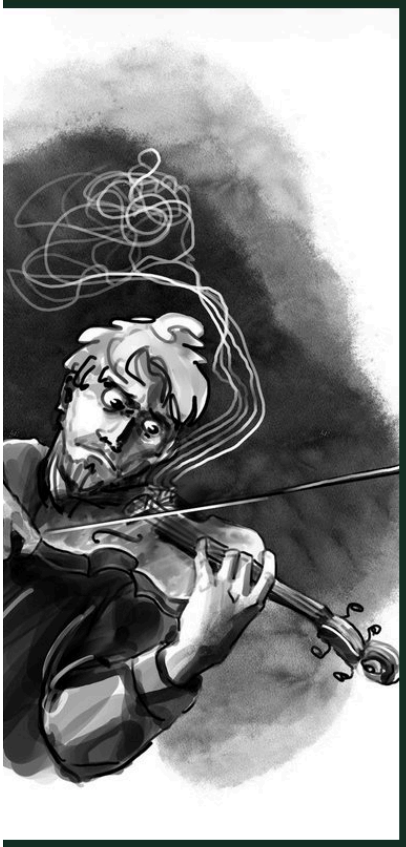
Russian Garden Gazette
A Digital Journal of the Russian Cultural Garden, Cleveland
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The Dostoevsky We Have Yet to Meet

Netochka Nezvanova · Jon Lindseth · Anna and Yelena Kondratova · Kreisler

ISSUE #23 · NOVEMBER 11, 2026

The Dostoevsky We Have Yet to Meet

November 11 marks 205 years since the birth of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky.

It can seem that everything about him has already been written. His novels are studied, reread, translated and filmed. And yet it is sometimes enough to open one of his early, half-forgotten pages to meet an entirely different Dostoevsky: young, witty, in love with music and the theater, brimming with literary plans.

That is the Dostoevsky we find in *Netochka Nezvanova*, the novel he never had the chance to finish.



Konstantin Trutovsky. Portrait of Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1847. Pencil. Public domain.

In our last issue we promised you a story about a doctor and music. Here it is! Our doctor, though, is not a physician but a scientist: the biologist Anna Kondratova, a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology who once seriously meant to become a violinist. And music is more than an accompaniment to this story. It holds a special place in the life of the young Dostoevsky, in his unfinished novel, and in the life of its present-day translator.



Anna Kondratova. Personal archive.

This special issue celebrates not only the great writer's 205th birthday but also the remarkable chain of events through which the original text of *Netochka Nezvanova*, nearly two centuries later, found a new life in Cleveland. Anna Kondratova's translation is available on Amazon.

And it all began with one suspiciously expensive magazine…

Svetlana Stolyarova

Editor, The Russian Garden Gazette

How *Netochka Nezvanova* Came to Cleveland

A literary detective story featuring Charlotte Brontë, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Lewis Carroll and a few tennis lovers

It began with a suspiciously expensive magazine

The American bibliophile Jon Lindseth was searching for the first Russian publications of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. He asked his trusted agent in Russia to buy the relevant issues of old literary magazines.

All went smoothly until Lindseth noticed something odd: one of the magazines cost considerably more than the rest.

He asked why.

It turned out that the magazine's special value had nothing to do with *Jane Eyre*. It contained the first publication of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Netochka Nezvanova*.

And so Charlotte Brontë unexpectedly introduced an American collector to a Russian writer who was then just starting out, and who had yet to write *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.



Yelena Kondratova leafing through an old issue of the journal. Kondratova family archive.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Nétochka Nezvánova*. Translated by Anna Kondratova and Yelena Kondratova, illustrated by Yelena Kondratova, with essays by Anna Kondratova and Jon A. Lindseth. The Russian text of the original 1849 journal version with the English translation on facing pages. ATBOSH Media, 2025. Available on Amazon; publisher's page.

Netochka Nezvanova was serialized in the journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*) in January, February and May 1849. Dostoevsky had planned a large novel but never finished it: in April he was arrested in the Petrashevsky affair. The last installment appeared after his arrest, without the author's name.

Dostoevsky later revised the novel, and it is this later version that most readers know.

Jon Lindseth, however, was drawn to the original text, the one the young Dostoevsky's contemporaries read in 1849.

Little by little, a collector's find turned into the idea for a new edition.

The man who gave Alice to Oxford

So who is Jon Lindseth?

To get a sense of the scale of his interests, let us step away from Dostoevsky for a moment and travel to Oxford.

In early 2025 the American collector and philanthropist gave Christ Church, a college of the University of Oxford whose chapel is also Oxford's cathedral, one of the world's largest private collections devoted to Lewis Carroll.

It includes rare editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, more than two hundred autograph letters, original photographs and negatives, and an extensive collection of translations of *Alice* into the world's languages. Lindseth did not just collect translations; he helped new ones come into being, including in some very unexpected languages, from Church Slavonic to Klingon, the language invented for the *Star Trek* universe.

The choice of Christ Church was no accident. It was there that Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, known to readers as Lewis Carroll, taught mathematics, and there that the story which gave the world Alice began.

Lindseth was one of the editors of *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: The Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece* (2015), a monumental study of the famous book's journey around the world.

What interests him is not only the rarity of a book as an object, but the way a literary work travels between languages and cultures.

Book collecting, though, is only one side of Jon Lindseth's character.

In 2023, at the 50th anniversary celebration of Cornell Outdoor Education, he climbed to the top of the climbing wall that bears his name. He was 89. There is a video of it.

Jon Lindseth, at 89, climbs the wall that bears his name. Cornell Outdoor Education 50th Anniversary Reunion, July 2023. (youtube.com/watch?v=qG37-w6p3uk)

A man who can spend hours studying rare nineteenth-century books and still take on new physical challenges with youthful zest clearly does not see age as a reason to give up on adventure.

Incidentally, readers of the Gazette have already met the Lindseth name without knowing it. Jon's father, Elmer L. Lindseth (1902–1999), led the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company for many years and tirelessly promoted Cleveland as "the best location in the nation." A professorship at Case Western Reserve University bears his name, and in 2000 it went to Igor Efimov, the hero of our previous issue and, like Anna Kondratova, a graduate of Phystech.

So our two issues turn out to be connected not only through Phystech but, quite unexpectedly, through the Lindseth family. As for the shared surname of the scientist Igor Efimov and the violinist Efimov in *Netochka Nezvanova*, let it remain one more of fate's little jokes.

The next chapter of our story suits his character perfectly.

In praise of tennis

How did an American collector with a passion for the history of English and Russian literature find someone he could trust to translate Dostoevsky?

The answer is unexpected: through tennis.

Anna Kondratova and her whole family are devoted to the game. Anna's younger daughter, Masha, played at a tennis club where she met Jon Lindseth.

Jon was planning to enter a doubles tournament on grass courts. He needed a young partner who could make up for the speed he no longer had. The coach recommended Masha.

It was Masha who introduced Jon to her mother.

Conversations followed, shared interests came to light, and gradually the idea took shape: Anna would make a new English translation of *Netochka Nezvanova*.

There was something unusual about this choice, too.

Anna Kondratova is a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, a research biologist with a doctorate. Russian is her native language, but literary translation was not her original profession.

Anna would later write in the book's acknowledgments that without Jon Lindseth this work would never have existed. The idea of a parallel Russian–English edition was his.

And so a meeting on a tennis court gave rise to a major literary and publishing project.

Taking Dostoevsky back to 1849

There had been English translations of *Netochka Nezvanova* before. The first, by Constance Garnett, was published in 1920; translations by Ann Dunnigan and Jane Kentish followed.

The new edition is different: Anna went back to the original 1849 journal version. As far as she knows, this is the first English translation of that version.

For Anna it mattered to convey not only the meaning but the particular texture of the young Dostoevsky's language: the long sentences, the repetitions, the unusual word order, the intonation and rhythm of the narrative. She deliberately resisted the temptation to make the text smoother and more familiar to the modern English reader.

Her indispensable partner was her elder daughter, Yelena.

A family enterprise

Lena was born in Russia and moved to America at the age of seven. Her experience of both languages proved especially valuable.

Anna and Lena read the Russian original and the English text over and over, discussing shades of meaning and looking for ways to keep the author's voice without making the translation sound artificial.

At Jon Lindseth's request, Lena also illustrated the book.



Yelena Kondratova and Jon Lindseth with her painting inspired by Netochka Nezvanova. Kondratova family archive.



Yelena Kondratova. A painting inspired by Netochka Nezvanova.

Anna's younger children, her daughter Maria (Masha) and her son Alexander, joined in too, reading the English text and offering comments.

It became something close to a family literary enterprise.

It is especially touching that Masha, who set the whole story in motion by meeting Jon, later took part in the work on the book herself.

But when the translation was finished, the team discovered that one more, entirely unexpected task lay ahead.

The adventures of an antique Cyrillic

The makers of the edition wanted not only to set the Russian and English texts side by side but to preserve a visual link with the original 1849 publication.

This work was taken on by Jared Bendis, a publisher and specialist in digital technology and historical typography.

He had to study scans of the pages of *Otechestvennye Zapiski* and the peculiarities of nineteenth-century Russian civil type, restore damaged letters, and find ways to reproduce old-fashioned typesetting with modern tools.

And Bendis himself did not know Russian.

The work gradually grew into a research project of its own. The typeface had to be reconstructed, the old orthography understood, and a host of technical problems solved.

Then, just when the book seemed practically finished, came a surprise: the Russian text, as typeset, was almost impossible to read.

It was back to work: correcting errors and solving all over again problems that had been considered settled.

Others who contributed to the edition include the editor Kathleen Mills, the designer Jerry Kelly, and Alexander Chubinsky, who helped obtain materials from Russian collections.

So a project that began with the purchase of an old magazine required the collaboration of people of different professions from different countries.

A young Dostoevsky we hardly know

Working on *Netochka Nezvanova* revealed a different Dostoevsky to Anna.

Not only the great author of heavy philosophical novels, the man we are used to picturing as tormented by moral questions, but a young writer: compassionate, witty, blessed with a wonderful sense of humor.

A writer who had not yet lived through arrest, a staged execution and penal servitude.

Perhaps this is one of the new edition's greatest gifts: it takes us back to a moment when Dostoevsky's literary fate had not yet been decided.

And the story of how the book came to be is a reminder of the unexpected paths literature travels.

Charlotte Brontë led an American collector to Fyodor Dostoevsky. Tennis introduced him to his future translator. Anna's scientific training, her command of Russian, her children's help, and the labor of editors and specialists in antique typography all came together in a single project.

And it all began with a simple question:

Why does one old magazine cost so much more than the others?

SOURCES

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February 4 – April 17, 2025.

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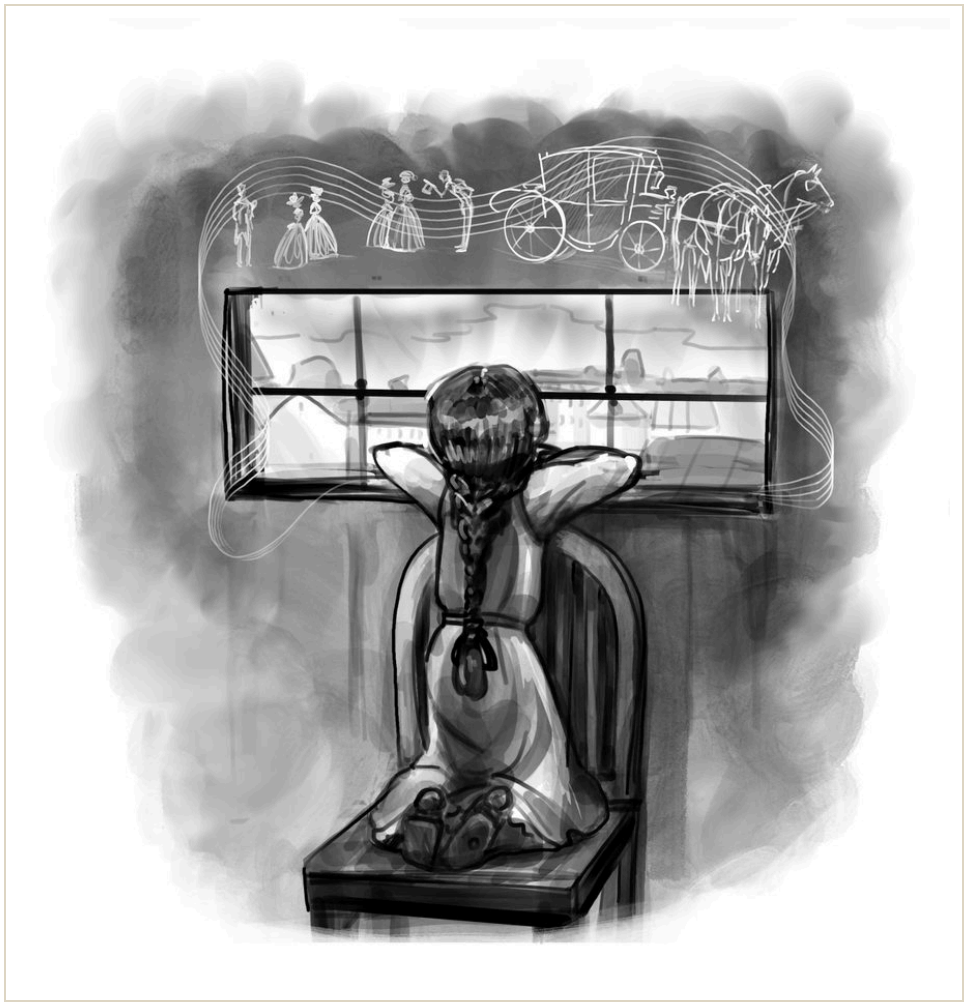
The Young Dostoevsky's Unfinished Novel

Anna Kondratova

Netochka Nezvanova was Dostoevsky's first attempt at a full-scale novel. The features of his genius are already plain to see: a deep compassion that extends to everyone without exception, and a subtle understanding of the twists and turns of the human soul. But something else shows through as well: the mischief of the young Dostoevsky, who could find the funny side of life even in the most serious circumstances. Many of the themes and characters he would later develop in his great novels first appear in this early work.

Gathered under the title of the unfinished novel are three piercing stories about how a human soul takes shape and is transformed, from the first moments of its self-awareness. Each is a love story of its own kind, full of keen observations of the psychology of childhood.

The first tells of eight-year-old Netochka's ardent, at times almost maternal attachment to her stepfather, the violinist Efimov, a man convinced of his own genius who never managed to realize his talent, and at the same time takes up the theme of an artist's vocation and fate. The second is about the awakening of a tender feeling for a girl her own age and conveys the overwhelming power of first attachments of the heart. In the third, unfinished story, the heroine enters the complicated world of adults. She witnesses the tragic consequences of a forbidden love that has crossed the boundaries of society, consequences that fall upon her unhappy patroness, a young married woman.



An illustration by Yelena Kondratova for Netochka Nezvanova.

Music for this article: Robert Schumann, Träumerei from Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood). Vladimir Horowitz, Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, April 20, 1986. (youtube.com/watch?v=3fhKaAX5dOc)

Dostoevsky had high hopes for *Netochka*. After the resounding success of *Poor Folk*, the young author quickly discovered the other side of fame. Critics greeted his next works with harsh ridicule: they did not fit the progressive social and political agenda that dominated at the time.

In December 1846 he wrote to his brother Mikhail, his closest friend and literary ally:

> *"I am now swamped with work, and I have promised to deliver to Kraevsky the first part of the novel Netochka Nezvanova by the 5th of January... I am writing with zeal. It keeps seeming to*

> *me that I have started a lawsuit against our entire literature, the journals and the critics… and that this year, too, I am establishing my primacy, to spite those who wish me ill."*

The plan was ambitious: Dostoevsky intended to publish the novel in Andrei Kraevsky's journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski* over six or seven issues. By his own account, as early as mid-1846 he had "the plot (and the prologue) and the idea" in his head, but the work dragged on. The first two parts appeared only in the January and February issues of 1849.

The continuation was cut short by Dostoevsky's arrest in April 1849. The unfinished fragment came out late, in the May issue, without the name of its author, who was by then imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg.

In 1847–1848 Dostoevsky attended the "Fridays" of Mikhail Petrashevsky. At first this was an informal circle of advocates of peaceful reform who discussed the ideas of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier. Over time, people with more radical views joined. This drew the attention of the secret police of Nicholas I, who had been alarmed by the revolutionary events in France. A curious detail: Petrashevsky was the godson of the previous emperor, Alexander I.

The arrest was followed by eight months of solitary confinement and a closed trial. Dostoevsky, who belonged to Nikolai Speshnev's radical group, was sentenced to death by firing squad. The emperor had commuted the sentence in advance but ordered that this be announced only at the last moment.

On the morning of December 22, 1849, the condemned men were brought to the snow-covered Semyonovsky Square. The death sentence was read out. The first three prisoners were dressed in white shrouds, tied to posts and blindfolded. Dostoevsky was in the second group of three. The command

“Take aim!” rang out, but then the drums beat the retreat and an aide-de-camp arrived to announce the pardon.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, Dostoevsky was put in shackles and sent to Siberia. His term of penal servitude had been reduced from eight years to four, to be followed by service as a soldier in exile.

The mock execution left an indelible mark on the writer. One of the condemned men lost his mind and never recovered. Nearly twenty years later Dostoevsky put the experience of those last minutes before execution into *The Idiot*.

There is a bitter irony here as well: some of the ideas discussed at Petrashevsky’s later became part of the reforms of Alexander II, including the abolition of serfdom.

When Dostoevsky returned to St. Petersburg in 1859, he did not take up *Netochka* again as a novel, but on the advice of friends he reworked it into a self-contained novella in seven chapters. He removed repetitions and “overly sentimental phrases,” shortened the heroine’s reflections and cut some episodes. The second part changed most of all: gone were Netochka’s friend, the little orphan Larya, and his tragicomic guardian Fyodor Ferapontovich, as well as some details of Prince Kh.’s family life.



An illustration by Yelena Kondratova for Netochka Nezvanova.

In its new form the novella appeared in 1860 in the first volume of Dostoevsky's collected works, published by N. A. Osnovsky in Moscow. This version became the basis for all later editions. The episodes about Netochka's friendship with Princess Katya were often included in collections of stories for children.



Princess Katya and the bulldog Falstaff. Illustration by Yelena Kondratova.



Falstaff. Illustration by Yelena Kondratova.

A few words about the title

The heroine's very name is full of meanings a Russian reader picks up almost unconsciously. In "Netochka" one hears *net*, "no," while the affectionate diminutive suffix softens the negation with tenderness. The surname Nezvanova is entirely transparent: *nezvanaya*, uninvited, the one nobody asked for.

Netochka explains where her name came from as she remembers her mother:

> *"Besides, she called me Netochka, which meant that at that moment she was especially tender toward me. She had invented the nickname herself, turning my name, Anna, affectionately into Netochka, and when she called me that, it meant she wanted to caress me. <...> Then, poor thing, she stroked my head for a long time, perhaps mechanically by then, forgetting that she was caressing me, and kept murmuring: 'My child, Anneta, Netochka!'"*

For a translator this is a real puzzle: how do you convey negation and affection at once in English? One could call the heroine “Nonnette” or “Nonnetty” and render the surname as “Noncalled.” In Russian that would come out as something like “Netushka Nezvanaya”: a negation, but a soft, almost tender one.

There is another curious detail. In the 1849 journal publication and in the first book edition of 1860, the heroine’s name was printed with a stress mark: Nétochka. It probably helped readers pronounce an unusual name correctly. Later editions dropped the accent.

Netochka played a remarkable part in Dostoevsky’s own life as well. His future wife, Anna Grigorievna Snitkina, had read his works avidly since childhood, and her family nicknamed her Netochka. In 1866 the young stenographer came to work for Dostoevsky, and in February of the following year she became his wife, his devoted helper, and later the guardian of his literary legacy.



Illustration by Yelena Kondratova.

And so the unfinished story of one Anna unexpectedly continued in the life of another.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

A Musical Hoax, or How Pugnani Turned Out to Be Kreisler

Listening to Itzhak Perlman's dazzling performance of the Praeludium and Allegro, it is hard to suspect that behind this music lies one of the wittiest hoaxes of the twentieth century.

The Austrian violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler presented a whole series of pieces to the public as works by old masters that he claimed to have discovered in forgotten manuscripts. Among them was the Praeludium and Allegro, attributed to the eighteenth-century Italian violinist Gaetano Pugnani.

Musicians played these pieces, critics discussed their merits, audiences adored them. Only in 1935 did Kreisler confess: he had written them himself!

Fritz Kreisler, Praeludium and Allegro (in the style of Pugnani). Itzhak Perlman, violin; Bruno Canino, piano. Around 1984. (youtube.com/watch?v=dlyzqrnQI14)

The result was a wonderful paradox: music admired as a legacy of the past turned out to be the work of the listeners' own contemporary. But did that make it any worse?

This story may sound familiar to our readers. In Issue 17 of the Gazette we wrote about musical hoaxes in connection with Vladimir Vavilov.

Here is one more reason to wonder: what do we actually hear in music — the composer himself, or the story we have been told about him?

“When a Ship Has a Destination, Every Wind Is a Fair Wind”

Svetlana Stolyarova in conversation with Anna Kondratova



Anna Kondratova. Personal archive.

After the story of one Anna, Dostoevsky’s heroine, and of another, Anna Grigorievna, his future wife, let us meet our contemporary Anna Kondratova, thanks to whom the original *Netochka Nezvanova* has found a new life in English.

The questions are mine: I am Svetlana Stolyarova, editor of the Russian Garden Gazette. Anya and I are old friends and comrades-in-arms who have

carried out many cultural projects together. So this was not quite a typical interview: no formalities, first names only, with detours from Dostoevsky into music, science, philosophy and our other shared passions.



Anna Kondratova and Svetlana Stolyarova in the Cleveland Cultural Gardens. Personal archive.

"To move like that, you have to think differently."

Dostoevsky: the start of an unexpected journey

> *Anya, we do so much together, and yet the Netochka Nezvanova story still amazes me. How did you dare to take on translating Dostoevsky? Did you have any idea at the time what it would turn into?*

In fact it turned into an enormous journey that seems to have no end in sight. But at the very first moment all I felt was joy and a desire to see it through.

Imagine traveling somewhere new. Arriving as a tourist is one thing; arriving on business is another, especially business that thrills you. Then you don't just look at the sights. You start living the life of the place, meeting people, seeing everything from the inside.

And when a ship has a destination, every wind is a fair wind. You gain focus; you begin to notice things you would never have paid attention to before.

I made up my mind in the spirit of "come what may" and "it isn't the gods who fire the pots" — with humility, but also with hope. The hope rested on my love of the Russian language and on having my daughter Lena. She was born in Russia, moved to America at seven, had time to absorb Russian culture, and mastered English beautifully. And she is a wonderful writer herself.

Without Lena as my safety net I would never have dared to "take a swing at our William Shakespeare."

My personal goal was to see this huge undertaking through to the end. The more important one was to make the complete original text, never before translated into English, available, and if possible to convey its "Russianness" to the American reader.

Jon wanted a translation not only from one language into another but from one culture into another, in the spirit of Umberto Eco's ideas.

For example, I did not want to break up Dostoevsky's long sentences, as translators sometimes do. I wanted to keep the rhythm and the mounting tension of his language, and in that way "tune" the English-speaking reader's ear a little to the Russian manner.

> *You and Lena grew up in different linguistic and cultural circumstances. Did you have real translation battles? And who usually won?*

Interestingly, we had no arguments at all in the usual sense, where somebody has to win and wants to. We had a genuine creative collaboration that brought a great deal of joy and discovery: linguistic, cultural and personal. Not to mention that my English improved considerably.

Phystech, science and the art of learning

> *You are a graduate of Phystech with a PhD in biology. One would think your education was complete. Yet you keep studying with as much enthusiasm as in your youth. Right now, for instance, you are studying ancient philosophy at Case Western Reserve University. What makes you become a student again?*

You can learn a lot from books, even from YouTube. But when a subject is taught by someone who has devoted years of thought, observation, discovery and comparison to it, you get something more than knowledge.

The teacher's personality adds its own emotional colors, brings the subject to life, makes it real. It is no accident that people became disciples of philosophers, apprentices of artists, or members of research laboratories.

> *The more we learn, the more clearly we see the extent of our own ignorance. Do you experience that as discomfort, as an intellectual challenge, or as a source of pleasure?*

A source of pleasure — that's a very good way to put it! I would even say it is less about the extent of my ignorance than about the new, unexpected things

one may suddenly come across.

> *Is there a fundamental difference between scientific and humanistic thinking? Or did Phystech give you a universal way of asking questions and looking for answers?*

Of course there is a difference. You have noticed yourself that I write “very scientifically.” Sometimes it even gets in my way.

Education tunes your thinking in a particular way. Phystech in many ways frees and strengthens it: it teaches you to really understand a phenomenon down to the details and small things, where the key to discovering something new is often found.

It teaches independence: authority is only a sign that there is something here that has interested many people. But you can accept it only when you have understood it yourself.

Scientific thinking demands almost absolute precision, even in forming hypotheses. Let’s leave one percent for flights of fancy. The movement is measured, rigorous, from the simple to the complex.

Humanistic thinking, it seems to me, does the opposite: it tries to grasp complexity as it is, without breaking it into parts.

> *And what does returning to ancient philosophy give you? Do you find answers to modern questions in Plato and Aristotle, or discover new ones?*

For me it is a deepening of my understanding of the same questions. It’s like reading Dostoevsky at twenty, at forty, or at sixty.

Music, Dostoevsky and a violinist's fate

> *Anya, I am struck by how important music is in Netochka Nezvanova. The story of the violinist Efimov, Netochka's stepfather, is not only the story of a failed genius but a meditation on the nature of artistic talent. What do we know about the young Dostoevsky's love of music? Why did he give music such a prominent place in his first big novel?*

The young Dostoevsky soaked up, with enormous enthusiasm and delight, everything the extraordinarily rich musical and theatrical life of 1840s St. Petersburg had to offer.

He went to the opera, the ballet, the theater, and concerts by famous European performers. He heard the violin virtuoso Ole Bull, Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz, and he especially loved Italian opera. In general, theater and music are more present in Dostoevsky's works from before his penal servitude than in his late novels.

But the meaning of music in *Netochka Nezvanova* goes far beyond the writer's personal tastes.

Scholars place the novel in the tradition of the musical tale that runs from Hoffmann through Odoevsky. In Romantic literature the musician often embodied the artist of genius whom society fails to understand.

Dostoevsky turns the Romantic tragedy of the unrecognized genius into a psychological study of the nature of talent: how it is recognized and developed, how it shapes relationships with others, and how it bears on self-deception, moral choice and the meaning of life.



The violinist Efimov. Illustration by Yelena Kondratova.

Efimov blames his failures on external circumstances: poverty, lack of recognition, a wife who supposedly stands in his way. His supposed genius becomes an excuse for idleness, cruelty and selfishness.

Dostoevsky asks: does artistic gift give a person the right to consider himself exceptional, and does it release him from moral obligations?

Art by itself does not make a person moral. And awareness of one's own gift can become a source of dangerous egoism. This is already thoroughly Dostoevskian territory, which he would go on to explore in his great novels.

Music for the violinist Efimov: Niccolò Paganini, Caprice No. 24 in A minor. Alexander Markov, violin. (youtube.com/watch?v=XPM2LIStXPE)

Interestingly, the musical theme continues after Efimov's death. Netochka herself turns out to have an extraordinary singing voice, and the prospect of a professional musical education opens up.

A curious detail: in 1846 Dostoevsky lived in a building where an Italian teacher named Giuliani opened a free singing school for young women. Perhaps the writer intended to explore another attitude toward artistic vocation, continuing the theme sketched in Efimov's friend, the violinist B., and in the musical genius, the violinist S—ts.

Music undoubtedly mattered to Dostoevsky as the language of the human soul. In an 1863 letter to Turgenev he wondered whether music was merely a pleasure or a positive necessity, and leaned toward the latter.

Music can express what has not yet taken clear shape in consciousness. In this sense it is remarkably close to Dostoevsky's literary method: his characters often first feel, suffer and act, and only afterward try to understand what has happened to them.

> *Now I'd like to turn from Dostoevsky to you. I know how important music is in your life. We organize concerts together and spend time with wonderful musicians. How did your own story with music begin? And does a musical ear help you feel the rhythm of a literary text, especially when translating Dostoevsky?*

I studied violin at music school for eight years. I thought about going on to music college, but decided to finish secondary school and ended up in a physics-and-mathematics class.

I was always good at math, but I felt a deep aversion to physics, because I didn't understand it, even though I got top marks anyway.

And then Yuri Grigorievich Koifman came into my life, a teacher words cannot describe. He taught physics through quotations from Ilf and Petrov!

So I abandoned all my French novels and began devouring optics and thermodynamics, hauling enormous volumes home from the library.

At Phystech my interests began to shift again. I even wanted to apply to the philosophy department. And I wanted to be an opera singer too, though that was pure daydreaming. But then my daughter was born.

Later I spent two more years at UNIK, the University of the History of Cultures, a tuition-based division of Moscow State University where famous professors taught the most delicious subjects.

Whether music helps with translation specifically is hard to say. Music is simply part of my inner makeup.

You cannot overestimate the importance of a musical education in childhood. Perhaps my brightest and most meaningful memories, however fleeting, are connected with music school.

World order, harmony, beauty, happiness, beautiful human relationships.

Musicians and music teachers are very special people with a unique mission.



Art, movement and the meeting of cultures

> *You practice classical Chinese dance, an unexpected pursuit for someone with your scientific and literary background. What drew you to it?*

I have always been fascinated by Eastern thought and culture, by their promise of important sacred knowledge and a different kind of beauty.

I have a long history with Chinese philosophy and painting. And now I have been lucky enough to land, by chance, in a dance studio where Chinese dance is taught by an amazing woman who studied as an adult with a well-known teacher in China.

I never stop marveling at and delighting in movements that are utterly unimaginable to my European understanding, created and refined over literally thousands of years.

To move like that, you have to think differently. I can't put it better than that.

> *We work together on concerts by Polina Osetinskaya, Emilio Llinás and Khalida Dinova. What attracts you most in these projects: time with outstanding artists, the creative process, or the chance to show audiences something new?*

All three!

Outstanding artists really are demigods. They are people who, year after year, live ever more deeply the highest achievements of human genius, concentrated to their quintessence.

Promethean fire burns in them, and just being near them, you are fed by it.

Any creative process brings joy. It may be the most reliable way to enjoy life.

And being able to share it with others makes the joy greater still.

Philosophy and the art of asking questions

> *Our Forum of Minds and SocratesQ grew out of the idea that philosophy should be a living conversation partner, not a museum exhibit. Can artificial intelligence really help a person learn to think, or does it tempt us to stop thinking for ourselves?*

Artificial intelligence is a complex and beautiful tool. To benefit from it, you have to know how to use it. That is, you already have to know how to think, and then it will help you go further.

Douglas Adams plays with a paradox in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: getting the answer is not enough; you also need to know what question to ask. Perhaps to ask the question, you already need to know most of the answer.

> *And which interests you more: finding an answer, or discovering a question you hadn't noticed before?*

Finding an answer, I suppose. It's fun. Questions somehow keep coming up on their own.

The art of living with curiosity

> *One of the most remarkable things about your character is your ability to get absorbed in completely new things without asking what practical use they have. But how do you choose what to spend your time on?*

Unfortunately, I waste far too much time. I still have to learn, I hope, how to make choices.

> *We are used to thinking of education as preparation for life: first we study, then we work. What if we turned the formula around? Perhaps life itself is an education that should never end?*

I think so. That, by the way, is how Phystech tried to teach: from the fourth year on, students were attached to "base" research institutes, where they were already working in laboratories.

That is how I learned biology when I came to America. And really, that is how everyone learns.

> *And finally, Anya, imagine that tomorrow you are given a completely free year, with no professional obligations and no organizational worries. What would you want to learn?*

I think I would want not to take anymore, but to give. To make something that I would do well.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

INTERVIEW

Konstantin Sonin

After Dostoevsky and Anna Kondratova, we will meet another scholar: Konstantin Sonin, a professor at the University of Chicago and a well-known economist who studies social institutions. We are preparing an interview about how economic and political decisions are made, what drives people, and why rational behavior so often fails to produce rational results.

NOVEMBER 22

Victor Pelevin

November also brings two wonderful literary birthdays. On November 22 Victor Pelevin turns 64. A writer who explored the world of advertising, information illusions and manufactured desires long before today's era of social media and algorithms gives us a fine occasion to ask: who shapes our sense of reality today?

NOVEMBER 14

Astrid Lindgren

And a very different story: Astrid Lindgren, born on November 14, 1907. How did the Swedish Karlsson-on-the-Roof become something close to a national hero of Soviet animation? And how much does our beloved Karlsson resemble the one the author herself invented?

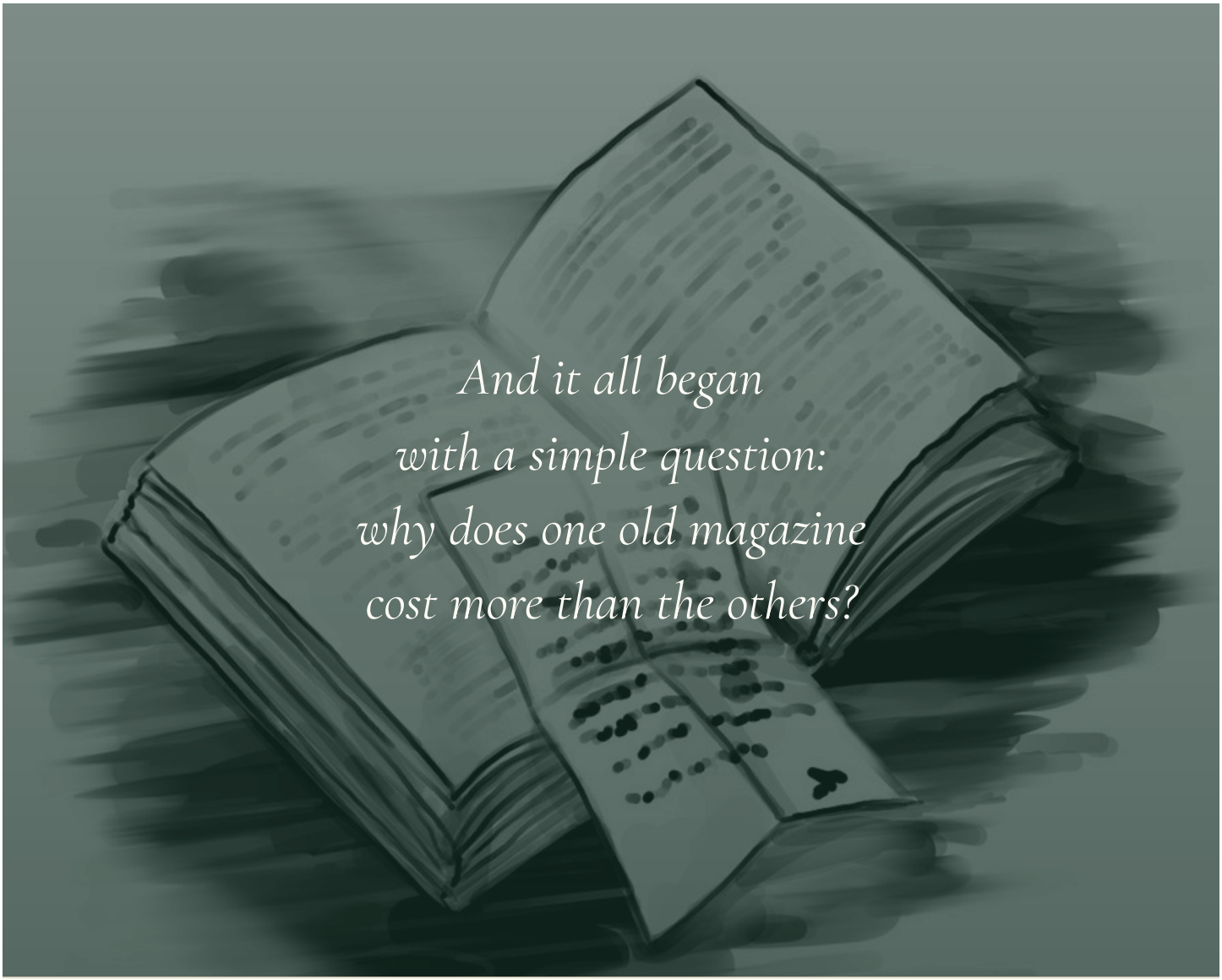
Economics, literature, philosophy — and one rather plump man in the prime of life.
See you in the next issue of the Russian Garden Gazette!

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