

**\*\*POST-EVENT RELEASE\*\***

## MASLENITSA: PUTS A SPRING IN LONDON'S STEP



FESTIVAL MASLENITSA 2013

The Russian Week in London, Festival Maslenitsa  
 FREE entry, 13:00–19:00, Saturday 16 March 2013  
 Trafalgar Square, London, UK

- Festival supported by the Mayor of London, **Boris Johnson**
- **Free** entry, **family-oriented** day of fun and special **children's marquee**
- Included VIP tent catered by **Mari Vanna** and a **Green Mark** marquee
- Official **charity** partner, **Naked Heart Foundation**, founded by model **Natalia Vodianova**

Saturday 16 March marked another successful Festival Maslenitsa, as the popular Russian spring celebration filled Trafalgar Square. The largest Russian celebration of culture, art, music and food outside of Russia, the free event returned for its fifth year, presenting audiences with the best in Russian popular entertainment. Maslenitsa is also known as **Pancake Week** and there were plenty of **authentic Russian dishes** to sample, including a healthy dose of blini and vodka. Coinciding with Maslenitsa celebrations across Russia its vibrant festival atmosphere allowed for an exchange of cultural dialogue as well as a celebration of important links between the UK and Russia, with a particular emphasis on the **Olympic** years of **London 2012** and **Sochi 2014**.

The popular festival featured a variety of activities for all ages including **musical performances** by Russia's leading musical talent, a **children's marquee** with songs, competitions and games, and a bustling **bazaar** organised by the Russian National Arts and Crafts organisation, with **original Russian art, handicrafts and souvenirs** for sale. The week preceding the Festival featured a **photography exhibition** at City Hall, a **literary evening** by **Theatre Praktika** at Waterstones Piccadilly, a **craft fair**, and a special visit by **Eurovision** Contest 2012 stars the **Buranovskie Babushki** (*Singing Grannies*), who performed at an exclusive British-Russian Gala on the eve of the festival. Performances on the day included superstar **Polina Gagarina**, celebrated folk diva **Nadezhda Babkina**, young folk group **Rodnaya Storonka** and the legendary **State Academic Ensemble Berezka**, among others.

## MASLENITSA 2013: QUOTES

11-17 March 2013

*"I am delighted to give my backing to London's Maslenitsa celebrations; a sure sign that spring is on its way. London has a large Russian population and this popular event is an opportunity to become immersed in the rich traditions and heritage of that great country. It also offers a taster ahead of Sochi 2014, which is now just a year away and I am sure it will be a huge success. In the meantime, whether you try a delicious blini, pirogi or chebureki, to our friends in Moscow and Russians everywhere have a fantastic Maslenitsa! Maslenitsa gulyaet - vesnu vstrechaet, zimu provoshaet!"*

– Boris Johnson  
Mayor of London

*"Thank you to Mr Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, who has supported us for the last five years. We are grateful to the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, Moscow City Government and the Embassy of the Russian Federation in London. A special word of thank you also to all of our sponsors (Polymetal International, ICT Group, O1 Properties, Lycamobile and Green Mark), who have helped us give so much pleasure to those who love Russian culture."*

– Olga Balakleets  
Director of Maslenitsa Festival and President of Ensemble Productions

*"It's crucial to know the traditions of different countries. This is how people can become more united and by learning about other cultures, we can all become friendly with each other."*

–The Buranovskie Babushki  
Eurovision 2012 Contestants and Peace-Loving Singing Grannies

### Photography Exhibition at London City Hall – Monday 11 March

*"There are a number of Russians living in the London and the Maslenitsa festival celebrating spring has gone from strength to strength over the last few years. I was delighted to support Maslenitsa by curating an exhibition for this important event which showcases the best of Russian culture abroad. I decided to select two well-known photographers, one Russian and the other British, to highlight the close cultural ties between our two countries and to present to the public a different perspective of two famous Russian cities with striking and unusual images of Moscow and St Petersburg. This show is also a warm-up for the Year of Russian Culture in the UK in 2014 and builds on the success of last year's photography exhibition focusing on Russian émigrés living in the capital."*

– Theodora Clarke  
Co-Curator and Editor of *Russian Art & Culture*

*"It's incredibly refreshing to see both artists together in this exhibition. While they are of a similar age, they are from very different artistic paths; Richard Pare has done significant research on Constructivist architecture and is very precise about the exact condition of the buildings he photographs. He knows exactly when the moment is right to take a shot, making it part of a bigger story. Meanwhile, Dimitri Konradt has searched all over St Petersburg for the connection between light and colour. His images let us breathe the air of St Petersburg. Thank you Theodora Clarke and Maslenitsa for giving me the opportunity to present these works in a very appropriate architectural setting [City Hall, London]."*

– Anya Stonelake  
Co-Curator

### Literary Evening at Waterstones – Wednesday 13 March

*“We very much enjoyed performing here at Waterstones. The atmosphere was extremely welcoming, warm and attentive – we were fully prepared for people to stand up and come and go during the performance as it was not planned as a formal theatre performance, but rather a literary evening. I am so pleased that the audience was riveted; you could feel the tension in the air! We are so happy to be here as part of Maslenitsa.”*

– Maria Koublanova  
Praktika Director of International Projects

*“The atmosphere was wonderful – Waterstones is a great store, with great people. While you can have poetry and literature anywhere – from London to Moscow to Paris – what is important is to have a reason to share it. It is often difficult to find an occasion to read a poem, it’s almost considered old-fashioned, so we need to create opportunities to do this, and the Maslenitsa Festival is just one such occasion, and a great way to share poetry and literature.”*

– Irina Mikhailovskaya  
Praktika Script Writer and Actor

### Event Sponsors

*“We are delighted to be supporting the Maslenitsa Festival in London and providing the opportunity for more people in the United Kingdom to see and experience a range of exciting Russian culture and social events. As a company that has most of its operations in Russia and many of its shareholders in UK, we are keen to see the relationship between the two nations prosper backed by thriving business and cultural cooperation.”*

– Vitaly Nesis  
CEO of Polymetal International

*“The Maslenitsa festival offers audiences in the UK the unique chance to take part in this ancient Russian tradition, and O1 Properties is happy to support this cheerful event.”*

– Dimitry Mints  
Chairman of the Management Board O1 Properties

*“Green Mark is delighted to be associated with the biggest Russian event in the UK. It feels right for Russia’s favourite vodka to be the official drink sponsors of this traditional celebration. Green Mark is made in Russia, with 100% Russian ingredients from a traditional Russian recipe, giving attendees the opportunity to experience the true taste of Russia whilst enjoying a day filled with Russian culture.”*

– Hayley Aldous  
Senior Brand Manager of Green Mark vodka

## Notes for Editors:

<b>Name:</b>	<i>The Russian Week in London, Festival Maslenitsa</i>
<b>Organiser:</b>	Ensemble Productions
<b>Date:</b>	16 March 2013
<b>Location:</b>	Trafalgar Square, London
<b>Hours:</b>	13:00–19:00
<b>Cost:</b>	Free
<b>Maslenitsa Week:</b>	11 March 2013 – 17 March 2013
<b>Official Charity Partner:</b>	Naked Heart Foundation
<b>Event Partners:</b>	Mayor of London, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Embassy of the Russian Federation in London, Federal Agency Rossotrudnichestvo, Russky Mir Foundation, Polymetal International, ICT Group, O1 Properties, Lycamobile, Green Mark

**About Ensemble Productions**

Founded in 1998, Ensemble Productions is a London-based production and events company that specialises in Classical, Jazz, World, Pop and Rock concerts as well as Opera, Ballet and Contemporary dance productions in the UK and internationally. Previous projects have included the Dimensions Festival of Music from Russia and the Former Soviet Republics; the annual Maslenitsa festival in Trafalgar Square; the Operalia Festival in Central Asia; Days of Hong Kong in Russia' the Marbella International Festival in Spain; the Russian New Year Festival in Switzerland; the Cyprus-Russia Gala in the Presidential Palace in Cyprus, the Arab-Russian Gala in Dubai and the Italia-Russia Gala in Rome. Ensemble Productions is proud to play a vital role in celebrating the rich heritage and diversity of the performing arts. For more information, visit [www.ensembleproductions.co.uk](http://www.ensembleproductions.co.uk)

**About Olga Balakleets**

Director of the Maslenitsa Festival and President of Ensemble Productions, Olga Balakleets is dedicated to sharing the arts and culture of her native Russia with the world. A graduate of the Conservatory in St Petersburg, she created Ensemble Productions in 1998 in order to initiate and promote international cultural projects, including the prestigious Maslenitsa Festival held in Trafalgar Square. As a Russian cultural advisor, Balakleets works closely with the Mayor of London, British Parliament, Russian State Duma and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. She has served as the Artistic Director of the British-Russian Cultural Association since 2005 as well as Vice-President of the Swiss-Russian Cultural Foundation since 2008 and was elected a member of the Russian Speaking Council of Great Britain in 2009. For her immense contribution in promoting Russian culture, Balakleets was awarded the Special Medal by Russian President Medvedev and the Order of St Prince Dimitry Donskoi and St Sergey Radonezhsky for Services to the Fatherhood, both in 2010.

**About the Naked Heart Foundation**

It was the Beslan school siege in 2004 that motivated international model Natalia Vodianova to set up the Naked Heart Foundation. Desperate to do something to help, she had a simple idea – if the young survivors could be distracted by play for at least five minutes each day, it would help them to heal. Providing them with safe outdoor play facilities would redefine their city landscape and act as a form of therapy. The Naked Heart Foundation was set up in the same year, and in 2006 it completed its first play park, five minutes from where Vodianova grew up in Nizhny Novgorod. In 2009, 40 play parks and 30 Russian cities later, Vodianova had fulfilled her dream of giving the children of Beslan their very own Naked Heart play park. To date the charity has built 90 play parks and playgrounds and is now creating a network of family support centres to care for families raising children with disabilities. It also provides funding for dozens of Russian NGOs working in the field and holds an annual international Forum for child development specialists. In 2013 it will open its 100<sup>th</sup> site. For more information visit [www.nakedheart.org](http://www.nakedheart.org) or [www.facebook.com/NHFcharity](http://www.facebook.com/NHFcharity)

**Polina Gagarina**

Polina Gagarina is a popular Russian singer born in Greece. She was a winner of Fabrika in 2003, two years later she released her debut single soon followed by her first album. The main subject of her songs is love and she is greatly admired by all generations. She is one of the most elegant and beautiful Russian female singers of her time.

**Nadezhda Babkina**

Russian folk diva and celebrity Nadezhda Babkina has been an integral figure on the Russian folk music scene for over three decades. She is not just a singer, but also an actress, a playwright and a director as well as an engaging compère. Although her remarkable music is rooted within the strong tradition of Russian folk song, its vibrant and exotic sound has a distinctly contemporary feel. Its emphatic beat and its rapid, sometimes frenzied tempo, is often punctuated with racy, high-pitched vocals. Babkina and her group's performance is complemented by rich and colourful Russian costumes, evoking a truly authentic atmosphere and creating an enduring impression on audiences all over the world from Spain, France, the UK and Germany, to the USA, Japan and South Korea.

**Berezka**

Berezka is a Russian dance ensemble whose programs, performed in over 80 countries, are comprised of fluid women's round dances, with styles ranging from the lyrical to the spirited and even comic dances accompanied by an orchestra of folk music. Their performances reproduce – in poetic choreographic images – the everyday life and rituals of old Russia. Performances are often based on folk melodies and songs and are frequently accompanied by the choral singing of the dancers.

#### Bis-Quit Orchestra

Since their formation in 2002, Bis-Quit has been creating a unique sound using a combination of Russian traditional musical instruments with saxophone and drum. Their repertoire includes more than 250 compositions in different genres including Russian Folk, Classical, Jazz, Country, Tango, Latino, Retro and Dance music. The ensemble has played at over 1500 concerts throughout Russia, Europe, Asia, the UK and Scandinavia.

#### Buranovskie Babushki

Translated as 'The Grannies from Buranovo' – or better known to us as the 'Singing Grannies' – Buranovskie Babushki is an ethno-pop band comprising eight elderly, yet sprightly, women. After finishing second in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest for Russia, the Grannies became an Internet sensation with more than 30,000 hits in less than a week. They sing in their native Udmurt, and often surprise audiences by singing covers of Tsoi, Grebenshchikov and The Beatles. The grannies are currently using their Eurovision money to help rebuild a local church from their home town Buranovo. For more information, visit <http://buranovskiebabushki.ru>

#### Oleg Gazmanov

Oleg Gazmanov's distinctive style combines traditional folklore with contemporary Pop and Rock music allowing him to occupy a special place on the national stage. Since 1989 Oleg Gazmanov has been a participant and a regular winner of the popular TV-festival 'Song of the Year'. Since 1995, every year on 23 February, the eve of Protector of Motherland Day, Gazmanov presents his concert, 'Gospoda Ofitsery', acting as both a producer and director of this outstanding large-scale show. In 2001 he was awarded with the title People's Artist of Russia by President Vladimir Putin.

#### Rodnaya Storonka

Young professional folk group Rodnaya Storonka was founded in 2009 and performs traditional songs as well as their own songs in a Folk Pop style. The group's extensive repertoire appeals to all generations thanks to its combination of national and modern music genres (RnB, Hip-hop, Club, House, Acapella, Beatbox, etc). The lyrics of Rodnaya Storonka are focused on the love felt for one's home and one's country and the importance of a patriotic spirit. All members of the band are graduates of the renowned Gnesin Academy of Music in Moscow. The band regularly tours around Russia and is winner of numerous awards.

#### Smyslovye Galuzinazii

Strong, highly rhythmic percussion and a keyboard dominated sound has made Smyslovye Galuzinazii one of the most popular bands in Russia. Originally from Ekaterinburg, the five-piece Russian rock band has been playing together for over a decade. Their name translates to 'Thought Hallucinations', a theme reflected in their intellectual and thought-provoking lyrics.

#### Peter Nalitch

In 2007 Peter Nalitch became a YouTube sensation with his song *Guitar*. Since then, the Russian singer and composer has gone on to finish 11<sup>th</sup> in the 2010 Eurovision Song Contest for Russia with his song *Lost and Forgotten*. His lyrics are often humorous and performed in Russian, English, Italian and French. Music lovers will be pleased to hear that all his music is available to download free on his website. For more information, visit [www.peternalitch.ru](http://www.peternalitch.ru)

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