

# Inhabited Island



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*"Your conscience is spoiled by constant attention, it begins to groan at the slightest inconvenience, and your mind respectfully bows before it."*

Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. "The Inhabited Island"

## Editor-in-chief's column



*Olga Belokon*

Dear readers, starting with this issue of the newspaper we are broadening our focus from the Russian community in New Zealand to broader coverage of events related to the war in Ukraine. The focus of our attention is on both the Russian and Ukrainian communities both in New Zealand and in other countries. We will continue to publish eyewitness accounts of the tragic events taking place in Ukraine and the dramatic events that are

unfolding before our eyes in Russia. We will also try to publish materials about how New Zealand society reacts to the war and how it is involved in a conflict that has gone far beyond the conflict between the two Slavic countries. We will also focus on cultural events that are not directly related to the war, both inside and outside New Zealand. We are starting to publish our newspaper in three languages: Russian, Ukrainian and English.

We continue to closely monitor developments in Ukraine and Russia. The Ukrainian army has finally launched the long-awaited offensive. It is hard and slow, but, according to military experts, the Ukrainian army managed to seize the initiative and forecasts for further developments look much more optimistic for it than for the Russian army. At the NATO summit in Vilnius, Ukraine was promised serious security guarantees, but was not formally invited to join NATO. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a brief personal conversation with New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins for the first time.



*"The Inhabited Island" at the Festival of Cultures, March 25, 2023, Auckland.*

And in Russia there was the Weekend Rebellion. After its unexpected and lightning-fast end, the main rebel, Yevgeny Prigozhin, was called a traitor. His severe "punishment" was to give him several billion rubles and some more dowry in the form of weapons. Prigozhin and other Wagner leaders met President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. The "traitor" was sent to Belarus, from where he quickly returned to Russia, and



***The leader of the Ukrainian community in New Zealand, Yuri Gladun, at the Festival of Cultures in Auckland on 25 March.***

then, suddenly, disappeared from sight altogether. Some experts consider all this phantasmagoria as events reflecting the beginning of a leadership change in Russia.

Scandals with Putin's armoured train and the palace of the main rebel harmoniously set off the main events of recent weeks and days in Russia.

Fast forward to New Zealand. It turns out that this small country has a big heart, according to Konstantin Kovalev, the author of a note about New Zealand heroes who have died in the war in Ukraine. From "The Inhabited Island" interview with Stephen Hoadley, a professor at the University of Auckland, you will learn the opinion of an expert political scientist about the war in Ukraine and the Russian diaspora in New Zealand. Lena Nikiforova, as always, gives a brief summary of protest, humanitarian and other actions organised over the past two months by the RSIA (Russian Speaking Integrity Alliance) group.

A notable event in the cultural life of New Zealand in the spring of 2023 was the tour of the Kyiv Ballet (Grand Kiev Ballet of Ukraine). In Auckland, the troupe performed on the stage of the Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre. In the first part, a fragment of the classical Ukrainian ballet, "The Forest Song" by composer Mykhailo Skorulsky, was presented. The libretto of the ballet — a touching love story — is based on Ukrainian folk legends. In the second part, we enjoyed the immortal music of Minkus and the professional performance of the sparkling Don Quixote. It is curious that the part of Kitri was danced by a ballerina of Japanese origin, Mie Nagasawa. The ballerina is short. She fits perfectly into the overall fabric of the production. Mia's story is interesting. After graduating from the Vaganova School in St Petersburg, she decided to connect her life with Ukraine and joined the troupe of the Kyiv Ballet. After the end of the performance and thunderous applause, the anthem of Ukraine sounded in the hall. The whole hall stood up. No, to be precise, one person in the whole hall remained

defiantly sitting. I recognised this man as the mother of one of my former students (I teach Russian to children). This family has recently arrived in New Zealand from St Petersburg.

The famous Ukrainian rock band Antytila will give a concert in Auckland on November 11. Over the 15 years of its existence, the group has become widely known not only in Ukraine, but also abroad. In the first days of the war, the musicians put their musical instruments aside and took up arms. After many months spent fighting, they took a break and are now touring in America and Europe. They will reach us. The poster of the concert is on the last page of this issue.

Needless to say, both touring groups are directing part of their proceeds to support the Ukrainian army and humanitarian projects in Ukraine.

Of the relatively recent bright cultural events of Russian Auckland, it should be noted the arrival of a wonderful duet of singer-songwriters, Lana Jandzhgava and Mikhail Frolov. Read interviews with them on the ,,,, page of this issue. Another "cultural" event of a scandalous nature is mentioned in a short note Misha Vorobyov: "The most important thing is the buffet ... And bring cash, cash". This article is about ethics in relation to the victims of the war in Ukraine. In this issue you will not see a page of humour. Alas... But on the last page of the newspaper, you will find announcements and posters of upcoming events.



***An excerpt from the ballet "The Forest Song" by Mikhail Skorulsky performed by Oleksandr Stoyanov (head of the troupe) and Anna Stoyanova.***



## A small country with a big heart



**Konstantin  
Kovalev**

New Zealand is a small country on the edge of the southern hemisphere of the Earth. Seventeen thousand kilometres separate it from Ukraine, the country where one of the worst tragedies of the 21st century is now unfolding — war. Moreover, this war stands out from others like it not in the number of victims, although since February 24, 2022, according to UN estimates, more than 8000 civilians, including about 500 children, have died, and, of

course, this figure is an underestimate, since in the conditions of war the collection of information is very difficult. Nor does it stand out for the number of refugees, although since the beginning of the war there have been more than 8 million, more than New Zealand's entire population. No, this war stands out for its complete lack of any meaning. Well, or at least common sense.

But what does New Zealand have to do with it? Not everyone may know that three citizens of this country have already died in Ukraine: Kane Te Tai, Dominic Abelen and Andrew

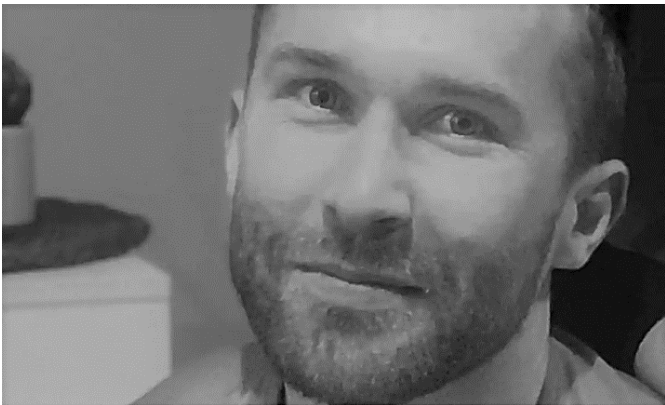
presumed to be in the possession of Russian troops, has not



**Kane Te Tai**

yet been returned to relatives in New Zealand. He was 24 years old.

Dr Andrew Bagshaw was a medical worker, a scientist. He received his doctorate from the University of Otago. He worked in the laboratory of Professor Martin Kennedy. His main project was to investigate the role of genetics in human intelligence. He decided to go to Ukraine in 2022 after he saw a news report about the Russian invasion. There he worked as a volunteer driver, helping in the evacuation of civilians from war zones. He worked under fire. On January 6, this year, he, along with another medical professional from the UK, Chris Parry, went on a mission to evacuate an elderly woman from Soledar. Communications with them abruptly ceased. As it



**Dominic Abelen**

Bagshaw. Who are these brave Kiwis?

Kane Te Tai was a professional soldier. He joined the New Zealand Defence Force at the age of 17. He served in Afghanistan with the First Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. On his own initiative, he arrived in Ukraine in April 2022. He participated in the training of Ukrainian soldiers, trained civilians in evacuation and disposal of weapons, helped fight human trafficking. He died on March 20, 2023, in Vuhledar, while carrying out a reconnaissance mission for the Military Intelligence Service of Ukraine. He was 38 years old.

Dominic Abelen was a corporal in the New Zealand Defence Force. He served in the same infantry regiment as Kane Te Tai. A professional soldier who served in the New Zealand Army for 10 years. Dominic Abelen went to Ukraine while on unpaid leave. He joined the International Legion of Territorial Defence of Ukraine. He died in August 2022 during an operation to capture enemy fortifications. His body,



**Dr Andrew Bagshaw**

turned out later, a shell hit their car. Dr Andrew Bagshaw was 47 years old. What was the reason for these people to go 17,000 kilometres to a country where a war was raging? Perhaps a sense of compassion? Kane Te Tai, in his last interview with [News Hub](#), said of Ukrainians: "They are very similar to those who grew up and did not want to be Maori. But now they are trying to re-discover it. [...] They are trying to return what makes them Ukrainians."

Official information on how many New Zealanders are involved in the war in Ukraine, as well as the details of this participation, is not covered in detail in the open press. It is believed that the New Zealand military in Ukraine does not participate in hostilities at the front, but trains local personnel and helps with logistics [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/russia-ukraine-war-laser-kiwi-flag-spotted-on-battlefield-among-nz-fighters/5VUKWYVQJREKVMHOXQYCA-ZFUJU/?fbclid=IwAR3DVqgGE54Pqs9wJ5pDWDR-IUu6DyIIEPRdhz9oOgT4ruEiWRPZEUwWtq0\\_O](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/russia-ukraine-war-laser-kiwi-flag-spotted-on-battlefield-among-nz-fighters/5VUKWYVQJREKVMHOXQYCA-ZFUJU/?fbclid=IwAR3DVqgGE54Pqs9wJ5pDWDR-IUu6DyIIEPRdhz9oOgT4ruEiWRPZEUwWtq0_O). At the end of May, a video appeared on Facebook in which a group of people dressed in military uniforms performed a haka in an open area, behind which you can see a forest resembling a European one. And the caption under the video: "Our guys from New Zealand in our Ukraine are a battalion of Maori volunteers, a haka before the battle" [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0LLXjnw1EPOXNt-JZu-kXES39racp8bLgJYafs9tRinmuvGSvN12k3QJeeF9j37pNwjI&id=1594430511&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0LLXjnw1EPOXNt-JZu-kXES39racp8bLgJYafs9tRinmuvGSvN12k3QJeeF9j37pNwjI&id=1594430511&mibextid=Nif5oz)



**Photos from the personal archive of Vladimir Fomin**

We were able to contact the person who posted this video. It turned out to be a New Zealander of Ukrainian origin, Volodymyr Fomin. Volodymyr is from Kyiv. He has lived in New Zealand for 25 years. As soon as the war in Ukraine began, Volodymyr returned to his homeland and started delivering military and humanitarian supplies to the front line. He was wounded twice and is now undergoing rehabilitation. Vladimir told us that he himself had personally met these Maori several times, and the video of the haka had been sent to him by his comrades. We do not have the opportunity to independently verify this information, but we have no doubt that the brave, courageous, and most importantly, empathetic to the grief of Ukrainians, citizens of the Country with a Big Heart are now standing shoulder to shoulder with other defenders of Ukraine.

## **New Zealand academic on the war in Ukraine and the Russian diaspora in New Zealand.**



**Dr Stephen Hoadley**

*Dr Stephen Hoadley is Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at the University of Auckland. He is an expert in foreign policy analysis, security assessment, and trade politics. He has served on four government advisory committees and has published 14 books and 60 articles and chapters over the course of his academic career. He is an honorary captain in the Royal New Zealand Navy. In retirement he continues to offer media commentaries and public talks. Dr Stephen Hoadley is the only NZ academic, to which the Russian Embassy in Wellington has denied visa privileges along with MPs, top officials and several journalists. Recently Prof. Hoadley published articles devoted to the Putin's regime and propaganda in relation to Ukrainian war. He kindly agreed to answer questions from Olga Belokon.*

*OB: The International Criminal Court (ICC) recognises Putin as a war criminal. Does the NZ Government recognise Putin as a war criminal? What*

*is the position of the NZ government regarding the war crimes committed by Russians in Ukraine?*

*SH: The NZ government has condemned the Russian invasion and as a signatory of the Rome statute of the ICC the NZ government implicitly supports the ICC indictment of Putin and others for war crimes. Individual parliamentarians and ministers have made statements condemning Russia's war crimes. But NZ officially has no plan to initiate war crimes*



proceedings by itself or to participate actively in ICC proceedings. NZ will support the decisions and actions of the ICC prosecutor and judges and will comply with ICC requirements such as funding and respect for arrest warrants, extradition requests, and sanctions. Whether NZ would directly support Ukrainian war crimes proceedings is not clear, e.g., whether NZ would extradite suspects to Ukraine in the absence of a specific extradition treaty.

*OB: NZ, unlike other developed countries, does not widely open doors to Ukraine refugees. Can you comment on it. Currently the only Ukraine people accepted as refugees are those who have relatives in NZ who sponsor them. Refugees do not get any support from the NZ government. Non-relatives are not allowed to sponsor Ukraine refugees. A small group of Russians started a petition asking for non-relatives to also become sponsors. The petition was not successful because only a few people signed it. Do you think the NZ government should provide more support for Ukraine refugees?*

SH: It has been observed that NZ is already more generous towards Ukrainians than to equally needy refugees from the Middle East, South Asia, or Africa, because Ukrainians are 'white' and 'European' and 'Christian'. I believe non-relatives such as churches or employers or charities should be able to sponsor refugee applicants and non-refugee migrant applicants as well. I believe refugees, and migrants, should be admitted on their individual merits. But temporary protection visas can and should be issued to victims of exceptional circumstances such as those in Ukraine.

*OB: Many Russians living in New Zealand support Putin's policies, including the war against Ukraine, and repeat messages containing disinformation. Can this be explained solely by the effectiveness of Putin's propaganda?*

SH: In my opinion anyone sceptical about American or European hegemony (leadership) will be inclined to accept Putin's version of Russian victimhood as plausible. Of course, any Russian chauvinist or follower of [Alexander] Dugin's geopolitics will, too. In addition, those who are naïve, ignorant, or impatient with complicated international affairs will gravitate to simple slogans or explanations as offered by Putin and the Russian troll factories. It is prior disposition, not subtlety of Putin's crude propaganda, that inclines some people to support the Russian narrative.

*OB: Can you compare the pattern of behaviour of the Russian diaspora in current situations with the pattern of behaviours of other diasporas in similar situations either currently or in historical perspective?*

SH: I have observed (unsystematically) that most migrants accept the laws and mores of their adopted home, and many don't want to be troubled with the problems they have left behind. I don't predict that anti- and pro-Russia Russians will clash violently in NZ; most will try to blend in.

*OB: Recently the BBC published an article about the celebration of the defeat of Nazi Germany in Berlin. It appeared that among Germans there was a spectrum opinions about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including labelling the Ukraine government a 'Fascist regime' <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65559516> indicating that Putin's propaganda is effective not only among Russians living in Germany but also among Germans.*

SH: Yes, Nazism, like the Holocaust, Islamic terrorism, and the alleged Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians are simple but powerful emotional symbols that can polarise societies.

*OB: Are there similar trends in New Zealand?*

SH: I have not encountered any New Zealander who has asserted that Ukrainians are Nazis.

*OB: If there are, how does Putin's propaganda reach New Zealanders of non-Russian origin?*

SH: The right-wing fringe of anti-vaxxers and anti-establishmentarians, and media such as Fox and Sky, do Putin's work for him by forwarding Russian propaganda, giving it a local appearance and credence.

*OB: Does it pose a threat to New Zealand democracy?*

SH: Not yet. It's taken up by only a small minority. The security agencies are monitoring it and researchers are warning us against it. Most Kiwis discount or ignore it.

*OB: Is the reaction of NZ society as a whole or of the Russian community to the war in Ukraine studied by experts in political science, sociologists or psychologists at the University of Auckland or in other NZ academic institutions?*

SH: Not that I know of. It should be a subject of academic research. The 'disinformation project' <https://thedisinfoproject.org/about-us/> must be studying this indirectly.

*OB: How do you see the future of Russia? How do you estimate the chances for Russia to switch to a more normal political system or even to democracy after the end of Putin's rule? Is it likely that a more repressive regime will follow Putin? Do you think that Russia after the war will keep its territorial integrity?*

SH: I am pessimistic about Russia becoming a democracy and good international citizen, content within its post-Soviet borders. It took devastating defeat and mass death and foreign occupation to turn Germany and Japan around in 1945. I would not wish this on the Russian people, only on Putin and his circle. Russia became great as an autocracy; this pattern of government and foreign belligerence is likely to persist. Western deterrence and pushback will always be necessary to limit Russia's grasp.

## "The most important thing is the buffet ... and bring cash, cash."



**Mikhail Vorobyov**

of the Jewish people.

On May 25th, something similar happened in Auckland. Two Russians, Grigory Oklensky and Konstantin Sigachev, playfully introducing themselves as "two normal excellent students", announced a programme for an evening "We all come from childhood", dedicated to the children of Ukraine and Russia. Here are excerpts from the advertisement of the evening: "Come – you won't regret it! The most important thing is that the buffet promises to work! It will be delicious, bring cash, cash! Admission is \$20, for seniors 65+ and students - \$10 (50% discount!). Pre-order tickets by phone xxxxxxx Grigory. E-tickets (including discounted tickets) can be purchased in advance at the link: <https://www.event-brite.co.nz/.../we-all-come-from...> The rest of the tickets will be sold at the entrance. There was no mention of raising funds for Ukraine in the advertisement. I note that the cost of renting the hall where the concert was held is only \$40 to \$60 dollars for the evening.

It is immoral to make money from the grief of Ukrainian children. It is especially disgusting when compatriots of the murderers of Ukrainian children do this. And it doesn't matter whether the organisers themselves consider their programme commercial or not. And it doesn't matter how much is raised

Imagine that in New York in 1943, tickets went on sale for a commercial concert announced by the German diaspora and dedicated to Jewish and German children. There was no charity component at the concert. Imagine the reaction of Jews, and indeed all normal people, to such an event — prosperous Germans making money on the tragedy

— \$20 or \$2000. The fact itself is important. An outsider who reads the advertisement would not from a better attitude toward Russians. And what if this outsider was a Ukrainian? And if his child had been taken to Russia or died?

After an unsuccessful attempt in a personal conversation to convince the organisers of the evening that with this advertisement they had violated the elementary rules of ethics in relation to the victims of the war, we wrote an open letter in which we called on the organisers of the programme to clearly indicate in the advertisement that the evening is non-commercial. The organisers refused to change the advertisement and turn the commercial evening into a charity one.

There was support for our open letter. Obviously, this explains the fact that immediately after the event, one organiser, Grigory Oklensky, published a post on his Facebook page in which he called the evening a charity! At the same time, he reported that the funds raised would be used to support Ukrainian children who fled the war and are now living in New Zealand. Allegedly, there is already an agreement with members of the local Ukrainian community on the transfer of funds. We turned to the author of the post with a letter in which we asked him to give us the contacts of these Ukrainians so that receipt of the funds by the addresses could be independently confirmed. Naturally, we guarantee complete confidentiality of personal information. We did not receive a response to our letters.

The question arises: why is a noble cause — helping Ukrainian children — kept a secret, as if they are embarrassed about it? After all, modesty is completely inappropriate here. We leave it to our readers to draw their own conclusions.

Russian communities abroad are now in a very difficult situation. Our country turned out to be a bloody aggressor. If we can't stop it, then let's at least behave with dignity. I would like to urge the organisers of Russian-language events not to forget this.

## Wings for a minute

*At the end of February, a concert of a wonderful duet from Melbourne — Lana Jandzhgava and Mikhail Frolov — was held in Auckland. Lana and Misha are well known not only in Australia and New Zealand, but also far beyond our most remote corner of the planet. Before leaving Auckland, the guys kindly agreed to give an interview to "The Inhabited Island". Our meeting took place in a cozy café in Auckland Domain, where Lana and Misha stopped on the way to the airport. It so happened that the publication of this interview "matured" for a good four months: by the time we conducted this interview, the previous, 5th issue of the newspaper had already been formed. However, during this time, the relevance of our conversation has not disappeared at all.*

*Note: The references to bard clubs and tourist clubs here are a phenomenon of the post-Soviet world. It refers to a body of original songs in the style of early Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger or Joan Baez. Performers commented on life with such songs in Soviet times and the genre lives on. Hiking clubs refer to clubs in which groups of people got together to hike. The singing might take place around a campfire and the songs might refer to tramping or wandering through nature.*



**Olga Belokon**

*Our interviews are lightly edited.*

**OB:** Please tell us how you came to the genre of writing and performing original songs and how you started singing together.

**Lana:** How did I start singing? The bard movement was strong in the 70s. As a matter of fact, I felt myself drawn to it. I was the youngest in the bard club of Chisinau. My parents didn't sing or do it. I heard it by chance and it resonated. I don't know, that's how it clicked. Worked. The right environment... I participated in the club's national concerts until I emigrated to Australia. In Australia, I was lucky, in Melbourne there was also a club in which I started singing a duet with Misha. We've been singing together for 17 years.

**OB:** Seventeen years???

**Lana:** Yes, 17.

**OB:** You said that at the very beginning you heard such music and it resonated. Was there a particular song or songs that you heard and that resonated with? I had the same resonance when, as a girl, I accidentally heard [Bulat] Okudzhava performing his songs on the radio.

**Lana:** Yes, but probably with a different subtext. I was attracted to the lyrics in this genre. Perhaps now it is perceived as primitive. But the lyrical component for me at that time was a pretty strong component factor. And then I was attracted by the musicality of bard songs. As a matter of fact, I have a musical education for the violin. I was attracted by musicality when it could be found in a song. Therefore, let's say, a campfire song, which sometimes suffers musically, did not attract me. And I was probably attracted by the poetry of songs sung by their writers. As a matter of fact, Misha and I went more into a poetic direction than a campfire or student one. But it all started with the lyrics.

**OB:** Misha, how did you start?

**Misha:** Well, I came from the other side. I also have a musical education, but after I graduated from music school, I stopped playing the violin. We sometimes say that we both did not become musicians, but our musical education formed both a musical taste and a certain feeling... And the theory of music, the understanding of musical constructions is not the last thing. We are brought up on the traditions of the classical school. But this is a separate topic ... I came to writing and performing original songs through a hiking club. And I took hiking seriously when I entered the institute of Mechanics and Mathematics of Odessa University. The strongest hiking club in the city was in the Polytechnic University. It was nearby, and everyone who was seriously engaged in hiking was from the Polytechnic University. And I also went to the Polytechnic club. As soon as the club's travel group found out after the first trip that I was engaged in music, they immediately gave me a guitar for my birthday and said that I would play. There are few guitarists, and in every group they wanted to

have someone to play. Campfire songs were sung in the club and at rallies. It was really easy for me to pick up a guitar. Literally six months later, I was playing and singing songs on five or six chords. After that, it became much easier for me to get into exactly the hiking group that I wanted to get into.

**OB:** What kind of hiking did you do?

**Misha:** Alpine and skiing. More mountain than skiing. In summer — mountains, in winter — skiing.

**OB:** Where did you go skiing from Odessa?

The question is correct. We went in different directions. Mostly, of course, the inhabitants of Odessa had no access to snow. There was snow in Ukraine, but only north of Kyiv. I went to the Northern Urals, the Khibiny Mountains, and Karelia. We even went to the Altai in the top three [grade of difficulty]. It was a great hike, a ski triple (a triple is a hike of the third grade of difficulty. In sports tourism, there are 6 categories, the 6th is the most technically difficult, with first ascents. Editor's note) Mountain hikes were more difficult. In principle, skiing is weak, like the majority. But we also had a strong group that went to ski fives in Yakutia and Yamal. That's how I came to the song. In parallel with the tourist club, I went to the singer-songwriter club at the university. There we analysed [First name] Landsberg's songs, listened to recordings. It had a semi-clandestine character.

**OB:** Why?

Good question. It was in the 1980s, the most stagnant time. We gathered in the dark, in some kind of auditorium, from which we were periodically chased ("it is no longer possible .."), we had to move to another room.

**OB:** I don't remember that at that time there was a persecution of singer-songwriter clubs. There were two big clubs in St. Petersburg - "Vostok" and Meridian, they were very popular, periodically arranged large public concerts.

**Misha:** Yes, there was still a city singer-songwriter club in Odessa, but they were drunkards, they drank a lot. Our group was elitist. We analysed styles, texts. Then I came to understand that an original song in this genre is poetry set to music. It's a difficult path. Then it was all over. Both tourism and bard song. We graduated from college and went our separate ways. Perestroika began, then there were the "dashing" '90s, I went into the army, then went to Australia. I hadn't sung in very many years. Maybe I wouldn't have come back to it if we hadn't formed a club in Melbourne. I came to Australia in 1992, I came to the club probably 10 years later, that is, in 2002. You [Lana] came a little later, in 2004. One day Lana came up to me and said, "Let's try to sing something together."

**Lana:** I've been in several duos before. At some point, I realised that I would not write. Before that, I made several





attempts. When you're in an environment where people write, you think, "Maybe I have something to say?" But I realised that my path is more performing than writing. I began to develop this side. I was a member of several duos in Chisinau, women's and mixed, and I really enjoyed it. After moving to Melbourne, I kind of planned for myself that maybe I could do it again. I kind of had a radar setup for this.

**Misha:** It was different for me. I wasn't looking for anyone. I'd never sung in a duo. I'd never performed on stage.

**Lana:** I had to train him in this sense.

**Misha:** It just gradually became clear that we have similar musical and poetic tastes, we like similar things, we sound good together. For five years we just sang in the club, and then Izzy [Isaac Drukman, head of the Southern Cross amateur song club, Melbourne. Ed.] says: "What are you singing, singing ... Let's make a program and perform a concert!"

**Lana:** Yes, he pressured us for a long time. We didn't have a large enough repertoire; we weren't ready for a large audience aimed only at us. We performed in national concerts, sang three or four songs. Preparing an independent program was a different level. And Izzy pressured us. His prods were not enough for us. It often happens that no-one gives you a prod; if that happens you stay at your starting level. Fear holds you back. When we started performing on our own, with our programs, we gradually realized what we were going to do. So, we developed a certain repertoire. It's all a creative process. The creative process sometimes tends to pause. We can stay on a plateau for a while, then think: "What's next?" Over the past five years, we have been doing a lot of mini projects: videos, performances. Now, after the performance in Auckland, it seems that we are reaching some new level.

**OB:** *When you include new songs in your repertoire, do you always have a consensus, or do some songs drop out?*

**Misha:** That's a good question. We sing what we both like. Another thing is that it doesn't always add up in one minute. Sometimes Lana says: "I want this writer, or this song". I say, "Well, I can't do that." And after a few years, we return to it. Many parameters must converge for a song to enter the repertoire. Sometimes poetry is stronger in a song than music, sometimes vice versa. I have to be able to play it. It should resonate with our voices. There are good songs that don't fit our voices, they don't sound. We don't sing them. We are often told, "How great you sound." That's because there are songs that fit our voices, that I can play and that are rehearsed. This complex process...



**Lana:** Sometimes you want to sing a song, but it's not yours. We, like all amateurs, have our own performance limitations. Our task is to broadcast what we feel, our emotions.

**OB:** *Arrangements, do you have your own arrangement of voices?*

**Misha:** It depends. We often want to add something of our own. It happens like this: the song is cool, you really want to sing it, even though it is famous. The Nikitins have such songs ...

**Lana:** ... Everything has already been done there.

**Misha:** Yes, there's nothing you can do there. But I still want to. And we sing them. In another case, the song is good, but it does not have a second voice. And it never was. Lana says: "It can be recast for two voices, or sung differently." We also try to sing unknown songs, those that have not undeservedly gained fame. We believe that one of our missions is to represent the work of talented songwriters. To let people hear ...

**Lana:** There are a lot of amazing, little-known songwriters. The songwriters also have limitations - sometimes the performer can convey songs to the listeners better than the writer himself.

**Misha:** It's interesting to find something that adds value...

**OB:** *Different readings are always interesting.*

**Misha:** Some songs stay with us for a very long time, some we sing a couple of times and never sing again.

**Lana:** Each song has its own life in our repertoire. What is the reason for this? — Probably, with the way our life is developing. Something falls out, something is added, something remains, something leaves. As for the interpretation of songs, I will give you an example: once at the concert "Times do not choose" we sang Eugeny Klyachkin's song "The Gift". At one time we listened to it performed by Sergei Nikitin. She made a fascinating impression on us. Then we heard a completely different version of Roman Lankin. Nikitin's we They didn't want to repeat it. Roma Lankin is quite difficult to repeat — he has a very complex dramatic accompaniment. We had the idea to create a third version. If you listen to it (we have it on YouTube), you will hear that we made it as a dialogue, a capella. Bare voices, without instruments. All three versions are very different.

**OB:** *How often do you give solo concerts?*

**Misha:** About once or twice a year. In Melbourne — once a year. Sometimes we do house concerts. During the pandemic, we sang a little bit on Zoom, we have groups in Melbourne,



social clubs. The government has allocated funds to them to somehow support people in their loneliness and isolation. So people sat at home and listened ...

*OB: I just wanted to ask you a question: how did you survive the pandemic?*

**Lana:** We live half an hour away from each other. At first, we were not allowed outside a five-kilometer zone from our homes. And we had to rehearse somehow. It was difficult. When we let go a little, changed the rules, we resumed rehearsals.

*OB: So you haven't rehearsed for a while?*

**Misha:** There were different phases. In the first phase, I analyzed the songs, recorded them on my phone to clarify the key and other details. It was impossible to sing synchronously. All discussion is via phone. Then, when they let us go a little, they began to call us to sing on Zoom. It was very nice. And we were supported. From 20 to 40 people could connect to each Zoom session. Everyone was sitting at home... So, we celebrated the anniversary of our club — the 20th anniversary — on Zoom. We did a Zoom concert. Then online marathons began, international. This is how the 75th anniversary of Sergei Nikitin was celebrated, then the 90th anniversary of Dmitrii Sukharev. The marathons were long — 6-12 hours, they passed through all time zones. Of course, not everyone sat and listened for 12 hours straight. Some connected, others disconnected. But the full records remained. Of course, Zoom does not completely replace live communication, but sessions are recorded. It's like we're connecting with people from all over the world. They began to call us to come. That's how the pandemic went.

*OB: How often do you rehearse?*

We usually try to rehearse at least once a week. More often than not, that doesn't work.

*OB: Do you have a specific day set aside for rehearsals?*

**Misha:** Yes. If we are preparing for another concert, we try to rehearse twice a week

*OB: Do you have any plans for touring?*

**Misha:** Not specifically now.

**Lana:** Before the pandemic happened, we were invited to Estonia, to Tartu, to the festival "Music of Leaf Falls" We flew there. On the way we gave concerts in Riga and Tallinn. It was wonderful. We met new people who are doing the same thing and are scattered all over the globe.

**Misha:** The world has become so small. We lived here for 20 years and could not imagine such a thing. Nobody knew us. We felt pretty cut off, and not just in the sense of performing

original songs. And during the pandemic, when everyone was sitting at home and it was impossible to go anywhere, we were recognized in Israel, and in Germany, and in the Baltic States and in America.

*OB: How does your club survive after February 24, 2022?*

**Misha:** There is no short answer to this question.

*OB: We are not in a hurry.*

**Misha:** Most of our club members are from Ukraine. It happened by chance. Therefore, we do not have particular differences of opinion. We can say that we did not have any conflicts. And no-one left. They react — each in their own way. Each person experiences what is happening in his own way, based on where he is from, where his relatives are, what his path was, what his age was. All of this matters. I try not to impose my point of view on other people. Someone will come to something later, someone will change their attitude in one direction or another. I believe that everyone should be responsible for their actions and actions, so that later they would not be ashamed. Or it's a shame ...

*OB: Can you voice your personal position? What is your attitude to the war in Ukraine?*

**Misha:** My position? This is an aggressive act of a tyrannical regime against another country. How could it be otherwise?

*OB: So the fact of the matter is that many Russians, including here in New Zealand, think otherwise.*

**Misha:** Well, I don't know. Anyone who thinks otherwise has his own views, which I don't even want to delve into. I have no discord in my family on this basis. If there was discord in my family, it would be a tragedy, I would have to deal with it. Personally, we participated in actions, and fundraising was arranged. Lana and I gave a charity concert. We invest in charities in Ukraine, and not in one. They are operated by our acquaintances, in Odessa, in Kherson. Our club held several charity concerts. We transferred money from the club's fund to a charitable foundation that helps Ukrainian refugees. There were absolutely no objections in the club, everyone was instantly ready. Everyone in the club has an unequivocal attitude towards war in terms of condemning war as an act of aggression that can lead nowhere.

*OB: Is the topic of war not forbidden in your club?*

**Misha:** No.

So, your point of view more or less reflects the general point of view at the club?

**Misha:** I don't want to say that because I don't want to speak for others. I can't rule out that someone thinks differently but doesn't. It would be naïve to believe that everyone thinks like



**A quick snap taken Just after the interview.  
The guys were rushing to the airport.**

me. Everyone is different. I have Russian friends from Moscow who are depressed by what happened. Positions are subject to change. Someone on February 24, 2023, will think that what they thought on February 24, 2022, was wrong.

*OB: Misha, do you still have contacts in Odessa?*

**Misha:** Of course, they stayed. But these are not relatives, but friends. We also have friends and relatives in Mariupol. There are dead in Mariupol.

*OB: Misha, this question: are there those among your acquaintances in Ukraine who support the invasion?*

**Misha:** But these are often not acquaintances, but simply someone said something, heard.

When I left Ukraine, I was not interested in politics at all. I'm from Odessa and, to be honest, I've never felt like a Ukrainian.

My relatives all left Ukraine. And from February 24, 2022, we began to follow the events every day. Now I know everyone: bloggers, politicians, I know the biography of Zelensky, I know who Gordon, Arestovich, Feigin, Shenderovich are and so on and so forth. This is our way. Other people take a different path. What will they come to?

*If you have not yet heard the bard songs performed by the duo of Lana Jangzhgava and Misha Frolov, be sure to go to their YouTube channel called "Wings for a minute" at the link <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCzuYh2jvryfL9BbArVvJyQ>. You will get great aesthetic pleasure. At the time of publication of the interview, the channel has collected 46.370 views.*

## News from the RSIA community group, Russian-speaking Integrity Alliance



**Elena Nikiforova**

Our group organised a rally in the main square of Auckland (Aotea Square) as part of an international action to support political prisoners in Russia on June 4. It marked the birthday of one of the leaders of the Russian democratic opposition, Alexei Navalny. More than 30 people came to support political prisoners. The participants of the rally expressed support for Navalny and all political prisoners in prison and tortured for their beliefs, called for their release, and with them for the liberation of all of Russia from Putin's dictatorial regime.

We raised \$NZ1,780 at a charity bake sale organised by our group of volunteers at the Nathan Homestead estate on June 10. Another \$US920 was raised through private donations and bake orders.

We sent a total of \$NZ1400 to Ukraine to the volunteer coordinator Galina Scocias through Zoriana Morgan (Zoryana Morgan), a Ukrainian volunteer in Auckland. This money

will be used to buy a car for the removal of the wounded from hot spots (Bakhmut, Soledar and others). We sent three \$US300 to Dr Vladislav and his team of psychologists and rescue doctors in Ukraine.

Members of our group came out to support the international action "Free Russia Day" on June 12, Russia Day. We called for Russia without the terrorist regime of Putin and his henchmen. We registered our action in Auckland under the name Russia is a Terrorist State. Our posters called on the Russian authorities to stop the criminal war in Ukraine and expressed the protest of Russians against the war. Members of our group in Wellington also came out with posters and white and blue flags to the Russian embassy in Wellington, demanding an end to the criminal war in Ukraine.

On June 22, Nadia Dikareva and I took part in another meeting of the New Zealand police with the ethnic communities



**Rally in support of Alexei Navalny and political prisoners in Russia, Auckland, June 4.  
Photo by the author**



of Auckland. The meeting was devoted to the topic of social cohesion (NZ Police Social Cohesion meeting and panel discussion on Hate Crime) and a new approach to hate crimes (ethnic, ethnic, hatred of minorities, etc.).



**Action "Day of Free Russia", Auckland, June 12 Photo by the author**

The police's new approach to hate crimes is aimed primarily at the victims of such crimes, how such crimes can be prevented, how people can be protected and how victims of hate crimes can be supported. The new "victim-centric" approach is called Te Raranga (The Weave, plexus) and reflects an

understanding of our interdependence and interconnectedness in society.

You can read more about the new method of police work on the NZ police website, at <https://www.police.govt.nz/.../hate-crime/te-raranga-weave>

The police ask us all to take seriously any kind of hate speech and harassment and to report such incidents to the police by calling 105 or through the website <https://www.police.govt.nz/use-105>

Another charity sale of pastries and other delicious dishes of Eastern European cuisine will take place, this time in Art. Heliers, in the church at 100 St Heliers Bay Road, from 11 am to 2pm on July 23. We invite you all to participate! The fair is a great opportunity to spend a Sunday morning or lunch with family and friends, eat pies and walk along the coast in one of the most beautiful areas of Auckland. All money earned from the sale of baked goods will be sent to Ukraine, to help Dr Vladislav and his team, as well as a team of volunteers who rescued people affected by flooding in the Kakhovka area and elsewhere. Details in the announcement on the back page of the newspaper and here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2143716009158161?ref=newsfeed>



The school "Russian for kids" invites school-age children to study Russian language, literature, mathematics, history and acting. Classes in small groups. More information about the school: [www.russianforkids.co.nz](http://www.russianforkids.co.nz), <https://www.facebook.com/russianforkids.co.nz/> [aboutlgabelokon@russianforkids.co.nz](mailto:aboutlgabelokon@russianforkids.co.nz)





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