

THE TRIANGLE of MU PHI EPSILON



Cover Feature:
Have Guitar, Will Travel

Musicological Research:
Black, White, and Elvis

ACME Advice to
Young Artists

Mu Phi Epsilon International Professional Music Fraternity is a coeducational fraternity whose aim is the advancement of music in the community, nation, and world through the promotion of musicianship, scholarship, and music education, with emphasis on service through music.

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on the cover:
Aaron Larget-Caplan with
"human statue" street performer
in St. Petersburg, Russia. Photo
by Barbara Tornow.

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IN MEMORIAM

Wynona Wieting Lipsett

March 28, 1939 – January 2, 2015

We are deeply saddened to report the passing of Wynona Lipsett after a short illness. She was a former president of both the Fraternity and Foundation, held countless other leadership positions, and was an inspiration to thousands. The spring *Triangle* will feature a full tribute. She is pictured receiving the fraternity's Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2014 convention.



Photo by Katherine Pfeiffer



Have Guitar, Will Travel To Russia With Love

By Aaron Larget-Caplan, *Beta*, Boston Alumni ALCGuitar.com

Last May I had the honor of participating in the *Days of American Culture in Russia*, a festival organized by the Educational Bridge Project (EBP). This was the second time I attended. In 2013, as the first guitarist accepted into the program, I had felt some hesitation. But that had disappeared after I performed and the directors made my acquaintance, and I received an invitation to return in 2014.

The 2014 schedule was packed. I arrived in Moscow on a Tuesday, checked into my quaint hotel close to the Bolshoi, and met with EBP director Dr. Ludmilla Leibman and board member Barbara Turnow. We visited the Kremlin and Red Square, and to get my strength back from travel, I ate some tasty Georgian food.

Show Time in Moscow

Wednesday evening I played a two-hour solo recital (with two encores) in Oval Hall at the State Foreign Library. My hospitable and knowledgeable library liaison Nina Borisova treated me royally. The room's high ceiling was perfect for a solo recital, and the walls were lined with books behind locked glass doors. On closer inspection I found that the books were mostly in German and quite old, and learned that they were brought to Russia after WWII. At that moment, being an artistic bridge via music took on a different meaning. The books and the space represent vastly different cultures, and though they can bring people together, the trophies came at a cost. I was moved to find myself in such a culturally historic setting, full of both love and loss.

Oval Hall was full for the recital, with over a hundred attendees of all ages and social levels. The diverse program featured music from 19th century to today and from seven countries, including three Russian premieres and a contemporary Japanese work. The audience was receptive to the modern music; though



the musical languages were not standard, dances and lullabies do not intimidate. I introduced the compositions with translation provided by Dr. Leibman, and even enjoyed a little banter with the audience before the encores. After the concert I spoke with new fans and explored the sounds of my Sicilian-made instrument with them.



Masterclass with host Sergei Matokhin

Prior to Thursday's concert I traveled to north Moscow to teach a master class at the State University of Arts and Culture. Two young guitarists performed a duet by Mario Castelnuovo-

Tedesco, and their fine technique, spirited performance, and openness to new musical ideas made for a pleasant time. The master class was attended by instrumentalists of all stripes, not just guitarists, which impressed me. I was grateful for my translators' ability to convey my guitar lingo to the non-guitarists.

That evening's performance was given to another full house. Dr. Leibman opened with a brief history of the Educational Bridge Project and showed her piano prowess with a Chopin mazurka. This was a collaborative performance, and though it was a lot of work and a bit nerve-wracking, I found it rewarding and hope to do it again both in Russia and the U.S. After a colorful reception, the three Americans boarded the Red Arrow, an overnight train to St. Petersburg that was formerly part of

the Orient Express. Wondering who was around each corner felt exciting and a bit mysterious. My time in historic Moscow was done. I did not get into political discussions nor did I worry for my safety. However, watch out for the \$10 cappuccino!



St. Petersburg Shines

We disembarked in St. Petersburg early Saturday morning, and the morning light on the city immediately stole my heart. With six days to explore and work, I had time to walk along the many rivers that flow quietly next to refurbished palaces. I ducked in and out of cafés, heard music in the Grand Philharmonic, visited museums, and lounged in the parks watching people enjoy the late spring sun. The city is a beautiful cultural center with many performance venues, light after midnight, and the magic of summer on the tip of the tongue.

My performances in St. Petersburg were shared with other EBP participants from Boston, Cambridge, and New York as well as local Russians. My main performance included some of the contemporary works I'd played in Moscow, Spanish pieces, a tango, and the world premiere of *Concert Champêtre* by Thomas L. Read for cello and guitar, a nine-minute single-movement work full of rhythmic vitality and melodic beauty. Its complexity and nuance require both players to be tip top. Thankfully I had the great honor of working alongside Anton Andreev, cellist with the Rimsky-Korsakov String Quartet. We rehearsed for three days, and the premiere took



Anton Andreev and Andrew at St. Petersburg Conservatory

place at the Rimsky-Korsakov St. Petersburg Conservatory as part of a contemporary music concert. (The *Concert Champêtre* score is to be published soon by the American Composers Association with the guitar part edited by me, and I hope it will be performed widely in the U.S. and abroad.)

Continued from page 5

Spontaneous collaboration

A spontaneous collaboration with Russian painter Luba Kostenko was one of the festival's high points for me. I had played a salon concert at her studio in 2013, and returned in 2014 for a similar but smaller event. After the performance, while we ate and sipped vodka, Luba told me that when younger she would often go to the Marinsky Theater during rehearsals and paint the musicians. She found the musical sounds and the rehearsal structure to be complimentary to her work. So I returned the next day and for 45 minutes I played while she drew. We were each other's only audience, and we fed each other as artists do. While she filled her sketchbook and then larger paper on her easel, the afternoon light colored the walls and I filled the room with Bach, Mertz, Spanish dances, Gershwin, and contemporary works. Later we discussed the arts and the world. I have always dreamed about and yearned for such an experience in my life as artist, and this brief but intense artistic adventure embodies my creative life, for which I am grateful.



Aaron, Luba and her Creation



With the Queen

Catherine's Magnificent Palace

Other festival events included a daylong cross-cultural collaboration at Baltic State University, with performances by Americans and Russians and wonderful essays and history lessons about the surrounding area given by our young hosts. A concert at the Izmailovsky Library saw our youngest participant (age 16) perform his own composition for trumpet and piano. I found an audience thirsty for guitar and received many autograph requests, not an everyday occurrence.

On the last day, Mikhail Bondarev, first violin of the Rimsky-Korsakov String Quartet, treated me to a day at Catherine's Palace in Pushkin, just south of St. Petersburg. For the first time in many days, I did not have my guitar on my back; I traveled as a tourist and had to decline requests for me to play after Mikhail introduced me. I found myself in awe of the grand historic residence's beauty and history. The palace was destroyed in WWII and has been completely rebuilt based on pictures, drawings, and paintings done before the war. Returned to its former grandeur – with exuberant colors, meticulously maintained gardens, and exquisite architectural details – Catherine's Palace was the perfect way to close such a glorious musical adventure.

Acknowledgements

A great depth of gratitude goes to festival founder and director Ludmilla Leibman. She organizes the concerts, raises the funds, and makes sure we try Russian foods. Barbara Tornow also deserves a big thank you for her hosting skills. Many more people in the U.S. and Russia ensure that the festival stays true to its mission of using the arts as an educational bridge between cultures. The Educational Bridge Project and a Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation Eleanor Hale Wilson Summer Scholarship provided me with financial support to attend. To both of these organizations I say

Thank you
Спасибо
[spaseeba]

