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OCREECAS NEWS

The Music of Princesses and Gypsies



Talisman Members: Etienne Abelin, Anne Harley, Oleg Timofeyev

Oberlin's Center for Russian and East European Studies recently had the pleasure of hosting several performances combining an unusual mixture of musical styles: the musical ensemble Talisman, performers of early Russian classical and folk music, accompanied by the Kolpapov Trio, a musical group that maintains the oral and guitar traditions of the Russian Roma, or gypsies. This diverse group came together in Oberlin to perform in a series of free concerts and lectures, and rehearse for the recording of their upcoming album.

Talisman was formed in 2000, when Ms. Harley, a renowned soprano, and Mr. Timofeyev, a leading authority on the Russian guitar tradition, were introduced by the record company that they both work for. They began to collaborate on a number of projects designed to rediscover the little-known musical treasures of these earlier musical traditions, and have since performed in a number of venues and recorded one album, *Roses d'amour: Music of the Russian Princesses from the Court of Catherine the Great*. Talisman's musical repertoire includes these compositions of women composers from the late 18th century, many selections from the genre of Russian *Romansy* popular during the late 18th to mid 19th century, and, with the recent collaboration with members of the Romen Theater, Roma music from the repertoire of the famous Roma primadonna, Stesha.

While at Oberlin, OCREECAS had a chance to discuss

the founding of Talisman with the co-founders of Talisman, Anne Harley and Oleg Timofeyev. Ms. Harley and Mr. Timofeyev took very different paths leading up to their careers in early Russian music. Ms. Harley's interest in Russian music began very early. "Even as a small girl, I was fascinated by all things Russian," she explains. She began taking Russian in elementary school at the age of ten, and upon entering Yale University, continued to take Russian Language courses and majored in Comparative Literature. During this time she was also developing her vocal talents, and went on to start a career in music a few



Anne Harley and Oleg Timofeyev

years after finishing college. As she began her career, Ms. Harley was puzzled by the wealth of French, Italian, English, and German early music, but the lack of early Russian music. When Ms. Harley was introduced to Oleg Timofeyev by the director of their recording company in the winter of 1999, she found another who had wondered at the forgotten treasures of early Russian music.

Mr. Timofeyev started his career in early music in 1989 when he came to America from Moscow to study at the University of Southern California. While there, he earned an MA in Early Music Performance, performing on the guitar and lyre. Initially, Oleg had very little interest in Russian music, especially since all he knew of it was the music of the Russian Orthodox Church.



Oleg Timofeyev

"Being Jewish, I had never really considered myself to be Russian, until I came to America and everyone told me I was Russian. People would always ask me to play something Russian, and partially from that pressure and for other reasons, I discovered that I had access to a unique and an underrepresented area of early music." Mr. Timofeyev began collecting antique Russian guitars and manuscripts of early music that he came across. Returning to Russia to conduct his search, Mr. Timofeyev explains that he "was

convinced that there was enough material to base a dissertation on; it was just a matter of finding it." As it turned out there was a wealth of manuscripts and records hidden in the vast archives, too much for just one dissertation. Surprised at the abundance of material, Mr. Timofeyev became determined to help rediscover and popularize early Russian Music in the West.



Etienne Abelin

For their first concert at Oberlin, Talisman performed selections from their collected works of Russian women composers. Many scholars and enthusiasts of early music don't realize that many noble women in the court of Catherine the Great were composing and publishing music under their own name. "This is particularly interesting," Mr. Timofeyev adds, "because most male composers at the time concealed their identity." However, finding music in this specific genre proved to be a much larger challenge than earlier attempts; searching out manuscripts of music composed by women of this period was "hell" according to Mr. Timofeyev. Most of the



Kolpakov Trio: Vadim Kolpakov, Tamara Cherepovskaya, Sasha Kopakov works were either in French or Italian, the languages popular in the court of the day, and the music itself was simple and melodic. "The challenge was to make it exciting," says Ms. Harley. Talisman apparently succeeded in making it exciting, winning the Noah Greenberg Award for their recording -- a grant-in-aid to stimulate active cooperation between scholars and performers by recognizing and fostering outstanding contributions to historical performing practices.

For the next performance at Oberlin, Mr. Timofeyev drew upon his knowledge of the rich tradition of the Russian seven-stringed guitar, the subject he wrote his doctoral dissertation on. In a combination of lecture and performance, Mr. Timofeyev performed compositions from



Vadim and Sasha Kolpakov

the early 19th century (the “Golden Age of Russian Guitar”) and complemented the performance with selected readings from diaries and memoirs of the time that related to the Russian guitar tradition. The works of 19th century composers Andrei Sychra, Michael Vsotsky, Semion Aksionov, and others were performed on antique Russian seven-stringed guitars from Mr. Timofeyev’s own collection.

The last two performances at Oberlin premiered



Tamara Cherepovskaya



Sasha Kolpakov

Talisman’s new collaboration with the Roma musical ensemble, the Kolpakov Trio. Talisman’s collaboration with the Kolpakov Trio began with a chance encounter in Moscow. Mr. Timofeyev had arrived in Moscow with a vague idea of a joint project with Roma artists. “At the time I had envisioned collaborating with a Roma chorus,” says Timofeyev, “but while in Moscow I was invited to an informal Roma guitar concert, and was very impressed by what I heard.” The father and nephew team of Alexander and Vadim Kolpakov (the third member of the trio being vocal artist Tamara Cherepovskaya) was engaging, fresh, and incredibly talented, and Mr. Timofeyev immediately recognized the potential for a musical partnership.

After the concert, Mr. Timofeyev invited Alexander Kolpakov to dinner so that they could discuss the possibility of working together. Explaining his idea of collaborating with a Roma chorus, Mr. Timofeyev showed Mr. Kolpakov the manuscripts he had collected that included

Romen vocals. “Sasha then asked me to explain what it would sound like, and at that point I realized that he didn’t read music,” Mr. Timofeyev relates. Coming from the oral tradition of the Russian Roma, there was very little reason for Mr. Kolpakov to know how to read music; especially since traditional Roma music is performed in a highly improvisational style. Undaunted by this new information, Talisman decided to pursue the new collaboration.

As the two groups began their project, differences in performance style and preparation made the experience one of the most challenging, and most rewarding, experiences for the artists. In a recent article in *Early Music America*, Talisman explains the challenges they faced:

“It would never occur to us to consider a classical musician well-trained if he or she couldn’t read music. But the Kolpakovs had never felt any need for a score and indeed regard written music with more than a little suspicion. It takes them a while to learn songs “accurately” by mimesis, but whenever something goes wrong, they can improvise their way out of it so well that one is convinced that it was intended to sound exactly so.”

In their first performance together, Talisman and the Kolpakov Trio performed a selection of Russian *Romansy*, structured around an 1833 manuscript by Andrei Sychra. The manuscript, newly rediscovered by Mr. Timofeyev, compiles over 40 songs, many of which draw on the rich literary tradition of the time, including the poems of Pushkin and Zhukovsky. Sung beautifully and passionately by both Ms. Harley and Ms. Cherepovskaya and accompanied on guitar by Mr. Timofeyev and the Kolpakovs, this emotional genre of Russian music provides a soundtrack to the celebrated Golden Age of Russian poetry.

For their culminating and final performance, Talisman and the Kolpakov Trio decided to recreate the traditional Roma musical entertainment of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The group focused primarily on reenacting the repertoire of the famous Roma prima donna Stepanida Soldotova, known to her contemporaries as Stesha. Trained professionally in the tradition of Italian *bel canto*, Stesha was famous for her energetic, moving performances. She combined the traditional *romales* style with urban folk singing of the time and her professional training. In his archival digging, Mr. Timofeyev was fortunate enough to find some scores of Stesha’s singing, and an article that describes her singing style. This exciting program was performed for the first time in Oberlin’s Warner Concert Hall, and will later be recorded and released on CD.

In speaking of their first series of performances with the Roma, both Mr. Timofeyev and Ms. Harley agree



Tamara Cherepovskaya

that it was a success, though they still have things to work on. "It was much better than we had expected, and we received a lot of praise and compliments from audience members," says Ms. Harley. The main challenge that is ahead of them is working on group cohesion. "While we got plenty of comments about a 'cross-cultural dialogue,' no one could say that we sounded completely like one organism. They're [Kolpakovs] like Kandinsky, and we're [Talisman] just a bit more pastel," explains Mr. Timofeyev. Talisman is confident, however, that the longer they work together, the more unified their sound will become. The group's hope is to continue their collaboration beyond this project. "We'd like to turn the group into a touring musical ensemble, and perform at various folk and early music festivals around the world," explains Ms. Harley.

Talisman was very positive about their experience performing and rehearsing at Oberlin, and hopes to return as often as possible. Mr. Timofeyev described the experience as "wonderful" and "magic," emphasizing the sophistication of the faculty and the vast amount of resources and opportunities available to students and visiting performers. "It's almost too easy to be a musician here," laughs Mr. Timofeyev, "I'm so used to having to struggle for resources and support, that it's a shock to have everything go so smoothly."

-- Brianna Tindall '04



Talisman and the Kolpakov Trio

All photos in this section were provided by Martha Bihari

Faculty Profiles



Steve Crowley, Associate Professor of Politics and expert on Russian and Eastern European politics, has been teaching at Oberlin College for 8 years, and is a member of the committee on Russian and East European Studies. This spring Professor Crowley taught two courses, a lecture/discussion course titled "Social and Political Change in Eastern Europe", and an upper-level seminar on globalization and labor. Professor Crowley describes the common theme in both his teaching and research as "the transformation of the once-communist societies into the now globalized world."

In his teaching on Post-Soviet politics and society, Professor Crowley looks at the development of civil society through the lense of globalization, emphasizing the difficult process of reintegrating into the capitalist world system. Though Professor Crowley's area of expertise is in post-soviet politics, the seminar course he is teaching this semester has a broader focus and compares the effects of globalization on labor in many parts of the world. He looks at both how post-soviet societies have been affected by the transformation to capitalism, and "how the disappearance of "really existing socialism" has had an effect on the rest of the world, and particularly on the sense of whether there is any alternative to participating in the global capitalist economy." In past semesters, Professor Crowley has taught introductory and mid level courses in Post-Soviet politics, and courses with a broader focus where "'postcommunism' isn't the central theme" but remains an important element.

Professor Crowley's research focuses on the politics of labor in Post-Soviet Societies and the imprint of socialism on labor and unions today. He continues to examine the question of how these groups reorient themselves to the capitalist system and new definitions of what it means to be a worker. "These countries now have very different outcomes -- from Hungary joining the EU to Russia's much more troubled political and economic

changes," Professor Crowley explains, "but labor unions in all these countries are having a hard time adjusting, in large part because of the impact of the old communist ideologies and institutions." The largest trade unions in these societies continue to be those that were originally created and controlled by the Communist Party, and Professor Crowley analyzes how labor politics in the Post-Soviet Space are affected by this. His research now focuses on more comparative analysis of labor politics in different areas of the globe, drawing back from field work and synthesizing gathered material. Professor Crowley is in the process of pulling his research together into a book manuscript, and will also be writing articles related to this research.

-- Brianna Tindall '04



Arlene Forman, Professor of Russian, Literature, and Culture, has been a member of the Oberlin faculty since the fall of 1986. This past year she passed the chair of the Russian department on to Professor Newlin (*Faculty Profiles Fall 2002*) after 15 years. She claims that "there is life after the chair" and is currently exploring a new pedagogical direction in Soviet film. She recently received a grant to host a Mellon Fellow here at Oberlin who will teach film and language courses. She plans to audit courses taught by the Fellow and spend the spring semester developing new courses. Although she has used films in past courses, Professor Forman wants to expand the use of films to be a main focus for the exploration of Russian culture, with a particular emphasis on cinematic adaptations.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Professor Forman has been busy with several long-term projects. She gathered and translated archival material for an anthology of the siege of Leningrad, entitled *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose*. The book was published by University of Pittsburgh Press in May 2002.

Two years ago Professor Forman was invited to take part in the RELIA PROJECT along with other foreign language instructors, librarians, and information technology specialists. The RELIA PROJECT, which stands for Rich Electronic Archive for Language Instruction Anywhere, is a database of copyright free images intended for foreign

language instruction at the secondary and college levels. As a member of the managing board, she assists in writing the online text, selects pictures for the Russian prototype and solicits for and edits contributions. Eventually Professor Forman would like to involve native-speaking Russian professors in order to help build the database from their perspective. Professor Forman was invited to participate on the RELIA PROJECT because of her work on the steering committee for the Ohio 5 Foreign Language Technology Grant. She served for five years on the steering committee, during which she directed two projects, *Points of View* and *Russian Emigre Viewpoints 2002*. These projects, which were funded by the Mellon Foundation, are multi-media, interactive CD-ROMs that focus on authentic Russian every day terms.

The RELIA PROJECT

The RELIA PROJECT, Rich Electronic Archive for Language Instruction Anywhere, is a database prototype of copyright free materials intended for the college and secondary levels of foreign language instruction. The database prototypes are currently available for Russian and Spanish with future plans to add images associated with other languages. The RELIA PROJECT also strives to create and maintain a community of scholars who want to enhance their teaching through the use of digitized media.

The rarity of a software product that addresses the use of both Roman and non-Roman characters inspired the use of Russian as one of the prototype languages. The main goals of the RELIA PROJECT are to develop a cross-platform database that will be user-friendly and searchable in target languages. Although this is not the first searchable database, it is the first image bank of its kind that is aimed at teachers and students of foreign languages and focuses on daily life and not high culture.

Several future projects include incorporating the use of additional media (sound and video), adding images associated with other languages, and resource contributions from students, who will contribute their own perspective on cultural issues.

To learn more about the RELIA PROJECT, visit their website at : www.reliaproject.org.

--Katie Scodova '03

OCREECAS INTERNSHIPS ARE EXPANDING

For the past three years OCREECAS has been sending students to the former Soviet Union for summer internships, but it has been part of the OCREECAS mission to extend these internships into post graduation experiences for longer periods of time. This year OCREECAS will be upholding its mission statement by sponsoring not one, but four interns this summer and well into the academic school year. In addition to the new length and time period of the internships, the interns are more involved in shaping their own experiences, making the internships more geared towards the individual intern's interests rather than sponsoring the same internships every year. OCREECAS is partnering with new organizations this year; The St. Petersburg Times, Moscow Times, the Buryat Federation for Eco-tourism, The Buryat Center for Environmental Expertise and is continuing work with AIDS Infoshare in Moscow. The interns selected this year are rising senior Brianna Tindall and graduating seniors, Maggie Ryan, Greg Walters and Katie Scodova.

Brianna Tindall will spend the summer working in Ulan-Ude in the Republic of Buryatia working for The Buryat Center for Environmental Expertise and the Federation for Sports Tourism and Mountaineering. Her duties in Buryatia will include assisting on the Great Baikal Trail Project and possibly serving as a project supervisor. Brianna feels that this internship was designed especially for her. As a REES major and Vice-Chair of Ohio PIRG, she will get to combine her academic background and her extracurricular interests. Brianna, who is a rising senior, will also use the opportunity to conduct research for her honors project on Russian and American cooperation in the environmental movement.



The main square in Ulan-Ude, with the largest head of Lenin in the world!

Maggie Ryan, a German language and literature major, will be working at AIDS Infoshare during the fall semester and is the third student to be participating on this internship. In past years, interns have translated medical brochures, distributed condoms to sex workers, and assisted Russian medical personnel in their research. Maggie is "anxiously anticipating" her first trip to Russia and is looking forward to

exploring all aspects of Russian culture. The AIDS Infoshare internship will allow Maggie to gain practical experience in the medical field and increase her knowledge of public health practices, while working with medical professionals in Russia. She is especially excited about this opportunity because she plans to attend medical school in the fall of 2004.



Temple on the Datsan Monastery grounds in the Republic of Buryatia

Katie Scodova also plans to go to Ulan-Ude to continue the OCREECAS partnership with local environmental organizations to help stimulate ecotourism interest around Lake Baikal. She is interested in the legal implications of ecological preservation and intends to attend law school in the fall of 2004. This will be Katie's third trip to the former Soviet Union and is looking forward to exploring the rich cultural diversity of the Republic of Buryatia.

Greg Walters is extending his internship for a whole year, which will be the longest OCREECAS internship to date. Greg will be working for the St. Petersburg Times and the Moscow Times, two of the most widely circulated English language newspapers in Russia.

Tim Scholl, the director of OCREECAS, is excited to be working with these new partners and "very pleased that our internship program continues to expand and develop. The program has one basic goal: to provide current students and recent graduates with meaningful work experiences in the Former Soviet Union. The better we can match available internships to the interests of potential interns, the better for all involved: the College, our students, and our partners abroad."

*Check the OCREECAS website and future newsletters for updates on these interns.
www.oberlin.edu/creecas*

--Katie Scodova '04

What's New With You?

The Oberlin Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies would like to hear from you. We are currently in the process of updating our database, so please respond in order to ensure the continuation of the OCREECAS newsletter. Your response will be greatly appreciated!

Name: _____

Place of Employment: _____

Current Mailing Address:

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Contact with the former Soviet Union since leaving Oberlin:

We look forward to your reply. You can return this form, or write us at:

OCREECAS
Peters Hall
50 North Professor St.
Oberlin College
Oberlin, OH 44074

Or email us: ocreecas@oberlin.edu

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