

Shana Novick

From: David Roskies [daroskies@jtsa.edu]
Sent: Friday, March 31, 2006 1:11 PM
To: snovick@hfisny.org
Subject: Fwd: Visit of Dr. Kelner from Petersburg Judaica to New York

>FYI. PLEASE PRINT AND COMMIT TO MEMORY!

>

>Dear David,

>My colleague Dr. Viktor Kelner will come to New York soon. We will
>bring 2 sets of catalogues dedicated to An-sky photo-archive for you.
>At last we have published them and they look not too bad. I hope that
>you will like them. One set you may deliver to the Jewish Museum for
>future arranging of An-sky exhibition there, if it is possible. I also
>send you 2 CDs from me and Valery. (He is in Moscow now). It's a pity
>that we did not speak about Jewish music when you were here in St.
>Petersburg. So I decided to improve the situation and to send you these
>two CDs with recordings of contemporary klezmer bands from Russia. The
>first one is a single of the best klezmer band in Petersburg
>"Dobranotch". I like its music even in spite of typical postmodern
>approach to traditional music material. I think that you will recognize
>the melody in the first composition "Nign". The second CD was recorded
>by famous Moscow singer and band leader Psoy Korolenko with the
>Petersburg-Moscow mixed band. This album is dedicated to Soviet popular
>songs of 60s - 70s translated into Yiddish by Aaron Vergelis.
>Presentations of both CDs were at the end of February. I hope that you
>will enjoy this music. I gave to Viktor your telephone number and your
>address. Viktor speaks English and I hope that he will arrange a
>meeting with you. By the way, Viktor will participate in the
>"Russian-Jewish New York" conference April 4
>- 6, 2006. Maybe it will be convenient for you to meet him there. (On April
>4 (Tuesday) the Conference will be opened in the Auditorium of the New York
>Public Library (Fifth Avenue & 42 Street). April 5 - 6 it will work at the
>Columbia University, (Butler Library, Room 203)
>To the end of this message I would like to tell you a funny story. It seems
>that you perform as a creator of a new city legend of St. Petersburg. I mean
>your excellent article in "Forverts". I am afraid that my English is not
>enough to tell this funny story. You know that it is very difficult to
>translate humor from one language to another but I will try. The well known
>on the both sides of Atlantic Mishke Alpert visited us in the middle of
>February. This time he was unwell because he had caught a cold. He had been
>lying on the same coach that you had mentioned in your article and terribly
>coughing and sneezing for a day. So in the evening we decided to call for a
>doctor in spite of Michael's objections. The doctor was a big and strong man
>weighing a hundred kilograms. Michael wanted to stand up but the doctor said
>that he would better sit down on the coach nearby and examine Michael's
>throat. He did so and in a minute they both appeared on the floor: the coach
>was completely crushed for it could not stand such a weight.
>Later it took me and Yura a lot of time to repair this coach.
>But it is not the end of the story.
>In two days Michel felt much better. We organized his lecture dedicated to
>klezmer music at the Conference hall of the European University. We had also
>arranged a concert of the vocal group "Zmiros" after Michael's lecture.
>"Zmiros" group made very good performance based on Hasidic nigunim and
>contemporary Jewish songs of Chava Alberstein, Joshua Waletzky and Michael
>Alpert of course. Do you remember those sweet-voiced girls that sang at the
>Sabbath's party at "Petersburg Judaica" where you "were cast in the role of
>Rebbe-for-the-Night"? Then you may believe me that this lecture + concert
>had gathered about 300 people or even more. This event could be mentioned as
>one of the most successful in "Petersburg Judaica" activity and I think that
>audience will remember it for a long time.
>It should be mentioned that a few days before we had printed several copies

>of your article in "Forverts" and gave them to our students for home
>reading.
>At last we comes the end of the story. Some days after Michel's lecture and
>"Zmiros's" concert I heard a talk between two students in a smoking room of
>the European University. A local guy was speaking to a girl from Germany
>about this event. He did not know English in a good way but he might read
>your article or somebody could re-tell him its content not very close to the
>text, anyway he wanted to look as an expert. At the end of their talk the
>boy sad: - I even know that Michael Alpert usually stays not far from the
>European University. There is a memorial flat where three very famous
>Russian composers once lived. Michel even sleeps on one old coach which
>those composers Tchaikovsky, Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov slept on....
>The girl was very much astonished. She had just asked: Really, all together?
>I can hardly imagine what she had just thought.
>Sorry for my English which does not allow to me translate this story in a
>better way but I hope you understand that I was laughing very much.
>Sorry for this long message. I did not expect that it will be so long.
>Please, give my best wishes to Shana,
>Best wishes from Alla and Valery,
>Alexander