



the
slavic scene

volume 26, summer 2017

A tributary of Lake Pend Oreille. Photo by Grace Mahoney.

lsa.umich.edu/slavic

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letter from the chair

Dear friends,

Leaving behind the very busy school year full of intensive study, exciting events, and stimulating intellectual discussions, we congratulate our graduating class, their families, and friends. The class of '17 was very robust, with 26 students graduating with majors and minors in Russian, Polish, and BCS. Our offerings in five Slavic languages and cultures consistently attract excellent students from a wide range of programs, so many of our graduates come out with more than one major and minor. We had solid enrollments in our classes last year, and hope to keep it this way in the future. We are consistently developing new courses addressing students' interests by engaging them with the rich and diverse cultural creativity of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe and Eurasia. Every year we introduce new courses which become increasingly popular with students. Next Fall Professor Aleksić is offering a new upper-level interdisciplinary course, *In No Man's Land: Walls, Migrations and Human Trafficking in the Balkans and Mediterranean*, see page 11 for details. And our mini-course offerings on Jewish Prague and Karel Capek for the coming fall are already fully enrolled.

Our graduate students are actively pursuing their study and research and sharing

results with the professional community, most recently at the biennial convention of the Association for Women in Slavic Studies in April. In response to the increasing research interests of our students and faculty in visual culture, we invited two internationally renowned scholars in that area. Professor Sergey Zenkin from Russian State University for the Humanities discussed the visual and the imaginary aspects in Roland Barthes's theory of photography, and Professor Anja Burghardt from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich analyzed the representations of ethnic diversity in the Soviet photography of the 1920s-1930s. Professor Sarah Lewis from Harvard gave a splendid lecture on the impact of photographs from the Caucasus on the formation of American racial imagination in the 19th century (more on this on page 4).

We also had a good opportunity to discuss in depth the ongoing projects of our own faculty. Professor Maiorova presented her research on Russia's expansion to Central Asia in the 19th century, and Professor Khagi spoke about her current book project, *Mbytes of Unfreedom: Victor Pelevin's Poetics, Politics, Metaphysics* (see page 6).

Professor Ilya Kaminsky, an acclaimed poet, translator, and scholar from San Diego State University, conducted an engaging and inspiring discussion with a group of students and faculty about poetry and translations. A follow up to this meeting is a joint invitation to the prominent Odessa-based poet Boris Khersonsky to visit Ann Arbor and San Diego in the Winter 2018 term. Khersonsky's visit will be a great contribution to our Ukrainian Studies Program.

This year we were very fortunate to have two visiting fellows, Professor Tatjana Rosic from Belgrade and Professor Mariana Burak from Lviv, who provided mentoring to our graduate students in Post-Yugoslav film and literature and Ukrainian language. Now our graduate students have embarked on their summer research in Bosnia, Croatia, Israel, Poland, Russia, and Japan.

Sincerely,



Misha Krutikov



Mikhail Krutikov

highlights

Sarah Lewis: From Frederick Douglass to Leo Tolstoy: Race and the Thought Pictures of the Caucasus

by Misha Krutikov, Professor



Left Image
Sarah Lewis.

Master, a widely acclaimed exploration of human creative experience. She held curatorial positions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Tate Modern, London. She served on President Obama's Arts Policy Committee and currently serves on the advisory council of the International Review of African-American Art and the board of the Andy Warhol Foundation of the Visual Arts, Creative Time, and The CUNY Graduate Center.

In her lecture on March 7, which was co-sponsored by the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies and the Department of Afroamerican and African

Studies, Professor Lewis shared the results of her fascinating research on 19th century photography which is the theme of her book *Black Sea, Black Atlantic: Frederick Douglass, the Circassian Beauties, and American Racial Formation in the Wake of the Civil War*, forthcoming at Harvard University Press. Her strikingly innovative approach to the interpretation of visual images is informed by Frederick Douglass' argument that "poets, prophets, and reformers are all picture-makers—and this ability is the secret of their power and of their achievements. They see what ought to be by the reflection of what is, and endeavor to remove that contradiction."

Professor Lewis' study focuses on the Caucasus mountain range in Russia and explores how the emerging technology of photography was used in the 19th century to develop myths of Caucasian racial identity, and by extension, the notion of racial purity. These "thought pictures" about race, as Frederick Douglass might have called them, underscore the nervous tenuousness at the heart of the racial project throughout the 20th century. Uniquely situated at an intersection of African American Studies, Art History, and Slavic Studies, Sarah Lewis' research reveals the enduring power of these Black Sea-related photographs of Circassia on the American imagination during its formative years.

The highlight of our busy visiting lecture season was a talk by Sarah Lewis, assistant professor of History of Art and African American Studies at Harvard University. Sarah Lewis is a bestselling author of *The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for*

The Richard Popov (AB '62) Scholarship

The Richard Popov (AB '62) Scholarship was recently established through a bequest by the Richard Popov Trust. This new scholarship will provide tuition assistance to undergraduate students

enrolled in the Slavic Department who have demonstrated financial need. We are extremely grateful to Richard Popov for supporting our students.

feature

Joseph Brodsky in LSA Magazine

Joseph Brodsky, who came to U-M's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures in 1972 as a poet-in-residence, was featured in LSA Magazine's Spring 2017 issue. The article, *Speak for Yourself*, was written by Brian Short and covers work done

by U-M Professor Carl Proffer and his wife Ellendea Proffer to publish works by Soviet authors and support Russian émigré writers. Read the full article on the University of Michigan's homepage at www.umich.edu.

staying connected

All (Networked) Roads Lead to Kyiv

by Jessica Zychowicz, PhD '15



In Johannes Vermeer's painting, *The Lacemaker* (1670), a young woman bends in focus over her craft of making lace, while a mess of red material lies tangled to her right. The scene has been critiqued as representative of shifts in social relations around women's domestic roles in mid-17th century Europe. The diligence and focus required to make lace by hand is in the foreground of the scene, and yet the blurred red thread from which such order springs belies deeper impulses that contrast with such feminine

virtuousness, repeated by the small prayer book in the center of the image. As also tends to be the case in weaving any comprehensive text, sometimes the best way to see something in one's own work is to look away from its seemingly predictable contexts. In recent months, I have been studying, learning, and observing state management processes in Washington. State-society relations have remained central to my ongoing interests in how the academy, governance, and protest intersect.

I am honored to have received a U.S. Fulbright Scholar Award for my work in cultural studies, gender, and media studies. Beginning this September, I will be conducting research in the culture of informatics while teaching at Kyiv-Mohilya Academy in the Faculty of Technology and Society, the Department of Sociology, and the Mohilya School of Journalism. I also plan to publish my current book involving art and the question of feminism in contemporary Ukraine at University of Toronto Press by the end of 2018. My mentors at U-M continue to sustain my thinking, particularly Benjamin Paloff's work in translation theory, metaphysics, and authorship.

In media and information studies, the term network carries with it a multitude of meanings. The word itself has roots in the textile industry of lacework, and like the Jacquard loom, describes a range of functions in computing. Yet the word network, or *ceť* in Soviet Ukrainian and Russian usage, once included additional concepts such as base, complex, cluster, and system.

The translation of these terms into wider social and cultural contexts since the 1950s-60s postwar era has enjoyed a rich and interesting transatlantic exchange of inquiry around theories that attempted to describe organizational patterns in computing, management, economics, and society—some fiercely opposed by scholars on purely ideological grounds. What these stories can tell us today about how we communicate, more and more often through the assistance of technology, inspires me to continue asking questions about language, identity, and their mediation across sociopolitical contexts. As part of this endeavor, I have been invited to help coordinate a new initiative at the University of Alberta in 2018, entitled CUSP: Contemporary Ukraine Studies Program, where I hope I will be able to continue to thread more stories, ideas, and scholars into our growing Ann Arbor Slavic network.

faculty focus

An Anti-Authoritarian Mind

by Sofya Khagi, Associate Professor



My current research and writing revolves around my book-in-progress, *Mbytes of Unfreedom: Victor Pelevin's Poetics, Politics, Metaphysics*—the first monograph-length study of arguably the most important writer in post-Soviet Russia.

I was introduced to Pelevin during my university days when I read his youthful collection of short stories *The Blue Lantern* (1991), novellas *Omon Ra* and *The Yellow Arrow* (1992), and the now-classic novel *Chapaev and the Void* (1996). He was

compared to the classics of socio-metaphysical fantasy like Gogol, Kafka, and Borges, and celebrated as the most “zeitgeisty” of contemporary writers. As a student, I was impressed (perhaps predictably so) by the forcefully anti-authoritarian quality of Pelevin’s thinking—not just by his deconstruction of Soviet Socialist ideology (an easy enough target at the time of the collapse of the USSR) but, in a wider sense, Pelevin never taking for granted what he terms “collective visualizations”—divergent

Left image
Cosmoparade, or the Victory Parade of 2937. A. Belyaev-Gintovt. (2010).

ideologies, mythologemes, worldviews, and common-sense assumptions.

My own scholarly work on Pelevin commenced about a decade later when I wrote “From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Zapiens: Victor Pelevin’s Consumer Dystopia” (*The Russian Review*, 2008). This article analyzed Pelevin’s paradigmatic turn-of-the-millennium novel *Generation ‘IT’*, arguing that Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), in which total control is achieved through saturating the populace with products of mass culture, serves as the most fitting model for Pelevin. More articles followed—“The Monstrous Aggregate of the Social: Biopolitics in Victor Pelevin” (*Slavic and East European Journal* 2011), and “Incarceration, Alibi, Escape? Pelevin’s Art of Irony” (*Russian Literature* 2014).

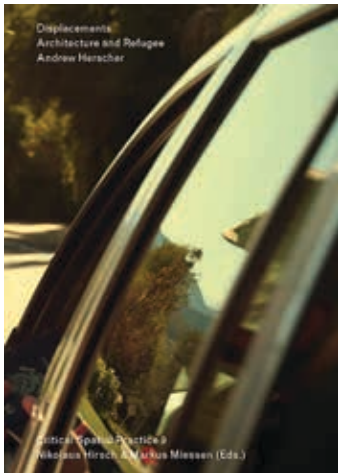
He is a challenging author to discuss because of the tricks that proliferate in his texts, the complexity of his narratives, and the general elusiveness of their meaning. One’s critical task, as I see it, is to try to think along—unhurriedly, with proper nuance, and, insofar as possible, avoiding ideological shortcuts.

As Pelevin develops his narratives along a stable set of key motifs such as hyper-commodification, dehumanization, social regress, illusions, and the lies of language and critical theory, he builds upon his preceding works and introduces new insights.

Even during my initial exposure to Pelevin, he struck me as more than a scathing parodist of Socialist mythologemes and a consummate postmodernist (as most Western critics tended to praise him). I came to see Pelevin as one who: a) adroitly utilizes postmodern themes and tropes to convey his own missive(s)—including, but not confined to, the requisite “there is no message” message; b) is constructive of a peculiar kind of *Weltanschauung* (Buddhist, solipsistic, even a bit romantic) rather than merely deconstructive of established worldviews; and c) combines a forceful voice of deconstruction, parody, and (self)-irony with poignant expressions of lyricism, compassion, and ethical concern. This may provide an insight into Pelevin’s relevance. To remain consistently anti-authoritarian in a world where irony is the default mode, one turns earnest and ethical.

Andrew Herscher

Displacements: Architecture and Refugee



*Edited by Nikolaus Hirsch,
Markus Miessen
Featuring artwork by Omer Fast*

In architectural history, just as in global politics, refugees have tended to exist as mere human surplus; histories of architecture, then, have usually reproduced the nation-state's exclusion of refugees as people out of place. Andrew Herscher's *Displacements: Architecture and Refugee*, the ninth book

in the Critical Spatial Practice series, examines some of the usually disavowed, but arguably decisive, intersections of mass-population displacement and architecture—an art and technology of population placement—through the 20th century and into the present. Posing the refugee as the preeminent collective political subject of our time, *Displacements* attempts to open up an architectural

history of the refugee that could refract on the history of architecture and the history of the refugee alike.

Herscher has been serving as a Stanford Arts Initiative Fellow for the 2016-17 academic year. He has been studying the role the arts play in major urban areas through Stanford's Creative Cities Fellowship.

1st Annual Graduate Student Mentoring Award Recipient



The Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures is pleased to announce the winner of the first annual departmental Graduate Student Mentoring Award: Professor Herb Eagle. The award recognizes research faculty who are

outstanding mentors to doctoral students, by supporting their intellectual, scholarly, and professional growth, and encouraging intellectual engagement.

Numerous current and past graduate students nominated Professor Eagle. One nominee stated, "[Herb is] a passionate and dedicated teacher, original thinker, outstanding researcher, and an inspiring mentor and leader." Another said, "Herb's intellect and gracious leadership aided me in navigating unconventional learning and career pathways not only within our Department, but also in my interdisciplinary

work and collaborations with other scholars within different research Centers and Institutes on campus."

While inspiring students is one of the key features of every successful teacher, Professor Eagle took this quality to the next level. He has educated generations of successful scholars in Slavic studies, one of which writes, "I have known Professor Herbert Eagle for fifteen years now. He was the professor in my first-year seminar on Russian cinema, whose lectures eventually inspired me to pursue an academic career in Slavic Studies. Thirteen years later, he was on my

committee when I defended my dissertation, and finally he was the one who took me to lunch six months ago to celebrate my newly acquired position as an Assistant Professor in Slavic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. My debt and gratitude to Professor Eagle is hardly unique to me."

Professor Eagle has made a true impact on the department, faculty, graduate students, and alumni. This is a well-deserved award for Professor Eagle and the department congratulates and thanks him for his years of mentorship and service.

graduate focus

Ukrainian Poetry in Translation

by Grace Mahoney, current PhD student



Left Image (Photo by Grace Mahoney.)
A pasture with horses outside of Heron, Montana
in the Cabinet Mountain range.

Above Image (Photo by Grace Mahoney.)
Entryway to Lost Horse Press in Sandpoint, Idaho.

Early this June, I spent a long weekend in Sandpoint, Idaho at Lost Horse Press. The owner, Christine Holbert, runs a one-woman show at this small independent poetry press. She's carved a niche for herself as a publisher of socially conscious, politically-minded American poetry. She's a leader in literary programming and publishing pedagogy in the northwest. In addition to all this, she also has Ukrainian heritage. Both of her parents immigrated to the U.S. after meeting in a German labor camp during WWII. Christine's mother, Marta, a true babusya in the middle of northern Idaho, lives with her at the age of 91. Christine and I have partnered together to produce a series

of contemporary Ukrainian poetry in translation. We will print these volumes in dual-language editions with the aim of promoting Ukrainian language and literature and appealing to lovers of poetry and students of language, literature, and translation.

The first book in this series will be my translations of Iryna Starovoyt, a poet and scholar who lives in Lviv. I first met Iryna when I was in Ukraine on a Fulbright fellowship. I reached out to her to discuss her scholarship and ended up reading, loving, and translating her poetry. This collection, *A Field of Foundlings*, includes selections from her 2014 book, *The Groningen*

Manuscript, and new poems. A scholar of memory and trauma, Iryna's poems engage the paradoxes of mythology, tradition, and technology to process histories of the 20th century and engage with the challenges of life in Ukraine today.

While at Lost Horse Press, Christine and I worked on editing the manuscript, tweaking the cover design, and hatching plans for the series as a whole. I was able to learn a lot about the process of publishing and the opportunities and challenges that small presses face today.

Sandpoint is located on the beautiful Lake Pend Orielle, the largest lake in Idaho and

one of the deepest lakes in the U.S. (deeper than Lake Michigan but not Lake Superior). Sandpoint is also situated between several mountain ranges. With such natural beauty and wonderful weather, Christine and I couldn't help but take breaks from pondering (tearing our hair out) over Iryna's elusive verse to take long drives along the Clark Fork River and gravelly country roads. At one point we even drove past Hope (a small town on the northeast side of the lake). As a native Idahoan growing up in Boise, it was my first experience in northern Idaho. I never would have guessed that business from my life as a Slavacist would be the first to bring me there.

Lessons to be Learned

by Paulina Duda, PhD '17



Everything happened rather quickly after my defense in December 2016. Anticipating the so-called “post-graduation” state of panic, I started searching for work opportunities well before the end of my graduate program. I found that starting my job search so early in the process was worth it—about six months before my defense, I already knew I would teach two courses during the Winter 2017 term of my own design in the Department of New Media Art at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw, Poland. To make up for my other half of employment, I’ve also been working as a freelance translator.

Despite the fact that Polish educational institutions are not as well organized as American ones, I am really happy with the work I do with my group of international

students and colleagues in Warsaw. Currently, I supervise eight individual projects on film and animation, and I’m developing an academic program in screen studies.

Yet, I found myself still driven by graduate student force of habit, i.e., the addiction to “applying for stuff.” This habit influenced my decision to apply for the Polish Lecturer position at Duke University, which I was fortunate enough to receive. I will be moving to Durham, North Carolina in August to teach two Polish language courses with hope in “reviving the Polish program,” as my job description says.

But Warsaw will wait for me—I will return to Poland to teach my courses at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology once my year at Duke University is over. In short, I will continue living on two different continents doing what I like to do most.

*“Lesson #1:
If you live like a
nomad, you will most
likely die like one.*

*Lesson #2:
If you apply for jobs
you want, you will
most likely get one.”*



Congratulations, Chris Fort!

Recipient of the Sweetland Dissertation Writing Institute Fellowship Spring/Summer 2017 and the Rackham PreDoc 2017-18.

undergraduate focus

Why I Study Polish at U-M

By Theresa Dowker, AB '17



Polish food was always a part of my family gatherings as I was growing up. I giggled when I learned about the *czarnina* (duck's blood soup) my mom used to eat. I stared at the "golumpki" swimming in tomato sauce, which I later learned were actually called *gołąbki*. I happily consumed kid-friendly potato-filled

pierogi we got from the supermarket freezer section. This was the extent of my exposure to Polish culture and language before enrolling at the University of Michigan.

At freshman orientation, they told us we needed to fulfill a two-year language requirement. I already took Spanish in high school, and I'd had enough of that. If I had to take more language classes, why not make it a fun one? I considered Tagalog so that I could talk to my aunt in her native language... but then I settled on Polish with an oddly firm level of certainty. Slavic languages felt exotic, exciting, and this was a way to connect with my grandma and show my family that I valued our heritage.

In my first semester at U-M, I stepped into Polish 121 with Paulina Duda and also decided to try out Slavic 225 with Professors Carpenter, Toman, and Eagle to fulfill another requirement. These ended up being my favorite courses of the semester! I learned about the colorful dichotomies of Bruno Schulz as we read *The Street of Crocodiles*, and delved into the horrors of the Holocaust as we read *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. I perfected my Polish pronunciation and grasp of difficult consonant clusters under Pani Paulina's wonderful tutelage. I also made friends who would struggle with me through subsequent years of Polish language classes.

As I progressed in fulfilling my language requirement, I began attending the Copernicus lectures and Slavic animation nights, and I took classes with Pani Ewa and Pan Piotr. Pani Ewa always puts so much effort into her teaching, and Pan Piotr has such a passion for Polish rock music, and both are so incredibly, unfailingly kind to their students, that there's no way I could have turned my back on the Slavic Department. Declaring a Polish Studies major has, without a doubt, been one of the best decisions I've ever made. I sincerely hope that many more students take the plunge in the future to study Polish and find their home in our tiny department, just like I did.

Congrats Graduates and Language Study Award Winners!

Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Language, Literature & Culture Minor

Ava Tavrazich

Polish Majors

David Beck

Victoria Chochla

Theresa Dowker***

Patryk Roczon

Jacqueline Saplicki-Lausell

Polish Language, Literature, and Culture Minors

Michael Dembicki

Patrick Glista

Aaron Keyes

Sean Kosecki

Jakub Kuras

Patryk Piasek

Gabrielle Wasilewski***

Russian Majors

Caleb Blohm

Aliya Brown

Anna Xinh Heim

Junghoon Kang

Cavin Park

Russian Language, Literature, and Culture Minors

Emily Karlsson

Megan McKenzie

Anna Mondrusov

Kathryn Orwig***

Lauren Stachew

Rebecca Stolar***

Ryan Tactac

PhD, Slavic Languages & Literatures

Paulina Duda

Jodi Greig*

Sarah Moncada**

Excellence in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian Language Studies Award

Tyler Loveall

Excellence in Czech Language Studies Awards

Mariah Cardenas

Sara Swords

Excellence in Polish Language Studies Award

David Beck

Excellence in Russian Language Studies Awards

Mark Dovich

Jonathan Poser

Excellence in Ukrainian Language Studies Award

Jason Rumsey

To see pictures, please see the back page or go to our website: www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic

*Denotes August 2016 Graduate
**Denotes December 2016 Graduate
***Denotes August 2017 Graduate

in the classroom

A New Film Course Highlights the Complexity of the Ongoing Humanitarian Tragedy

By Tatjana Aleksić, Associate Professor

In the Fall 2017 semester, I will be teaching a new film course, *In No Man's Land: Walls, Migrations and Human Trafficking in the Balkans and Mediterranean*, which deals with the issue of the migrant humanitarian crisis within the Balkans and the Mediterranean, the two routes through which most of the migrants and refugees arrive from the Middle East, Asia, and Sub Saharan Africa.

The course attempts to focus students' attention to the unprecedented contemporary

humanitarian tragedy of literally millions of people on the move, in pursuit of a better and safer life for themselves and their families. It takes issue with the extent to which the global audiences have been desensitized to the suffering of these people by frequently sensationalist, hostile, or even false political and media rhetoric, while acknowledging the fact that the arrival of large numbers of "foreigners" is always a worry to the local populations, sometimes with good reason. It likewise makes connections

with several key instances of similar population movements in the past, some of which are, perhaps, the reason why some among us now see ourselves as "local population" in the U.S. and claim our right to citizenship and privilege.

The primary sources in this course are films that treat the highly contentious problem of migrations and refugee crisis in the Balkan and Mediterranean region in a complex and non-partisan way. They range from

narratives about the man-made and natural obstacles and dangers that migrants face on their way, to the stories of their successful or failed integration within the fabric of the host nation and economy. Many of the films are deeply heartfelt narratives about human suffering, understanding, friendship and solidarity, although pervaded by tangible and ever present dangers, administrative obstacles and hostile politics.

Authentic Engagement: New Perspectives on Teaching Polish NAATPI 2nd Biennial Workshop for Polish Language Teachers

by Ewa Pasek, Lecturer



Left Image
NAATPI participants.

Association provides a forum for sharing resources and best practices among Polish language educators.

The May workshop, organized by Ewa Pasek and Jodi Greig, was attended by 27 language teachers from various universities, colleges and K-12 schools. The workshop program addressed challenges the language instructors face while incorporating authentic materials into their curricula: selecting appropriate texts, designing tasks for learners

of various ages and levels of language proficiency, and using technology for editing authentic materials. The participants also discussed the future of Polish language teaching and learning, and different modes of language instruction that technology offers, e.g. blended learning and CourseShare programs.

The workshop was co-sponsored by the Copernicus Program in Polish Studies, U-M's Language Resource Center, and the Polish Cultural Fund. A complete program of the workshop is available at www.sites.lsa.umich.edu/naatpi/.

On Saturday, May 6, 2017, our Department hosted the NAATPI 2nd biennial workshop for Polish language teachers. The topic of the workshop was *Teaching with Authentic Materials: Theoretical and Practical*

Classroom Implications. The North American Association of Teachers of Polish (NAATPI) is an organization run by passionate professionals who teach the Polish language at all levels of education in the U.S. and Canada. The

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Katherine E. White
Mark S. Schlissel (ex officio)



**Congrats
Graduates!**

Top Left Image: BCS Minor Ava Tavrachich with Tatjana Aleksic. *Top*

Right Image: Polish Majors and Minors Victoria Chochla, Sean Kosecki, Aaron Keyes, Patrick Glista, Michael Dembicki, Patryk Piascik, Jacqueline Saplicki-Lausell, David Beck, and Theresa Dowker with Piotr Westwalewicz. *Bottom*

Left Image: Russian Minors Megan McKenzie, Kathryn Orwig, Anna Mondrusov, and Emily Karlsson with Michael Makin. *Bottom*

Right Image: Russian Majors Cavin Park, Anna Heim, and Aliya Brown with Michael Makin.

