



Russophiles celebrate culture, Rasputin

Borsht, pirogi and "Russia's greatest love machine"

BY HEATHER-ANNE MATTSON

Russia may be an ocean away, but a little bit of the country found its way to Halifax this weekend.

Russophiles and Russians alike gathered last Saturday at All Nations Christian Reformed Church as part of the Dalhousie department of Russian Studies' annual Russian Night.

The evening of poetry, dance, songs and plays is an event for students to display their appreciation of Russian language, culture and literature, as well as for Russians to share a love of their culture with the Halifax community.

The night included performances by students and professors from the Dalhousie Russian department, as well as by Russians from the community. Featured were acts ranging from Russian folk dances to recitations

of poems by Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin.

Also deserving special mention was a rousing puppet show set to Boney M's disco interpretation of the life of one of

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Russia's most dubious figures, Rasputin. In the estimation of Boney M, PhD, Rasputin was "Russia's greatest love machine".

Following the entertainment a Russian meal prepared by students and professors was served — the creation of which began early Saturday morning. The preparation of such Russian culinary mainstays as borsht, pirogi and sweet bread gave students a chance to learn about aspects of Russian culture that can't be taught in the

classroom.

Dalhousie's Russian Nights date back to World War Two, when the department of Russian Studies was founded. While at that time the evening consisted of a formal tea in pre-revolutionary aristocratic style, Russian night has since, perhaps at the influence of the worldwide proletarian conspiracy, taken the more plebeian programme of entertainment, followed by a Russian meal of peasant tastes.

Irina Kasianov, a Russian Haligonian who regularly performs at these events, said Russian Night gives her a chance to revisit Russia's heritage.

"I really appreciate the work that students and professors put into the event and I am impressed by how much students know of the classic Russian writers. I also appreciate the chance to meet our culture again here, so far from our motherland... many Russians here appreciate this."



"Ladies, all the ladies, hoo-ahh!" Rasputin proving that personal hygiene is not the most important thing women want in a man.

Home in the highlands

A cornucopia of Gaelic talent

BY JANET FRENCH

Where can you see every traditional Nova Scotian stereotype packed into one show?

If not at the Lower Deck, then for sure at *Highland Heritage*, a show that took to the stage of the Rebecca Cohn last Saturday.

Highland Heritage was a variety show of sorts, featuring the talents of the Amethyst Scottish Dancers of Nova Scotia and an assortment of other impressive musical guests.

The evening began with a 'down the aisle' procession by the Dartmouth Junior Pipe and Drum band, followed by the Amethyst dancers. If you think one set of bagpipes is loud, try 12. Although slightly headache-inducing, the band was fantastic, and featured some amazing synchronized drumming. The dancers also performed "Sword Dance for Sixteen", a lively traditional piece.

The evening continued with a variety of performers playing pieces of their choice, followed by their accompaniment to the Amethyst dance troupe. Cheryl O'Hagan performed the traditional tune "She Moved Through the Fair" beautifully on the harp. Buddy MacMaster, known as Master of the Fiddle, performed with his daughter Mary Elizabeth MacInnis, treating the crowd to some cheerful traditional fiddle music. MacMaster and MacInnis were then joined by Blair MacDonald, a fifteen year old step dancing prodigy from Mabou.

John Allan Cameron, connoisseur of Celtic Music, followed with an amusing anecdote of a tune his mother used to sing

while milking cows. Finally, the first half of the evening concluded with a set of songs from Slainte Mhath and, naturally, more dancing from Amethyst.

The second half of the show featured more music from MacMaster, Cameron, Slainte Mhath and a lively step dance from Amethyst entitled "East Coast Ceilidh". Also performing in the second half was the Antigonish Gaelic Choir, who sang a set of traditional gaelic songs.

The show concluded with a finale, featuring the entire cast of musicians playing together. The finale also featured the piece "Signature" by the Amethyst dancers, which they perform at the end of every show they do.

The performance included a great deal of highland dancing and step dancing from Amethyst, which was enjoyable — but bordered on overkill.

The music, rather than the dancing, was the highlight of the evening. The lively tunes left the audience with sore hands by the end of the evening from all the enthusiastic clapping along.

It was pleasing to see that artists are working hard to preserve the traditions, heritage and culture of Nova Scotia. The proceeds from ticket sales were donated to the Celtic Studies departments of Saint Mary's University and St. Francis Xavier University, so all the fun was for a good cause. Most importantly, both the audience and the performers seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, showing that there is something great about those stereotypes after all.



Percy the Penguin gets a little Woody at the Grawood.

Halifax today, tomorrow the world

Wooderson makes Halifax and Percy the Penguin proud

BY REGAN MACPHEE

What were you doing on Friday the 13th? If you weren't partying at the Grawood with the rest of us then you missed Halifax's best kept secret.

Although Wooderson has been together for almost a year, they have yet to get the recognition they deserve. With a self-described groovy acoustic sound that appeals to even the most discerning of listeners, the band engages their fans with up-beat melodies and thoughtful lyrics.

As a group, one of Wooderson's best qualities is their flair for incorporating individuality into each performance. Although each show has a set repertoire, the band likes to experiment on stage. A song that normally runs five minutes may suddenly turn into an impromptu jam session.

In the band's opinion, Wooderson is "always on the edge of falling apart, but somehow manages to hold on". What results is the audience's sense of being a part of something special.

Friday night was no exception. You can't help but smile when you watch these guys on stage. Their enthusiasm is contagious and if you're not out on the dance floor, chances are you're groovin' in your chair.

Although inspired by the likes of musical legends Ricky Lee Jones and John Denver, the group does not like to make direct comparisons to other artists. Their sound is unique. While Kristen Hatt writes about family and close, personal issues, Tim Walker gravitates towards taking a thought and expanding it. Wooderson's lyrics are open metaphors, and listeners are able to interpret them as they choose.

As for long term goals, the group's answers are as varied as their personalities: from Bob Cornwall's "avoiding day jobs" to Bob Deveau's "going all the way — next stop, the world".

But one thing they all agreed upon was releasing their independently-produced CD by the beginning of February. With open

access to recording equipment, Wooderson plans to record all of their songs and then pick their favourites for the CD. If the CD is anything like Wooderson's shows, it will definitely be worth shelling out a few dollars for.

Unfortunately last Friday's performance was not indicative of the energy usually felt at a Wooderson show. The crowd was fairly apathetic — that is until the band played their perennial favourite, "My Majesty". At the distinctive chime of Kristen's mandolin, people swiftly got to their feet and the Grawood got jumpin'.

With growing talent and extremely-danceable, thoroughly-enjoyable songs like "Better Days", "Red Light Pressure" and the aptly named "Happy Song", Wooderson is sure to be around for a long, long time. So if Friday the 13th passed by without giving Wooderson a listen, come join mascot Percy the Penguin and the rest of the Wooderson faithful on Nov. 28 at the Attic. You won't regret it.

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