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Superstitions, Russian

Sibelan E. S. Forrester

Swarthmore College, sforres1@swarthmore.edu

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espied in their fiction have not lost their relevance for a new generation, and the Strugatskii's novels are continually in print, while an active on-line fan club is devoted to all aspects of Strugatskiana.

See also: fiziki-liriki (scientist-poets); Gagarin, Iurii; science fiction; Stagnation; Thaw

YVONNE HOWELL

Sturua, Robert

b. 31 July 1938, Tbilisi, Georgia

Director

A spiritual disciple of Sandro Akhmeteli, the founder of modern Georgian theatre, Sturua applies intrinsic national qualities to all authors, whether Bertolt Brecht (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, 1975), Shakespeare (*King Lear*, 1987) or Carlo Gozzi (*The Serpent Woman*, 1998). As such, his work may be compared to Akira Kurosawa's cinematic adaptations of world literature. Artistic director of the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia, since 1979, Sturua often works in Moscow, where he has staged Mikhail Shatrov's *Brestskii mir* (*The Peace at Brest*, 1988), Carlo Goldoni's *Signor Todero Brontolone* (2002), Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* (2002), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1998), *The Merchant of Venice* (2000) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2004).

See also: Georgia; theatre, post-Soviet

JOHN FREEDMAN

subbotnik

Subbotnik, from the word *subbota* (Saturday), is voluntary collective work useful to the community, originally scheduled on Saturdays. Lenin considered Communist *subbotniks* the real beginning of Communism. The first *subbotnik* was organized by railway workers on 12 April 1919 to answer Lenin's call 'to work the revolutionary way'. It prompted a mass movement that soon spread throughout the country. During World War II *subbotniks* were transformed into *voskresniki*

(Sunday). Later, *subbotniks* were called Lenin's *subbotniks* and throughout the Soviet period they took place on 22 April (Lenin's birthday). Today this form of volunteer work is used to foster a corporate spirit in companies, universities, or cities.

See also: Communist Party; Communist ideology; Lenin, Vladimir Ilich; World War II (Great Patriotic War)

ELENA OMELCHENKO

superstitions, Russian

Many Russian superstitions resemble Western beliefs – a black cat means bad luck, and not only for village peasants. Poet Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin was famously superstitious, reportedly escaping direct involvement in the Decembrist uprising, and thus punishment or exile, when omens dissuaded him from a planned trip to St. Petersburg. Superstitions survive from a more fully elaborated Russian folk mythology, such as belief in the Evil Eye (*sglaz*) and persons with the power, intentional or not, to cast it. Superstitions combine recurring elements with local variations and idiosyncratic additions (like a basketball player's lucky shorts); traditional superstitions mix with contemporary and imported elements. Omens (*primety*) both predict the future and determine behaviour (take the first step with your right, 'lucky' foot). While some are familiar in other traditions, others are specific to Russia: a bachelor who holds out his teacup for a serving without the saucer will remain unmarried. Not 'speaking of the devil' is a prominent concern (paradoxically in a culture with a rich, semi-taboo language of swear words, *mat*). After a slip of the tongue or pen that threatens someone's health or welfare, or an optimistic statement on these subjects, many Russians say or write 'Tfu, tfu, tfu!' – 'spitting' three times over the left shoulder, into the eye of the demon there, so as not to tempt fate (*ne sglazit*). Interpreting dreams is popular, combining fortune-telling with the pleasure of social ritual. Dream books (*sonniki*) and other such popular works were suppressed in the Soviet Union but are now widely published. Young

people may employ love spells or spells to pass examinations. The common nervousness about draughts recalls the belief that witches or sorcerers 'cast' illness onto the wind. To keep off the evil eye (in New Age terms, 'negative energy') a Russian may wear a safety pin upside-down inside her clothes.

See also: folk mythology

SIBELAN FORRESTER

Sverdlovskaia oblast

See: Ekaterinburg

Svetlanov, Evgenii Fedorovich

b. 6 June 1928, Moscow; d. 4 May 2002, Moscow

Conductor, composer, pianist

Svetlanov was born into a family of opera singers. His parents were soloists in the Bolshoi Theatre. As a boy Svetlanov participated in the children's choir, acting in many opera performances. After graduating from Moscow Conservatory, where he studied conducting (with Aleksandr Gauk), composition (with Iurii Shaporin) and piano (with Genrikh Neigauz) and after a few years with Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, Svetlanov returned to the Bolshoi (1955). In 1962, he became chief conductor and in 1964 led the tour of the Bolshoi to La Scala, which was the turning point of the theatre's history and brought it worldwide fame. Svetlanov conducted at the Bolshoi until the end

of his life, and, from 1965 on, also the State Symphony Orchestra, which for three decades was known as '*Svetlanov's orchestra*'. The monument to these years is a great cycle of recordings, '*An Anthology of Russian Symphonic Music*', begun in the 1960s and ending with Svetlanov's final days.

See also: Bolshoi Theatre; Moscow Conservatory; orchestras, Soviet and post-Soviet

KIRA NEMIROVSKAYA

Sviridov, Georgii Vasilevich

b. 3 [16] December 1915, Fatezh, Kursk oblast; d. 6 January 1998, Moscow

Composer, pianist

A musical nationalist, Leningrad Conservatory graduate, and student of Shostakovich, Sviridov wrote music in the nineteenth-century endemic tradition of Glinka, Mussorgskii, and Rimskii-Korsakov. His approach to folk music differs from theirs, however, for he believed that the peasantry's music would emancipate and free the composer. Sviridov's output is large, and his greatest legacy is considered his choral works set to words of folk texts or those of twentieth-century Russian poets. Particular significant is his monumental *Pesnopeniia i molitvy* (*Canticles and Prayers*, 1987–97), in the rich tradition of Rachmaninov's *Vsenoshchnoe bdenie* (*Vespers*, 1915).

See also: Shostakovich, Dmitrii; St. Petersburg Conservatory

DAVID GOMPPER