouraged them with journeys to master classes and competitions.

After every foreign tour Alexander was tempted with offers to study in Oslo, Berlin or New York, but the most real of them was Victor Salvi, who not only gave Boldachev an instrument but also sent him for consultations with the celebrated harpist Catherine Michel in Paris. After several years of private lessons with her, Alexander was accepted into her class at the Zurich Academy of Music without taking an examination. Was Catherine aware that just the deposit necessary to obtain a student visa for Switzerland was equivalent to two years' salary for Sasha's parents? However, the decision had been made. And although for the first six months, until patrons again came on the scene, the young man found it hard, going hungry in the world's most expensive city, it was a fruitful period in the 'sanatorium country'.

However, as Alexander informed me, another problem arose. Without difficulties and vicissitudes, the young musician was experiencing gulfs of frustration. Prosperous Switzerland, devoid of contradictions, was stifling his inspiration. He should have gone there in a quiet stage of his career, when the beautiful landscapes with lakes and mountain peaks would have suited him better. Talent, alas, does not always entail strength of spirit and go-getting qualities. A physically well-nourished individual can be deprived of the most important thing — creative hunger.

Everything changed in 2015 — a move to Moscow with its ebullient atmosphere, the start of work at the Bolshoi Theatre, the strengthening of relations with Salvi Harps, support for his projects in Paris from the Banque Populaire Foundation, the development of



Philanthropists

the instrument in various spheres and genres. Thanks to his projects with Kirill Serebrennikov, the harp was heard on the stage of the Gogol Centre. Evgenia Krivitskaya, editor-in-chief of the magazine 'Musical Life', put works by Boldachev on the stage of the Conservatory Great Hall. Andrey Bartenev used the harp in Slava Polunin's creative laboratory and in the 'Burning Man' festival project by the arts patron and venture investor Dmitry Volkov. Chuplan Khamatova staged an unconventional production of *Orfeo* with harp and saxophone (Veronika Kozhukharova), and the Moscow Department of Culture gave Alexander the opportunity to conduct a five-hour session of harp playing as part of 'Arts Night'. Today, with the new Salvi Delta electronic harp made from carbon fibre, he is preparing for the recording of a unique disc in the classical crossover genre. Other plans include setting up a 'Theory of Strings' agency, a tour of Russia...

In the last five years Boldachev has visited thirty countries giving concerts and master classes, has recorded numerous albums and has instigated the Zurich Harp Festival, to which he invited young stipendiaries of the Spivakov Foundation — he himself was one of them twenty years ago. He gives free lectures and invests in charity projects — according to our almanac's classification he is a typical 'creative patron'.

During the pandemic, with the support of harp manufacturers in Italy, France, Germany, the USA and Japan, Alexander initiated World Harp Day, the aim being for harpists to join forces to promote the instrument in the musical arena. Over a hundred performers from fifty countries took part in the first event. The next one will be held during the 2021–2022 season in Russia's million-plus cities. The main venue on 20.10.2021 will be St. Petersburg.

'Philanthropy', he wrote to me, 'is part of the continual work on the development of the instrument, which in turn urges people to reflect on the boundaries of art. That leads to projects which embellish one's vision of the world: for example, the creation of a market



for 3D copies of art objects in the form of artefacts for users' personal digital galleries. They prove yet again that I can reach any viewer with my harp, in the real or virtual world. Apart from that, it is a way of repaying the debt to my patrons'.

Behind the boy harpist and the venerable harp master on the magazine cover is a reproduction of Giovanni Tiepolo's masterpiece of 1743 in the Hermitage. The painting shows the principal Roman sponsor presenting the emperor with allegories of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. The boy, now an accomplished harpist, is adding the missing link, symbolizing Music. It is a beautiful story of patronage: initially the musician was helped by the head of a family company, then, as if by inheritance, by his son.

'Every helping hand that is offered unites people like family ties', says Alexander. 'Together we are proving that philanthropy is an art'.

With Veronika Kozhukharova
and the Salvi Delta electronic harp. 2019.

Page 44:
Alexander Boldachev on stage
at the Gogol Centre.

Always be Happy!

AN INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION OFFERS ITS VIEW ON LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS

Anastasia CHERTUNINA. Photos: participants in the 'Glances' competition



Almira Shagalina from Kazan is a mother of children with developmental difficulties. She tries to ensure that every day is full of bright moments for her family. For example, on the way to the seaside in their car the family stopped now and again to rest and stretch their legs, always choosing the most picturesque spots. Seeing a field of sunflowers in bloom, they decided to take a few photographs as a memento. Almira admits that it was not too easy to drag the children to the sunflowers! But her efforts were not in vain: the photograph 'Always be Happy' was placed third in the 2020 'Glances' competition.

The idea for the photography competition was conceived by specialists at the St. Petersburg State Association of Public Unions of Parents of Disabled Children (GAOORDI) in 2006. They suggested to volunteers, social workers and teachers that they photograph the children in their care and share the most successful results. Parents

Philanthropists

of children with disabilities and disabled people themselves wanted to compete for the prizes. The first competitions were fairly small: only about thirty people, as a rule, from the close circle of the subjects. The number of entrants increased year by year, and among the works submitted there were already some by professional photographers. The subjects featured were the victories, everyday problems, achievements, disappointments and pure emotions of people with disabilities. The competition's principal aim is to dispel the myth that these people are helpless and that their days are uniformly grey. Like everybody else, they raise families, bring up children, conquer mountain peaks and play sport!

Here is another story. Pavel has been blind from birth. His golden retriever Happy helps him find his way around his flat, walk in the park and go shopping. The dog is the young man's faithful friend, prepared to show his devotion and unconditional love at any moment. Pavel has a hobby — he loves knitting. He can spend hours bringing his ideas to fruition, turning fluffy yarn into warm, comfortable items. During this time Happy sits next to Pavel with his head in his master's lap; apart from anything else, it is a good excuse to laze on the sofa. The photograph by Darya Romanova from Koryazhma entered for the 2020 competition is actually called 'Best Friends'.

Each year the competition attracts around a thousand entries from regions of Russia and foreign countries and now has a fund of over 7,000 photographs. The best of them are included in exhibitions entitled 'Glances. Life without Limits'. In various years the exhibitions (supported by the city administration, sponsors and special partners) have been staged in various venues in St. Petersburg — in libraries, museums, large hotels, shopping centres, at Vitebsk Station, at Pulkovo Airport and at Peter and Paul Fortress.

'These photographs have a unique value', says Margarita Urmancheeva, President of GAOORDI. 'They tell the unique life stories of disabled people, honestly and without embellishment, through the medium of one of the most expressive types of art — photography.'



Some people prefer to take black-and-white photographs, others add brightness and colour with the aid of computer graphics. Some like staged photos, while others prefer spontaneous subjects. We give every photograph our careful consideration.'

...Twelve years ago, the life of the subject of this photograph was divided into 'before' and 'after' a terrorist attack: during an explosion in a bus the man suffered serious injuries — over a hundred splinters entered his body. His leg was damaged most of all. His treatment and rehabilitation took a year. He had to sell everything in his home to pay for the treatment, but it was still not possible to save his leg. After the amputation, he found work cleaning the toilets in a department store, in order to at least provide for his family. However, the new director did not like the fact that he had a disabled person in his workforce... The man's spirit proved to be much stronger than his body — he has managed to open his own brickworks. The work is done exclusively by hand, and the whole family is involved. Selling bricks literally one by one, the man managed to save enough money for a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. So it was not quite a 'Sisyphean Labour' (that is what Didor Sadulloev from Dushanbe called his entry for the 2019 competition).

'Best Friends'. Darya Romanova. Koryazhma. 2020.

Page 46:
'Always be Happy'. Almira Shagalina. Kazan. 2020.

The beginning of the receipt of applications for 'Glances — 2021', the 15th anniversary photography competition, will be announced in October. News of the project can be followed on the official website Sights.su.

The 'Russian Maecenas' almanac is the information partner of the 'Glances' photography competition.

Philanthropists



'Masha and Suvorov'. Olga Shoot. Moscow. 2020. The characters in this still are Masha Gutova, a girl with spinal muscular atrophy, and Alexander Suvorov, Doctor of Psychology and Full Member of the International Academy of Informatization, who is registered as disabled in sight and hearing.

'Favourite Book'. Oleg Konstantinov. Maykop, Adygea. 2020. The name of the woman in the photograph is Anna. She is registered as blind, and has sung in churches most of her life. She is seen sitting on the foundation of her house and reading a book in braille. This photograph was included in twelve international exhibitions in eight countries. It has now won an honourable second place in the 'Glances' competition.



The 'Glances — 2020' competition attracted a record number of entries: about 800 photographs by nearly 400 people from various parts of the world. In addition, the programme of the project 'Everyone's View is Important', run by GAOORDI with the support of the St. Petersburg Cultural Committee, was supplemented by cultural-educational promotions. These included seven exhibitions, a series of educational webinars and trips to photographic shops and photographic museums in the Northern Capital. The competition's website has been completely updated and has become more convenient to use. Competitors submitted their applications in electronic form and the members of the jury rated the photographs in their personal account...

Yura and Vova are twin brothers born four minutes apart. As is usual for brothers, they are great friends, like to play together, read books and get up to all kinds of mischief. Yura has Down's syndrome, which does not prevent him from finding a common language with other children. The brothers' photograph for the competition was taken just a day before the closing date for entries. 'They jumped into the last carriage!', said their mother about the spontaneous but very heartfelt session. The photograph 'Twins' by Natalia Yurenka from St. Petersburg was awarded a special prize and was included in the exhibition of the best works of 2020. More valuable than that, though, is the fact that it is in the family album, and many years later those carefree boys with mischievous eyes will look out on those same boys who will then be adults.

'Over the years the competition has grown from a small district event into a project of international stature', says Anastasia Pilkevich, the competition's curator. 'Photographs are sent to us from all over Russia — from Kaliningrad to Chukotka. Foreign photographers also submit their works. We are sincerely glad that such an important subject is finding a response in the hearts of a growing number of people and is even occupying its niche in photographic art'. Anastasia invites all-comers to support the competition as photographer or subject, patron or partner.