

## ORANGE COUNTY CELEBRATES WHITE NIGHTS BY DAY



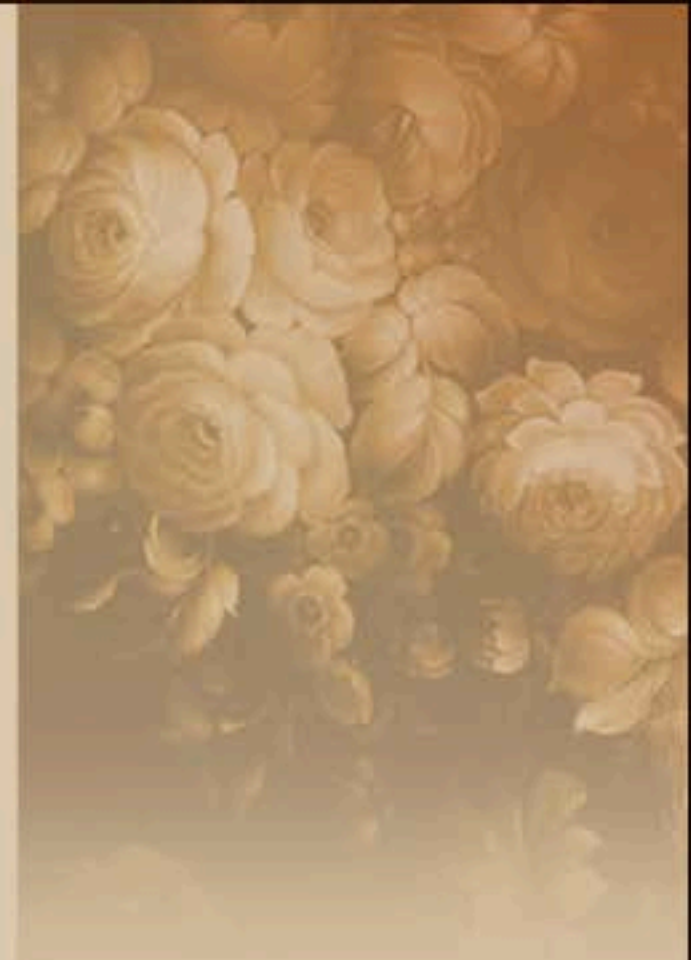
By Dr. Laura Wilhelm (LauraWil Intercultural)

***The White Nights of summer in St. Petersburg, Russia cast an enchanted spell throughout the vast city during days that last far into the night. Festivals celebrating the midnight sun in the world's most northern metropolis abound until the shorter and darker days of fall approach.***

*Having spent two summers doing doctoral research in St. Petersburg, I was delighted to attend the Russian White Nights Festival held in the gracious Spanish-style courtyard at the Bowers Cultural Museum in Santa Ana on June 5th. The daytime Russian White Nights program was part of a monthly series of family cultural events.*

*Natalia Spikes, Co-founder of The California Russian Foundation and President of the Orange Tea Room Creative Social Club, capably hosted the festivities featuring music and dance performances by Elina Avanesyan, Ilya Sergienko, Maria Tihomirova, and the Firebird Balalaika Quartet. Aleksandra Efimova, Founder and President of Growing Through Arts and Russian Culture Now, was the guest of honor. She talked about the importance of promoting the beauty and richness of Russian culture, and read her book, "The Cinderella Ballet by Aleksandra<sup>SM</sup>," from the stage.*

*Special guest Nina Naydenova spoke about her book "Runlish" that was published in her native St. Petersburg and has quickly gained a following in the USA. Nina hopes this book will help Russians of all ages to maintain awareness of their language. Olga Yakovleva and I served as RWN media sponsors.*



Children were able to create their own Faberge eggs and have their faces painted at some of the booths, while their parents could buy Russian books and handicrafts at others. Artists Larissa Morais and Yuri Kuznetsov sold paintings at once spontaneous in subject matter yet sophisticated in technique. Vendors came from as far away as Chicago to acquaint Southern Californians with the glories of Russian ballet and other aspects of their native arts and culture.

Visitors from many national backgrounds felt welcome to join in the fun and feast on lasagna, tea, and tiny pastries. The Russians' warm hospitality will be returned next month when the Bowers Museum holds its Americana festival on July 3rd. Until then, let us close with an apt quotation by the narrator of Fyodor Dostoevsky's well-known short story "White Nights": "May your sky be always clear, may your dear smile be always bright and happy, and may you be forever blessed for that moment of bliss and happiness which you gave to another lonely and grateful heart."

*Special Thanks to*

*Bowers Museum* (Genevieve Barrios Southgate – Assistant Director of Education)

*The California Russian Foundation* (Natalia Spikes – Co-founder / Chairman and CEO)

*Russian Culture Now* (Aleksandra Efimova – Founder / President)

*Growing Through Arts* (Aleksandra Efimova – Founder / President)

*Orange Tea Room* (the entire team)

*Tsarina Home* (the entire team)

*Larissa Morais*

*Yurii Kuznetsov*

*Nina Naydenova*

*Moscow Deli*, Richard Lambden, Damian Dmitrikovsky, Tanya Morrison, Irena McConnell, Lyudmila Flicker, Nadia Adikes, Elena Velishek, Elena Houston, Natasha Gilani, Yulia Samburskaya, Anna Razumeeva.

*Performances by:*

*Elina Avanesyan, Maria Tikhomirova, Oscar Kekelbekov, Ilya Sergienko,  
Mikael Oganis, Firebird Balalaika Quartet*

***To see the photo-album of the event please visit or PHOTO GALLERY page, or click here.***





*Capturing the Spirit of Time*

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