

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Oxford Perm Association

November 2010

From Perm with love

by Allan Hutson, Nicola Moses and the young people in the Pegasus Dance and Production Companies.

"From the trip I will now have so many good memories; most importantly the memory of how so many people, from four different nations, were able to pull together to produce such an amazing show. There are people who I met on the trip that I will never forget. Everyone was just fantastic!" *James Roberts*

The groups from America, Germany, England and Perm (Russia) interacted to form a melting pot of talent.



The young people learnt different techniques in singing and dancing and harmoniously formed a company who had passion, strength, and professional integrity. The barriers of language did not seem to hinder the working progress of the young people involved in the project. Everyone worked together and helped each other with every challenge which arose, whether physical or emotional.

"The Russian, German and American participants were great, we all had something to add and there were no language barriers which stopped us. There was a day when I had a rehearsal and one of the translators was a bit late; for 10 minutes the Russian girls and I managed to understand each other in some way and by the time we had some language help it was all done. It is always fantastic to learn a new culture and collaborate with new people." *Maggie Concalves*

The company comprising four groups from around the world, demonstrated clearly that projects like this can be very positive. Everybody appreciated each other's talent, background, and culture and were all eager and willing to learn about each other's way of life which, was reminiscent of Pegasus Theatre's own ethos.

"I have never been to Russia before and going allowed me to experience a different way of life. A place with different norms and values to what I am used to; although I cannot say it has changed my own personal beliefs it has opened my eyes to new ways of thinking and behaving and accepting opposing points of view.

The pride taken in heritage also struck a chord for me, such as the monument "Permyak-salty ears" and how everyone seemed to know the story behind it. Oxford is such a historical city and going to Perm made me realise how little I know about the stories behind its "dreaming spires", but how much I want to find out." *Shona Beechey*

All of the young people, tutors, mentors and people involved in the Perm Summer Camp took away something dear to them from the project. Many of the young people and tutors are still in contact with each other, building on relationships formed in Perm. There was an enormous sense of us all learning new things by being exposed to the lives of each other and being willing to keep an open mind to different ways of thinking, living and individual social experiences. By opening each other's minds to new realms of thinking and exploring ideas that otherwise we may not have been exposed to, gave all of the participants who went to Perm something very precious to take away with us. Gaining this kind of experience in life is priceless, and Pegasus Dance and Production Companies would personally like to say thank you to the Oxford Perm Association for their support, donation and most of all their belief in this project.

"At the end of the performance we got a huge round of applause and even everyone in the audience stood up...at that particular moment I felt so proud to be standing amongst such lovely people and so proud to be allowed to perform alongside them.

It would be lovely to have our twin cities over next year, when we hold a Youth Festival in Dance, Production, and Theatre and to show them how we live in Oxford. To take them sightseeing and maybe let them meet my family and show them where I live etc.... I would want them to feel as welcome in our city as they made us feel so welcome in theirs." *Manon Franklin-Fraiture*

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Dates for your diary

Autumn party

The annual party for Oxford Perm Association members to meet visiting Permian university teachers is to be held at Rewley House, St. John's Street at 7.30pm on Wednesday 17th November. This is always a fun evening with entertainment, food and drink. Those attending are asked if possible to bring an offering of finger food. This can either be sweet or savoury. It would be helpful if you could let Ann Davis (social co-ordinator) know what food you are bringing. Plates for presentation of the food will be provided.

Tel 01993-811927 or e-mail annharvarddavis45@hotmail.com

Perm University teachers will be in Oxford from 13th November to 4th December. Members who cannot come to the party but who would like to invite one or two of the Russians to a meal or to visit places of interest should contact Karen, preferably after 17th November.

Big Christmas celebrations will take place in Oxford city centre on Friday 26 November.

Three doctors from Perm are visiting Oxford from 5th to 12th December. Members willing to invite them out to a meal or to visit places of interest should contact Rosalyn Roulston.

The Annual General Meeting of the Oxford Perm Association in 2011 is likely to be in the week beginning 21 February. Details to follow.

A Bite at the Opera – an opera night at the Town Hall to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Leon link, on Friday 4 March 2011 at 7.30pm. Former Covent Garden principal Quentin Hayes (Escamillo in last year's *Twin City Carmen*) brings a group of his friends to sing highlights from the opera repertoire. Tickets include a welcome drink on arrival and an interval meal (from Fosters, the Town Hall's regular catering company). Tickets from Caroline Williams at the Town Hall. Email cjwilliams@oxford.gov.uk or phone 01865 252264. If you add 'Perm Association' to your booking information, and let Mari know your names, we can have tables for Perm members. Email mari.prichard@hcarpenter.co.uk or phone/text 07768 908341.

Karavai are planning a visit to Oxford in April next year. It's expected that the Perm and other link association will sponsor a concert at the Newman Rooms in St Aldate's on the evening of Friday 8 April, and other performances will include the Oxford Folk Festival, Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 April 2011.

Oxford's Bonn Week celebrations will take place on 1st to 5th June 2011.

International Youth Festival finale will take place on 29th July 2011.

News of other links

Leiden

From November 26th – 28th a 50-piece marching youth band, the K & G band, will be performing round Oxford, the Castle and the Town Hall.

An equivocal testament

In John Le Carré's most recent novel, *Our Kind of Traitor*, a young Oxford academic meets a Russian of dubious antecedents on a tennis court. (I don't believe in giving away plots, but we learn this in the first sentence of the novel.)

The Russian, Dima, and most of his complicated family come from Perm. At the end of the novel, Le Carré acknowledges the help of Federico Varese who gave a fascinating talk to the Perm Association some years ago about the Perm mafia.

No scenes in the novel take place in Perm which Le Carré clearly does not know personally, but the city does loom in the novel as a sinister sort of place. (At one point I did wonder what would have happened if the novelist had made use of our twin-city connections. Would events have been different if young Perry, the academic, had visited Perm on one of our exchanges? Probably not – but he would have left with impressions of a very different city from Dima's..)

The novel is, I think, very gripping and pervaded with a tense moral anger – not about Russia but about England. And it is extraordinarily up-to-date.

Karen Hewitt

May Wylie

Where would the Oxford Perm Association be today without May Wylie as the Oxford International Officer at the Town Hall? Of course the first Perm links were initiated around 1990, but without the huge amount of effort put in by May at the Town Hall over the past 18 years the character of our Russian twinning activities would have been very different. I remember well many years ago a visit by a ballet group from Perm which May had organised to perform at the town hall - it was such an impressive event that I was persuaded to become an active supporter of the link. The short ceremony when Perm officially became a twin was a significant step forward (but I still wonder how May could contemplate yet more work with another country, another language, added to her already busy schedule).

I never ceased to be amazed at May's ability not only to arrange for visits of dancers, singers, musicians, and various youth groups to come to Oxford, but by her stamina in supervising their stays here. On many occasions she could be seen driving a mini van around the county to various village halls and never seemed fazed by unforeseen circumstances, not to mention driving to ferries to pick up groups, and shopping at supermarkets for 200 mouths to feed. When not organising foreign visits, she also was key in setting up the annual Oxford International Links parties in a variety of city venues, not to mention stalls at Christmas markets (in Oxford and abroad), driving loads of goods to the venues. Behind the scenes she became adept at filling in EU grant applications, sorting out visa requirements, official invitations and dealing with bureaucracy in different countries.

I never saw May lose her (Northern Irish) sense of humour - probably an essential ingredient in her character to be able to continue so successfully in such a demanding job for a very long time. If a problem seemed insurmountable, she would laugh, see it as a challenge and always find a solution.

Perhaps May's most outstanding contribution was the ability to dream up projects. There were often gasps from OIL committee members when she would announce yet one more seemingly impossible idea for an opera performance involving young people from different countries to be held two years hence. Combined with this was her knowledge of local people whom she knew she could count on for major support.

All Oxford Perm Association members wish her a happy and well deserved retirement. We know that she will continue to be in touch with the Association - she has set up Karavai's next visit to Oxford in April - and we will always be delighted to see her at any of our events .

David Roulston

On the Road to Friendship

As readers probably know, the Perm-Oxford organization in Perm was founded as a result of Permians observing our Oxford-Perm Association. In Perm they are becoming increasingly active, and here is an account of one of their recent meetings.

On October 5, the Perm-Oxford organization held a party in the hall of the Public Centre "Energy", situated in the centre of Perm.

The first part was the opening ceremony of the photo exhibition. The best 30 photos of the contest that had been taking place from June up to September were exhibited. The pictures were taken by the people who visited Oxford not long ago.

Most of them were submitted by Raisa Gurina, Kira Solovyova and Professor Tarunin.

The Perm City Duma sponsored the project.

Besides the members of the Perm-Oxford organization there were volunteers, the representative of Duma, people from other twin-cities clubs, such as Perm-Duisburg and Perm-Louisville. The hall was decorated with the flags of the UK and the Russian Federation. At the beginning the public looked at the photos and exchanged their opinions. The winners of the contest were awarded their prizes, they took the floor and spoke about our twin city Oxford that inspired them.

Then came the Auction. The idea to hold it appeared half a year ago. The Committee appealed to the members of the organization to ask VIPs to submit some pictures, photos, books, souvenirs to the Auction. We also asked our friend from Oxford, Karen Hewitt, to take part. She agreed to give us her books that attracted much attention during the party. The executive director of our organization Elizaveta Balashova took the floor and conducted a lively Auction. There was a real fight for the auction subjects. All were sold including the Newsletters about twin-cities. The Chair of the Perm-Duisburg organization Yelena Shafieva came to the party with her three students, cadets. One of them bought the book by Karen Hewitt and presented his teacher with it. I'm sure she will inspire all of them to read the book.

Everybody seemed to be satisfied with the party. It was the first experience of our organization to collect money for charity this way.

Galina Gusarova

See photos on page 6

Memorial visits in Perm

During our September visit to Perm, we were interested to participate in the laying of carnations on two memorials. Our very kind hosts were Nadia and Sergei and their daughter Olga. Olga was our superb and untiring preparer of breakfasts and our guide, interpreter and general organizer for visits and talks. She spoke lovingly of her late grandfather (Sergei's father) who had served as head of the Perm Militia for several years before his retirement. Rosalyn and I felt privileged to be invited to join the family at a Memorial Service to him at the Militia Academy. As we arrived in the autumn sun, the Academy courtyard was full of cadets (male and female) and serving Militia resplendent in their dress uniforms. After a delicious reception meal, we proceeded to the ceremony at which several short speeches were made in memory of Olga's grandfather by past colleagues and serving Militia. My Russian is poor but I could detect many words of praise and in previous and subsequent discussions, I realized that he was a much loved leader and took a great interest in the Academy and the well-being of its members even after his retirement. At the end of the speeches, with the surrounding trees swaying in the wind and the golden autumnal leaves gently falling, the cadet band played some suitable music and a small procession proceeded to lay carnations on the Memorial. Rosalyn and I felt

honoured to be included in this group and in turn placed our flowers after the family. It was a very moving experience.



The second occasion was to the newly completed memorial to those who lost their lives in the Perm plane crash of September 2008. The plane crashed a few miles from the airport and not far from several apartment buildings. Fortunately it crashed on the railway lines with only car garages and no inhabited buildings in the immediate vicinity. Sergei drove us to this deserted spot and we could see that the earth had been newly laid around the whole site with the actual memorial in two parts on either side of the railway lines. Together with Sergei and Olga, we placed our carnations beside the plaque with the names and photographs of the 88 people

who died (most of the passengers were from Perm). No one else was present and the silence was impressive for such a sad memory. The 'main' memorial was on the other side of the tracks, so Sergei and I clambered down the steep side and, waiting until a long goods train had passed, crossed over (this does not seem to be a problem in Russia). This memorial consists of a small shrine and a series of pillars arranged in a circular pattern, the number corresponding to the number killed in the crash, with a corresponding number of saplings planted in memory of the victims. It is an impressive and sober structure. After a short walk around the monument, we crossed back to where Olga and Rosalyn were waiting and we left the scene feeling very sad but glad that such an impressive memorial had been erected to those who lost their lives two years previously.

David Roulston

Photos from the Perm-Oxford Association

The Perm-Oxford Association celebrates 15 years of Perm-Oxford friendship links with a book auction.



An army cadet officer buys a copy of an Anthology of Contemporary Poetry, written and donated by Karen Hewitt