Russian Garden Gazette
A Digital Journal of the Russian Cultural Garden, Cleveland
ISSUE #25 · NOVEMBER 2026

🇺🇸 English | 🇷🇺 Русский



Russian Garden Gazette

A Digital Journal of the Russian Cultural Garden, Cleveland

The Circle of Kindness

A Special Thanksgiving Issue

ISSUE #25 · NOVEMBER 26, 2026

Always Say Thank You

One of my first words — and certainly the first one I was truly taught — was “thank you.”

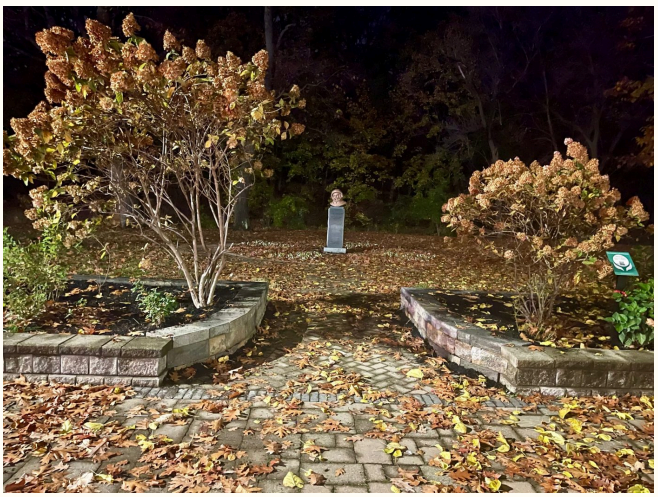
Always say thank you. For any help, any favor, any kindness. Even when it isn’t meant for you.

Over the years you come to understand that gratitude is more than good manners. It is the memory of the good we have received, and of the people without whom our lives would have turned out differently.

The Russian Garden, like all of Cleveland’s Cultural Gardens, is a monument to generosity and gratitude. And quite literally, beneath it all lies the land — the very land John D. Rockefeller gave to Cleveland in 1896 for the city’s centennial. On it the Cultural Gardens later grew: a remarkable monument to the human wish to preserve one’s culture and share it with others. We are grateful to Rockefeller not only for his generous gift, but for the opportunity he gave all of us — the chance to do good ourselves. To create beauty, to keep memory alive, to share our cultural treasures with other people.

But generosity does not end with the act of giving. It also brings responsibility for what becomes of the gift. “You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed,” says Saint-Exupéry’s Little Prince. Don’t we feel the same responsibility for whatever we have put a piece of our soul into? That is how

love, care and the wish to protect what we have made are born. And that is how the original gift lives on, bringing together new generations of givers and keepers.





The Garden's entry plaza was completed with the support of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens Federation and Cuyahoga County.

The Russian Garden was created, and keeps growing, thanks to the generosity of spirit and the financial support of hundreds of people — volunteers, donors, everyone who holds dear Russian history, the Russian language and the humanist traditions of Russian culture. A culture that has given the world great works which long ago crossed national borders and, without losing their Russian roots, became part of the heritage of all humanity.

Generosity always brings warmth and joy, and with them the happiness of giving. Often the giver takes even more joy from the gift than the one who receives it. And a true giver certainly does not give for the sake of thanks or any other reward.

Yet each of us is sometimes the giver and sometimes the receiver, and the roles keep changing. Today we help someone; tomorrow someone reaches out a hand to us. And so the endless circle of kindness and gratitude goes on.

So let's pay each other compliments!

Bulat Okudzhava, "Let Us Exclaim," 1984. In Russian. (youtube.com/watch?v=m4xqi9ELYJQ)

Svetlana Stolyarova

A VIRTUAL SALON

Three Questions, Many Voices

The Russian Garden Gazette's virtual Thanksgiving salon

We love bringing friends together — for musical evenings, salon gatherings and long conversations that often begin with music and end with philosophy well past midnight. Musicians, artists, scientists and people of every profession meet at one table, united by curiosity and the pleasure of good company.

This time our salon is virtual. We invited six remarkable women, gifted and lively conversationalists, each of whom knows in her own way how to turn life into art.

The occasion is Thanksgiving, and there are only three questions. But as so often happens in good company, simple questions open onto subjects one could talk about forever.

OUR GUESTS



Photo: Asya Mineeva

Polina Osetinskaya

PIANIST, WRITER

One of the most striking performers of her generation. Her concert programs, her books and her singular view of music never fail to draw an audience. In March 2027 we will be delighted to welcome Polina back to Cleveland. Her Severance Hall recital is described in Issue #15.



Milena Georgiadi

DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY, CLEVELAND CLINIC

A Solon resident who loves art, science, European travel and intellectual discovery. Milena treasures family traditions, friendship, decency and the art of enjoying life. She is also faithful to the Odesa philosophy: whatever happens, you must “keep your style!”



From Halida Dinova's archive

Halida Dinova

PIANIST, TEACHER

Concert pianist, recording artist and teacher. A graduate of the Kazan and St. Petersburg conservatories and of the Cleveland Institute of Music, she has lived in Cleveland since 1993. For Halida, music is not only a profession but a way to bring people together, preserve cultural memory and pass on to the next generation what her own teachers once gave her.

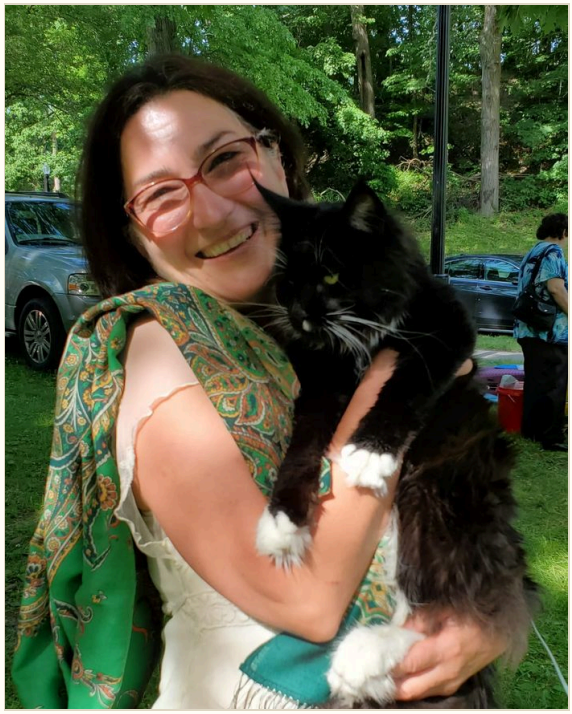


From Daria Rabotkina's archive

Daria Rabotkina

PIANIST, FACULTY, CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

A noted pianist who teaches at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Her performing and teaching join the classical tradition with a lively interest in many other kinds of music.



From Svetlana Stolyarova's archive

Natalia Tararova

BIOLOGIST

Co-founder and head of DAPCEL, and co-founder and a leading scientist of SATOR Therapeutics, a company developing new approaches to cancer treatment. A person of extraordinary generosity, always ready to help — Natalia is not only a scientist and executive but the true soul of SATOR.



Lena Matveeva

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY (RETIRED)

In America since 1996. She worked for the University of Kentucky for thirty years and is now retired — the happy mother of three daughters and grandmother of eleven. Her main passions are travel and museums. Plenty of things to be thankful for!

The guests have gathered. Let the conversation begin.

QUESTION ONE

What does gratitude mean to you?

Polina Osetinskaya

Gratitude, and the ability to be grateful, is what distinguishes a human being from an animal. If not for the people in my life to whom I am grateful, my life would have turned out completely differently. Remembering kindness and always giving thanks for it is what makes life meaningful.

Milena Georgiadi

Gratitude is more than knowing how to say thank you for the good things that happen to us. It is the ability to see goodness even in small things, to remember the people who made our lives warmer, to cherish moments that will never come again, and never to take love, friendship and attention for granted.

In my professional life, the best thanks is a patient who has learned to walk again, who has beaten an illness, who has gained even a grain more independence…

For me, gratitude means noticing. Remembering. Cherishing. Answering kindness with kindness.

And finding at least one reason every day to say to life: thank you…

Halida Dinova

For me, gratitude is the ability to treasure the gifts of fate, moments of inspiration, and the people who bring warmth, friendship and joy into our lives.

In January 2026 I received an unexpected gift. My old friend Emilio Llinás, for many years a member of the Cleveland Orchestra, invited me to perform with him in a chamber concert. That invitation opened a new musical chapter in my life and introduced me to the magical world of Richard Strauss's Violin Sonata.

Through this collaboration I found new friends — Svetlana Stolyarova, Anna Kondratova and their families — and felt connected to Cleveland's Russian community once again. New friendships, a shared love of music and the cultural life around the Russian Cultural Garden gave me a wonderful sense of belonging to a community of kindred spirits.

The Stars of Summer festival, the celebrations in the Cultural Gardens and our Russian Garden Gazette are priceless gifts to the whole community, made possible by the dedication and generosity of people who believe in the unifying power of culture.

Daria Rabotkina

For me, Thanksgiving means rest and time spent with family.

Natalia Tararova

If a person has something to thank fate for (God?), luck (a guardian angel?), family and friends, she is truly blessed with a wealth that cannot be counted — a wealth that lies deep inside you and is your very essence.

After all, some people are both rich and lucky, yet unable to appreciate it, to enjoy it fully or share their happiness, because they don't see it themselves and take it for granted.

Of course, everything is learned by comparison. Perhaps if we had not lived through serious hardships, overcome the insurmountable, jumped onto the last car of a departing train, we simply would not have the material for comparison, the strength to grow and succeed — and, as a result, gratitude for all of life's experience, for all our friends and not-quite-friends, our teachers and the strangers we happened to meet.

I remember one incident. Sometime around 2001. I was younger then, and of better quality.

In the middle of a workday I ended up in a little café on Coventry: I had left my car at the repair shop and needed to kill some time. I got a coffee and a newspaper (people still read those then, not their phones) and settled into a corner.

At one of the tables a man sat writing something. On his way out he came over, rather shyly, and said, "This is for you."

I said, "Thank you." And he left.

I read it — some beautiful verses. Dedicated to me.

Well, I thought, all right. One can live in Cleveland with a certain degree of pleasantness after all.

Thank you, kind man.

Lena Matveeva

It means to stop doing things and running around like crazy, and to think about what is actually important in your life and what you could be really thankful for. And reflect on it. Better with all the people you love around.



Lena Matveeva on the "My Old Kentucky Home" bench.

QUESTION TWO

Repay kindness, or pass it on? Are we losing this tradition?

Polina Osetinskaya

It should certainly be as natural as brushing your teeth, giving to charity or saying your evening prayers. The circle of kindness must be multiplied, even if there is never enough of it to save the world from wars, troubles and misfortunes.



Polina Osetinskaya. Photo: Rada Abib

Milena Georgiadi

I believe kindness should never turn into a debt between two people. If someone once warmed your soul, someday you must warm someone else's. True gratitude is when the good you have received lives on in what you do for others.

Halida Dinova

From the very beginning of my musical education I was taught that talent is a gift — a seed we are obliged to cultivate, and whose fruit we must share with those around us.

For me, performing and teaching are inseparable. I strive to keep growing as a musician and to pass on to my students the knowledge, inspiration and wisdom I received from my own teachers.

Some gifts can never be repaid. Many of my mentors are no longer with us, but I try to honor their memory by following their creed: "To be, rather than to seem."

Preserving cultural heritage and handing it on to the next generations is another way of expressing gratitude. The Russian Cultural Garden is a living space where history, music and

tradition continue to inspire people.



Halida Dinova. From her archive

Daria Rabotkina

I think this problem has always existed. But right now I notice something of a revival of interest in the arts, despite the lack of official support.

My husband, one of the leading figures in the ragtime community, could probably tell you about a second revival of that music. Young people are drawn to music instinctively, much more, it seems to me, than they were ten years ago.



Daria Rabotkina. From her archive

Lena Matveeva

Always a good thing. One and/or the other. If you can do something good, do it. Today, tomorrow, always. Give it back and pay it forward. Try to move the Universe's balance toward the positive side of the scale. Away from the negative.

QUESTION THREE

And what is on your holiday table?

Polina Osetinskaya

Instead of the traditional Thanksgiving turkey I make duck with apples and sour shchi from Elena Molokhovets's recipe. And the main thing is to gather the people you love around the table!!

Milena Georgiadi

My Thanksgiving table always has room not only for the traditional holiday dishes but for memories that warm the soul.

In Odesa, duck was the true queen of the holiday table, so I try to keep this small family tradition and always include it in our menu. And every year I cook at least one dish from my

childhood — the one whose familiar taste instantly takes me home to Odesa, to family feasts, conversations and moments of the past.

A holiday table is more than beautifully prepared food. It is our history, our roots, the aromas of childhood and the love we carry across years, countries and generations. You can change continents, homes and even habits, but some tastes remain part of us forever.



Milena Georgiadi's Odesa-style duck.

Halida Dinova

Halida shared with us the recipe for her favorite raspberry pie — a tender shortbread base, an airy layer of whipped egg whites and a crisp golden crumble. The recipe follows below.

Daria Rabotkina

Since we don't eat meat, I expect we'll have corn, green beans, maybe a veggie burger — and pies.

Natalia Tararova

Anyone who grew up in the USSR should remember the Soviet Thanksgiving well — the Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution, November 7, a red-letter day on the calendar.

Happily, it nearly coincided with the birthday of my grandfather, Dmitry Fokich Khapaev — a front-line veteran, a merry soul and a passionate cook.

What wasn't on that holiday table! Aspic and jellied fish, without fail. And of course we started with the fish. (We were still children.)

Tripe! Kidneys! Brains! Those were the hot appetizers. Then some kind of soup, kharcho or the like. Little cutlets, a pie with vyaziga! And speck-kuchen — tiny pies with bacon and onion.

Ah… there were people in our time…

In short, try it: in any dough, yeast or puff pastry, put a teaspoon of filling made of finely chopped smoked bacon fried with a little finely chopped onion.

The smaller you can make these pies, the better. I remember ours were tiny, golden and indescribably delicious.

Thank you for the delicious memories.



Natalia Tararova and Anton Komar. From Svetlana Stolyarova's archive

Lena Matveeva

Usually whatever my kids ask for. Even though they were raised in America, they love the traditional salads we have always made in our family: Olivier salad, vinegret, herring under a fur coat. And Kiev cake. New additions: macarons and Derby pie.

Turkey, of course. It is Thanksgiving, after all.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

FROM OUR SALON'S HOLIDAY KITCHEN

Halida Dinova's Favorite Raspberry Pie



Ingredients

- Flour — 200 g (about 1⅔ cups)
- Softened butter — 100 g (7 tablespoons)
- Eggs — 3 (yolks and whites separated)
- Baking powder — 1½ teaspoons
- Sugar — 3 tablespoons for the whites and 2 tablespoons for the crumble
- Fresh or frozen raspberries — to taste

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 350 °F (175 °C). Line the bottom of the pan with parchment and lightly butter the sides.
2. Rub the butter into the flour with your hands, then add the three yolks and the baking powder. Do not add sugar to the base.
3. Set a third of the crumbs aside in the refrigerator. Press the rest firmly over the bottom and sides of the pan.
4. Spread dry fresh or frozen raspberries over the base and bake for 17 minutes.
5. Whip the egg whites with three tablespoons of sugar and spread them over the raspberries.
6. Warm the chilled crumbs in a skillet with two tablespoons of sugar, stirring constantly, until they form crisp golden clusters.
7. Sprinkle the crumble over the pie and return it to the oven for another 7 minutes.

Bunky Bernstein, Carol Hanley and My First Thanksgiving

Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein's Thanksgiving story, with an introduction by their old friend Boris Vinogradsky



Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein.

This little Thanksgiving story was written by Bunky Bernstein and Carol Hanley. They are, I think, my closest American friends. It all began in

June 1988.

That summer a delegation from Burlington, Vermont — business people, lawyers, doctors — came to Yaroslavl. The purpose of the visit was to build ties between two sister cities, Yaroslavl and Burlington. The delegation was led by Bernie Sanders, then mayor of Burlington, later a congressman and then a senator from Vermont.

I had always wanted to talk with people abroad, especially fellow doctors. By then I was already thinking of leaving Russia if the chance came, and I was looking for contacts in America.

So I asked one of the delegates, the attorney Howard Seaver, to introduce me to one of his doctor friends in Burlington.

That friend turned out to be Richard Bernstein, whom everyone calls Bunky. He was a family physician in Charlotte, Vermont; he is retired now.

To my great surprise, a couple of months later an envelope arrived. Inside were a Polaroid photo and a short note from Bunky and Carol: of course they would be happy to correspond with me!

I wrote back immediately. We didn't write very often, but when I finally decided to leave Russia, I wrote to them again and asked for an invitation to the United States.

Bunky knew I was coming, but not when.

On November 7, 1991, I landed at JFK in New York. I didn't have Bunky's phone number, but I managed to reach another acquaintance, Dr. Alan Rubin, who had also been part of that delegation. I told him I was in New York and about to take a bus to Burlington.

And then — to my next incredible surprise — when I arrived at the Burlington bus station, Bunky and his son Noah were already there to meet me!

The rest is history.

I stayed with Bunky and Carol for two weeks. They gave me a small room and surrounded me with care and hospitality. Later I found a place in Burlington itself, which was much more convenient.

A week after that, they invited me to celebrate my very first Thanksgiving.

It was something completely extraordinary, unfamiliar and wonderful.

Ever since, Turkey Day, as Americans jokingly call Thanksgiving, has been my favorite American holiday.



Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein.



Aboard Luna.

The Gazette profiled Dr. Boris Vinogradsky — a surgeon who brings people together — in Issue #22.

Thanksgiving Recipe...

Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein

First, a history lesson. For millennia humans have celebrated the harvest, and the indigenous Wampanoags and the Pilgrims did share a feast in the fall of 1621. But our American Thanksgiving, the one we celebrate today, dates from the Civil War. In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving.

Now, we can eat.

Thanksgiving is the best holiday. It's an inclusive event with no religious overtones. Expectations are low. There are no presents. It's all about gratitude for what we already have in our lives. It's very simple, and it's all a blessing.

You gather family and friends, cook more food than they can eat, accept everyone else's contribution to the meal, set a festive table, and there you have it. Steer away from discussions about politics, and everyone's happy. And, as a bonus, the firewood you've had strategically delivered the week before gets stacked in neat rows by the out-of-town guests. (All our family lived out of town.)

We started hosting Thanksgiving in the 1980's. We were settled in Vermont, had built a house in the woods, and decided we were grown-up enough for the challenge. We invited both sides of the family — parents, aunts, siblings, nephews, nieces, and the occasional cousin. We always had friends who wanted to join us as well.





Thanksgiving in Vermont, early 1990s.

In November 1991 we introduced a Russian physician to the holiday. He and his family were guests for several years, and he calls faithfully every year to remind us.

We planned for days, and my sister and I made the stuffing for the turkey the night before — the traditional Hanley recipe of Vermont crackers, onions, Bell's seasoning.



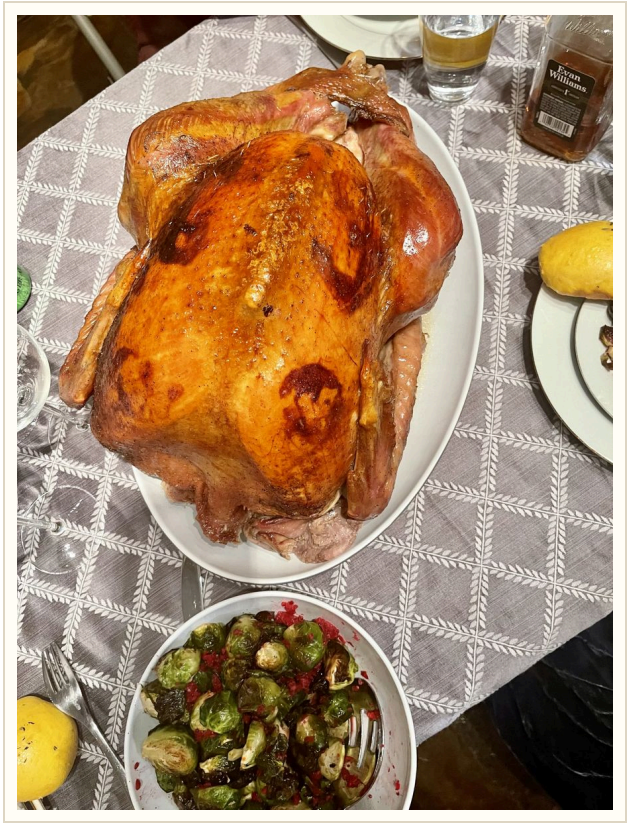
The turkey is almost done.

The turkey went into the oven early. Stock simmered on the stove all day. My aunt Kay, who never learned her way around a kitchen, polished the silver.

We began celebrating with shrimp cocktail and Bunky's Bloody Marys. My father carved the turkey and made the gravy. Side dishes varied, but our brother-in-law David's mashed potatoes, squash, cranberry sauce (the jellied canned kind), and the aforementioned gravy were always on the table. Maybe some endive, some carrots, a green salad. And more than enough Beaujolais Nouveau to wash it all down.

Dessert was monumental. My mother made my grandmother's lemon sponge pies. David made an icebox cake from chocolate cookies and whipped cream and an angel-food cake filled with strawberries and more whipped cream.





We did it for decades. There was always a crowd, and we loved it.

Now the holiday is calmer. The old folks are gone; we are now the old folks. Our four boys are scattered around the country making their own traditions. But we still have a meal and celebrate the holiday. We still invite some friends, find a few more who have no plans, cook more food than they can eat, accept their contributions, and continue to count our blessings.

Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein

Ferrisburgh, Vermont · November 2026

About the authors

Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein met in Vermont in 1974. They built a house in East Charlotte, raised four sons there, and pursued careers in graphic design and family

medicine respectively. Now retired, they live in the house on Lake Champlain and enjoy sailing and other water activities. Their four sons visit in the summer with their families, including five grandchildren, who have become proficient sailors. Carol and Bunky spend part of their winters in St. Augustine, FL, but return to Vermont for the holidays and continue to host Thanksgiving dinners for their friends.

THANKSGIVING APERITIF

Bunky's Bloody Mary



The Bloody Mary's story began in Paris in 1921, when the bartender Fernand Petiot mixed Russian vodka with American canned tomato juice. Later, after moving to New York, he refined the drink, adding salt, lemon juice, pepper, cayenne and Worcestershire sauce.

A Bloody Mary goes beautifully with seafood — shrimp and oysters — and is often served before dinner as an aperitif.

Here is my own recipe. When a big crowd gathers for Thanksgiving, I simply multiply the ingredients by the number of servings I expect and mix everything in a large pitcher or glass jar. There is always room for creativity: adjust the spices to taste, or add something else.

Per serving

- Vodka — 1½ oz (45 ml)
- Tomato juice or Clamato — 4 oz (120 ml)
- Lemon juice — 2 teaspoons
- Lime juice — 2 teaspoons
- Horseradish — 1 teaspoon
- Worcestershire sauce — 4 dashes
- Tabasco — 3 dashes
- Grated garlic — a pinch
- Celery salt or Old Bay — a pinch

Method

1. Mix all the ingredients, cover and refrigerate for about an hour so the flavors come together.
2. Serve in a tall glass over ice.
3. Garnish with a celery stalk, olives on a pick, and a wedge of lemon or lime.

Recipe by Richard "Bunky" Bernstein, Vermont.

Salt and black pepper — to taste

Wonderfully Luminous Blok

November 28 marks 146 years since the birth of Alexander Blok



Alexander Blok. Public domain.

Blok's poems are wonderfully youthful. I'll go further: if a young man or woman feels no answering echo in Blok's poetry, something is rotten in the kingdom of Denmark.



Alexander Blok as Hamlet and Lyubov Mendeleeva as Ophelia, an amateur performance at Boblovo, 1898. Public domain.

A girl was singing in a church choir
of all the weary in foreign lands,
of all the ships gone out to sea,
of all who have forgotten their joy…

Those born in the muffled years
do not remember their own way…

Wind, wind —
over all God's world!
The wind is curling
the white snow.
Under the snow — ice.
Slippery, hard going,
every walker
slips — ah, poor thing!

...only one who loves
has the right to be called human.

Scraps of Blok's lines lodge in the memory forever and surface the moment a poem begins to sound.

And then there is Blok's extraordinary night:

Night, street, streetlamp, drugstore,
a meaningless and dim light...

A cinematically precise picture of hopelessness. Yet even in this despair you sense the presence of someone who, for some reason, is drawn out into that night.

For all his sober gloom, Blok is a wonderfully luminous poet.

Only a poet with a luminous soul could have written:

O spring without end, without limit —

a dream without end, without limit!

I know you, life! I accept you!

And I greet you with the ring of my shield!

The English renderings of Blok's lines are the Gazette's own.

Svetlana Stolyarova

"Alexander Blok," from the Soviet television series Great Names of Russia, 1986. In Russian. (youtube.com/watch?v=-iXIdWEzaY0)

LOOKING AHEAD

From Gratitude to New Endeavors

In this holiday issue we have talked a great deal about gratitude: about the people to whom we owe who we have become, about generosity, about family and cultural traditions, about the need to pass on the good we have received.

Ahead lie a new year, new meetings, new plans and new chances to do something good together.

In the coming year we hope to make a long-held dream come true: to create the Rachmaninoff Music Corner in the Russian Cultural Garden. Concerts, traditional celebrations, meetings with wonderful musicians and, of course, work in the Garden itself all lie ahead.

We want the Russian Garden Gazette not only to introduce its readers to the cultural past, but to invite them to take part in the cultural present.

So today we invite you to look at our calendar.

RUSSIAN CULTURAL GARDEN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 2026 — October 2027

November 29, 2026	The Stars of Summer — *A Season of Gratitude* concert. St. Casimir Church.
December 6, 2026	Lighting of the Cultural Gardens Christmas tree. Centennial Plaza.
January 23, 2027	The traditional Tatiana Ball.
March 25, 2027	Rachmaninoff Tribute — a private benefit concert by Polina Osetinskaya in support of the Rachmaninoff Music Corner.
March 27, 2027	Polina Osetinskaya in recital. Reinberger Chamber Hall, Severance Music Center.
April 17, 2027	The traditional spring cleanup of the Russian Garden.
June 6, 2027	Alexander Pushkin's birthday. New names on the Walk of Fame.
August 29, 2027	One World Day and the Stars of Summer festival.
October 16, 2027	The traditional fall cleanup of the Russian Garden.
Dates to be announced	Stars of Summer concerts and other cultural events for children.

More details about upcoming events will appear in future issues of the Russian Garden Gazette.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

DECEMBER 3, 2026

An Interview-Meditation with Hershey Felder

The centerpiece of our next issue is an interview-meditation with the pianist, actor and playwright Hershey Felder. And, we hope, the story of Anastas Mikoyan's visit to Cleveland.

See you on December 3!

Support the Russian Cultural Garden

The Garden lives thanks to its friends. Your gift helps us care for the Garden, extend the Walk of Fame, build the Rachmaninoff Music Corner and publish the Gazette. Every amount matters: $10, $25 or $100 — each gift helps the Garden grow.

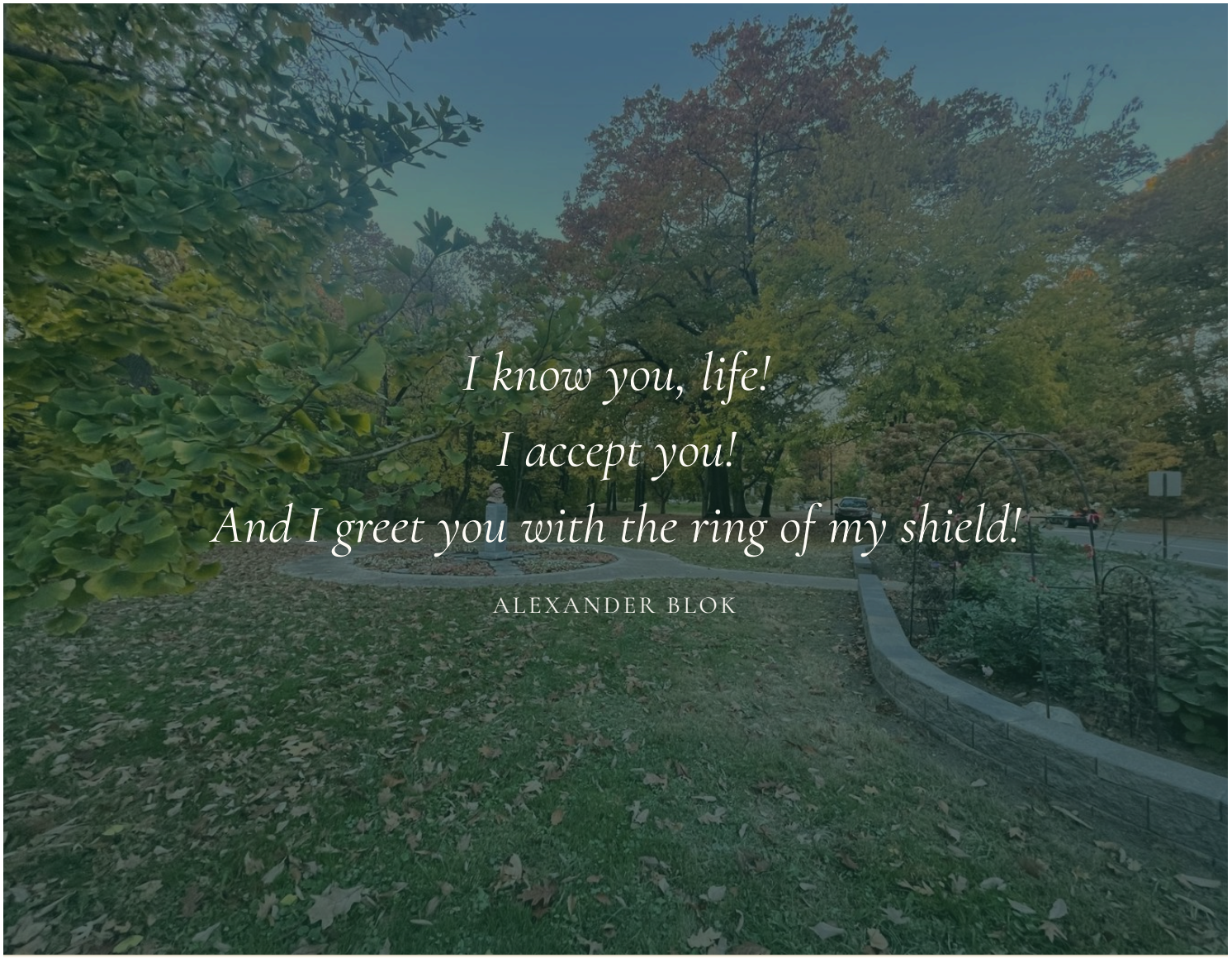
To place a name on the Walk of Fame, the suggested gift is **$250**. Sponsors are listed at RussianGarden.org. A gift may be made in honor or in memory of someone dear to you.



Zelle:

board@russiangarden.org

Russian Cultural Gardens



RUSSIAN Cultural Garden

Stay in Touch

The Russian Garden Gazette is the digital journal of the Russian Cultural Garden, Cleveland — a permanent record of the Garden's life for everyone who has ever called it their own.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Russian Garden Gazette · Issue #25 · November 26, 2026

Photographs for Boris Vinogradsky's article are from the family archive of Carol Hanley and Bunky Bernstein. Garden photographs: Russian Cultural Garden. Salon portraits: Polina Osetinskaya by Asya Mineeva and Rada Abib; Halida Dinova and Daria Rabotkina from their own archives; Natalia Tararova from Svetlana Stolyarova's archive. Portrait of Alexander Blok and the 1898 *Hamlet* photograph: public domain.

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