Opera is his life - to become a singer his dream. To fulfill this dream the American James Caran studies at the world famous Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory in St. Petersburg.
(page 3)

Protest against election fraud after State Duma election is huge, for example on 10th December in Moscow. We talked with students from the faculty and also with other young people.
(page 5-6)

You will get an overview about the recent fanciest places on Vasilievskij Island. There you can have lunch for a small budget and feel comfortable being one of many students.
(page 8)

Our editorial department: now.

Jan-Ole Niermann, 24, Student of Journalism in Dortmund:
"Be curious, not furious."

Anja Willner, 25, Student of Journalism in Dortmund:
"I know everything about you – I have googled you."

Yanxin Zhao, 20, Student of Journalism in Bejing:
"Life is like a box of chocolate."

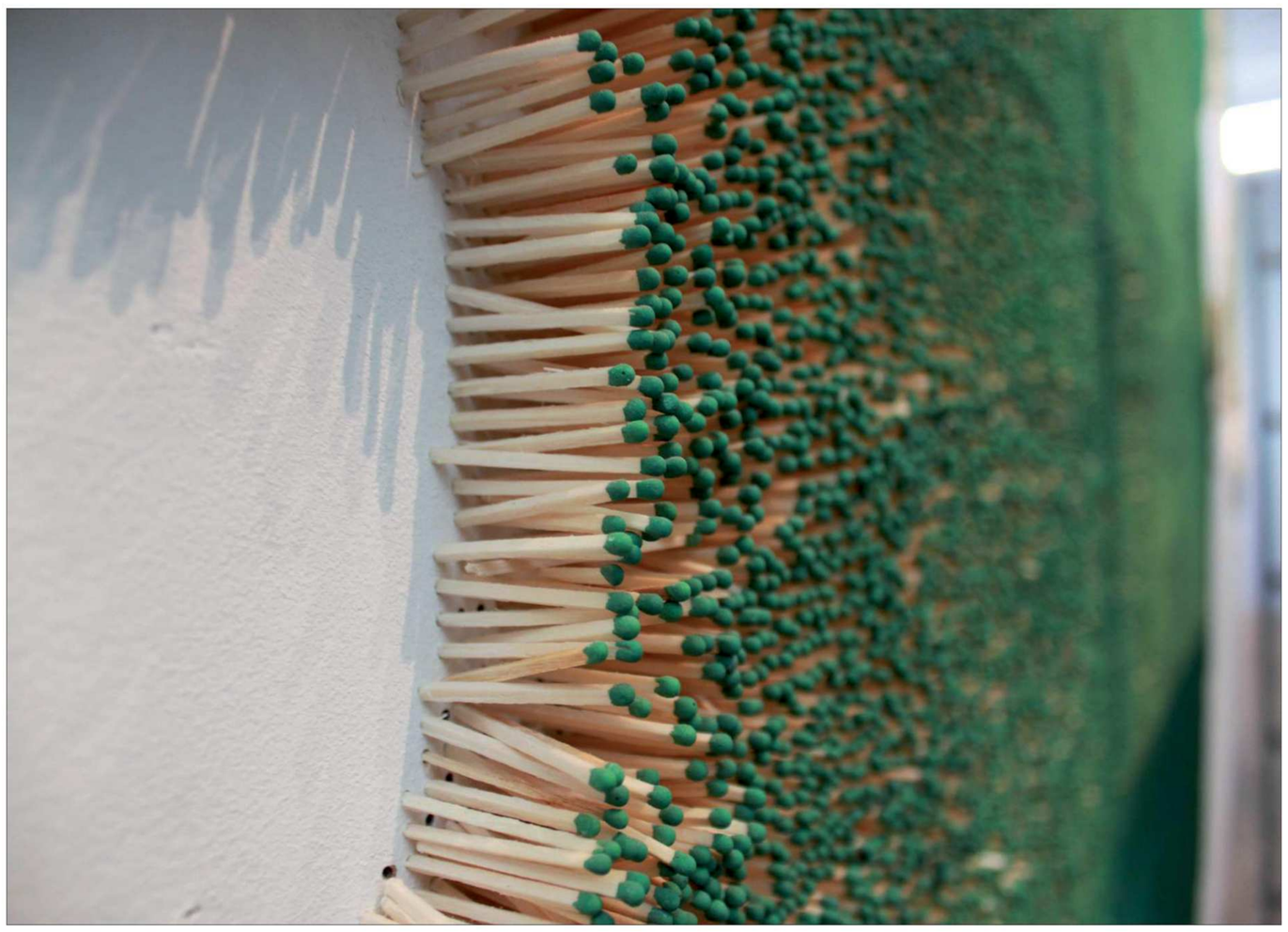
Halvor Storvik, 30, Student of Journalism in St. Petersburg:
"You have to be willing to risk being disappointed in order to be positively surprised."

Katrin Herms, 24, Student of Journalism in Dortmund:
"Better to catch the right train in the last very second than to be on time and go in the wrong direction."

Irina Shtreys, 24, Student of Journalism in St. Petersburg:
"Be naive but check your first impressions."

Pauline Tillmann, 28, Chief Editor:
"Use your time!"

Taras Yasinko, 22, Layouter:
"It's better to regret something you did, than something you didn't do!"



Imagine each match is some kind of experience – whether in Russia or abroad… as a journalist you have to gain as many matches as possible.

Introduction

By Pauline Tillmann, Freelance Foreign Correspondent and Chief Editor

Your time. Is. Now. I deeply believe in that. And I will tell you why. I have been working as journalist for ten years now. And in this period journalism as a profession has changed a lot. I started at a local newspaper – as many journalists get started in Germany. The advantage is in that: there is a mass of work to do and never enough people. Best preconditions for newcomer journalists who gain their first experience in journalism. So, my first advice to you: **Get started small.** Every young journalist dreams working at a major newspaper and at a major TV station. But professional journalism is like a staircase. You have to take one step after the other. By doing so you discover that there is a wide range of different media forms: newspaper, magazine, news agency, radio station, TV station and online media. Second advice: **Try to join all forms.** By doing so you will find out what you like most. And besides you gain new skills which will help you later to stay flexible. And you have to stay flexible when you decide to work as professional journalist. Times are changing. For us times are changing even faster. About 15 years ago something called "internet" was coming up. People who have grown up with the internet are called "digital natives" – they can't imagine a life without the internet. I am 28, so I am one of these "digital natives". I had my fist computer at the age of 14. And in fact: I can't imagine a life without the internet. It is a huge progress that nowadays everybody can have his own media – a blog, a newspaper or even a TV station. So, use these possibilities. Third advice: **Start your own experiment.** That means: Create your own blog or your own homepage. Start experimenting with texts, audio files, photo galleries, short videos and audio-slide-shows. And besides: use social media. In future journalists will become more and more navigators with their knowledge and their specialization. They will become curators who have to filter out of a mass of information – the important one and the right one. That's why the journalists of tomorrow will have to be credible and trustworthy while creating content. The journalists of tomorrow should have an attitude that they are not changing day by day. The journalists of tomorrow should help readers to find their way in this jungle of (mostly useless) information. We selected the most interesting information of now for you. Use your time and have fun reading the following pages! ■

Newcomer journalists nowadays are...

curious
courageous
interested
educated
exciting
bright
honest
clever
chaotic
vivid
versatile
professional
impatient
self-confident
flexible
dedicated
open-minded
lucky

"The atmosphere comes with the company, not with the decoration"

In a few weeks only we will have champagne corks popping, rockets whistling and hormones dancing. 2011 will change into 2012, a new year will begin. While the Russians can hardly wait for the end of the year to present gifts to each other, many exchange students are looking forward to Christmas Eve on 24th December. Others do not celebrate at all. But they all have something in common: The wish not to be alone.

By Katrin Herms

It is cold in the lobby of the dormitory. The heavy front door with the inscription "Kapitanskaya, House 3" lets a frosty coastal wind whistle through. Everybody is in a hurry to get to his apartment. Andrej Semenov cannot be in a hurry because his humble abode is in the corner – at least every three days, for 24 hours. Andrej Semenov is the security guard who checks the identity cards of the students. Nobody comes in here without being identified. The19-year-old guy shares his work with a colleague. For him not feeling cold a chamber has been established recently – with mobile radiators, telephone and mini-TV.

While two students, heavily loaded with Christmas decorations, are passing by, Andrej Semenov smiles tiredly. He does not care much for Christmas and says: "Christmas does not matter to me, I'm looking forward to New Year! Every year I meet my good old friends then and I don't want to miss it this year. We make our gifts and then just have a nice time altogether." He looks away for a second, smiles and then adds: "Sometimes my friends come to visit me here even at night." Now, in the morning hours, Andrej Semenov is alone. He leans back in his leather chair and looks up to the next grocery bag which disappears together with the giggling students towards the elevator.

Lorea Allica is getting up to eleventh floor with the elevator. Walls here are grey and the ground a bit dirty. Here, the 22-year-old Spanish woman lives with six other exchange students from Germany, France and China. As usual, her way leads into the kitchen first of all – which is the heart of the community. Laure and Josephine have already taken a seat at the table; they are preparing a presentation while talking French. Meanwhile, a third roommate, Christina, is standing at the oven preparing a sausage for breakfast.

Lorea skeptically looks at the window and discovers: little. Only two silver stars line the frame. Lorea suggests: "We could actually make it more cozy in here!" She holds a blue garland of paper in the air. Another roommate, Diei from China, declares: "Christmas is not of interest for me." No wonder, Diei is Buddhist. Laure from France, on the other hand, welcomes Lorea's proposal. As a Catholic, she usually celebrates Christmas by attending midnight mass. Before exchanging gifts she has to wait until the morning of the 25th December. Laure says: "There is always a terrible moment when you have to wait. But still, there is a midnight supper before going to bed." She also enjoys the atmosphere before Christmas because it is the time of hot chocolate and beautiful decorations. On 22nd December Laure will travel back to her family to Paris. As she wants to get into the right mood, she helps her Spanish roommate Lorea to decorate their apartment.

Baking cookies for Christmas

On the headword "decoration", Christina, originally from Germany, carries a miniature wreath out of her room and sets the first two candles on fire. There are four candles for four Sundays before Christmas Eve. While the apartment gets more and more decorated with garlands, Christina explains to her roommates that her family emigrated from Kazakhstan to Germany when she was only eight years old. That's why she knows both, Orthodox and Catholic Christmas: "I still remember how I, as a child, sprayed white snow on the windows. That was the time when the Russian "Deyed Moros" brought his gifts at New Year's Eve. Later, there was a Santa Clause who came earlier, on 24th December. But this has also vanished nowadays, of course – the only thing that remains is the tradition to celebrate with a Christmas tree and colorful balls." After decorating, Lorea proposes to bake cookies together. For her as a Spaniard it is something that clearly belongs to the time around Christmas. The other girls quickly agree. Eating candies when it's cold outside? They all can get along with that and are willing to stay together at the oven.

One floor down, there is another shared flat. The special thing: there live only guys. Today, Jan Dufouremont from Belgium is alone at home; his roommates from Poland, Hungary, Germany, India and Lithuania have gone together on vacation to Murmansk. Jan could not join them because he has to learn for his exams in January. His studies of "European Management" let him little space for excursions in December - and he hardly thinks about Christmas. The fact that he sits alone in the dormitory while his family is sitting next to the open fireplace drinking hot wine occupies him very much: "It feels very strange, especially being alone without my roommates. By the way, my grandparents are getting old and sick and I wonder what year will be the last one to celebrate Christmas together".

Security guard Andrej Semenov at work.

Muugii Munkhtsetseg prepared the Mongolian New Year's supper "Chuurod".

Jan Dufouremont from Belgium stays alone at the dormitory.

In the weeks before Christmas, contact to family and to friends is the most important thing for the 24-year-old student. He explains: "The atmosphere comes with the company, not with the decoration. I am absolutely against the commercialization of Christmas. On 6th December, for example, in Belgium we celebrate the day of Saint Nicholas, which means: children get sweets. The advertising for that is spread in the supermarkets already weeks before. To tell you the truth, I hate this culture of consumerism." But anyway, decoration is important to get into the right mood. That's why Jan wanted to get a Christmas tree in the kitchen. But his roommates refused. They said it would be too kitschy. A Christmas tree, traditionally decorated with traditional red balls and real candles, is the same thing for Jan as Christmas cookies are for Lorea from Spain: They are central symbols of a special mood. Actually, they shouldn't be missing, but in a shared community you have to accept such compromises - whether you like it or not.

There is laughter coming up from the lower floors now. It is followed by the sound of a rhythmic pounding and feet pattering begins. It sounds like a renovation and basically that's it: Kuboon Charumanee, a student from Thailand adorns her kitchen. A green garland already lies on the window sill and a glittering red wire connects the lamp with the wall. Next steps: Putting the chain of lights at the window and decorating a plastic fir. Kuboon doesn't celebrate Christmas because she is Buddhist. Nevertheless, she wants to get into this special mood. She wants at least the kitchen to become a pleasant place during the final weeks of the year: "I love Christmas. The stores have so much to offer and I especially like to buy decorations for home."

The bell rings because Kuboon's Mongolian roommate Muugii Munkhtsetseg will be visited by a friend. It is Motoi Onigi, originally from Japan. Muugii invited him for having dinner. In the kitchen herbs and tea are smelling intensively. On the table there is the typical New Year's dish "Chuurod". For Muugii, who also is Buddhist, these fried noodles have no special meaning. She simply loves to prepare tasteful food for people she likes. Muugii and Motoi agree: "When you spend time with a good friend, a nice atmosphere is coming up just like that. It doesn't matter if is Christmas or not."

Improvised Christmas feeling

A sweet fragrance is now blowing through the window, it smells like cinnamon, spices and hot wine. A few rooms further, Conny Hildmann, a student from Berlin, is preparing German mulled wine. On the corridor, she provisionally has compiled two kitchen tables, draped out chocolate Santa Clauses, candles and a plastic fir. To eat, there are typically German salami slices, salad, vegetables and a Russian cream cake. Conny wishes that German and Russian guests feel both at home. Above all, one thing should come up: Christmas atmosphere. Therefore, red and golden garlands and two chocolate calendars hang on the wall, a CD in the background is playing Christmas songs.

The guests are almost all from Germany because her neighbor Chris has brought friends along visiting him in St. Petersburg at the moment. The dinner is supposed to be something like a farewell party for Chris because he moves back to Germany soon. Sitting all together they exchange recipe ideas, suggest Christmas movies and plan to go ice-skating. For Dasha, a student from Belarus, Christmas is just a holiday like any other. Nevertheless she listens to the conversations of the others and also likes the cozy atmosphere. However: there is no real Christmas feeling coming up in the hallway of the dormitory. The dinner remains just an improvisational celebration and even "Jingle Bells" cannot replace the unique atmosphere of a traditional Christmas market in Germany. Chris, who will soon be together with his family in Germany again, is especially looking forward to black bread with salami at home. On the table there is a special Russian salad with peas, beetroot and a lot of mayonnaise – Chris has also liked that sort of food so far. With the taste it is the same as with the decoration: You like it when you are with people you like. ■

Singing abroad – an American learns to sing in St. Petersburg

An American came to St. Petersburg without knowing any Russian. He wanted to learn to sing in a professional way at the Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory which also Anna Netrebko attended once. In a few years he will graduate and will get started with his career as an opera singer.

By Jan-Ole Niermann

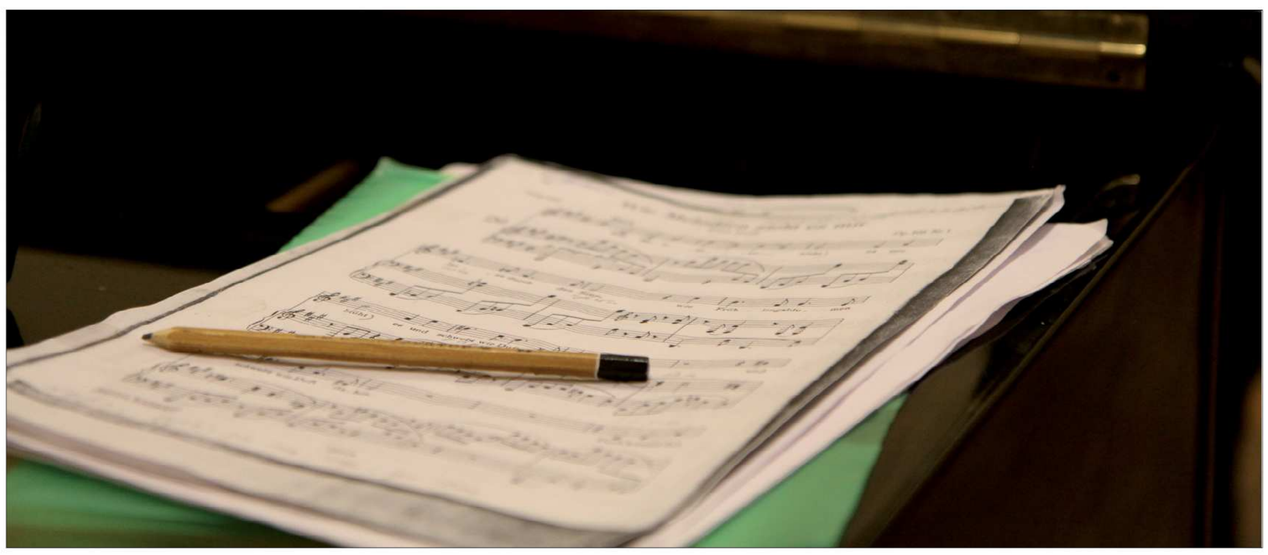
He looks straight-ahead, his feet solid on the ground, the chest is inflated, slowly his voice fills the little room and he sings louder and louder: James Caran prepares his voice. A few moments later his teacher Nina Shahnova enters room number 303 at Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory. They talk a few words in Russian, and then the lesson begins. She plays the piano, Caran sings "Amen" by Handel. From time to time she stops playing and tells him what could be improved. Caran seems to be concentrated and listens closely to her words. In the exam in a few weeks he must sing this song perfectly.

Almost two years ago James Caran came from the United States to Russia – in his luggage: barely 50 Russian words and the big goal to become a professional opera singer. The 29-year-old guy chose this way being aware that it will become a difficult one, especially in Russia: "If I do something, I want to do it the hardest way possible. I came to Russia because it is a big challenge for me." He learns how to be an opera singer at the famous Conservatory in St. Petersburg. And this demands a lot: He has to practice up to ten hours per day, six days a week. That's the reason why it is not that easy even to have a cup of coffee with him – he only finds time between dancing class and a singing education. A one-hour break used also for lunch, in a crowded restaurant close to the Conservatory Caran orders a typical Russian rissole. While other tables are occupied by Russians, Caran doesn't seem to be a foreigner. He even says that he feels comfortable in Russia.

For the last time Caran acted in the theatre in 2008 – before he went to St. Petersburg to go to the opera. "I'm good at acting. I've done it a lot. But theatre is not enough", Caran thinks about the right words for a second, "opera fits more to my personality." He knows that it is hard to become a professional opera singer. The places at the well-known Conservatory are limited, though. The musical college will celebrate its 150-years anniversary next year. Many famous artists attended the Conservatory, among them the famous opera singer Anna Netrebko. The American James Caran prepared himself for several months for the succeeding selection process. After sending tome tapes with his voice to Russia he was invited for audition. "I had to sing "Don Giovanni" by Mozart, one song and fortunately they accepted me", he says and smiles.

If James Caran talks about a play, he always gives a short summary and he uses words like "brilliant" or "wonderful". He loves both - theatre and opera. In St. Petersburg he enjoys the intimate atmosphere in the Mikhailovsky Theater, a theatre close to the famous boulevard Nevskij Prospekt. Once a month he visits one of the many theatres in town. There is no time for more. After school he started to study acting and vocals – but he didn't finish: "I enjoyed acting but it wasn't the right school for me." Now it is different, Caran says that he is happy at the Conservatory and in St. Petersburg. For him it is a perfect environment for artists: "The range of opportunities is amazing. It is a very open and flexible environment for learning. That doesn't mean that they don't expect you to exceed, of course." Until he gets his diploma, it will take almost four more years – after that Caran would like to stay in Russia. He hopes to find a job: "I want to perfect what I do and what I learned. I want to get to that point where I'm already at theatre – to that point that I'm on stage." So far opera is more difficult for him, he tells, because there are several tasks to fulfil: singing, acting and entertaining at the same time.

Every day practice for the perfect voice: James Caran works hard to improve his singing. Later on stage his voice needs to fill the whole theatre, without microphone.



When Caran sings for his exams every tune needs to be perfect – his teacher helps him to hit the right one.

He speaks Russian with his teachers – today it is not a big deal for him. But during his first months in St. Petersburg the language was a huge barrier: "All of my lessons have been in Russian since the very first day. The claim was: sink or swim. Today my Russian is not bad, we can understand each other." In the first few months at the Conservatory James Caran was concentrated on learning the language – in the Russian courses and especially in everyday-life: "I try to talk as less English as possible and meet many Russian people." Sometimes he even missed language courses to get practice in talking. That is why most of his friends in St. Petersburg are Russians. And now Caran has a new goal: He wants to learn Italian because most operas are written in Italian – thanks to Verdi and Puccini.

Homesickness comes while he is packing his bags

James Caran gets a little homesick only while packing his bags: "One or two days before I'm travelling home, I realise that I miss something – not the places but my family and my friends." He will spend the Christmas holidays in Russia because he needs to prepare for exams. The most difficult one will be the vocal exam, after that he will visit his home town Hamilton in New Jersey. But after a few days at home he will miss Russia: "When I'm in the U.S., I'm thinking about St. Petersburg, when I'm here I don't think very much about the United States."

His voice sounds like one of a well-trained singer – he doesn't speak very loudly but clearly and distinctly. It is pleasant to listen to him. Before he answers, he is thinking about what he wants to say and he often looks out of the window. For him opera is also some kind of conversation – a conversation between the singer and his audience. He says: "Opera is a very personal thing; the singers have to open themselves and show all their emotions to the audience. That is why I like opera more than theatre." Right now his favourite opera is „Iolanta" by Tchaikovsky. It is over within 90 minutes – in Russia normally operas run more than three hours.

A few minutes after having lunch he is already on his way back to the Conservatory: The next vocal session is waiting for him. "Mostly there's no problem that I have to work that much because I love what I do." And then he enters the old wooden door of the Conservatory to take the next steps on the long way to become an opera singer. ■

Contemporary art is en vogue

It is en vogue to be interested in contemporary art. We interviewed Marina Koldobskaya about her international media art festival "Cyberfest" which took place at the end of November and also talked with her about a growing contemporary art scene in St. Petersburg.

By Pauline Tillmann

Question: You established "Cyberfest" five years ago; you are one of the curators of this event – what was the idea behind it?

Maria Koldobskaya: St. Petersburg is a very conservative city with a huge tradition for classical art. Contemporary art is difficult to establish because it has to compete with famous museums like the Hermitage or the Russian Museum. The question is: Why do we need to look at new forms of expression when we have the possibility to look at Rembrandt at the same time? That sounds ridiculous, but it is like that. Besides, there is another problem: Opinion leaders in the art scene are socialized within the Soviet period. So they think contemporary art is something really weird coming from Western countries and is not worth dealing with. But there is a change going on. More and more people start to discover it as part of progress, as part of modernization and they start to think about contemporary art in a positive way.

Question: And why did you establish "Cyberfest", an international media art festival?

Maria Koldobskaya: In St. Petersburg we have a long tradition of good engineers. Here we just combined engineering with art. You have to be aware that a media art piece is done by a few people and not only by one artist. And for that there are good preconditions here in St. Petersburg so that the right persons can work together. Besides, this city is the most Western one in whole Russia. So we wanted to connect our Russian artists with international ones, too – and where if not here? So all in all we saw something like a niche at the very beginning and that's why we established "Cyberfest" in 2006.

Question: What about the interest of the audience – has it been growing during the past few years?

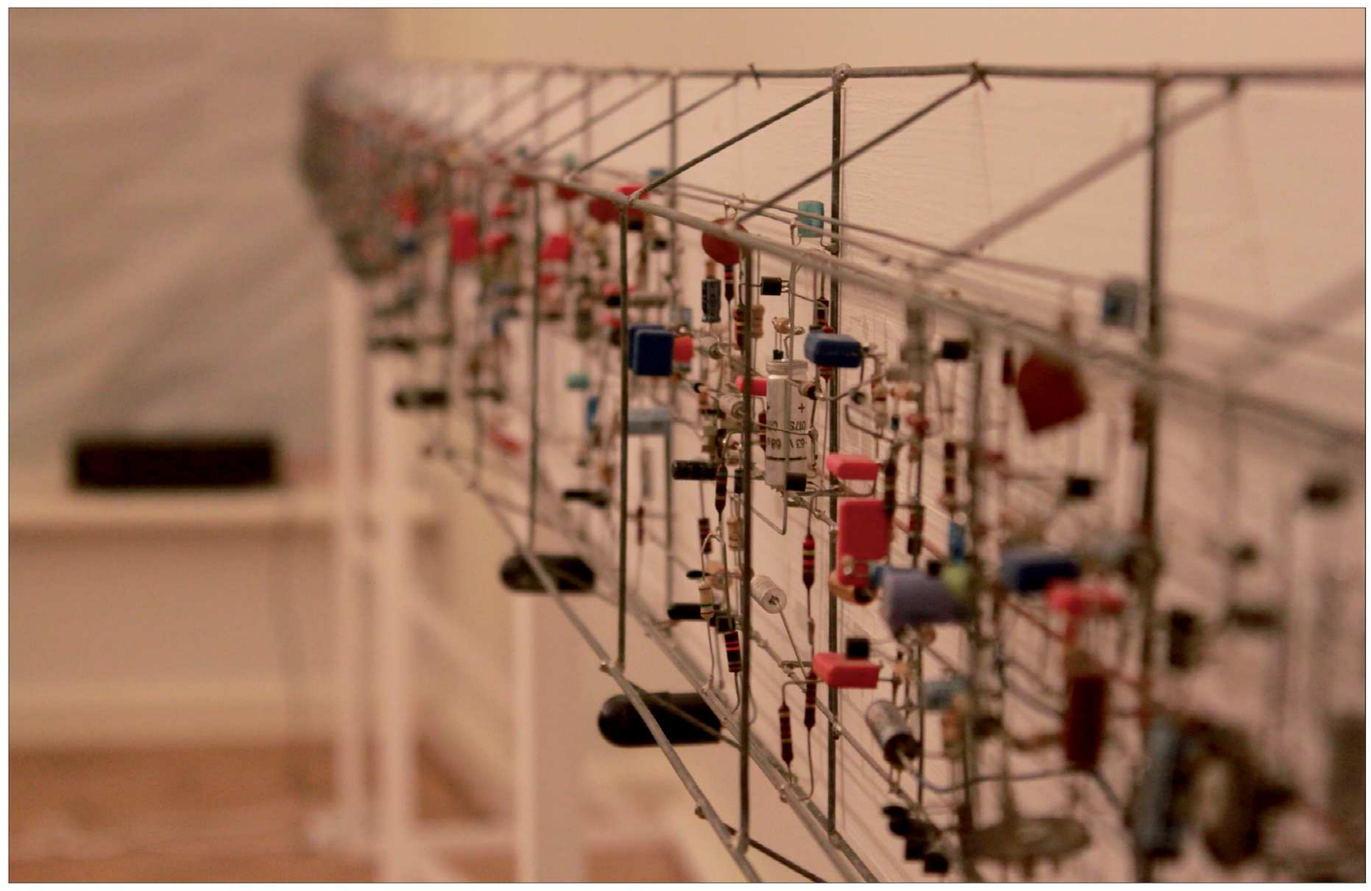
Maria Koldobskaya: Of course it was growing. We have a lot of students here in St. Petersburg, a lot of universities and institutes for higher education. These people are not faced with the fears against contemporary art which took place during the Communist era. They are curious and interested in new forms of media. As they know how to deal with a laptop, mobile and video camera, they want to be inspired. So they are joining our festival not only as visitors but also as participants of our workshops. This year there were in total around 11.000 visitors at "Cyberfest", which is a huge success.

Question: So, do you want to expand this festival?

Maria Koldobskaya: No, we don't want this festival to get a really huge one. We want to improve the quality all time long and we want to give new Russian artists the chance to show their work. We have some really young artists along our exhibition and for them it is a big deal to show their work at the newly built young educational centre of Hermitage.

Question: How did you get this festival financed?

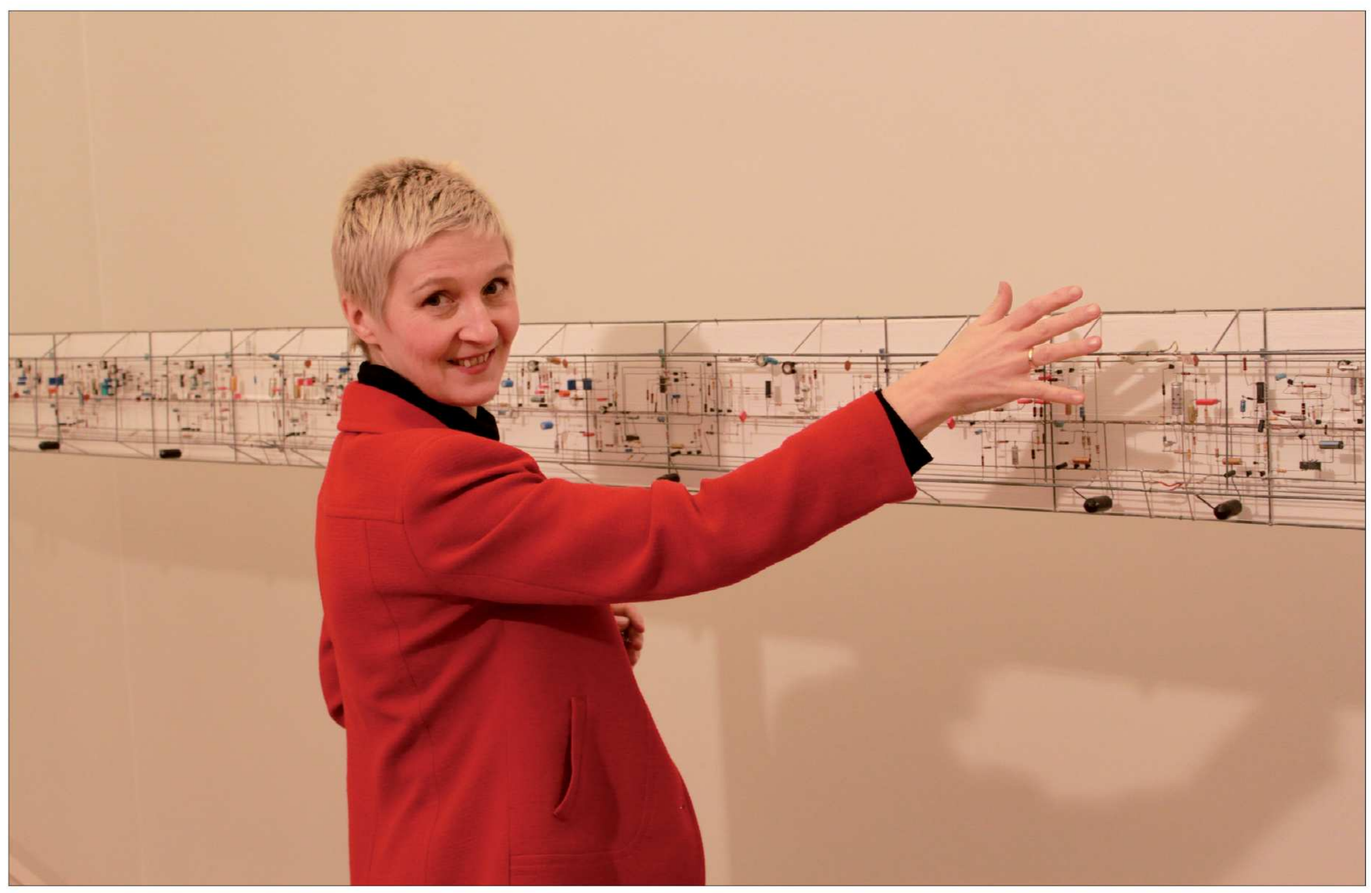
Maria Koldobskaya: The National Center for Contemporary art gave money, so this was money from the state. The city government gave money and there were also some private sponsors.



A work made by German Peter Vogel: "Rhythmic Sounds" is an interactive electronic sound installation reacting to the movements and the shadows of the spectator.

Information about Maria Koldobskaya:

She finished her studies at the University of Design, worked as a freelance artist and curator, as a journalist wrote for different newspapers and magazines, then worked for the conformism centre "Pushkinskaya 10" and since 2002 she has been director of the National Center for Contemporary Art in St. Petersburg. This year she was one of the main organizers of "Cyberfest" with the title "Show me your tongue".



Curator Maria Koldobskaya in front of one of her favorite art pieces at the exhibition, "Rhythmic Sounds".

Question: We are talking about what sum?

Maria Koldobskaya: I don't want to talk about sums. It is not a very expensive festival because it is made by enthusiastic people. It is difficult to count that all together.

Question: Is it possible to live on art in Russia?

Maria Koldobskaya: Of course it is not. Art – especially contemporary art – is not really profitable in Russia. Most of our exhibited artists have a normal job to make money in an office or as camera operators or as programmers. And besides that they have something like a hobby and like to produce some kind of media art.

Question: What do you think about the development of contemporary art in St. Petersburg over the past five years?

Maria Koldobskaya: There is a lot going on. This is really great! New environments for contemporary art like "New Holland" are established and also interesting new museums like Erata. There have been festivals for video art, for sound art, recently there took place "Electromechanika" in Kyryokhin Centre, a festival for electronic art music. So there are going on a lot of interesting things. Of course there is still a lack of a market for contemporary art, but that will also grow in near future, I guess.

Question: You have been director of the National Center for Contemporary Art since 2002. What has been changing since that time for you?

Maria Koldobskaya: We still have no building (laughing)… Yes, it is really like that. We always have to cooperate with institutions or in terms of "Cyberfest" with the Hermitage because we have no building of our own. We have an office at the Fontanka river, but we are still trying to convince our colleagues from Moscow that we also need a permanent building. There is one new building in Yekaterinburg, one in Vladikavkas and there will be a new one soon in Moscow, but in St. Petersburg we have no building for our National Centre for Contemporary Art.

Question: In Moscow there is a vivid contemporary art scene supported by Russian oligarchs like Roman Abramovich who financed for example the contemporary art centre "Garage" cooperating with the London Tate Modern. What do you think about such commitments?

Maria Koldobskaya: You are right. It is chic for oligarchs to invest in contemporary art and not in another yacht. I think this is a good development. It is always better if people invest their money in education, in art or, in general, in something useful than to spend their money in a casino, for instance. And they start to understand that you need another view on the world nowadays and that it is also a part of general education.

Thank you very much for the interview, Maria Koldobskaya. ■

After State Duma election: Student reporters have been arrested

In St. Petersburg, in the days following the State Duma elections, hundreds of people, mostly young students, gathered together outside Gostiny Dvor in a "protest against falsification". Several of the students, including at least six from the faculty of journalism, were detained by OMON special police forces.

By Halvor Storvik

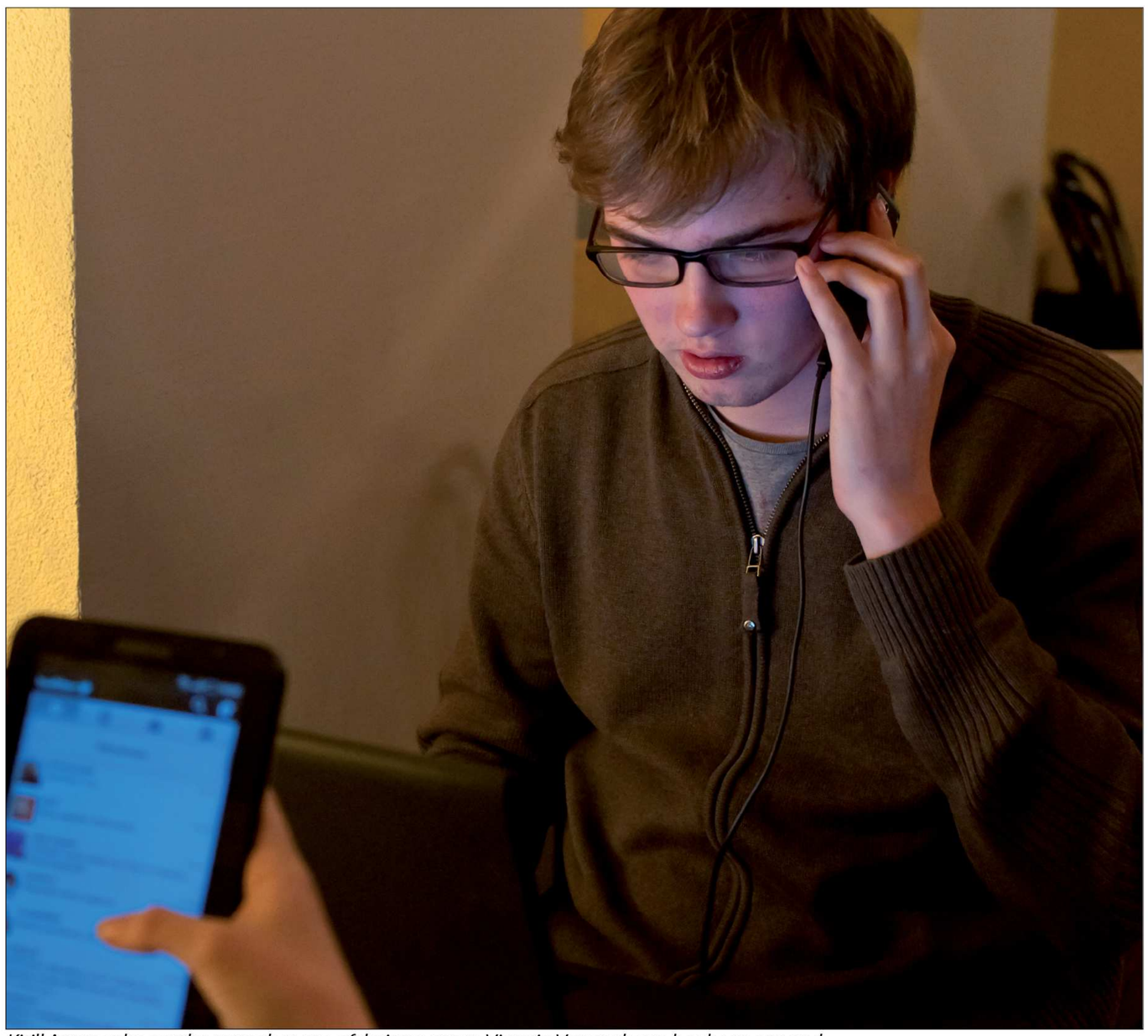
The first two students from the faculty of journalism were arrested on Monday, 5th December: Timur Zajnullin working for Interfax and Kirill Artemenko, editor of Uni.ru, who was filming. Both were released after two hours – then they went back to cover the rest of the meeting. The following day we met up with Kirill and Kristina Volobueva, a colleague of iUni.ru, to talk about last day's events. Both were busy following the ongoing protests via internet and by phone, as messages of detained friends and colleagues continued to tick in.

Colleague Timur Zajnullin was the first to be arrested by police and Kirill Artemenko understood he might be next one and tried to show his press card. Then a special forces policeman took him in armlock, dropped his camera and forced Kirill to kick it in front of him. After a while he could persuade one of the officers to let him collect his camera. The protests were spontaneously organized by the Russian social network service "vkontakti" and without any clear leadership. For many of the demonstrators this was the first time to be arrested and several among them experienced the situation as dramatic.

Kirill explained after that: "What we have witnessed there was an important event. For the first time people never attending any meeting, normal students, intelligent, well-educated, not at all radically-minded people, went to the streets to express their protest." At the end Kirill Artemenko and Timur Zajnullin were lucky. They showed their documents and their press cards and were released after only two hours.

Hundreds of young mainly young people might not be that much for a city with five million inhabitants. But journalist Kirill is convinced the demonstrators are not just an insignificant minority: "I would rather say it's an elite group of people, smart, educated people, who care what is going on at the moment with our political system. At the same time it would be wrong to call them representatives of the people because then there should be more." The 20-year old student thinks that there will be no more people joining the protests because of fear and indifference. Besides, these demonstrations were not covered by most television stations, even though there were such protests also in Moscow and other cities.

Kirill is wondering what will happen next: "If the government will tighten the screws on society, I see only two possibilities: whether people will endure that or there will come up a big turning point."



Kirill Artemenko got the news that one of their reporters, Victoria Vzyatysheva, has been arrested.

Kirill Artemenko thought it would make more sense to attend demonstrations in St. Petersburg as a reporter more than as a participant, even though he sympathizes with their views. "I share the view that results of the recent Duma election were falsified. I see it as my professional duty to report about that, so that as many people as possible get to know the truth", he said. He was able to capture only one minute on tape before hiding his camera while police got started to gather people. Kirill said he had not been acting provocatively or shouting slogans at the moment of his detention: "I was in the middle of the crowd attempting to get suitable footage as I suddenly found myself encircled by special police forces who tried to detain me and the rest of the crowd."

During the interview Kirill got a call: Another iUni correspondent has been detained – Victoria Vzyatysheva, also a student of the faculty of journalism. According to her point of view she was detained as she was just passing by the crowd.

Victoria was not as lucky as her colleagues. She has been arrested for more than a day at the police department in Kalinsky District. She was told by the police that the worst she can expect is a punishment of 3.000 rubles, which is about 72 euro. But Viktoria Vzyatysheva was not the last arrested student of the faculty of journalism. There have been at least four more students – but the number may be even higher. They gained experience with another face of Putin's power, an ugly one that in future will be shown even more for sure. ■

State Duma election of 2011 in numbers:

United Russia: **49,41%**
Communist Party: **19,15%**
A Fair Russia: **13,23%**
Liberal Democratic Party: **11,65%**

State Duma election of 2007 in numbers:

United Russia: **64,30%**
Communist Party: **11,57%**
Liberal Democratic Party: **8,14%**
A Fair Russia: **7,74%**

Source: The Central Election Commission of Russia

Putin is out

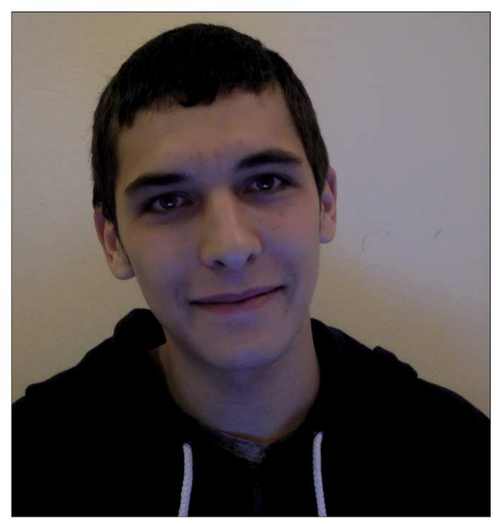
Vladimir Putin has been president of Russia for about eight years, from 2000 till 2008. In 2012 there will be a new election of Russia's president and today's state leader Dmitrij Medvedev suggested Putin as favorite candidate for the next presidential election. So we asked students from different faculties what they think about the upcoming presidential election in March 2012.

By Yanxin Zhao

Anastasiya, 18 years old, student of philosophy:

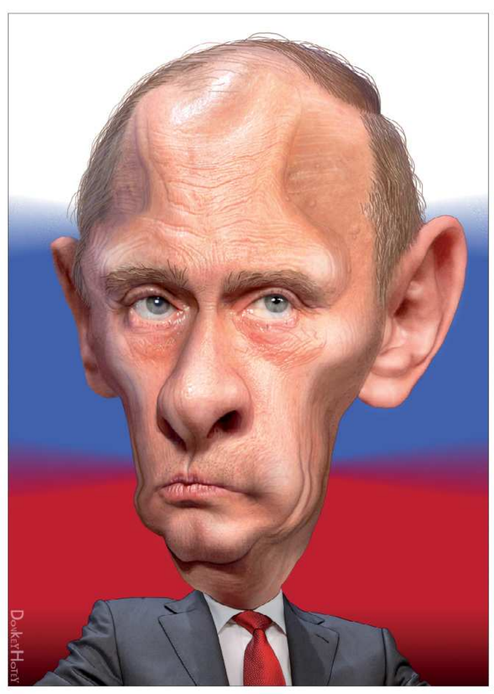
She is going to have her first election in March 2012: "But I don't know who I should give my vote because I don't know that much about our candidates. I do not believe that I can change anything with my voice. That's why I think that there is no use in participating in such elections. The only thing I know is that Dmitrij Medvedev won't lead the country furthermore, but Putin will become the next president."

In the Duma election at the beginning of December Putin's party got only 50 per cent – which is 15 per cent less than in 2007. A big decline of trust for Putin but also for young people in St. Petersburg? Some more voices of students about their thoughts: What do they think, who will be the next president in Russia? ■



Kyrill, also 18 years old, student of philosophy:

"I think that our next president will be Vladimir Putin. But it's not a very good idea because he is not a very good governor. Nobody from the leading party, United Russia, is worth being president. They don't understand that people are not satisfied with their way of governing. Me and my friends want to have a smart, honorable and polite president. Unfortunately, these politicians you can find very rarely in our country."



Source: Donkey Hotey

Anastasiya, 23-year-old student of the Arabic language:

"At the beginning of December I voted for Jabloko – in English "apple" – on the last Duma election. When I was a child, my parents took me to the election poll, but I was not allowed to vote. But four years ago, when I was 19, I put my first vote into the box and then I voted for United Russia. I thought they were good and that they could make our country more powerful. But during these years things got worse, so I changed my opinion. Although we don't have that many parties to choose I would like to take the right decision. Of course I know that United Russia will gain most of the votes anyway, but I would like to create a small change by not giving them my voice. And there should be more people like me who don't vote for Putin's party but make their own point of view clear with participating in the elections. There are so many people who waste their chance to create a real change in our country."

Maria Boganowa, 21 years old, student of economics:

"I have been to the State Duma election with my roommate. We read some programs about the parties for preparing, then we decided to vote for "A Just Russia" – at the next presidential election I will also vote for the leader of them because I really like their ideas. What I don't like is United Russia: They are just loud but their words mean nothing. Dmitrij Medvedev is like a marionette. Some people don't like United Russia either and because of that they do not attend in elections. But if they don't vote, their voice will help United Russia because they are the biggest party so far. So I think people shouldn't waste their right of telling their opinion by voting."

Alla Slusarenko, 20-years old student of medicine:

"In March I am going to vote for my first time. I won't vote for United Russia. There is no doubt that Vladimir Putin will win. That is what annoys many people, so that there are many funny pictures and jokes about him and Medvedev on the internet. People say that United Russia's only task is to explore and to sell oil and gas. But in fact, there are many social and economic problems in our country that should be solved. I heard that some students were going to vote for other parties than United Russia so that they get fewer percentages. My friends and me prefer "A Just Russia" though they are pretty weak but their programs look good."

Latest trend: life without fish and meat

There are really better places in the world to be a vegetarian – but also in St. Petersburg this movement is getting more and more popular. Meanwhile, there are a number of restaurants that are focused on a new generation of young people who go absolutely committed without fish and meat.

by Anja Willner

Nina Dadali is a typical representative of this new avant-garde: She's young, well-educated and she cares about a healthy nutrition. The 21-year old history student from Sakhalin stopped eating meat five years ago. Today, she also goes without fish. Nina Dadali explains: "In my childhood I could only eat sausages and chicken and I stopped doing even that for instance. I just don't like the taste. "

But this is not her only reason to be a vegetarian: As she read in an article, meat is not produced in an ecological way: "The production of meat has a bad balance for the climate." For example, according to a study from Japan, while making a kilogram of beef about 36 kilograms of carbon dioxide are produced at the same time. And that animals have to die also disturbs the 21-year-old Nina Dadali. Although she wouldn't declare herself as a hardcore fighter for animal rights, she adds after a while: "I would never wear a coat made of fur in principle because I know how it is produced."

Times are changing

Her friends understand her position – many of them are vegetarians themselves. For Nina's parents her decision to live without fish and meat seemed quite unusual at the beginning. "They probably thought that I am a little bit crazy but that this would pass", says the student, "but by now they are somehow used to it." And also the waiters in St. Petersburg's restaurants have got used to people who would like to eat dishes without meat – "They don't wonder any more if you order a vegetarian meal", Nina adds.

In Soviet times the opinion on vegetarians was differing, most people believed that they were ill or at least insane. But that was not always like that. At the beginning of the 20th century, when meatless meals were starting to be in vogue all over Europe, Russia kept up with this trend, of course: Even the famous writer Leo Tolstoy was a vegetarian.The first vegetarian circle of Russia was established in 1901. But these circles quickly disappeared as the Bolsheviks came to power – they propagated a struggle of the classes and a dictatorship of proletarians, about vegetables, however, they did not care much.

Healthy nutrition is fashionable

But socialism and the Soviet Union have been history since 1991. In the past 20 years there has been established a new middle-class in Russia, trying to be different from the Russian mainstream. To be different means for example wearing Western fashion brands, studying abroad, learning English and last but not least caring about healthy nutrition. To Nina Dadali healthy nutrition is to eat with a quiet conscience – and for her this is only possible without meat.

Healthy food is popular especially among young people.

Nina Dadali is a typical representative of upcoming vegetarianism in Russia.

But Nina is not the only one who thinks like that, she says: "There is a trend, perhaps even a little hype with being vegetarian. But I don't care too much about trends and I wouldn't dictate anyone what to eat." That means for her: living without meat and without fur – yes, but please without any ideology. This is typical for this new small vegetarian scene as it is now developing in St. Petersburg. The revolutions nowadays are taking place in a private sector, not in political spheres.

Meanwhile some vegetarian restaurants have appeared

Nina has never been to a restaurant that specializes on vegetarian food. The reason: She prefers cooking. Though, in St. Petersburg, she now has the choice: "Happy Cow", a search engine for vegetarian food, lists nine vegetarian restaurants for St. Petersburg and eleven in Russia's capital Moscow.

One of them is the centrally located "Café Botanika" at the Fontanka River. The owner, an Italo-American woman, at the very beginning avoided to label her restaurant as "vegetarian". Marina Albi says with this label she feared that guests would be frightened. Instead she and her team tried to accustom their guests to a meatless meal: "The goal was just to cook so deliciously that people would not notice there was no meat in there." Meanwhile, the Botanika team is more self-confident: Today they call themselves the "best vegetarian restaurant in St. Petersburg, perhaps the best in the world".

Vegetarian food is not cheap

This new self-confidence, however, has a price – especially for the customers. People who want to eat cheap vegetarian food do not go to "Café Botanika" but cooks at home as student Nina Dadali. Because a salad with rucola costs 400 rubles, which is about ten euros, and a plate of vegetables called "Tolstoy's choice" is even around 450 rubles. But an average salary in Russia is only about 12.3000 rubles – about 300 euros. In St. Petersburg incomes are higher, but even here people cannot easily afford eating for more than ten euros. Therefore, rather students go to "Café Botanika" than young, health-conscious wives of businessmen.

"Café Botanika" really is a cozy place with quiet music in the background so that people can talk with each other without shouting. On each table there are fresh flowers – real flowers, no plastic flowers – and a candle. There's even a fireplace with a sign above: "God save the green!" The light is warm and the big green velvet couches are comfortable. All together it is like a small oasis for Western foreigners, who are often among the guests.

Vegetarian food is, like so often in the Russia that wants to be modern, a trend that only a small elite can afford so far. ■

Fancy places for students

New fancy places appear in St. Petersburg almost every day. We decided to walk around the centre and Vasilievskij Island and get an overview of the most popular cafés and restaurants among students.

By Irina Shtreys and Ekaterina Glebova

First location: "Kvartira №55"

Restaurant "Kvartira №55", which is situated on the 1st line of Vasilevskij Island, attracts mostly teachers and students of the faculty of journalism. Nevertheless, the concept of this place means that it's also good for all neighbors who live in the same house. Nice flat atmosphere and domestic cuisine confirm it as well. The menu combines different kinds of meals from sandwiches, which are quite popular among students, to cream-soups and vegetarian lasagna. The system of discount includes all menus, so till 4 p. m. there is a discount of about 20 per cent. For students of the faculty of journalism there is a special offer of discount of about ten per cent for all meals. So don't forget your student card if you are going to have lunch or dinner there.

Anna Shaginjan, third-year student of journalism:

"I visit this restaurant very often because of the place where I study. But if I made a ranking of best places in St. Petersburg with best mark ten, this place would get a seven. Kvartira is far away from the centre of the city, so that's why there are not so many people here like somewhere on Nevskij Prospect. But when I have lunch there, I always take a sandwich with mozzarella and a coffee. You can get that here in a good quality and for reasonable prices – but for example wine is quite expensive."

"Kvartira 55", 1-я линия В.О., д. 36, Tel.: 3277444.
http://www.restoranchik-kv.ru/

Second location: "Van der Waffel"

The second location we would like to recommend to you is "Van der Waffel", a small cafe on Lomovskaya Street. The waffles are hand-made, that's why there are really tasty waffles within an amazing bohemian atmosphere. Students, housewives and couples are the main clients of "Van der Waffel". They come very often so that sometimes there is no free space at once. If you also like this place, you can draw something in a special guest album – like a real artist.

Evgenia Nekrasova, barista at "Van der Waffel":

"I make all drinks of real Belgian chocolate. We buy it every month with Belgian caramel sugar. It's necessary for cooking because waffles should have this taste. Interesting that Belgium doesn't have its own language, there are no notable national peculiarities. Belgian people are not really special but they have extraordinarily tasty beer, chocolate and waffles."

"Van der Waffe", ул. Ломоносова, д. 1, Tel.: 3149085.
http://vkontakte.ru/club3702487

Third location: "Café Beautiful Green"

The new vegetarian café "Beautiful Green" borrowed its name from the eponymous film, shot in 1996. Its heroes: herbivores and bare aliens have a primitive but useful life. This Russian café wants more – it wants to propagate healthy lifestyle, including refusing smoking and drinking alcohol. Special conditions are created to some people with a very special lifestyle – even more special than vegetarians in Russia are: There a lot of vegan meals with raw food dishes such as soup of spinach for 180 rubles or flax cereal for 70 rubles. Nevertheless, there are also fish dishes, although in future there will be less. Most of the visitors are students of creative universities who are also allowed to play the piano – Mukhina Academy and Theatre Academy are located very closely. For about 300 rubles you get a first and second dish plus one drink.

"Beautiful green", ул. Моховая., д. 41, Tel.: 2735118.
http://vk.com/club28504417

Fourth location: Bar "Artek"

Another discovery at Mohovaya Street is bar "Artek" with a student audience mainly. Here you can find table tennis and in contrary to "Beautiful Green" a wide range of alcoholic drinks. The new space is open for cooperation: an exhibition of student-painters of the Mukhina Academy took place, occasionally solo performances are held or plays read. So far, the most advantageous offer is business lunch for 180 rubles. From January onward university students will also get a discount of ten per cent by showing their student card. "Prices will still remain available", says manager Irina Sholk, "I was once student of the faculty of theatre so I completely understand that students need to eat fast and at the same time cheap."

"Artek", ул. Моховая, 27/29, Tel: 9650967623.
http://www.facebook.com/pages/artek/122409997861781

Fifth location: "Brooklyn Local Café"

This place is one of the very few bagel-shops in Russia which specialized only on bagels and bagel-sandwiches. The idea was originally born in New York – a Mecca of bagel-stores all around the world. Besides bagels you can get cheese cakes, milkshakes and a wide range of sorbets in this café. The style of interior is close to American culture: For example you can find a portrait of the famous actor Bill Murray and different posters with covers of famous comic books. Clients are mostly students, so that's why there is free internet and even available computers for free. But if you want to get a laptop for working there, your order should be higher than 500 rubles.

"Brooklyn Local Café", наб. канала Грибоедова, д. 27, Tel.: 5718955.
http://broolocal.com/ ■