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**AT THE THEATRE UNION OF RUSSIA**

**The 5<sup>th</sup> (19<sup>th</sup>) Congress of the Theatre Union of Russia (STD RF)**

According to the STD RF Charter from October 21 to 22, 2006 the Theatre Union of Russia held its 5<sup>th</sup> Congress in Moscow. 6 months before 75 branches of this association in different parts of Russia held conferences to elect delegates to the congress. All told 200 delegates from 84 regions of the Russian Federation and 150 guests (representing different theatres, state culture management bodies, Russia's artistic associations, guests from the Baltic countries and CIS that maintain cultural ties with Russia attended the congress. As events of the kind require the agenda included reports, discussions and voting on congress decisions. On the whole the general atmosphere at the congress was constructive and serene. As one of the speakers said theatre is an impression of society, and as Russia is now undergoing a stage of relative stability, no one needs dramatic changes. Governors of many cities are implementing programmes of support of theatre art; grants are provided and new theatres are being opened. The feeling everyone shared was expressed in the phrase "that things would not become worse". Even though it is clear to understand that as soon as the notorious Law on Autonomous Institutes comes into legal force, a great deal of problems would become evident, so the next congress would be forced to make serious decisions about the situation provoked by the Law (*for more details of the Law, see previous Russian Theatre Life in Brief special issue*). So far the congress participants shared the

opinion that the Theatre Union of Russia should not be turned into a trade union, retaining its status of an association uniting creatively-minded people. In particular a decision was adopted about the setting up at the Theatre Union of Russia the Information and Analysis Centre, which could later be transformed into a national Theatre Institute (similar to this type of institutions in Europe.)

*Info source:* <http://www.stdrf.ru>

## **THEATRE AND AUTHORITIES**

### **Anatoly Vasiliev's School of Dramatic Art is under the threat of extinction**

In the previous newsletter (No. 4, special issue) we touched upon the theme of the impact of the adoption by Russian law-makers and bureaucracy of ill-thought-out laws that often threaten the very existence of what is the pride of national culture.

To continue the theme we are now telling you about the situation in which the theatre titled "The School of Dramatic Art" under Anatoly Vasiliev has found itself. Anatoly Vasiliev is a man whose name needs no commenting on. He is one of the world's leading theatre directors, who earned the world's renown after he opened his School of Dramatic Art. Then in 1986 riding the wave of "perestroika" theatrical studios began to appear in the former USSR, whose creative directions differed from the official policies prescribed for the theatre. Theatre in South-West, Theatre on the Floorboards, Theatre in Krasnaya Presnia and others appeared in Moscow. In the wake of the general trend of changes Moscow authorities began to offer premises to them, mainly basements. One of these in Povarskaya Street was offered to Anatoly Vasiliev, the supporter of the school Yerzi Grotowski. After renovations of the basement in 1987 the experimental theatre School of Dramatic Art presented its first production *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello. The production was a thunderous success at high-profile European festivals. That was followed by the famous *Joseph and His Brothers* by Tomas Mann, Moliere's *Amphitryon*, *Lamentations of Jeremiah* by Vladimir Martynov that gave Vasiliev's theatre the world renown as one of the most exciting present-day theatres. His school began to raise its status. People would come to Vasiliev for tutorship.

The basement in Povarskaya Street was also changed. The efforts of Vasiliev and his company turned it into a space where every corner was permeated with the theatrical spirit. Alongside rehearsal premises there appeared a library, a museum, a display room, professional sound recording studio, facilities for training workshops, a small hotel and a student's hostel. In 1999 Anatoly Vasiliev was awarded Russia's Literature and Arts State Prize for the establishment of his School of Dramatic Art. In 2001 Vasilyev's theatre School of Dramatic Art (the first Russian theatre and to date the only one in Moscow) became a member of the Union of the Theatres of Europe (Théâtres de'Europe).

Moscow authorities could not disregard international renown of Vasiliev's theatre and decided to present it with a building of 10,000-plus square metres in Sretenka Street in Moscow's downtown. It had four stages and several halls for rehearsals, workshops and lecturing. In a nutshell, a royal gift. Live and enjoy it.

However, events that followed began to remind of the ancient story about the Trojan horse. Moscow authorities began doubt that the theatre needed two premises – in both Sretenka and Povarskaya Sreet. So they decided to take the latter away, issuing a special resolution...

The process of adopting any resolution in Russia usually defies the laws of logic. It would seem natural that before deciding something one should ask the "subjects" in whose favour this or that resolution would be adopted, coming to a consensus and give it a legal form only after that. Here we have it the other way about. The decree comes first with a follow-up explanation to the "figures" of the good intentions of the authors of the document. The trouble is laws and regulations in Russia cannot be cancelled, they should only be observed...

That was how the decree “On the Reorganisation of the School of Dramatic Art”, which deprived Vasiliev’s theatre of its Povarskaya Street premises. To the great surprise of the officials Anatoly Vasiliev flatly refused to return the premises to authorities. The basement in Povarskaya Street is the life, the essence and the roots of his theatre. With roots destroyed no tree can grow, no matter how beautiful and lush its top can be. Moscow bureaucrats could not accept Vasiliev’s arguments treating them as the maitre’s caprice and empty talk. But on second thoughts they decided that as a genius Anatoly Vasiliev would hardly be able to run the luxurious premises in Sretenka street profitably (it must earn money for the city!). So they issued another resolution... to dismiss Anatoly Vasiliev from his position as the artistic director of the theatre he had created. One thing followed another. October 18, 2006 taking advantage of Vasiliev’s absence in Russia and without consulting him they appointed managing director of the theatre a man who, Moscow officials thought, could save the theatre of world renown, but from what or whom?

A piece of information. Three buildings away from Anatoly Vasiliev’s theatre at 20, Povarskaya Street, the 5<sup>th</sup> Studio of Vsevolod Meyerhold was based in the 1920s. As is known, for some time the great Meyerhold was an acknowledged master and was treated kindly by Soviet authorities, but he was later repressed and faced a shooting squad. The great Virgil was correct, saying in his *Aeneid* “Quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes”. Vasiliev does not face such a fate as the times have changed. Deprived of his cherished brainchild and exhausted by fighting many new decrees and resolutions he may simply leave the country for Europe where its best theatres would be pleased to have him. But there would not be the School of Dramatic Art in Moscow any longer...

Still, there is some hope. The Moscow government would do better if it gives up its bureaucratic diktat and accept the fact that not all values in life are measured by the rate of profitability, money and golden metropolitan square metres. They should begin a normal dialogue with Anatoly Vasiliev, an artist of the world renown, issuing no more decrees.

The official web-site of the School of Dramatic Art: <http://www.sdart.ru>

Anatoly Vasiliev’s creative biography in English is available at:  
[http://www.iugte.com/projects/Anatoly\\_Vasilyev.php](http://www.iugte.com/projects/Anatoly_Vasilyev.php)

If you wish to support the theatre, please contact: [admin@sdart.ru](mailto:admin@sdart.ru)

## **THEATRE FESTIVALS IN RUSSIA. A BRIEF DOSSIER**

### ***Information about the most significant theatre festivals in Russia***

#### **NEW DRAMA FESTIVAL, Moscow**

Frequency – annual

Last edition – September 2006

The idea to hold the festival is Eduard Boyakov’s, Elena Gremina’s and Mikhail Ugarov’s.

New Drama is not only a festival; it represents the full-fledged movement in the present-day art, whose essence is the search of themes and plots of current importance, using the present-day theatre stylistics. Orienting itself at the process rather than result, New Drama sets itself a goal of identifying in the Russian theatre community new playwrights and directors, as well as promote contemporary plays in the conditions of the system of repertoire theatres. At present, New Drama is a dynamically developing cultural phenomenon of a new order.

Since the project was started, it has brought together playwrights Vasily Sigarev, Vladimir and Oleg Presnyakovs, Ivan Vyrypaev, Viacheslav and Mikhail Durnenkovs, Maksim Kurochkin, and Yuri Klavdiev, and directors Andrei Serebrennikov, Vladimir Ageev, Vladimir Pankov and many others.

The latest festival was held at three stages of theatres *Praktika*, which was founded a year ago by Eduard Boyakov, *Teatr.doc* set up by playwright Elena Gremina together with playwright and director Mikhail Ugarov, and *Meyerhold Centre*. Aside from stage productions of new dramaturgy, a special programme within the framework of the festival is enacted, which its organisers tentatively divided into 2 segments, “Heroes” (morning meetings with playwrights and directors) and “Experiences” (workshops, video showings and reading of plays). Presentation of plays written by beginner authors unknown by wide audiences as well as presentation of translations of foreign authors are also within the framework of the programme. For example, readings of translations into Russian of new plays by British playwrights were part of the festival programme in September, 2006 organised with assistance of the British Council.

Info source: <http://www.newdramafest.ru>

Impressions and an analysis in English of the events of the New Drama Festival held in September by John Freedman a contributor to The Moscow Times can be found at:

<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/stories/2006/09/15/110.html>

John Freedman *Staging New Voices*, The Moscow Times, September 15-21, 2006.

## LATEST PUBLICATION

### ***Russian Theatre Festivals Guide – 2006 (In Russian and English)***

In October, 2006 a guide on Russian theatre festivals was published in Russian and English, the first edition of the kind in print. The guide was compiled by the staff of the Information Centre of the Theatre Union of Russia. Publisher: *The Stage* magazine.

The publication contains information about **254 theatre festivals regularly held in the Russian Federation** as of October 1, 2006. Relevant information (the structure, locations, addresses and contacts of organisers of theatre festivals of all disciplines) has been collected from official sources and updated by direct contacts. All the guide’s entries are arranged according to festival genres (Performing arts and multidisciplinary festivals; Opera, ballet and music theatre; Drama theatre festivals and awards; Competitions and showcases; Theatre for children and youth; Puppetry; Mono-performances; Amateur companies; Internet festivals). The Guide’s section *Index by City* structured according to the festival host cities in the alphabetic order. Each guide entry is presented in two languages, containing information about the festival title, its status (international, national or regional), its organisers, the addresses of directorates and contact information. Some references indicate frequency, first edition and the usual time of festival’s holding (if such information has been provided by festival’s organisers).

The guide also has a digital version in PDF which will be available upon the completion of a number of improvements. For more information please contact: [jd@stdrf.ru](mailto:jd@stdrf.ru)

To obtain a printed version please contact:

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

### **The Stanislavsky Method Today / Practical Training for Actors and Directors of the Amateur Theatre, April 26 – May 04, 2007, Moscow region**

The Russian Centre of the AITA/IATA (International Amateur Theatre Association) will hold its 12<sup>th</sup> regular International Seminar *The Stanislavsky Method Today / Practical Training for Actors and Directors of the Amateur Theatre*, which will take place from 26<sup>th</sup> April to 04<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 in Odintsovo, Moscow region (25 km west of Moscow).

Professors of Moscow drama schools will teach at the Seminar in the following subjects:

- Acting skills
- Director's work on the play during the staging
- Onstage movement skills

The working languages are Russian, English, French, German.

**Application deadline: December 10, 2006.**

For more information please contact:

**Alla Zorina**

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E-mail: [alla\\_zorina@mail.ru](mailto:alla_zorina@mail.ru)

Tel/Fax: +7 (495) 694 07 02

**The 8<sup>th</sup> International Theatre Festival *Raduga* (Rainbow), St.Petersburg, May 31 – June 6, 2007**

May 31 to June 6, 2007 the 8<sup>th</sup> International theatre Festival *Raduga* will be held in St.Petersburg. Professional theatres for children and youth will take part, including 7 Russian and 7 foreign companies. The Expert Council is preparing the creative programme of the festival based on applications and videos (CD and DVD) dispatched by would-be participants.

The festival gives priority attention to contemporary plays for teenagers and youth as well as present-day re-thinking of the works of classics. There will be discussions of the plays by the leading Russian critics and its holding will be covered by mass media.

Workshops will be held within the framework of the festival by theatre directors, pedagogues and playwrights. At the end of the festival the scientific and practice conference "Theatre. Teenager. 21<sup>st</sup> Century" will be held.

**Application deadline (with VCD/DVD): February 01, 2007.**

Contact:

**St.Petersburg State Theatre for Young Audience**

Pionerskaya ploshchad, 1, St.Petersburg, 191119 - Russia

Tel. +7(812) 7124068

Fax.+7(812) 712 59 70

E-mail: [spb-tuz@mail.ru](mailto:spb-tuz@mail.ru)

**The 9<sup>th</sup> International Theatre Festival «King -Fairy Tale», Velikiy Novgorod, April 22-27, 2007**

Since 1992 the festival supports contemporary theatre productions in Russia and Europe, paying a special attention to the fairy-tale as the unique genre of the world's literature treasuring the culture and traditions of different countries. Modern fairy tales are not only addressed to children as unique works in the genre are nowadays created for adults as well. The Festival reveals new opportunities for understanding of fantastic stories in a drama and puppet theatre, as well as in the sphere of the modern dance. The Festival organizers intend to broaden the genre borders, introducing the repertory beginning with the Bible up to the folk epos and Shakespeare plays. The 9<sup>th</sup> International Theatre Festival "King - Fairy Tale" plans to present new production from Switzerland, Spain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, France, South Korea, and Russia.

To perform at festival, please send us DVD or CD of your production to the mail address and full application form from <http://www.kingfestival.ru>

**Deadline for applications: December 01, 2006**

For more information please, contact:

**International Festival "King-Fairy Tale"**

Novgorod Theater for children and youth "Mali",

Pr. Mira 32 A, Velikiy Novgorod, 173025-Russia, ,

E-mail: [mtheater@mail.natm.ru](mailto:mtheater@mail.natm.ru)

[kingfestival@rambler.ru](mailto:kingfestival@rambler.ru)

## **The 9<sup>th</sup> International Theatre Festival «Voices of History» Vologda, July 6-13, 2007**

Organisers are pleased to announce that the 9<sup>th</sup> International Theatre Festival "Voices of History" will be held in Vologda, July 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The "Voices of History" Festival started in 1991 in Vologda as a showcase of performances in the historical and architectural surroundings. Its main open-air stage is the territory of the unique ensemble of the Vologda Kremlin.

The artistic program consists of two parts:

- Open-air performances in the historical and architectural surroundings;
- Performances on traditional theatre stage in line with the principal idea of the Festival "Theatre and History"

**Deadline for application and presentation of visual materials** (video of the production you wish to present) **is January 01, 2007**. The application form is available on:

<http://www.cultinfo.ru/voices/2007>

Contact:

**Vologda Region Department for Culture**

37, Gertsen St., Vologda, Russia, 160035

Tel: +7(8172)723220

Fax: +7(8172)726059

E-mail: [depcult@yandex.ru](mailto:depcult@yandex.ru)

## **ONE-LINE NEWS**

*Recent and coming theatre events in Russia*

- **After the completion of restoration, Aleksandrinsky Theatre was reopened in St.Petersburg.** The festivities around the event were timed to the establishment in Russia of the "state theatre" on the strength of a decree signed by Empress Elisaveta on "the establishment of a Russian theatre for presentation of tragedies and comedies". The performance the theatre debuted with was Sophocles' *King Oedipus*.
- **Season of French dramaturgy in Orel.** The 30<sup>th</sup> jubilee season of *Svobodnoye Prostranstvo* (Free Space), a theatre for children and youth will be devoted to French plays. The first production of the season is Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* (Love is Not to Be Trifled With) staged by Roman Ilyin and Gennady Trostianetsky. Apart from the debut performances different events (concerts, exhibitions, meetings of the artists) will take place at the theatre within the framework of its European programme.
- **February 2 through 17, 2007 Moscow will be venue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> national festival Theatre's Music Heart.** In October 2006 the festival was awarded "Brand of the Year" prize in the nomination "Culture and the Arts" of the international system EFFIE, one of the most authoritative programmes in the area of market communications. Over 70 applications were received from potential competition participants from different Russian regions. Awards in 18 nominations will be presented based on results.
- **October 20, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibition of Theatre Costume *The-Art-Costume* opened in Moscow.** The display was organised by the Scenography Department of the Theatre Union of Russia together with an affiliation of the State Bakhrushin Theatre Museum. More than 200 exhibits are displayed, including drawings, costumes, installations and photos by artists from Moscow, St.Petersburg, Omsk.
- **The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Chuvashia held a playwrights competition** whose aim was to promote ethnic drama. Both professional and amateur playwrights writing in the Chuvash language participated. The authors of 3 best plays selected by the jury were paid royalties and received letters of recommendation for staging their plays by Chuvash theatres.
- **Charity act *Theatre to Beslan Children* was organised in North Ossetia in memory of the September 2002 tragedy when the terrorists held more than a thousand schoolchildren hostage.** The act was arranged by the Moscow Theatre for Children and

Youth with financial support of the Bank of Moscow. Within the framework of the project the Moscow theatre performed in Vladikavkaz in June and September and Moscow-based theatre *Ten* (Shadow) staged its productions in Beslan in October. The charity act will be continued by the SamArt Young Audience Theatre in November and then theatre for children of Denmark will visit North Ossetia in January 2007.

- **A Festival of Nominees for *Golden Sofit*, the Biggest Theatre Award of the 2005-2006 season opened in St.Petersburg.** The award *Golden Sofit* for creative discoveries and achievements in different theatrical disciplines was established in 1995. 19 St.Petersburg-based theatres nominated for the award presented 31 productions.
- **Valery Gergiev takes Dmitry Shostakovich's opera *Lady McBeth of Mtsensk* to China.** The tours of Mariinski Theatre in China were part of the programme of Year of Russia in China. "Performing this opera at the Beijing Music Festival this time is dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Dmitry Shostakovich. It is one of the most significant operas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and I think this was exactly what we should bring to China," Valeri Gergiev, the artistic director of Mariinsky Theatre said before the performance.
- **The Galiaskar Kamal Tatarstan State Academic Theatre toured London in October.** The tour was timed to the theatre's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary marked this year. The company presented three productions of ethnic Tatar playwrights with simultaneous translation into English. The first-ever public performance of a play in the Tartar language was done December 22, 1906. The date is regarded the foundation date of the theatre. Speaking to journalists Russian Ambassador to Great Britain Yuri Fyodorov said: "This is the first professional theatre in the Muslim world, so we undoubtedly welcome this tour that takes place within the framework of the dialogue of civilisations and cultural exchanges between Russia and Great Britain."

*For more information about any particular event please contact the STD Information Centre: [id@stdrf.ru](mailto:id@stdrf.ru)*

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