Russian Language and Literature Week in Britain

London, 14 - 20 April 2008

ACADEMIA ROSSICA

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ACADEMIA ROSSICA

Academia Rossica was founded in London in 2000 with the aim of supporting and developing cultural links between Russia and the West. In collaboration with the leading cultural institutions of Russia, Europe and America, the foundation strives to present the best of Russian culture to the British and American public and to promote deeper understanding of Russian culture abroad. Academia Rossica is a non-profit organization, and a UK registered charity.

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The first ever Russian Language and Literature Week in the UK
London 14 - 20 April 2008

For the first time British publishers and audiences alike had the opportunity to make the acquaintance of leading Russian literati, the laureates of Russian literary prizes, publishers and literary critics.

The week incorporated the first ever Russian Publishers' Stand at the London Book Fair, showcasing leading publishing houses from Moscow and St Petersburg.

Russian Language and Literature week represented an outstanding event in the London cultural scene. The great interest in the events on the part both of representatives of the publishing business and the British reading public demonstrated the existence of all of the necessary conditions for an extension of the long-standing love of Russian classics, into new and deep interest in Russian poetry and prose of the 21st century.

The organisers of the Russian Language and Literature Week's main aims were as follows:

- To draw attention to Russian language and contemporary literature on the world cultural stage, and particularly in the English-speaking world
- To present Russian publishers at one of the most important intellectual forums worldwide, the London Book Fair
- To facilitate the integration of Russian publishers into the international book market
- To consolidate the Russian community in Britain and encourage unity in the Russian cultural community at home and abroad

Russian stand at the LBF

Press conference at the LBF: Dm. Bykov and V. Grigoriev

Discussions at the Russian stand at the LBF

GUESTS AND SPEAKERS

The following leading Russian literati were among the week's Russian participants:

Vladimir Grigoriev Publisher, founder of the publishing house 'Vagrius', Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications, Moscow

Dmitry Bykov Writer, journalist, winner of the 'Big Book Prize', and the "National Bestseller" prize

Alexander Ilichevsky Author, poet, winner of the 2007 'Russian Booker Prize', and editor of the 'Freedom' (Svoboda) radio station

Lev Rubinstein Author, poet, winner of the Andrei Bely Prize

Olga Slavnikova Author, winner of the 2006 'Russian Booker Prize', founder of the 'Debut Prize'

Alexander Arkhangelsky Author, journalist, political commentator, host of the television programme 'At the same time' (Tem Vremenem)

Nikolai Alexandrov Author, literary critic, host of the television programme 'Different Readings' (Raznochteniya)

Natalya Ivanova Literary critic, deputy editor of the journal 'Znamya'

Natalya Perova Publisher, translator, founder of the 'Glas'

Irina Prokhorova Cultural historian, editor-in-chief of the 'New Literary Review' (Novoe Knizhnoe Obozrenie) publishing house

Alexander Gavrilov Literary critic, editor-in-chief of newspaper 'Book Review' (Knizhnoe Obozrenie), founder of the Moscow Book Festival

Vladimir Gusev Director of the State Russian Museum

The British side was represented by leading Russia specialists – the esteemed academics and authors Norman Stone, Orlando Figes, Dominic Lieven, Anatol Lieven, James Meek and Bridget Kendall. British-based Russian literary figures, author and journalist Zinovy Zinik and critic Valentina Polukhina also participated in discussions.

Writer Olga Slavnikova

Vladimir Grigoriev of the Russian Federal Agency for Press and Susanna Nicklin of British Council

Writer and TV presenter Alexander Arkhangelsky

BOOKS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Language and Literature week was timed to coincide with the London Book Fair, one of the most authoritative in the world.

Academia Rossica organised the first ever Russian Publishers' stand at the LBF, BOOKS FROM RUSSIA, presenting books and publishing projects from more than 20 leading Moscow and Petersburg publishing houses. For the first time Russians were fully-fledged participants in one of the main international publishing and intellectual forums in Great Britain.

Russian Language and Literature Week began with the official opening of the Russian publishers' stand by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Great Britain, HE Mr Yury Fedotov.

Within the framework of the London Book Fair, Academia Rossica organised a programme of high profile intellectual discussions and seminars.

Of great interest to British publishers at the Fair were the seminars on the Russian book market, the presentation of the Rossica Translation Prize – awarded for literary translation from Russian into English – as well as the presentation of Academia Rossica's anthology of contemporary Russian prose and poetry in English translation, 'The Ties of Blood'.

The participation of Russian publishing houses in the London Book Fair made possible the establishment of promising contacts between Russian and international intellectuals, the integration of Russian publishers and writers into the international literary community, and an increased presence for contemporary Russian literature on the British book market.

The complete programme of Russian Language and Literature Week is attached.

BOOK FROM RUSSIA – Russian stand at the London Book Fair

Writers Dmitry Bykov and Maria Galina present books

Bridget Kendall, BBC

Public Talks and Events Programme

Russian Evening at the Royal Society of Literature

Russian evening at the RSL on the 14th April was a great success. The evening was dedicated both to the start of Russian Language and Literature Week and to the fifty year anniversary of the first English translation of Boris Pasternak's novel 'Doctor Zhivago'. Dmitry Bykov, one of the most prominent members of the Russian literary scene and author of the definitive biography of Boris Pasternak, and eminent British literary figures and slavists Angela Livingstone and Elaine Feinstein discussed Pasternak's work and his influence on English literature.

Evenings with Russian Writers at Waterstone's Piccadilly

Over the week Russian authors met British readers and spoke in open discussions of contemporary Russian literature at Waterstone's Piccadilly. Prominent British writers and winners of literary prizes such as James Meek and Orlando Figes also participated in debates.
The shop window and the shelves of Waterstone's Piccadilly featured displays of Russian books published in Great Britain.

The complete programme of Russian Language and Literature Week is attached.

Natalia Ivanova's talk at Waterstones Piccadilly

At a Russian evening at Waterstones Piccadilly

Discussion at the Russian stand at the LBF

Forum of Russian Language and Literature Teachers

On 17th April 2008 Russian-language teachers convened at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), UCL.

Russian-language teachers from Britain's leading universities and schools contributed to the work of the forum, along with representatives of the British Council and the British Ministry of Education.

Participants discussed problems in teaching Russian in the UK, and planned methods of broadening the popularity of the Russian language in British schools and universities, as well as ways to improve the level of qualification of both teachers and students.

The forum's participants emphasised the importance of consolidating efforts to achieve these goals, as well as the need to create a unified centre of information and coordination.

Contributors also stressed the importance of teaching Russian language as a constituent of Russian culture, and likewise the necessity of establishing information resources on Russian culture that can be used by teachers of Russian at schools and universities.

As a result of the discussions that took place, a strategic document is being developed proposing a programme of measures for the development Russian-language teaching, literature and culture in Great Britain.

Participants of the Russian Language Teachers' Forum

Zinivy Zinik and Alexander Gavrilov

Publisher Natalia Perova

Russian Literary Classics on Screen

Russian Language and Literature Week was topped off by the screening of films by the greatest Soviet cinematic masters, adapting the Russian literary classics:

- Crime and Punishment
- War and Peace
- Cruel Romance

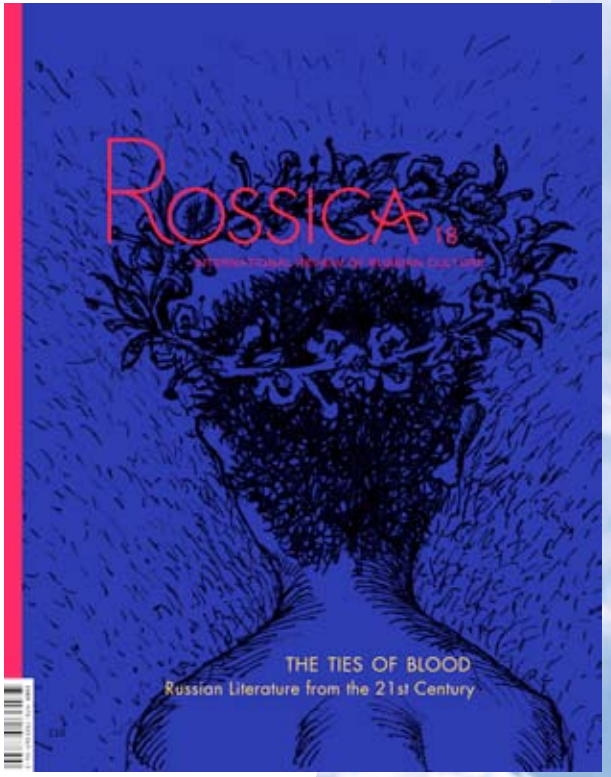
The films were shown in Russian with English subtitles at the Apollo West End Cinema, at which in September 2007 Academia Rossica had held with great success the first Russian Film Festival.

Publication of the Anthology of Contemporary Russian Writing
The Ties of Blood

The circle of contemporary Russian writers whose works are available in English is extremely limited. It includes authors such as Victor Pelevin, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, and Boris Akunin, whose work represents only one, although significant, part of contemporary Russian Literature. The release of a special edition of the Rossica journal, The Ties of Blood: Russian Literature From the 21st Century, offers English-language readers and publishers the opportunity to make the acquaintance of other authors and poets who have contributed to the formation of contemporary Russian literature, and without knowing whose work it would be impossible to arrive at a complete picture of Russia's literary scene today.

Practically unknown outside Russia, these writers have received broad recognition at home and are the laureates of prestigious Russian literary prizes, such as the 'Russian Booker Prize', the 'Big Book Prize' and the 'National Bestseller' prize.

Among the works included are the short stories of Dmitry Novikov, Herman Sadulaev and Alexander Ilichevsky, as well as extracts from the novels of Alexei Ivanov, Dina Rubina, Dmitry Bykov, Alexei Slapovsky and many others.

At the request of Academia Rossica, Oxford professor Oliver Ready selected and edited the works in the anthology. This publication represents only the first of what will be a series of anthologies of contemporary Russian literature realised by Academia Rossica.

The publication is illustrated by the well-known Moscow artist Dmitry Tsvetkov.