RUSSIAN POETRY
READ IN RUSSIAN

BY
LARISSA GATOVA

Larissa Gatova enjoys tremendous prestige among the Russians in America. When the Russian workers in Detroit were informed that she was to give a recital of Russian poetry in their city, they printed and distributed playbills headed "Russian Men! Salute the great Russian actress!"

Where is a secret of her artistic influence?

Her diploma in the College of Dramatic Art was signed, among others, by the great Maria Savina, who, with Vladimir Davydov, admired the young actress's early performances. In the first and terrible years of the Russian upheaval, she rapidly conquered the stage, already disturbed by opposing influences. She played tragic and dramatic roles in the theater named in the honor of the late Vera Komisarjevsky, in the theater of Bailleiff, in the studio of the Moscow Art Theater, in the spectaculars of the Moscow Art Theater itself, and in the theater of Sinelnikov. She was marvellous in the dramatic roles of Ostrovsky, Tchekhov and Burgutchev, but she attained the heights when she had occasion to play in Greek tragedy. She had already developed a passion to recite the great works of Russian poetry. At current exhibit in the New York Library dedicated to Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theater, one could find her name on one of the playbills. Stanislavsky prepared her for the role of Eve in the Byron's Cain, but circumstances external to the Theater stopped its production, already staged. She played in the poet Kuzmin's play "A knight who lost the soul of his wife in a game with the devil," where Gatova is the unfortunate wife. She played also principal roles in the Russian films. We present here her photos in the film "Glossia" based on the text of Kuprin, with Moscow Art Theater artists Muratova and Boleslavsky, and in the film "The Lame Gentleman" based on the text of Isei Tolstoy, with Moscow Art Theater artists Aylanov and Zeland.

In exile she played leading roles in Russian theaters in Riga and Tallin, and on the ephemeral Russian stage in Paris. But in exile she developed her unheard of mastery of the reciting of Russian poetry.

She was aided by her exceptional memory. She gave scores of recitals with a wide repertory of poetry. She knows by heart some 3000 pages of the poems of old and modern Russian poets from Pushkin to Blok, from Blok to Kirsanov. Sometimes she introduced in these recitals her favorite scenes from the great tragedies. She recited and played the Medea of Euripides, Antigone of Sophocles, Maria Stuart of Schiller, Sister Beatrice of Masterlinck, Catherine of Ostrovsky. In certain cases she played two roles, as for Maria and Elisabeth by Schiller or Mozart and Salieri by Pushkin. Nobody listening with closed eyes could believe that only one actress was playing both. She astounded all the critics by reciting with elfin ease the poem "Cinderella" of Kirsanov which requires sixty minutes to read— all without any note or book.

The word of "genius" was often uttered about this extraordinary actress, who today gives us eighteen masterpieces of classical Russian poetry. The poems of Pushkin, Lermontov, Tyutcheff, Fet, and Nekrasov and several lines from the artistic prose of Gogol are included in a record submitted to the American public. They are supplemented by their Russian text and by English translations.

B.G.
Larissa Gatova, without the aid of special costumes and scenery, plays alone both roles of Mozart and Gallieri, in the dramatic poem of 'Rusalka'.

A reveller of genius, Mozart, and a scientific architect of music, Gallieri, writing in envy of Mozart, alternates before our eyes, making it seem natural that in the single body of Gatova reside two souls.

And here something supernatural occurs. The pianist seated on the stage plays twice for Mozart. But Mozart-Gatova is also here, in the chair, and his face continues the fatal game. And nobody in the audience finds it strange that Mozart has two bodies, as the Egyptian mummy has two souls.

The audience is bewitched by Gatova, and dares not believe that someone else is playing the piano. And the wise, cunning, tragic face of Gallieri shines like a torch in the hall of the high priest of the God of Vengeance. He is full of the passion for his future victim, Mozart, but also full of anxiety to save all composers from the competition of this dangerous and crazy genius.

In the 'Masquerade' of Lemontov, Gatova-Nina, in antique lace lightly gilded, speaks not only in the word of Lemontov. She speaks as much in the musical, infinitely various, and monstrously truthful movements of her fingers and turns of her shoulders.

Her suffering and faithful soul finally vanquishes the vindictive and demoniacal friendship of Arsenin. How did this actress impersonate a few minutes ago Don Juan, Learpello, and Donna Anna, and force us to imagine, without scenery, a church, a sepulchre, and the Stony Guest?

Larissa Gatova reaches her highest point of heroic and religious power in the monologue of the Chairman in the 'Feast During the Flagge' of Pushkin, and in the revelations that she finds in Alexander Blok.

She re-creates for us the Blok of the Beautiful Dame, of the Unknown Lady Stranger, the Blok of his youth, bewitched by the philosophy of Vladimir Soloviev and by the spectral and sinful city. And also she re-creates the Blok of the mysterious thousand years of Russia, and the Blok resurrecting the medieval mysteries of the knights in 'The Rose and the Cross', as never was done before him.

"The Rose and the Cross" of Gatova could move the knightly stone statues of the Gothic cathedrals. A kind of new and elusive kinship with Pushkin is heard in the rhythm and in the ring of this noble medieval poem-mystery of Blok.

The Middle Ages, their paths, their supreme self-renunciation, are perceived by Pushkin otherwise than by Blok. But Gatova finds a trail connecting the two great poets, and finds in Blok the heritage of the images of Pushkin. In the same manner, many are finding the magic of the nature images of Nicholas in Wordsworth and Chateaubriand.

The "Feast During the Flagge" by Larissa Gatova reveals itself as the feast of the millions of years of life on earth, the feast of our days in the shadow of atomic explosions. And behind the courageous words, behind the 'Ode to Joy' by the chairman of this ill-opened feast, rings not the real 'Ode to Joy' of Schiller and Beethoven, but the demoniacal ruse of Irvoy, the laugh of Nefligshyphes from the 'Nephtysto Value' of Liszt.

Gatova seeks and finds in Blok and Pushkin the theory of an occult art conjuring a demonic and frightful nature.

She reads—or she plays—(with these both reading identical) the words of Tyutcheff on chaos stirring under tempests which fell asleep. In the monologue of Sophocles' Antigone she challenges the laws of men in the name of the divine commands of fraternal love and of Natural Law.

One can feel her deep religiosity verified by philosophical thought. Her creativity is rebellious, searching for the truth and for mystery, and full of faith in occult religion of an Eternal Beauty.

The secret of the creative work of Larissa Gatova lies in the limitless religious seriousness with which she has worked for many years over her voice, gestures, mimetic art, and intonations. In full command of her material after long and diligent application, not forgetting a single intonation, she has an elfin ease and freedom. And she gives freely and lightly to the spectator all that she has succeeded in creating.

On the impassable roads of a Russian exile, as from a mist, appeared her tragic mask and rang a voice for whom Tyutcheff, Pushkin, Blok, -- the magic of Russian verse--is a mysterious and eternal cosmic reality.

Her creative art is pierced by the lights of the prophetic revelation of Beauty and Truth. In this manner, in the "Symposium" of Plato, Dionysia and Socrates pass from Beauty to the Supreme Good. Gatova, in her creative art, reverently dedicates herself to the eternal images of poets, like the antique menadon to the ever elusive face of Dionysus.

Boris Gourevitch

"The day" ("Ter Top"), December 21, 1932.

I can hardly imagine a stranger place for reciting poems by Pushkin and mystical verses by Blok than on Broadway.

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in the center of New York.
And nevertheless for several days already I have been under the spell of the marvelous evening which I spent in a small salon of a New York hotel in which the noted Russian actress Larissa Gatova recited a cycle of poems of great Russian poets.
It is difficult to communicate the impression made by these Russian poems rendered by that talented actress with such finesse, such tender lyricism and with such compelling, extatical pathos.
The movingly lyrical song of Pet's admirable lines: "Whispering, kind breathing. A nightingale's trills!" echoes in your ears, and you feel a nostalgic breath of youth which passed forever - and of old time Russia.
And now a tragic struggle of the Russian people against the Tartar yoke comes to life before you, essayed by the genius of the great poet Alexander Blok in his immortal poem "On the Kulikovo battlefield," and I remember the face of the late poet himself as I saw him in 1918 reciting before a large audience of revolutionary Moscow his famous poem "The Twelve." And it seems to me that a whole century, and not 34 years, passed since that day...
You are still under the unforgettable charm of Blok's poetry, when Gatova, with her bewitching voice and admirable play of her face and hands already introduces you into a different world, the world of trashnovsk's "Russian Women," those tragic heroines, the wives of the Bolshevik revolutionaries who, in 1866, followed their husbands to faraway Siberia.
One image succeeds another, one poem after another bewitches you, and when you recover from the overpowering spell, you suddenly realize that you are sitting in a hotel in New York, among a hundred of Russian intellectuals assembled there, who, like you yourself, came here to relive together and, possibly, reexperience the feelings of the youth gone forever, the memory of Russia forever veiled and obscured...

All our gratitude goes to the marvelous Larissa Gatova for these admirable two hours of spiritual feast which, in this prosaic New York, I spent with her and, thanks to her, in the company of Pushkin, Solzhenitzyn, Blok, Tyncheff, Ostrovsky and Turgenev.

These two hours I am going to remember for a very long time.

NOVOSTNOYE SLOVO, December 11, 1952.
Boris Gourevitch

Larissa Gatova's recitals of Russian poetry are so very uncommon that it is not easy for me to discover the nature of the deep artistic enjoyment which possesses the audience.

Her recitals do not belong to the realm of ordinary to the theater, Gatova acts with her voice, her facial expressions, the movements of her body, her hands and shoulders. She plays in the sense of the reactions of the religious mysteries of old. She throws away all that is unsuited to the theater, -- rigid Peruvian poems, the dead beauty of description. By instinct she revises and sets aside by side poems pierced through by the flaming thread of a common emotion. It seems that she creates a living unity from several borrowed poems as the poet creates his poem out of words.

Gatova plays both Mozart and Salieri, as if her body were possessed by two souls. And the spectator forgets that there are not two artists before him. This magical ability of taking from every hero the inner sanctum of his feelings and passions, and of forcing everybody to forget that one single actress plays for two, creates miracles. Blok's "The Rose and the Cross," Pushkin's "The tragedy of Udina, prince of Issiri," Ophelion's "Antigone," Tyncheff's "Emilie, from Essen to the emir of Klenovsky... In all of them Gatova avidly seeks and finds lines trembling with life, passion, sorrow and wisdom, she gives herself up to them, as though in the trances of some Delphic inspiration.

I cannot forget, and remember again the millenary majesty of Blok's "Divan" as recited by Gatova.

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

Maksim Vasilyevich

The Bronze Horseman
A tale of Petersburg
1831
Introduction.
Before the wilderness of waves, Invoking thinking full of greatness, He stood and peered into space. The river drifted very broadly. A poor and solitary skiff Was seen while scudding on the river. Upon it swayed, mossy shores Appeared a few poor, blackish shackles-- The shelters of the pitiable natives; The sun was hidden by the clouds, The woods, untouched by rays of light, Were howling under the wind.
And thought he: From thither shall we threaten Sweden. A city will be laid and built In spite of our naughty neighbor. And nature's destiny for us: To make a window on Europe, To put the foot on the seashore. Ships of the world will visit us Over these waves for them unknown; There will be feasts in this wide space.
One century. The youthful city, Miracle and beauty of the North, Arose in pride, and stood in splendor. Both from the darkness of the woods And from the swamps of endless marshes. There, where the Finnish fisher- man, A mourning step of the forest, Alone on the loveland of the shores Cast his decrepit old fish-net Into unknown somber waters,

- On the bright, vivacious, board-walks Are crowded sightly edifices Of towers and of palaces; the ships In crowds, from far-lightening countries Are rushing to the wealthy harbours. Neva is clothed in granite; The bridges hang over the waters; The gardens in the darkest green Are far and near over the islands. Old Moscovia became so dim Before the young and reigniting city--

Old widow in her poryphy Before the consort of the Tsar.
I love you, work of the great Peter, I love your stern, well-fashioned face, The river's streams majestic flow, Granite of shores on the Neva, Cast-iron pattern of enclosures, Transparent twilight, moonless Of thoughtful nights in which I can Both write and read without light. The heaps of sleeping streets are clear, Deserted in the night, and bright Is the Admiralty spire. One dawn hastens to replace Another dawn, in preventing The night from climbing in the golden sky, The night endures for half an hour. I like the frost and air insomniable Of the ferocious winter days, The girls with rosy darne faces, The glitter, noise, and talks of balls.
And in the hour of the party Among the bachelors, at night, The fizzle of all the fauns goblets, And the blue flame of the punch-bowl.
I like the martial animation of the parade on the Field of Mars,

- The monotony and the beauty Of infantry and of the horses; In their well-shaped, rippled ranks The glory of the victorious banners, And radiance of the copper caps, Shot through and through on Russian battlefields.
I love, O martial capital, Your fortress's thunder and the smoke When the Tsarina of the North Cavalry goes to the Tsar's house,

- Or if a victory in war Is celebrated by the Russians, Or when, by breaking bluish ice, Neva bears it straight to the sea,
МЕДЛЯ БЛЯДЯ.

Петербургская повесть.

ВСТУПЛЕНИЕ.

Из берегу ругом я бы вышел, из берегу в киеве, из берегу в киеве.

В 1857-1860.

A Poem by
Alexander Pushkin
I Loved You Once
You Was Lubi!

Ly a slip of the tongue she replaced
The empty seat by the cordial thrust.
And I felt my heart to be quiet;
For it would seem that love still
 lingered here;
But do not you be further troubled by it;

What jealous pangs, what shy despair
I know;
A love as deep as this, as true,
as tender,
God grant another may yet offer you.
(1829)

In passing by, a prince will capture
A redoubtable and terrible king;
There in the clouds in sight of the crowd,
Through the forests and through the sea,
A sorcerer carries a robust hero;
A princess grieves in darkest dungeon,
And the hirsute wolf attends her.

A. C. КУФКИН

ΡΕΣΑΪΑ Χ ΛΟΔΩΠΙΑ
/Отрывок из первой песни./

ПОСВЯЩЕНИЕ.

Для вас, душа честной, узниці, узниці, моего дружка.
В часы тепловатые, в часы тепловатые, в часы тепловатые.

А. С. КУФКИН

I would in no wise hurt you, oh,
my dearest.

Alexander Pushkin
Excerpt from the first canto of the Poem
"Russian and Latvian"
At the Curved Seashore/ At "Lokomoyre"/ At the Fairy Seaside Forest/
A green oak is standing on the curved seashore;
A golden chain rings this green oak.
And day and night a learned tocat
Is running around on this chain.
When he goes to rest he wins a song,
When he goes to let, a fairy tale.

There are the wonders: the wood goblin is roaring,
A mermaid is sitting on a branch;
There, on the unknown paths,
There are the slopes of unseen beeches.
A but so small, on chicken feet,
Is standing without doors and windows;
The dale and forest are full of visions;
At the dawn, the sea waves will run over
The boardwalk, empty, full of sand.
And thirty knights of splendid beauty
In turn appear from the clear sea,
With their maritime undertaker.

Alexander Pushkin
Thou and You*

I say to her, "How nice you are!"
But I think, "Now I love thy!"
(1829)

In Russian, tender feelings among lovers, in or close friends are expressed by the pronoun Ty (thou).

Translated by
Boris Gourevitch

and
Lee Culpepper

Alexandrovian, Selected and Edited by Avram Tarnopolsky.


A. C. КУФКИН

Я вас люблю, люблю еще, быть может,
В душа честная, узница твоя.
И мы не будем преграждаться;
На пути оных нами воскресем;
Я вас люблю беспредельно, безмерно,
Та радость, то трепетное томление,
Я вас люблю так восхищаюсь, так наслаждаюсь,
Как бы там бог любовью был другим.

A. C. КУФКИН

STRAKHA X LODIKAPA
/Отрывок из первой песни.

ПОСВЯЩЕНИЕ.

Для вас, душа честного, узница, для вас одна,
В часы тепловатой, в часы тепловатой, в часы тепловатой.

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В часы тепловатой, в часы тепловатой, в часы тепловатой.

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В душа честная, узница твоя.
И мы не будем преграждаться;
На пути оных нами воскресем;
Я вас люблю беспредельно, безмерно,
Та радость, то трепетное томление,
Я вас люблю так восхищаюсь, так наслаждаюсь,
Как бы там бог любовью был другим.
A Poem by Alexander Pushkin

Winter Evening

Elegy

The mirth, now dead, that once
Like tunes of last night’s cups
Not so the griefs that to those
Like wine, I find, with age
to sorrowing toll

A Poem of Alexander Pushkin

To Kern

I remember the instant of marvel
You appeared alone before me,
In the agitation of the noisy bustle,
Long I remembered your voice so tender,
And dreamed of your beloved deadest face.

The years were passing. The restless gust of tempests
Dispersed all my former dreams,
Let us drink, dear old companion,
Who shared my sorrow start;
Get the mug and drown our troubles;
That’s the way to cheer the heart.

A Poem of Alexander Pushkin

To Kern

I remember the instant of marvel;
You appeared alone before me,
Like a fugitive, fleeting vision,
Like a spirit of innocent beauty.

Elegy

The mirth, now dead, that once was madly bubbling,
Like tunes of last night’s cups was vacantly troubling;
Not so the griefs that to those years belong;
Like wine, I find, with age they grow more strong.
My path is bleak—before me stretch my sorrows;

A Poem of Alexander Pushkin

To Kern

I remember the instant of marvel
You appeared alone before me,
Like a fugitive, fleeting vision,
You appeared alone before me,

The mirth, now dead, that once
Like tunes of last night’s cups
Not so the griefs that to those
Like wine, I find, with age
My path is bleak—before me stretch my sorrows;

A Poem of Alexander Pushkin

To Kern

I remember the instant of marvel;
You appeared alone before me,
Like a fugitive, fleeting vision,
Like a spirit of innocent beauty.

In the agitation of hopeless sadness,
In the agitation of the noisy bustle,
Long I remembered your voice so tender,
And dreamed of your beloved deadest face.

I remember the instant of marvel;
You appeared alone before me,
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I remember the instant of marvel;
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Like a fugitive, fleeting vision,
Like a spirit of innocent beauty.

In the agitation of hopeless sadness,
In the agitation of the noisy bustle,
Long I remembered your voice so tender,
And dreamed of your beloved deadest face.
In our cruel time I raised my voice for freedom,
And I ventured for mercy to the fallen.

O Muse! O Muse! I know not the name

And never contradicted a stupid man.

(1835)
Translated by
Boris Gourévitch and
Lee Culppeper

Translated by Babette Deutsch.
"The Poems, Prose and Plays of
Alexander Pushkin," Selected
and Edited by Avelina Yarmolinsky.

The Modern Library, Random House,
New York.

A. С. ПУШКИН

I have no idea of love.
In my times it was not known.
I could never have imagined

Heavenly music, heavenly love.
I could never have imagined

All thoughts when uttered are lies.
Blasting the springs will only trouble

I only search for freedom and for

I will forget myself and fall

But not in the cold sleep of

I have only searched for freedom and

To see a star in the sky,

This is a regret an expectation

I have no hope of anything from

Life, and nothing I regret in years

Inexhaustible, incalculable,
You are flowing like streams of

In the lonely autumn, in the

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You are flowing like streams of

In the lonely autumn, in the
The range of magical changes of the beloved face.
In the smoky clouds
The purple of the rose,
The gleam of amber,
And little stars,
And the dawn, dawn.

By A. A. FET"Y

Selected lines
read by L. Grigore from the poem on
"The Nightingale"
from Gogol's Dead Souls

In the smoky clouds
The purple of the rose,
The gleam of amber,
And little stars,
And the dawn, dawn.

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