

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

ЗАПИСКИ ИЗ ПОДПОЛЬЯ

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE BOWDOIN COLLEGE
RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT

JUNE 2020

ISSUE NO. 2



Dear alumni and friends of Bowdoin's Russian Department!

Greetings from beautiful Brunswick! I wish I could say that I am writing you from my Sills basement office as I did last year, but in fact, probably like many of you, I have been teaching and working from home over the past weeks and months.

Yet despite the severe upheavals we are all living through now, this June in Maine is as beautiful as always: fragrant, blossoming, and vibrant after the long winter, full of birdsong and wafted by sweet breezes. There is hope.

Indeed, let us hope that next year's newsletter will be coming to you from a brighter and more optimistic place. Please be in touch with us, via an email to agillesp@bowdoin.edu or the Alumni Contact form on our website. We look forward to hearing from you. Stay safe and healthy!

Alyssa Gillespie, Chair



A YEAR FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bowdoin College moved all instruction online after spring break, resulting in the unfortunate cancellation of several highly anticipated co-curricular events, along with the annual Russian department dinner that we had planned for later in the spring semester. Nevertheless, it was a very full year in the department even before the disruption occurred, with four lectures and a dance performance, student outings to two different versions of *Swan Lake*, the first-ever group trip to explore Russian culture in and around New York City, our traditional holiday potluck in December, and even a Zoom event featuring two Bowdoin alumni in May! This was also Lecturer of Russian Reed Johnson's first year at Bowdoin; he has brought tremendous energy, a friendly spirit, and a wide range of teaching interests to the department. Finally, it was a year of major student achievements that deserve to be celebrated. We hope you will enjoy reading about all of this and more in the pages that follow!

ABOVE: FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS POSE OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ICONS IN CLINTON, MA

BELOW: BORIS ARDEMASOV '23, MIGUEL DIAZ SEGURA '20, AND AUGUSTUS GILCHRIST '20 RECITED RUSSIAN POEMS AT A MULTILINGUAL POETRY EVENING, NOVEMBER 2019



PRIZES, PUBLICATIONS, POETRY RECITATIONS AND MORE

STUDENTS EXCEL ON CAMPUS AND NATIONALLY

Russian students distinguished themselves this year in a wide range of achievements:

- In November, Augustus Gilchrist '20, Boris Ardemasov '23, and Miguel Diaz Segura '20 recited Russian poems during a multilingual poetry evening
- Four students were honored in the ACTR National Russian Essay Contest: Boris Ardemasov (gold), Augustus Gilchrist (silver), and Jacob Baltaytis '21 and Liam McNett '23 (honorable mention)
- Artur Kalandarov '20 received first prizes in the John Quincy Adams Society/The National Interest Student Foreign Policy Essay Contest and the Macalester College Russian Studies Contest
- Three students published their research: Stephen Pastoriza '19 published his honors thesis research on images of women in the works of Ivan Turgenev; Artur Kalandarov published his prize-winning essay on the war on terror, and Laura Howells '20 co-authored an analysis of the Russian Presidential Grant Fund
- Two students received Fulbright awards: Augustus Gilchrist received an ETA to Russia, and Laura Howells received a study/research award to Estonia
- Laura Howells and Artur Kalandarov completed honors theses on Russian topics in the Government department
- Shandiin Largo '23 received a summer fellowship to explore Russian colonial identities through a Native American lens

LAKE BAIKAL: BY KITREA TAKATA-GLUSHKOFF '19

I first became acquainted with Lake Baikal while reading Valentin Rasputin's "Baikal," in Professor Gillespie's class two years ago. To be honest I don't remember reading it! I only remember the impression it left on me: that Baikal is a powerful and spiritual host of overwhelming beauty. The world's deepest and oldest lake, Baikal's physical attributes already caught my geoscientific interest, but I was eager to feel its power for myself. Just as Maine's coast drew me years ago from California to Bowdoin, Baikal allured me to study at its nearby Irkutsk State University for a semester (in Middlebury's School in Russia).

Traveling to Moscow or St. Petersburg is always possible, given the time, money, and absence of a pandemic. However, living in Siberia, with no other Americans in sight, within an hour of a world wonder, is not an opportunity you'll easily come across!

I lived in a massive, grey cement dorm, where I made lasting friendships with international floormates, Russian classmates, and our fiercely protective, motherly security guards. I was the first American most of them had ever met. We ate more *bliny* than we could count, jumped from a *banya* (Russian sauna) into Baikal's ice water, sang Russian songs, and



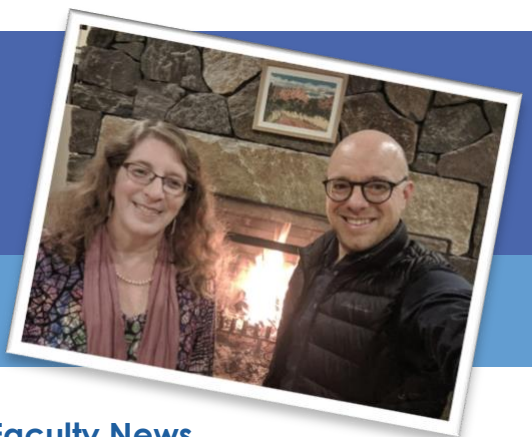
discussed our cultures late into the nights over pickled vegetables.

As for Baikal? The *feeling of Baikal* is one that Buryats, Russians, and others have conveyed in their art, literature, and religion for thousands of years. That feeling moved me to tears each time I visited Baikal, and danced on its vast, colliding ice floes. I hope that one day you will feel it too.

[Watch Kitrea dance](#) in reverence of Baikal.

AN ARRAY OF VIBRANT CO-CURRICULAR OFFERINGS

THANKS TO A GENEROUS DONATION FROM A LOYAL BOWDOIN FAMILY, THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT HAS BROUGHT A RICH PROGRAM OF LECTURES, CONCERTS, AND CULTURAL EVENTS TO BOWDOIN OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, PROPELLING US TO THE FOREFRONT OF CAMPUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE.



Faculty News

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie

Dr. Gillespie (associate professor and department chair) is excited to announce the release of a new CD on the Delos record label, titled *The Cave of Wondrous Voice*, by California-based composer Mark Abel, containing his new piece for soprano, piano, and English horn "Four Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva," a setting of Tsvetaeva's verse in Dr. Gillespie's translation. She will be on sabbatical in 2020-21, working on three different books on poet Alexander Pushkin (a scholarly monography, a biography, and a collection of essays) and a book-length translation of Tsvetaeva's selected verse.

Reed Johnson

Dr. Johnson (lecturer) joined Bowdoin this fall after a year of teaching academic writing at Harvard and is glad for the opportunity to return to the Russian fold. This year he taught a literature in translation course on the subject of love and desire in Russian culture, along with Intermediate and Advanced Russian languages courses in both semesters, and is currently developing a course on the demonic in Russian literature and film. This summer he will be working on research for a book project on the early Soviet writer Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, alongside other ongoing writing projects.

Mira Nikolova

Dr. Nikolova (BA '13 Bowdoin College, PhD '20 Brown University) will join the Russian department for the 2020-21 year as Visiting Lecturer of Russian. Her research focuses on exile, space, and place in the poetry of Brodsky and Akhmatova.

Performances

Grachanitsa, "Exploring Serbia through Dance and Song," November 2019

Swan Lake at the Merrill Auditorium in Portland, performed by the National Ballet Theater of Odessa, February 2020



Evgenii Bershtein, Professor of Russian at Reed College: "Two in One: Imagination of Bisexuality in Einstein and Sokurov," November 8, 2019

Lisa Hayden, independent translator: "Adventures in Translating Contemporary Russian Fiction: Time Travel, Twisted Families, and Loving One's Authors," February 2020

Lectures

Masha Gessen, prominent Russian-American journalist: "Jews and Borders," September 2019

Victoria Juharyan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian at Middlebury and Dartmouth Colleges: "The Problem of Desire: Self-Consciousness and Self-Narration in Late Tolstoy," October 2019



Alumni Event

A Zoom discussion with two Bowdoin alumni who live and work in Moscow, Evan Gershkovich '14, *Moscow Times* reporter and Josh Tulgan '95, Director of Corporate Finance & Investor Relations at Mobile Telesystems: "From Pines to Сочи! A Bowdoin View from Russia," May 2020



FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BOWDOIN

By Reed Johnson, Lecturer of Russian

Russians have a saying about the New Year: *как новый год встретишь, так его и проведёшь*. If this is true—that how you greet the new year is how you'll spend it—then, as I joked to my Intermediate students back in January, the year 2020 was shaping up to be a sad affair: for our first New Year's Eve as exhausted new parents, my wife and I ended up staying home for the night, sending our best wishes to friends via text and internet. So, if you're stuck at home and looking for someone to blame for your predicament, look no further.

But before all that, before the pandemic and remote learning, before these latest cataclysms, there was the fall semester of 2019, when I began teaching here at Bowdoin. It was just the glorious Maine fall I'd been hoping for after my years living in the south, and I knew Bowdoin would be a lovely place to be. But what struck me most wasn't the place, but the people. Bowdoin students, I quickly realized, love a challenge, whether teasing apart the complex dialectical strands of Dostoevskian thought, or remembering which verb of motion prefix goes with which preposition. (Or, more recently, how to screen-share a Powerpoint presentation over Microsoft Teams.)

These past mornings, I've been coming by Sills Hall to get some writing done. The building is the same, but it's empty and quiet, a body without a soul. Hanging in the building's hallways are posters for events that were scheduled and never held, giving the building an unexpectedly abandoned feel, a Pompeii or a Pripjat. But this atmosphere only underscores what I've come to understand about Bowdoin these past few months, as everything else has been stripped away—that this is not a place but a community, a group of students and faculty and staff united in and by their commitment to learning. I am so impressed to see this community pull together even while we are all apart. And this pulling together is made possible in part because of what we do—for instance, the study of languages to knit together our larger global communities, or literature, which makes even the faraway seem real. As we connect with the words of Zamyatin across the divide of language, geography and a century of time, so too we can still connect with each other across time zones through Zoom. And connect we have—I salute the students of our department for their hard work and their continued love of the challenge.

In fact, I've got my toast already prepared for New Year's Eve 2020: *За вас!* This time I'm hoping, for all our sakes, that I'll be in the company of a hundred of my closest friends.



EXPLORING RUSSIAN CULTURE IN AND AROUND NEW YORK CITY

During what in retrospect now seems like the very last days of the "old world order," Professor Gillespie led a group of six first-year students on an exciting four-day journey in early March to explore various aspects of Russian culture in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York City. The trip included curated tours of Russian artworks at the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, MA (see photo on p.1), the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC; attendance at the liturgy of the beautiful St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral; a visit to see the home collection of Ballets Russes costume designs of Bowdoin parent (P '10) and Bowdoin Museum of Art Advisory Board member Caroline Hyman; a tour of two East European-Jewish garment worker families' early 20th-century apartments at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum; a play featuring dramatizations of two short stories by Anton Chekhov and Lev Tolstoy; a concert by pop singer Lev Leshchenko in Brighton Beach; meetups with two of our 2019 alumni; and delicious Central Asian, Ukrainian, and Georgian cuisine. We hope you enjoy this photo gallery showing some of our many wonderful adventures!



ALUMNI CORNER

By Joey Kellner '09 and Mira Nikolova '13

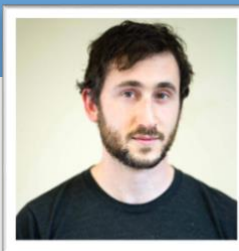
Reflections on the Russian major, from two graduates who, to their own surprise, now teach on Russian topics:

"History doesn't repeat, though it does sometimes rhyme—just as I graduated into a recession in 2009, so too will undergraduates leave Bowdoin now in uncertain times. I won't presume to know the best path for students (or society for that matter), but I can say that I'm glad I chose the Russian major. I began at Bowdoin in math, but after taking a Russian class I enjoyed, I reasoned: I'll major in Russian, leave school with a concrete skill, and keep an open mind about jobs. I took on faith that Russia is important and always will be; that international exchange and communication are good for the world; and that a subject I'm passionate about would at least present the possibility of enjoying work someday. After two years in an unrelated job just to pay my bills, I grew bored and sought any Russia-related work I could find. I translated for a time; I went to the North Caucasus to teach English; I applied to several grad schools for Russian history; and I enrolled in the one that accepted me. Ten years later, I'm teaching Soviet history to college students. All of this entailed enormous good fortune, to be sure. It also depended on the support of Bowdoin's Russian professors and our Russian historian Page Herrlinger, both while at Bowdoin and in the enduring friendships and mentorships that persist to this day. And now I'm in a place to do the same for my own students."

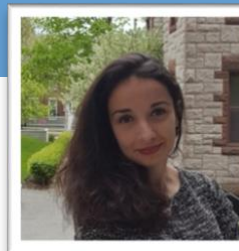
- Joey Kellner, Class of 2009

"In my case, the Russian major chose me as much as I chose it. As an international student from Bulgaria (but also one who had not studied any Russian), I never imagined I would major in a field that is so close to my own culture, especially while attending college abroad. I thought I would pursue neuroscience, or art history, or English. Once I took a class with the Russian Department, however, there was no turning back. The community I discovered through the program was fun and supportive and I enjoyed every class and opportunity to learn from both the professors and my peers. Before I knew it, I was majoring in Russian and I was soon off to pursue a Ph.D. in Slavic Studies. Choosing the Russian major did require a leap of faith, especially in this fluid global environment. It also became a way to revisit my own understanding of the Slavic world and my place in it. Now that I have wrapped up graduate school and I prepare to teach language and literature (at the place where it all started, Bowdoin!), I can only hope that I, too, can play a small part in the academic journey of a student. One who, much to everyone's surprise, ends up majoring in Russian."

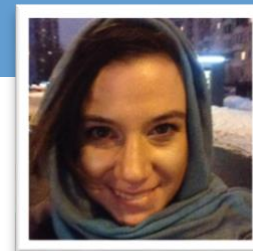
- Mira Nikolova, Class of 2013



Joey Kellner



Mira Nikolova



Anna Nutter

By Anna Nutter '12

Like so many of us, I fell into Russian accidentally. My grandmother had been a professor of literature and *The Brothers Karamazov* was one of her favorites. To please her, I read it and found it impossible.

At Bowdoin I majored in history and minored in African Studies. I found myself driven to understand how history shapes the ways that peoples and countries view their respective worlds and how they interact. After Bowdoin, I felt I wanted to eventually get my doctorate and so wanted some teaching experience. As a result, I became an ESL teacher in Moscow.

Moscow overwhelmed me that first year. Nobody smiled. The Khrushchovka apartment buildings all looked depressingly the same. And I never knew there could be quite so many varieties of mayonnaise. Then gradually, understanding Russia became my obsession. It really is the land of the two-headed eagle. For me, Russia was beautiful and yet starkly brutal. Deeply intellectual and yet impulsive. Harsh and yet sentimental.

My obsession has led me back to Russia multiple times. It has broadened beyond Russia, leading me to a Fulbright ETA in Ukraine and to studying at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, the only Ukrainian research body in the United States. This fall, I will be entering the REEES (Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia) M.A. program at Yale University. I was also fortunate enough to be given a FLAS graduate fellowship that will help fund my continued Russian language study.

My undergraduate education intimately structures my academic relationship with Russia and Russian Studies. Due to the education I got at Bowdoin, I may not always know something, but I have the research skills to figure it out and then synthesize the information. My one regret was that I did not study Russian at Bowdoin.

An Italian exchange student once told me that there are two groups of expats in Moscow: some quickly leave after their task has finished, largely unaffected by Russia. Then there are the others. They complain about so much about Russia: the winters, the bureaucracy, the bluntness. But they keep returning. The frustrating complexity, the weight of history, the acceptance of cognitive dissonance... it all becomes part of them. Perhaps because it echoes who they themselves are. I am part of that latter group. In my opinion, Bowdoin is the perfect place to join that group as well.

Our Students

2020 Graduates

Brennan Clark

Hometown: Minneapolis, MN
Majors: Russian and English

In his senior year, Brennan completed an independent study project researching Fyodor Tyutchev's poetry and translating it into English

Nat Deacon

Hometown: Warren, RI
Majors: Philosophy and Russian

Nat became interested in Russian after taking a course on the Russian novel as a sophomore

Miguel Diaz Segura

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA
Majors: Government and Legal Studies and Russian

Miguel hopes to work for Year Up, a non-profit that brings talented young adults and top companies together to build community and launch meaningful careers

Augustus Gilchrist

Hometown: Portsmouth, NH
Major: Russian

Augustus studied at the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg in spring 2019; he is the recipient of two silver medals in the ACTR Russian Essay Contest and a Fulbright ETA fellowship to Russia

Laura Howells

Hometown: Norwalk, CT
Majors: Government and Legal Studies and Russian

Laura studied on the ACTR program in Moscow in fall 2018; she has been awarded a Fulbright Study/Research Award to study cyber-security in Estonia

Artur Kalandarov

Hometown: Flushing, NY
Majors: Government and Legal Studies and Russian; Minor: History

Artur has received several major prizes for his scholarship and has published a comparative analysis of Soviet and German history during WWII

Kitrea Takata-Glushkoff

Hometown: El Sobrante, CA
Majors: Earth and Oceanographic Science and Russian

Kitrea studied in Irkutsk in spring 2020 and fell in love with the Lake Baikal region; she hopes to research climate change in the Russian Arctic

Honors Theses

Laura Howells: "Digital Authoritarianism in China and Russia: A Comparative Study"

Artur Kalandarov: "The Soviet and American Wars in Afghanistan: Applying Clausewitzian Concepts to Modern Military Failure"

Study Away

More and more of our students are having intensive Russian immersion experiences while studying away. Here is what they have been up to this past year (unfortunately, the spring semester programs were cut short but continued online):

ACTR Business Russian Program
Nat Deacon '20 (summer 2019)

Middlebury College Russian Institute
Brennan Clark '20 (summer 2019)

ACTR Russian Language Program
Evan Marrow '21 (spring 2020)

Middlebury in Russia in Irkutsk
Kitrea Takata-Glushkoff '19 (spring 2020)

SRAS Diplomacy and International Relations in Moscow
Justin Wishchel '21 (spring 2020)

Summer Internships

Our students pursue a variety of exciting opportunities beyond the classroom to broaden their experience in Russian-related fields. Many of these experiences are supported by Bowdoin fellowships.

Surdna Foundation Undergraduate Research Fellowship

Augustus Gilchrist '20 – "The Happiness that Redeems the Bitterness of Previous Pages": Mikhail Zoshchenko and the 19th-Century Russian Canon"

McKeen Center Bowdoin Public Service Fellowship

Artur Kalandarov '20 – Internship at the Cohen Group, Washington, DC

Laura Howells '20 – Research Assistant on U.S.-Russia-Europe relations at the Brookings Institution and data analysis work on Russian Presidential Grant Funding at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University

Departmental Prizes

Prize for Excellence in Russian Language and Literature

Augustus Gilchrist and Laura Howells (2020)

ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award

Artur Kalandarov (2019) and Kitrea Takata-Glushkoff (2020)



ELEMENTARY RUSSIAN STUDENTS SPORT RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT SPIRIT WEAR BEFORE THE FIRST TEST



STUDENTS AND FACULTY RECRUIT NEW RUSSIAN STUDENTS AT THE FALL ACADEMIC FAIR



STUDENTS AWAIT THE START OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S SWAN LAKE IN MERRILL AUDITORIUM IN PORTLAND



RUSSIAN STUDENTS ENJOY SOCIALIZING AT THE HOLIDAY PARTY IN DECEMBER



Clockwise from top left: Pushkin seminar students enjoy a home-cooked Russian meal, Professors Laura Henry (Gov) and Page Herrlinger (History), students socialize at our holiday party, Justin Winschel in Moscow, Professor Gillespie with Peter Lysenko (the very first instructor of Russian at Bowdoin, 1962-63), spring semester Zoom class

Alumni News

We celebrate the successes of our Bowdoin alumni:

Joey Kellner '09 will begin a tenure-track appointment in Russian History at the University of Georgia-Athens (July 2020)

Anna Nutter '12 has been admitted to the M.A. Program in European and Russian Studies at Yale University

Mira Nikolova '13 completed her Ph.D. in Slavic Studies at Brown University and has accepted a position as Visiting Lecturer of Russian at Bowdoin College for 2020-21

Melanie Tsang '13 received her Master of International Affairs degree at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs; she now works as an analyst at the Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General in NYC

Evan Gershkovich '14 is a reporter for *The Moscow Times*, an independent English-language news website covering Russia

Johanna Moody '17 attends Georgetown Law School, where she founded The Russian Law and Security Club

Jae-Yeon Yoo '18 is completing an MA in English at New York University; she is an editorial intern at NYU Press

Johna Cook '19 is a consultant at the Beacon Group in Portland

Zoe Shamis '19 works as a paralegal at the Major Economic Crimes Bureau of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in NYC

Stephen Pastoriza '19 is a Private Equity Analyst at Brown Brothers Harriman Capital Partners in NYC

Laura Howells '20 will be working as a Legal Analyst for Kobre and Kim in Washington, DC

Bowdoin Russian in the News

News articles that have featured our department during this past year:

[Essay Honors Add to Russian Department's Record Achievements](#)

[The Balkans Comes to Bowdoin](#)

[Laura Howells'20 Publishes Analysis of the Current State of Russian Civil Society](#)

[Artur Kalandarov '20 Publishes Scholarly Article on Soviet Germans and Soviets in Germany during World War II](#)

[Two Russian Majors Receive Prestigious Fulbright Grants](#)

[Senior Wins Foreign Policy Essay Contest](#)

[Russian Professors Poetry Translations Set to Music](#)

[Two Senior Russian Majors Recognized for Research Excellence](#)

Please Keep in Touch!

We are always happy to hear from our Bowdoin Russian Department alumni and grateful for your support. We would be very interested in having you visit campus to meet with current students to discuss the role of Russian in your career path or set up a long-distance internship or career mentorship for our students. We would also just love to hear from you and find out what you are up to! Please be in touch through the alumni page of our website. And if you have a creative idea that you would like to bring to life, please do let us know!

Find us on the web:

