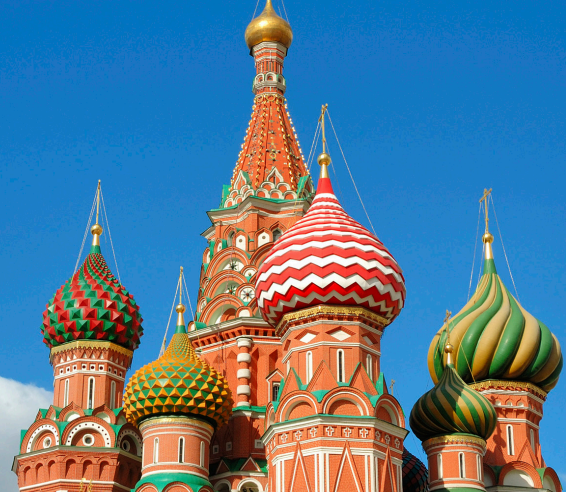


REESNews



Fall 2013 • Volume 3

A Letter from the Editor

BY IAN MACMILLEN, OCREECAS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

GREETINGS TO ALUMNI AND FRIENDS of Russian and Russian and East European Studies (REES) at Oberlin College. The 2013–14 academic year was an eventful one for us, with guest speakers visiting, a continuation of the artist-residency series, many student and faculty achievements, and the creation of our first teaching position (a postdoctoral fellowship) solely within REES and the Oberlin Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies.

Since the distribution of our last newsletter, and through Tom Newlin's research on the history of Winter Term Intensive Russian (*see article below*), we have heard from many of you about your own activities. We welcome submissions of alumni news for our next issue (you can send it to imacmill@oberlin.edu), scheduled for the spring of 2014.

We hope to hear from you soon!

Celebrating 40 Years of Winter Term Intensive Russian at Oberlin

On February 15 the Russian department celebrated 40 Years of Winter Term Intensive Russian at Oberlin.

Current faculty members, students, alumni, and guests, including President Marvin Krislov, gathered in Peters Hall for drinks, Russian food, and remarks by Edith W. Clowes '73, the first student instructor of Winter Term Russian. The occasion also served as an opportunity for Professor Tom Newlin and the Russian department to reach out to alumni of Russian Winter Term and to Russian majors; we aim to have their reflections on the course available on the department's website this summer.

The following reflections are excerpted from oral presentations given on February 15—Tom Newlin's introduction of Edith Clowes and her subsequent speech about her experiences learning and teaching Russian at Oberlin:

Tom Newlin

Associate Professor of Russian:

I'd like to say a few words about how this event came about, and about why four-plus decades of Winter Term Russian is something to really cheer about. I'll then turn the floor over to Edith Clowes, Class of 1973, who will also make some remarks.

A couple of years back, in talking with Edith, I was surprised to learn that she was the person who started Winter Term Russian in the early '70s as a student here. I remember being impressed—it

*hadn't occurred to me before then that there was a whole history of WT Russian (and WT at Oberlin in general), and I stored away this new knowledge in the back of my mind as another interesting nugget of information. Then last spring, when Edie was back here to give a talk in connection with the publication of her latest book, *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geography and Post-Soviet Identity* (Cornell, 2011), it suddenly sunk in for me that she had graduated from Oberlin in 1973—four decades ago—and I realized that we must be fast approaching the 40th anniversary of WT Intensive Russian as well. I decided that we definitely needed to mark and celebrate this somehow.*

Now here I have to 'fess up about something: purely for propaganda purposes, I have had to tweak the truth very slightly in advertising this event. I assumed—and Edie initially concurred—that she had taught that first Russian intensive class as a senior, that is, in January 1973. But we figured out that we were wrong about this, and that Edie was in fact more of a wunderkind than she cared to remember. She somehow managed to cover two years of Russian her first year here, then covered third-year Russian over the summer, and was already a fourth-year Russian student by her sophomore year. It was in that year, January of 1971, rather than January of 1973, that she dreamed up the idea of Winter Term Intensive Russian. (This was just two years after the introduction of winter term at Oberlin in 1969.) So, technically speaking, we are

continued on page 2

Celebrating 40 Years of Winter Term, cont.

celebrating the 42nd anniversary of WT Russian—not a neat, round number like 40, I realize, but all the more impressive: not just a long time in biblical terms, but more than a long time! Or if you prefer you can look at it through a Russian absurdist lens: we are simply celebrating the 40th anniversary on the 42nd anniversary! There is an unintended but appropriate and serendipitous Russian logic to this!

So why has WT Russian been so important?

For one: This small class may in fact have been the very first instance in which the first semester of a foreign language was offered in condensed form over winter term at Oberlin. It has become a model widely used by many language departments (Russian and German now; also Greek and Latin; in the '70s there was French, Spanish, and Italian). We have engaged in friendly competition with German for enrollments; they always win, but we have the best posters! I will freely admit: I am going out on a limb here, as I have not been able to find any archival confirmation of this. But lacking confirmation one way or another, we will blithely go ahead and stake our claim!

Second: We have offered Winter Term Intensive Russian almost every year ever since 1971. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that it has been a vital part of the Russian department's curriculum. Many of our students (including many of our best students, and many of our majors) start out in Winter Term Russian. Many students who started Russian during WT have gone on to distinguished careers in the field: there are numerous Oberlin WT alumni working as professors of Russian, Russian history, and other Russia-related disciplines at colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad. There are others working in journalism, government (state department/foreign service), and the sciences who are also putting the knowledge of Russian that they acquired here at Oberlin to daily use.



Left to right: Will Watkins '15, Edith Clowes '73, lecturer in Russian Maia Solovieva, and Brian Miller '71

Edith Clowes '73 Brown-Forman Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Virginia:

The 40th anniversary of the start of the intensive Russian course during winter term is a great opportunity to reminisce about all the things that Oberlin has meant to me. The most important of those was that during my college years I found my own voice.

Arriving in Oberlin, I felt speechless. I was just one in a crowd of smart, articulate, ambitious students—Jessica Pinkus and Diane Yu were the bright girls on our first-floor hall in Fairchild. And there was sharply ironic, spellbinding Suzanne Somers from working-class Cleveland, who already spoke what seemed like perfect Russian and left notes on people's doors in beautifully written Russian script. Her first year, Suzanne dreamed and prepared for a semester in the Soviet Union, during which, as it turned out, she would deliver messages and documents to would-be Jewish emigrants. And be followed by the police. And be disabused of every last romantic thought she had about Russians and the Soviet Union.

Trying to catch up with her, I raced through three years of Russian in one year and a summer...and moved into Russian house, Allencroft—a small, absorbing world of its own on the southern edge of

campus. Allencroft became my world. Here I found my community—the hilarious pranksters Steve Kelly and Brian Miller, the fabulous cook Susan Uebelohde, the unicyclist John “Pushkin” Peck from Moscow, Idaho, Jane Hradek from Czech Chicago with her beautiful voice, Bev McCoy who played the violin and treated us to a continual stream of Russian/English puns à la Nabokov, Nancy Tittler with her perfect memory for detail, and Stephen White, just out of the armed services, with his elegant Russian. We entertained Russian poets before they were famous, like Joseph Brodsky before he was Nobel laureate “Joseph Brodsky.” Brodsky sat in my room, and we listened to Mozart horn and flute sonatas. Our beloved Anna Sergeevna, a warmhearted, chain-smoking émigré, ran Allencroft and played with us too many card games to count. She was the soul of Russian House. She listened to our efforts at Russian conversation and made us read aloud to her. From her we learned Russian by osmosis—and we all knew our card “masti,” our card suits. She even found time to take me horseback riding in Cleveland—because her husband worked at a stable near Rocky River. And that was close to the end of my life as a young horse rider...The Russian world had pushed the horse world into the deep background.

I've always believed that learning another language—if you do it intensely

continued on page 8

New OCREECAS Postdoctoral Fellow Ian MacMillen

Ian MacMillen began working for OCREECAS in the fall of 2012 as its first postdoctoral fellow, with a joint appointment as visiting assistant professor in Russian and East European studies. An ethnomusicologist specializing in folk and popular musics of Southeastern Europe and with additional interests in the Czech avant-garde and Soviet filmscoring, MacMillen received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 2012. Previously, he taught there and at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. His work for OCREECAS/REES this year included editing the REES newsletters, redesigning and updating the OCREECAS website, creating and maintaining OCREECAS's online calendar, OCREECAS committee work, and programming the third annual OCREECAS Artist-in-



Residence (a discussion, performance, and master class by the Šarena Tamburitza Orchestra; see page 4 for more information).

MacMillen also taught two new REES courses: Rockin' the Bloc: From Doo-Wop to Punk Rock in Communist Eastern Europe (fall 2012) and Music and Revolution in Postsocialist Eurasia (spring 2013). The latter course has a fieldwork component for which the class partnered with the nearby Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church to document ethnographically the role of music in the traditions and adaptations of the church both before and after 1989. MacMillen also offered a spring Balkan Ensemble course in the conservatory for a third time and taught Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian to Oberlin students in a weekly language-table setting through the Virtual Language Table program of Oberlin's Cooper International Learning Center. He begins the second year of his postdoctoral fellowship in the fall of 2013, when he will introduce a third course: Roma and "Gypsies" in the Musical Imagination.

continued on page 4

Old Believer Miniatures on View for the First Time at Oberlin College's Allen Memorial Art Museum

February marked the opening of the exhibition *Illuminating Faith in the Russian Old Believer Tradition*, curated by Liliana Milkova, curator of academic programs at the Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM). On view at the AMAM through the end of June, the exhibition features late 18th, early 19th-century manuscript illuminations that originate in the religious practices of the Old Believers, an extant Christian faction that separated from the Russian Orthodox Church in reaction to the liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon in the 1650s. The exhibition also includes two complete manuscript volumes on loan from Ohio State University. The loans were facilitated by Predrag Matejic '74, curator of the Hilandar Research Library and director of the Resource Center for Medieval Studies at Ohio State.

With research help from recent Oberlin graduate and former OCREECAS grant recipient Anna Arays '10, Milkova was able to update the Russian miniatures' attribution, which for five decades had identified them as part of a Bible in the official Russian church from the time of Peter the Great. Milkova's findings, however, suggest that the leaves date to the late 18th and early 19th centuries and come from Old Believer liturgical books, which, due to the Old Believers' dissenting views, were typically disseminated secretly, as well as copied and illustrated by hand as the Old Believers rarely had access to printing presses.

Illuminating Faith in the Russian Old Believer Tradition has enjoyed interest from academic and general audiences alike. Milkova conducted guided tours for clergy and parishioners



Elena Polyakova with students from Intermediate Russian visiting the exhibition Illuminating Faith in the Russian Old Believer Tradition at the Allen Memorial Art Museum

from the Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church in Lorain, faculty members in Oberlin College's Visual Arts and Literature Colloquium, and courses in the Russian department and the Russian and East European Studies Program. Russian Fulbright Fellow and foreign language teaching assistant Elena Polyakova took students in the intermediate Russian course to see the exhibition and discuss the use and symbolism of colors in religious painting, as well as to practice key words and expressions in the Russian language.

Artist Residency: The Šarena Tamburitza Orchestra

On April 5 and 10, 2013, OCREECAS welcomed the Šarena Tamburitza Orchestra of Cleveland as its third annual artists-in-residence. Šarena (www.sarenaorchestra.com), known as one of the top ensembles performing on the traditional string instrument *tambura* and one of only very few professional female bands of this type, plays a rich variety of traditional and popular music from Croatia, Serbia, and other parts of southeastern Europe.

The ensemble is noted for combining members of Croatian and Serbian descent and for their apolitical approach to their repertoire and performances. The residency began with a public discussion over dinner, of these and related issues, among the band and Oberlin students, faculty, and staff. Visiting Assistant Professor in REES Ian MacMillen and students in his class *Music and Revolution in Postsocialist Eurasia* led the discussion.

Later that evening, Šarena performed a concert of traditional and neo-traditional *tambura* music. The ensemble's lineup comprises Nisi Pozderac on upright bass and *berda* (bass *tambura*), Denise Mulec on *bugarija* (rhythm/harmony *tambura*), Marci Coleff on first *brač* (melody *tambura*), and Tamburitza Association of America Hall of Fame Inductee Mickey Arangelovich on second *brač*. Students, faculty, staff, and community members attended the concert, and the majority stood up to participate in traditional circular line dances taught by MacMillen. The band



The Šarena Tamburitza Orchestra with students from the class Music and Revolution in Postsocialist Eurasia

actively engaged the audience and dancers, teaching them to shout in time to the music in the appropriate manner and moving with the dance line in the style typical of performances at Croatian and Serbian events.

Šarena's Artist Residency at OCREECAS continued on April 10 with a dinner for staff, faculty, and students and a master class in Ian's Balkan Ensemble class in the conservatory. The ensemble had been rehearsing repertoire from throughout southeast Europe, and the master class with Šarena afforded students the opportunity to play their music with and receive feedback from musicians steeped in these traditions. Šarena also taught several pieces from their own repertoire to Oberlin

ensemble members and worked with them on learning and arranging music by rote. The ensemble then performed some of this repertoire at its end-of-semester concert in the Dionysus Disco (The 'Sco).

The master class concluded with a jam session in which Šarena and members of the Balkan Ensemble played a wide assortment of tunes, including pieces that Šarena had performed in concert as well as other favorites from both groups' repertoires and even classic American songs such as the Osborne Brothers' "Rocky Top."

Šarena regularly plays in the area, including in frequent appearances at the Riverstone Tavern in Valley City, Ohio, and with the Kosovo Men's Choir of the Cleveland-Akron region.

Ian MacMillen, cont.

MacMillen is currently working on revising his dissertation into a book-length ethnographic study of music performed on guitar-like tamburas among (and as a site of encounter between) Croatian, Romani, and Serbian communities in the former Yugoslavia and its diasporas. Having previously conducted field and archival research in the region as an ACLS dissertation fellow in East European studies, he will return to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia this summer on a Powers Travel Grant from Oberlin College for an additional field project titled "An Ethnographic Study of Interethnic Musical Patronage and Transnational Tours in the Former Yugoslavia." The journal

Balkanistica has recently accepted for publication (2014) his article "Tamburaši of the Balkanized Peninsula: Musical Relations of The Slavonian Tambura Society 'Pajo Kolaric' in Croatia and Its Intimates". Another article, "Local Color and the Search for the Musical Origin of the Nation in the Early Nineteenth Century, from the German to the Croatian Lands," was just published (2013) in the journal *Bulgarian Musicology*. He continues to work on Soviet filmscoring and has had a paper on this topic accepted for the November 2013 meeting of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES).

Sam Skove's OCREECAS Internship in Moscow

Thanks to a generous OCREECAS grant, I spent three months, from August to November 2012, interning for Friends House Moscow (FHM), a Quaker group working primarily within Russia. The small office in an outlying ring of Moscow is run by Sergei Grushko and Natasha Zhuravenkova, with help from Judy Maurer, an American who is teaching in the Elektrostad. Funding comes mainly from U.S. and British Quakers. FHM, despite its size, runs or contributes to a number of operations. At the office, employees translate Quaker texts into Russian and work closely with the Alternatives to Violence Project, a Quaker program for helping people peacefully manage conflict. They also evaluate and translate grant proposals for a variety of independent groups, including programs to help foster parents and army draft resisters. While there, I translated grant applications, ran social media, and volunteered with Krug, a dance/theater center for people with developmental disabilities.

One of the joys of working for FHM was working with Natasha and Sergei. Both are unique, freethinking individuals who believe strongly in seeking better ways to live as Russians. Given the current government's corruption and autocratic ways, it can be easy at times to be cynical, but Natasha and Sergei persevere. They are also genuinely nice people. This was my first trip to Russia and they were always kind to me, fully understanding whenever I had difficulties. I likewise found everyone at Krug to be hardworking, passionate, and kind.

Krug in particular was a wonderful experience, as I was able to do work that had an immediate effect and meet a wide variety of Russians from all walks of life and age groups.

Living in Russia, and particularly Moscow, is a balance of appreciating the good, understanding the strange, and finding the humor in the bad. The good included amazing theater, beautiful public spaces, and finding friends (including, quite fortuitously, Dakota Hall and Hannah Klein, two friends from Oberlin). The strange was adapting to Soviet architecture, Russians' ideas about Americans, and the pervasiveness of the WWII mythos. The bad was having my bank cancel my ATM card (twice), the packed Metro at rush hour, and mistrusting the police. All in all though, those negatives just made me more self-reliant, while giving me a few good stories to share. And in a city like Moscow, between the extreme wealth and the extreme poverty, sometimes all you could do was observe and reflect.

Working in Moscow was many things for me, and I look forward to returning some day. Most importantly, it helped me better understand Russia as a country instead of an abstraction. I got to live life as a real citizen. I lived and worked far from the glitzy center, spent my leisure hours strolling Gorki park, and spoke Russian as much as I could. I am happy to be back in the U.S., but it was truly special to be, at least a little bit, a part of Moscow life.

Meet Writer John Vaillant '84

Writer and journalist John Vaillant, Oberlin Class of 1984, delivered the Russian department's annual Clowes lecture to a rapt audience last September. Vaillant has written for the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, *Outside*, and a number of other prestigious venues, and is the author of several highly acclaimed books of non-fiction that explore man's uneasy relationship with the natural world. At Oberlin he read from and talked about his most recent book, *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival* (2010), which garnered numerous awards, including British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction for 2010, and the *Globe and Mail* Best Book



for Science in 2010. The book is set in the so-called Primorski krai of Eastern Siberia, a vast area along the Pacific that is the last refuge of a fast-dwindling population of Amur tigers, the awe-inspiring creature that sits—now extremely precariously—

at the top of the region's ecological food chain. Vaillant's book is a riveting account of a drawn-out confrontation during the early post-Soviet period between one particular tiger and his primary territorial rival—that animal called man. Described by one critic as the “forest equivalent of *Moby Dick*,” the book is a mesmerizing mix of investigative journalism and natural and social history that reads like a psychological thriller.

The talk/reading was paired with a screening of *Conflict Tiger*, the award-winning documentary film by British director Sasha Snow that inspired Vaillant to write his book. Copies of *The Tiger* were available for purchase at the talk/screening, with all proceeds (more than \$250) going toward the Wildlife Conservation Society's Siberian Tiger Project.

Vaillant held an informal session the next day in which he talked shop with students interested in writing as a craft and a livelihood. He was a guest at Lynn Powell's CRW 340 (Non-Fiction Workshop). This was Vaillant's first trip back to Oberlin since graduating. His visit was sponsored by the biology department, the Environmental Studies Program, the Creative Writing Program, and the Oberlin Alumni Association.

Faculty and Staff News

MOLLY BLASING

The Russian department welcomes Molly Thomasy Blasing, who will join us this fall on a visiting basis, filling in for Arlene Forman, who has research status. Molly is completing a dissertation at the University of Wisconsin at Madison titled “Writing with Light: The Influence of Photography on Modern Russian Poetry.” She comes to Oberlin by way of Wellesley College, where she was a visiting lecturer this past year. Besides First Year Russian, this fall she will teach the course Russian Fairy Tales (in translation) and an advanced course (in Russian), Contemporary Russian Culture on Stage and Screen.

STEPHEN CROWLEY

Stephen is completing an edited volume (with two coeditors) titled *Working Through the Past: Labor and Authoritarian Legacies in Comparative Perspective*, which looks at how legacies from the authoritarian past shape labor politics in Asia, Latin America, and postcommunist Europe. He is also researching the potential for labor protest in Putin’s Russia, with a particular focus on the fate of Russia’s many *monogoroda*, the single-industry towns left over from the Soviet era. He recently completed a paper on the shifting perception of social class in Russia since the Soviet collapse, scheduled to appear in a special issue on class in *East European Politics and Society*.

ARLENE FORMAN

Professor Forman was awarded Research Leave for the 2013-2014 academic year to work on a critical edition of the prose of the St. Petersburg writer Bella Ulanovskaia (1943-2005). She received funding from the Great Lakes Colleges Association’s New Directions Initiative to support this project. This past spring she began teaching a new class entitled

Cold War Culture: A-Bombs, Beatniks and Dogs in Space. The course examines Soviet and U.S. cultural artifacts and attitudes from the end of World War II to the end of the U.S.S.R. She continues to write about contemporary cinema for *Kinokultura* (her latest review appeared in the April 2013 issue). Her article “Myths of the New Millennium: Visions of Petersburg in Recent Russian Cinema,” appeared in the 2012 volume *From Petersburg to Bloomington, Essays in Honor of Nina Perlina* (Slavica Press).

LILIANA MILKOVA

Curator of Academic Programs, Allen Memorial Art Museum

Aside from curating the exhibition *Illuminating Faith in the Russian Old Believer Tradition*, on view at the Allen Memorial Art Museum through June 2013, Liliana made a three-week trip to France and Bulgaria last summer on a Powers Travel Grant to conduct archival research and interviews for a scholarly article she’s completing. The article focuses on American comic art legend R. Crumb (who resides in France and who was the subject of a major retrospective exhibition in Paris at the time) and his sketchbook report of a weeklong journey to Bulgaria that he took at the height of the Cold War. She also contributed to the first volume of the catalogue raisonné of the Russian painter Erik Bulatov, a key member of the Moscow underground art scene in the 1970s-80s. Presently, Liliana is finalizing a selection of Socialist Realist artworks for an AMAM exhibition of 20th-century art coming in fall 2013.

TOM NEWLIN

Tom writes: “On the teaching front, I co-taught a new first year seminar last fall titled Conversations with Chekhov with Russian Faculty-in-Residence Maia Solovieva, who is from Chekhov’s

hometown, Taganrog. On the scholarly front, I published a pair of pieces in 2012 on Tolstoy: one in Russian, in an Italian anthology marking the 100-year anniversary of Tolstoy’s death (*Sincerità di Tolstoj. Saggi sull’opera e la fortuna a 100 anni dalla morte*, Milan, 2012) that looks at Tolstoy’s mythic “green stick” as a metaphor for writing, and another in English (*Slavic Review*, Summer 2012) that explores how Tolstoy’s brief stint as a beekeeper helped shape *War and Peace*. Both essays figure as part of a larger book project titled *Tolstoy: A Natural History*.

TIM SCHOLL

Tim writes: “The past academic year has been full of variety, to say the least. The Diaghilev/Ballets Russes centennial is over, but the publications keep appearing long after the conferences have ended. I published one article on the Diaghilev version of *Sleeping Beauty* in *Experiment*, and another on the Russian/Soviet reactions to the fantastic success of the Russian dancers in the West in *Europa Orientalis*, a publication of the University of Venice. The Oberlin College Choir tour of the Soviet Union in 1964 has been a fascinating new area of research, and I presented a paper on that topic for a conference on Cold War Culture at Jyväskylä University in the summer. I’ve just returned from a week as the San Francisco Ballet’s scholar in residence, where I gave six talks in six days. I also answered lots of questions about acid attacks (the Bolshoi Ballet scandal) and have been doing so for several media outlets, including *The Atlantic* and the BBC.

A Lecture and a Visit

Jane T. Costlow, Clark Griffith Professor of Environmental Studies at Bates College, visited Oberlin on April 29-30, 2013. She is the author of several pioneering works about Russians' relationship to the natural world, including *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Cornell, 2012) and *Other Animals: Situating the Non-Human in Russian Culture and History* (Pittsburgh, 2010, coeditor). She taught in the Russian department at Bates for many years before moving recently to environmental studies, where she teaches an array of courses that investigate meanings of nature and senses of place across different cultures and time periods, including 19th-century Russia. These include *Walking: The Practice, Politics and Pleasures of Your Own Two Feet*, and a course on disaster narratives from Katrina and Chernobyl to the "slow catastrophe" of climate change.

At Oberlin, Costlow gave the lecture "Bogs, Hermits and a Meandering River: Vladimir Korolenko's Journey into the Russian Wilderness." She examined depictions of the wilderness and particularly of bodies of water in works by Korolenko (a Ukrainian author whose prominence paralleled that of Chekhov in 19th-century Russia) vis-à-vis his experiences in exile and in the Russian forests, his encounters with religious dissidents such as the Old Believers, and issues of translation and interpretation.

The next day, Costlow guest-taught in Tom Newlin's class *Literature and the Land: Nature-Writing in Russia and America*. She discussed with students the concept and processes of "re-wilding" (what happens when human spaces are abandoned and "return to nature"), with a particular focus on the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath.

Student and Alumni News

AMANDA GRACIA

Senior Russian major Amanda Gracia '13 (right) was awarded a Fulbright English Language Teaching Assistantship in Russia for 2013-14.

The following appeared on Oberlin's online news page this past spring:

A Russian language major, Amanda Gracia will spend a year as an English teaching assistant in Russia. As a co-captain of the track and field team, Gracia is especially interested in getting a first-hand look at the after-school activities and programs available to the students in her Russian community. When she returns to the United States, Gracia plans to continue her study of Russian and eventually follow a career path in social work with a focus on language instruction. "Learning English as a second language is challenging for immigrants who are navigating new social and political terrains," says Gracia. "I hope to utilize my language abilities—both Spanish and Russian—and my experience as an English as a second language language instructor to make the transition to American society easier for immigrants."



TANYA ROSEN-JONES

BEN LUSSIER

Ben Lussier '10, an OCREECAS intern at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg in 2010-11, is headed to graduate school in Russian literature at Columbia University this fall.

LOUIS PORTER

Louis Porter '10, a past OCREECAS

intern in Moscow and a PhD student in Russian history at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, won the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies Best Student Paper Prize this year for his MA thesis, "An Endnote to History: Julian Huxley, Soviet Scholars and UNESCO's History of Mankind, 1945-1967."

Send us an update! Email imacmill@oberlin.edu

Celebrating 40 Years of Winter Term, cont.

enough—can bring out new and usually better possibilities in your character. My Russian “language remake” helped me see new possibilities in myself. I found a new voice. With Galina Viktorovna’s help, we staged Russian plays—almost always comedies, Chekhov’s one-act, *The Bear* (*Medved’*), Kataev’s full-length play, *The Squaring of the Circle* (*Kvadratura kruga*), but also larger Chekhov dramas, *Uncle Vanya* and *The Seagull*. Some of them we were even invited to stage a second time at the Russian community center in Cleveland. In school I was tongue-tied, and I would never have been caught dead acting in a play. But suddenly I could make it work in Russian.

The Russian House community was my Oberlin home, one that I could help make even better than it already was. Maybe my most long-lasting contribution to Russian House life was to start the intensive, first-semester Russian during winter term 1971 (as I now know). I have no idea why Marjorie Hoover, Serge Kryzyski, and John Dunlop would have let someone who had only been studying Russian for 16 months take on this job. First-year students Carolyn Rutland and Madeleine Wells struggled through four horribly intensive weeks and half of that old brick of a book, *Russian Grammar*, and we read and learned some of Chukovsky’s deathless children’s poems (“*Telefon*” and “*Barmalei*”). We met twice a day in the Russian House living room. No classroom for us—we

were typically in a prone position on the living room carpet. I suspect that I was unable to explain anything about points of Russian grammar but could just tell them to memorize and drill everything to death. I had been through the Marjorie Hoover school of first-year Russian during my first semester, which was predicated on the attitude that grammar books were boring, and one should memorize all the grammar and basic vocabulary ASAP and get on to the good stuff. So she had us reading and memorizing Pushkin, Akhmatova, and Blok poems our first semester—if the poem had even one or two relevant grammar points or vocabulary words, then we would read it. She had no patience for anyone who couldn’t keep up. I’m sure Professors Foreman, Newlin, and Scholl are much more circumspect. Who knows what I did to Carolyn’s psyche. I hope that Chukovsky was easier, and more immediately “fun” (even if we had to learn the word for “elephant” (*slon*), than Pushkin’s quiet, sad “*Ia vas liubil*” (“I loved you”). Stalwart people that they were, Carolyn and Madeleine survived and joined the second semester of Russian in the spring. The year 2013 is close enough to the 40th anniversary of that experiment, which, as I was delighted to learn, had 13 students in it this past January.

To end on a Russian note: Да здравствует Оберлинская русская программа! Да здравствует Русский дом!”