

Yale Daily News

Published: Monday, October 27, 2003

Russian Chorus turns 50

By [Melissa Wisner](#)
Contributing Reporter

During the weekend that Yale celebrated St. Petersburg's tercentennial, the Yale Russian Chorus -- along with its audience members -- applauded an anniversary of its own.

The Yale Russian Chorus, an undergraduate a cappella chorus that specializes in Slavic choral music, gave its 50th anniversary concert Saturday evening at Woolsey Hall. Approximately 1,500 students and community members attended.

At the concert, the Russian Chorus celebrated the achievements of its founding conductor as well as the group's cultural contributions to the Yale community since its founding in 1953. The concert concluded Yale University's celebration of St. Petersburg's 300th anniversary.

Following intermission, Robert L. Blocker, the Dean of the School of Music, presented Denis Mickiewicz '57, the Russian Chorus' founding conductor, with a plaque commemorating his service to the group.

In addition to Mickiewicz, approximately 175 Russian Chorus alumni attended and sang in the concert. The alumni sang the first half and last quarter of the concert, conducted by Mickiewicz and Daniel Gsovski '64 GRD '65. The Yale Russian Chorus of 2003 sang after intermission and during the presentation of the plaque to Mickiewicz, conducted by Mark Bailey MUS '89.

Alumni of the Yale Russian Chorus said they found it meaningful to take part in this event and to return to Yale after being away for years.

"It is truly exhilarating to be back after 35 years," Harlan Kleiman '64, former first tenor, said.

Tom Barton '64, a former second tenor who now lives in San Francisco, expressed his excitement about the concert.

"I haven't been back here for 40 years and this is an absolutely delightful experience," he said.

The Russian Chorus' program included a variety of songs, such as liturgical music, Cossack and soldier songs, folk songs and songs from countries neighboring Russia. The concert closed with its traditional closing piece called "There Lived Twelve Brigands," a song recounting how a leader of a band of outlaws experiences a spiritual awakening.

One member of the audience, Bob Klancko, praised the Russian Chorus for its ability to preserve Russian culture through its music and applauded its 50 years of effort.

"I respect the Russian Chorus' ability to keep traditions going. The YRC is the stalwart group which has connected the Slavic community and has done a fantastic job in doing so. The YRC is more than singing -- this group is responsible for building bridges during the Communist period and maintaining dialogue between Russians and Americans," Klancko said.

Members of the 2003 Yale Russian Chorus expressed their enthusiasm at playing a part in contributing to the Russian Chorus' legacy as well.

"It is incredible to see the tradition that is going on and to understand that we are a part of it," Andrew Shram '06, a member of the 2003 Russian Chorus, said. "We are singing different kinds of music, but we all share the same love."

History and Slavic studies Professor Paul Bushkovitch described the concert as a "wonderful and completely appropriate way" to complete the celebration of St. Petersburg's tercentennial.