

Yalta Chekhov Campaign / Anton Chekhov Foundation Newsletter No. 2, March 2009

www.yaltachekhov.org

Dear Friends,

We would like to express our endless gratitude to you for supporting the Chekhov House-Museum in Yalta and are writing to update you on the latest developments. Our successful campaign launch in November 2008 generated a wave of publicity, which spread from London to Kiev and Moscow. Articles which appeared in *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, as well as a piece by Michael Pennington, were picked up by all the main news agencies in Russia and Ukraine, and our campaign was even featured in Russian television news bulletins. In January 2009 Iryna Tymchishin's interview with Rosamund Bartlett was aired on national Ukrainian TV in the popular current affairs programme "Podrobnosti", and our campaign was featured in the newsletter of the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. We are very grateful to the conservators who have got in touch with us with offers of help.

We have been pleased to see that the publicity we have generated has led people in Ukraine to start making donations, enabling the Museum to purchase some mobile heaters. These enable Chekhov's house to be heated during the winter, regardless of the frequent drops of pressure in the new gas pipeline. It is a long way from the provision of reliable central heating, which ought of course to be standard, but for the beleaguered Museum staff it represents a huge step forward. As Director Alla Golovacheva wrote to us recently in great excitement, "For the first time in many years Chekhov's dacha has begun to be heated properly. We can now maintain a temperature of 20-21C°, and humidity has gone down to normal levels. It's such a huge victory!" Meanwhile, the old gas pipeline, which still heats the administrative building has sprung an underground leak, so there is a lot more that needs to be done.

And in December 2008, thanks to your generous contributions, we successfully made our first monetary transfer of £2 000, which went from London straight to the Chekhov House-Museum in Yalta. With the approval of the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous Crimean Republic, €1 850/20 000 UAH will be spent on restoring the fabrics in Chekhov's study. These were brought by Chekhov himself from Nice, and have now been transferred to Kiev for specialist conservation. On 25 December the Ministry of Culture made available a further €4 615/50 000 UAH to the House-Museum. This sum was spent on commissioning a specialist conservation institute in Simferopol which has expertise in civil engineering to produce a restoration plan for the exterior of the house (including repairs to the dangerously sagging balcony), and the dilapidated administrative building. The budget for the exterior restoration alone is 500 000 UAH (£42 000 or €46 120). Neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian government has volunteered any funds to pay for these urgent repairs. Chekhov's garden is also in desperate need of specialist attention. With the huge support we have received, we feel that we can do a lot to help here in the future.

YALTA CHEKHOV CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES 2009

We are very happy to announce that the Yalta Chekhov Campaign now comes under the aegis of the newly-formed Anton Chekhov Foundation, a UK charity of which we are the directors. The Anton Chekhov Foundation's charitable status shows that the Charity Commission considers our work to be a public good, and also means that we can benefit from the favourable tax arrangements that apply to charities. Your generous donations will therefore now go further. The Chekhov House-Museum in Yalta continues to rely almost solely on private donations for its upkeep.





OUR MAIN GOALS IN 2009:

- 1) to raise £42 000/ 500 000 UAH to pay for the restoration of the House-Museum's exterior. We would like to get the work underway prior to the 150th anniversary of Chekhov's birth in January 2010, and, as always, we feel that British support has a big part to play.
- 2) to raise the funds to pay for a conservation plan for Chekhov's garden. The garden includes old trees planted by Chekhov himself, as well as shrubs, paths, benches, a greenhouse, and a well, which are all in need of restoration. A Russian horticultural magazine has contributed bulbs and seeds for the garden's flowerbeds, but there is a lot more to do. We plan to use UK donations to commission a survey and conservation plan for the garden, which will set a target figure for the work needed.
- 3) to commission a conservation plan for the Chekhov House-Museum annexe. This small building is a part of the House-Museum's architectural ensemble, and during Chekhov's lifetime functioned as his kitchen, but has never been opened to the public.

We are living through uncertain times, but even during wars people have managed to save precious cultural artefacts that belong to world heritage for the benefit of future generations. Chekhov wrote in 1899 from Yalta to his friend Ivan Orlov: "I have no faith in our intelligentsia.... My faith is in individual people..."; and in 2009 it is up to us individuals not to rely on the help of authorities and save the things that matter by taking action. The House-Museum and the Anton Chekhov Foundation are grateful to you for your support.

With best wishes

Rosamund Bartlett, Elena Michajlowska and Alexander Walsh

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 2009:

How Chekhov Became a Writer, Oxford Literary Festival, 4pm, 1 April 2009

Biographer and translator Rosamund Bartlett discusses the stories brought together in her new Chekhov anthology *The Exclamation Mark* (Hesperus Press), which all date from the six critical months in the writer's life when he first began to sign his fiction with his real name. She will also talk about the campaign to help renovate the house and garden that Chekhov built at the end of his life in Yalta.

Further information: http://www.sundaytimes-oxfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/events_01april.htm

Chekhov Anniversary Tour to Yalta, Spring 2010

We are hoping to organise a 5-day tour to Yalta to celebrate Chekhov's 150th birthday, which we hope will be joined by actors and writers. We want to keep costs as low as possible, with profits going to the campaign, and the more participants on the tour, the more economically viable it becomes. Details to follow, and in a meantime, please, let us know if you would be interested in going!

Chekhov Anniversary Readings, Spring 2010

Plans are underway to organise a series of readings of Chekhov stories by well-known actors, to be followed by an "afterword" from a noted writer. Details to follow.