



# Russian STUDIES

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2010

**UF** | UNIVERSITY of  
FLORIDA

# GREETINGS FROM RUSSIAN STUDIES

## Dear Alumni and Friends of UF Russian Studies,

On behalf of the entire faculty I send warmest regards from UF Russian Studies in Dauer Hall! With the 2009-2010 academic year now on the verge of completion, I can safely say the past 15 months have been among the most eventful in recent history. Our now-annual fall and spring celebrations -- "Russian Fall Festival" and "Maslenitsa" -- drew upwards to 300 people each. In February 2009 UF Russian Studies faculty hosted a one-day symposium organized by yours truly, entitled "Up From the Ashes: National Identity and Imperial Aspirations in Putin-era Russia," which featured UF faculty (Finkel, Gorham, Rylkova and the new Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Dr. Paul D'Anieri) together with a group of outside guest speakers from Harvard, Princeton, NYU, Pittsburgh, and the University of Pennsylvania. That same weekend UF hosted the U.S. national debut of Olga Ionova, a soprano and rising star in Russian opera. You can read more about Ionova in the interview on page 8, conducted in Russian and translated by Lindsay Nuesca, who graduated this year with a dual degree in Russian and Musicology.

More recently, UF Slavic Studies played host to the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, which attracted to Gainesville over 150 scholars from over 17 different states and 4

different countries. (See page 3 for highlights.)

Most importantly, however, we continue to graduate some of the most talented and adventurous students in Florida. Four graduating seniors completed honors theses with "High Honors" or higher and one, Rita Chernyak (Dual Major, Russian and Journalism), received the prestigious Russian Scholar Laureate Award, awarded annually to the nation's top Russian majors by the American Council of Teachers of Russian. For news about not-so-recent grads, please see the feature article on page 6 and the "Alumni News" section on page 11.

More special events are planned for 2010-2011 and we do hope you might have occasion to join us. Do let us know if and when you're passing through town, in any case, and send information about yourself that we can share in the next issue of the newsletter—either by using the form at the end of this newsletter or sending a separate e-mail message to me at mgorham@ufl.edu. It's always good to see and hear from you, so keep in touch!

До скорой встречи!

—Michael Gorham

## CONTENTS

Greeting from UF Russian Studies.....	2
UF Hosts Slavic Studies Conference in March .....	3
Russian Rockers in Gainesville: An Interview with Mumiy Troll's Ilya Lagutenko .....	4
Alumni on the Move: The Gator Nation Reaches Mongolia (Christian Packard, Class of 2005) .....	6
Russian Soprano Performs at UF .....	8
Faculty News .....	10
Thank You for Your Support .....	10
Keep Your Classmates Up to Date .....	10
Alumni News .....	11
Major Distinctions .....	12

**UF** | UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**



**MARCH 25-27, 2010  
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA**

# SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ON SLAVIC STUDIES

The 48th annual meeting of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies (SCSS) took place in Gainesville, Florida on March 25-27, 2010. The conference, hosted by the University of Florida, was held at the Hilton University of Florida Conference Center. Two full days of over 40 thematic panels were complimented by a special plenary roundtable session devoted to:

## **Gas Wars, Colored Revolutions, and Media Politics in Russia and the 'Near Abroad'**

Leading scholars of Russian and Ukrainian politics gave their assessment of the state of and prospects for relations between Russia, Europe, and the Russian "Near Abroad."

### **Roundtable participants include:**

**Paul D'Anieri**, Professor of Political Science and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at University of Florida

**Ellen Mickiewicz**, James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy, Duke University

**Lucan Way**, Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of Toronto

**Zachary Selden**, Deputy Secretary General for Policy, NATO Parliamentary Assembly

**Andrew Wilson**, Senior Lecturer in Ukrainian Studies at the University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies and Senior Policy Fellow for the European Council on Foreign Relations

Following the plenary session, Professor Mark von Hagen delivered the keynote address, "History Wars: Memory and Geopolitics in Eastern Europe," at the Friday night banquet. For details, please visit the conference website at: <http://www.languages.ufl.edu/events/2010-slavic/>.





# INTERVIEW WITH MUMIY TROLL'S ILYA LAGUTENKO



by Rita Chernyak

With over 2 decades of albums and performances behind them, MumiY Troll has firmly established its place in the annals of Soviet and Russian Rock. The band rolled through Gainesville on November 13, for a one-night performance at "1982 Bar." Rita Chernyak, a graduating senior with dual degrees in Russian and Public Relations, spoke with the band's lead singer, Ilya Lagutenko. Chernyak has contributed regularly to *The Gainesville Sun* and other, on campus publications and plans to pursue a career in law.



**How did you begin your career in music? Why and how did you choose to come together as the rock band you are today?**

Being a kid from the Soviet Union background, you don't really have any illusions about the rock music [being] a part of your life, or [that] you can make a living out of it. So, I guess, it was a long and winding road for us to make a decision. I did lots of studies and did lots of different types of work before we actually ended up being a 100 percent, full-time rock band. It was a difficult decision for me and the band members—to basically give up whatever our day jobs were and to concentrate on following this dream... The moment you realize your music is actually appreciated by someone else outside your band and your relatives then you think, "OK, I'm on the right path."

**Your current tour is in the United States and your performance is in Gainesville. What made you want to come to Gainesville and the U.S. in general?**

Let's put it this way: We started to come to America quite often several years ago, and basically for economic reasons. Because of the value of the dollar, we could get more recording done here, even to compare it to Russia, because at some point, Moscow especially, became too expensive to live and to work... Moscow at the moment, it looks like it's for multimillionaires not for normal people, so that's why we decided [to come on tour in America]. Because we had to record new songs, and it was winter time, so it was like let's just do it somewhere—some nice place. We actually went to South Africa first, and then we decided why not to go to California?

And talking about Gainesville—Gainesville has a big history of bands basically being here on the university campus; lots of bands started here. It's a very interesting experience. Let's put it this way: We would prefer to play in Gainesville than Miami, because Miami has its own. It's not really a rock place. So, we travel to a real-people place, not a touristy place.

**Which one do you prefer—performing in large concert halls or smaller venues? You have done both quite well, but do you have a preference?**

It all depends. I really take it easy because we have experienced playing for millions of people at one place—all those free open air shows in Russia—literally millions of people around you. And we play in small clubs back home for few people, like a dozen people. So, for me, I don't really choose the place. I mean, whatever comes up. It's not about my choice—it's about the people that come to the show.

**How do you define happiness and are you happy with your musical accomplishments as an artist?**

I mean, you've got too many ambitions; you never write your best song ever, because it [might happen] tomorrow.... I wouldn't say I'm happy on accomplishments because there are too many tasks you can put in front of you, but I'm definitely happy that I've been given this chance to exploit this opportunity and I didn't really give up this chance. I didn't really give up on myself.... Let's put it this way: Some of my relatives [are] still not sure that I'm on the right track. It's just years and years of what you've been doing, and it's just time, and now when they see that you are happy in what you are doing.

Basically, you are not the stereotypical rock star, you know, going the wrong way and the drugs. And basically, I'm happy to be that unique rock star kind of balancing between being really edge and normal.

**Do you like American food?**

I'll tell you what, you know, you go to people and they ask you what is Russian traditional food, and I say, "OK, dumplings and potatoes." And [then] you remember, "When the last time you had dumplings?" I guess with all this globalization in a good way; you get too many choices now. Burgers—I really like them, yes, I really like them. The nice meat on the grill; it's really appealing to me, a good piece of steak and good piece of meat. So, I'm not really sure about all these American sauces, but some of them I like. You know, the really big Asian impact on America now. Sometimes we think maybe chicken noodle soup is more American. (Laughs)

**What surprised you about America?**

I guess the biggest surprise for me would be that America actually meets lots of criteria which I heard about from other people. I guess it's [the] middle class lifestyle idea. I mean, for me, a guy from modern Russia and Soviet background, we are used to the big difference in lifestyle ideas. The Soviet Union was so-called communist. It's totally different here, in America. I like that. I definitely appreciate it. Because democracy may not work for other countries, but it work here. And God Bless—let it work here.

# UF RUSSIAN STUDIES ALUM EXTENDS THE GATOR NATION TO ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA



After graduating UF with a major in Political Science and then receiving his MA from Harvard in 2008, Christian Packard (2005) spent a year in Mongolia working as a legal assistant for an international law firm. In the heat of exam session at UF Law, where he's now in his first year, Packard took the time to talk.

**By way of background, where exactly were you, when were you there, and how did you get the position?**

My year in Mongolia was spent primarily in Ulaanbaatar, the capital, though I did get to take three business trips to different cities in China too. I got the position after I finished my MA. I knew I wanted to go to Mongolia or somewhere in Central Asia, and on a whim I looked for English-speaking lawyers in those countries through the American Bar Association "lawyer locator." I emailed the ones I found to see if any of them

needed someone with my qualifications and one, a senior partner at Anderson & Anderson LLP, wrote me back with an offer.

**What were some of the biggest challenges?**

Mongolia's business environment is rated as one of the more friendly and open in the world, according to the World Bank's survey of businessmen around the globe. Based on my experiences there, I definitely agree. It's true that the capitalist system is very new for them,

and that the bureaucracy could be a serious hassle, but entrepreneurship was highly encouraged and in most sectors so was investment. The legal culture is also new for the country, and a bit more difficult for outsiders to navigate.... Almost every part of the legal system had to be remade in the last twenty years, often without expert advice, so while general principles familiar to American lawyers would be present specific details would not.... Of course, this is part of what made the job so exciting.

### **How would you characterize the legal/business culture in Mongolia?**

Other than helping the attorneys unravel intricate legal questions like the one described above, my biggest challenge was probably communication. Firstly the language barrier was tough. Even though everyone in my office spoke rather good English, this was often not enough to quickly explain the “terms of art” that make legal-ese so difficult in any tongue. Sometimes we would have hilarious conversations where I would sit with an English legal dictionary, explain that to a colleague who spoke Russian, who would then explain what I meant to another colleague in Mongolian. We always got across what we needed to, but sometimes it took a while. That was just with co-workers. Add in a Japanese client speaking through their own translator and things got still more interesting.

Secondly was the technology barrier. We communicated with most of our clients and the other offices in our firm through the internet, primarily Email and VOIP services like Skype. Due to the time zone differences, e-mail usually resulted in hours or days of delay, which is a tricky thing to manage in the legal profession. Also, anyone who has used Skype internationally knows how finicky it can be sometimes.

### **What were some of the biggest rewards?**

The biggest reward was unequivocally the experience. I admit that’s a rather broad term, but I don’t know how else to describe getting to work in a new industry in a new environment, meeting

new and interesting people from all across the world, and doing almost every day things I’d never done before. I made many new friends with whom I am still very close. I learned a lot about myself, Mongolia, and life in a developing country. I got to travel to a number of places that I’d only read about in dusty old books, and at one point I even met the Prime Minister. Life over there isn’t exactly easy, but I would happily do it again. I suppose being able to look back and say “I’m glad I did that,” is a reward in itself.

### **To what extent are Russian and English used in the workplace, the government, the media, and the everyday public sphere?**

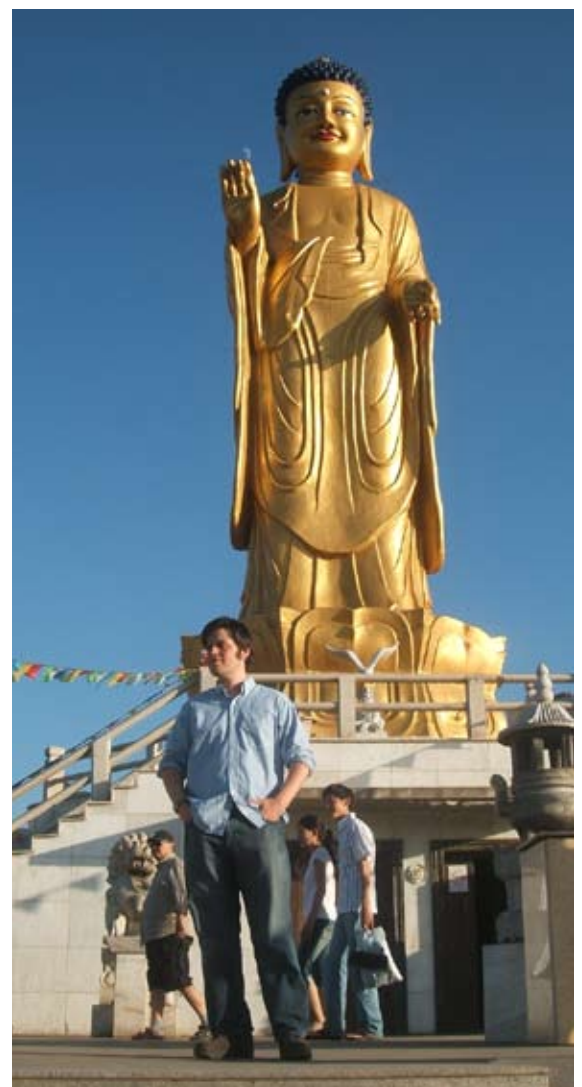
In our office, English was the official language of the workplace. It was the language in which we most often communicated with each other, with the firm’s many offices in China, and with our clients. In the country as a whole, English was proudly pronounced in the early 90s to be Mongolia’s new “second language” (replacing Russian). In reality, everyone wants to learn it, most people (of the new generation) speak at least a few sentences of it, and you can see advertisements sprinkled with English words on every street corner....

However, contradictory though this may sound, I think Russian is actually slightly more prevalent. It seemed to me like almost every member of Parliament had studied in Russia at some point in their lives, even the ones who also studied in the West.... In my personal experience, if I was lost or otherwise needed help from a stranger, it was much more likely that we could communicate

in Russian than in English. Of course, the fact that modern Mongolian is written in Cyrillic probably helped.

### **How’s your Mongolian?**

My Mongolian is decent, though not anywhere near fluent. I could carry basic “Hi, how are you?” conversations, order food, direct taxis, and in general terms describe my position at the firm. I had a strange education in Mongolian, first studying the classical language and script for a year at Harvard, and then studying Buryat-Mongol in Ulan-Ude for a summer, and only in Mongolia studying the modern colloquial language of that country. It was like if I had studied Latin for a year, spent a summer in Brazil, and then moved to Spain. My Mongolian acceptable, lets just leave it at that.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH

# OLGA IONOVA

by Lindsay Nuesca

**Olga Ionova, a leading soprano on the Russian operatic stage, made her United States debut in UF's own University Auditorium in March of 2009. Lindsay Nuesca, a Russian major pursuing a joint degree in Musicology, spoke with her about her career and views on opera—Russian and otherwise.**

**When and how did you first become interested in opera?**

I have always loved opera, since the time I learned my first opera aria!!! I cannot express in words how wonderful it is to feel the sound of one's own voice, to govern it, and relate through the voice various kinds of feelings and moods.

**Do you have any especially favorite roles? Which ones and why do you like them?**

Every role is a favorite; they are like children... Most loved are those that are more "suffering." For me the dearest roles are "Magic Flute" (Pamina) and "Rigoletto" (Gilda).

**How has Russian opera changed since the fall of the Soviet Union? The culture of the profession? Financially? The quality of artists? Audience? Competition from lower, more "popular" forms of culture?**

In my opinion, opera is a constant art, just like music is eternal! The modern rhythm of life doesn't accept statics on the operatic stage. Today, opera is a more creative, modernized production, communicating the emotions and feelings of the modern person.

**What advice do you have for aspiring vocalists?**

A strong desire to sing is not enough... Vocal study must be approached with trepidation towards the music on one hand, and a cool head on the other, like a scholar who comprehends difficult formulas.

**Who do you most admire?**

More than anyone else, I admire singers who are found constantly working, creatively exploring, and who preserve within themselves the "pupil"—an ease of perception and an ability to find something new in familiar roles! Without a doubt, this includes Maria Callas, Jessie Norman, Mario Lanza, Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, and many, many other wonderful and unique operatic artists.

**What are your impressions of Gainesville and about America in general?**

Gainesville became for me the warmest city in Florida!! I would really like the cultural life in this wonderful city to be booming and diverse, and [I would like] for Gainesville to have its own opera festival. I hope your city comes to be known as the cultural capital of Florida...





# FACULTY NEWS

**Dr. Barksdale** continues to teach his popular "Russian Masterpieces" and is currently in the final stages of his sixth book, this one dedicated to religion in Dostoevsky and other Russian writers. **Dr. Goodwin's** book, *Confronting Dostoevsky's Demons: Anarchism and the Specter of Bakunin in Twentieth-Century Russia*, will be published in 2010 by Peter Lang for its series of "Middlebury Studies in Russian Language and

Literature.” **Dr. Gorham** has published several articles on the language culture and politics of post-Soviet Russia and is completing a book on the same topic. He’s involved in an international working group dedicated to “The Future of Russian: Language Culture in the Era of New Technology” and has been invited to the University of Passau as Visiting Professor in Spring 2010. His “Russian Fairy Tales” continues to fill

auditoriums and he's currently working with colleagues in Moscow to develop upper-division team-taught courses dedicated to "Russian Mass and New Media." **Dr. Rylkova** was promoted to Associate Professor and now serves as the Undergraduate Coordinator for Russian Studies. Her book, *The Archaeology of Anxiety: The Russian Silver Age and Its Legacy*, came out in December 2007 and has met with high

critical acclaim. Dr. Rylkova is now working on issues relating to biography writing and cultural memory, and on “the lives and deaths” of Anton Chekhov. In addition to her work in the language classroom, **Galina Wladyka** continues to be the moving force behind the “Russian Fall Festival” and “Maslenitsa” events. Last spring she also spearheaded the U.S. debut of the star Russian soprano, Olga Ionova.

# Thank You For Your Support

☒ **YES!** I would like to support Russian Studies at the University of Florida.

**Amount:** (Please circle) \$1,000    \$500    \$250    \$100    \$50    \$

☐ My Company matches gifts: form is enclosed.

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Credit Card:** Contributions via Credit Card are gladly accepted. Please call the secure credit card processing operator at 1-877-351-2377 or visit the Russian Studies Fund donation page at <https://www.uff.ufl.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=012833> to make an online gift.

**Check:** Please enclose a check made payable to the University of Florida Foundation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the above form and return it to:

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Office of Development & Alumni Affairs  
University of Florida Foundation, Inc.  
PO Box 14425  
Gainesville FL 32604-2425  
E-mail: CLAS@uff.ufl.edu

## Keep Your Classmates Up to Date

Please use this form for address changes and to tell us what you are up to. Alumni updates can be sent via post to the **PO BOX 115565, Gainesville, FL 32611-5565**, or send news via e-mail to [mqorham@ufl.edu](mailto:mqorham@ufl.edu).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Activities:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# ALUMNI NEWS

**James Slater (2007).** After graduating with a BA in Russian from the University of Florida, I went on to pursue an MA in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—where I was funded through FLAS and a teaching assistantship as an instructor for RUS 101 & 102. After graduating from UNC, I was accepted to participate in the ACTR Russian Overseas Flagship Program in Saint-Petersburg. I have just completed my first of two semesters here, where I take Russian language courses, *spetskursy* with Russian students and have an internship with Bellona (a Norwegian environmental and human-rights NGO) where I translate legal documents, articles and informational reports into English and Russian.

**Kevin Kopelman (2006).** Since graduating in 2006, I've been working as an equity research analyst at Cowen and Company, an investment bank in New York. My team covers public Internet companies, primarily in the online advertising and e-commerce businesses, such as Google, Amazon, Yahoo, and Netflix. The job consists of conducting market research, building financial models, and writing investment reports for institutional investors. This summer I passed the third and final exam of the Chartered

Financial Analyst (CFA) program. My Russian studies, including a semester in Moscow with the UF Russian Studies exchange program, have been a major talking point and differentiator in every interview I've had since leaving Florida.

**Liza Shurik (2005).** After graduation I worked in Moscow for two years. I developed programs and informational materials on HIV for vulnerable groups throughout the former Soviet Union. Upon returning home, I worked as a freelance writer for UNAIDS and WHO. I backpacked through Israel for a month before heading back to "Soviet" territory, where I helped write the 5-year national HIV strategy for Tajikistan. Working for three months out of Dushanbe, I helped write a winning 50 million dollar HIV grant to the Global Fund Against AIDS, TB and Malaria. I came home for a few months during which I volunteered for the Obama campaign before heading to Jerusalem for a year to get my Master's degree in Public Health. Now I'm back in Miami, currently unemployed and enjoying the time with my family.

**Evan Doyle (2005).** After graduating UF with a double major in economics and Russian, I received my master's degree in National Security Studies from Georgetown

University's School of Foreign Service. While finishing up my academic work, I worked for a retired Ambassador at L-3 Communications (a government consulting firm) where I worked on government capacity-building and rule of law programs for governments in Eastern Europe (mainly the Balkans) and the Middle East. I currently work as an Analyst for the Department of Defense in the Washington DC area, analyzing situations worldwide that are of interest to the U.S. Government.

**Lara Hopkins (2003).** I live in Washington, DC and work on Capitol Hill for Congresswoman Kathy Castor. My job entails a little bit of everything including some communications and administrative work, along with a legislative portfolio of international affairs, human rights and trade.

**Nick Chadeayne (2003).** I graduated from the MSM program at Florida in May of '05 and went to work for Merrill Lynch as a broker. I left Merrill in '07 and became a portfolio manager for Wachovia Wealth Management. I've been studying for the CFA designation and considering working on a Master's of Finance from Tulane next year. Brooke Bornick (2003) and I are still happily married and we recently relocated to

Houston, Texas. We found a great Russian grocery store here and I'm able to get my fix of pelmeni.

**Ruth Decalo (1999).** Since graduating UF with a double BA in Balkan Studies and Russian, I went on to earn my MA at George Washington University in Russian and East European Studies. I worked concurrently with international labor unions in the former Yugoslavia, learning Serbian/Croatian and visiting the region to help with field office operations. I have since worked in NYC as a Senior Director of Program and Training at a national NGO, and am currently the Director of Student Life and Community Outreach at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. I served as a Peace Corps Business and Social Entrepreneurship volunteer in the Republic of Georgia until war interrupted my service. After leaving the country for three weeks, I returned to help refugees and continue my work with youth in the Azeri ethnic minority region of Marneuli. During my time in Georgia I studied Georgian, Azeri and Turkish, and my professional life was conducted mostly in Russian—until the war, when my work with young refugees and international NGOs had me leaning on Georgian and English.

**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**  
**RUSSIAN STUDIES**

Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures  
P.O. Box 115565  
Gainesville, FL 32611-5565

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 94  
Gainesville, FL



# MAJOR DISTINCTIONS

## HONORS THESES

---

**Andres Alegria-Martinez**, "Drinking and Russia: How Russia's Drinking Culture Limits Current Anti-Alcoholism Measures." (Director: Gorham)

**James Wyatt Meng**, "Financial isolationism and the Russian business environment: linking culture & policy." (Director: Gorham)

**Tiffany Richard**, "From Russia, With Gay Love: A Theoretical Analysis of the Intersection of Sexuality, History, and Culture." (Director: Kleespies)

**Danijela Zekanovic**, "Ukraine and Russia: Sibling Rivalries Escalating. Effects of leader relationships on the Ukraine-Russia relations." (Director: Burak)

## AWARDS

---

**Rita Chernyak**, American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), Russian Scholar Laureate Award.