



Message from the President

Marc Fink
Madison, Wisconsin

In October, I had the great privilege to travel to Russia at the invitation of Ivan Poushechnikov, honorary member of IDRS and venerated professor of oboe at Moscow's Gnessin Academy of Music. Although I left the United States with a few apprehensions about conditions in Russia (particularly the economic crisis and reports of food shortages), my fears were immediately put to rest by my host and his wife, Sofia, as they greeted me warmly at Sherem'tyev Airport. True, the ruble had fallen in recent weeks from 6 rubles/US\$ to 16 rubles/US \$, and the economic crisis was on the minds of most of the people whom I met during my 10 days in Russia. However, in spite of these obvious hardships, the Russian people exuded a genuine warmth, friendship, and compassion for the arts. I enjoyed performing a recital for a most appreciative audience in the Gnessin Academy, and had the opportunity to observe Professor Poushechnikov's teaching both at the Music School (precollege) and the Academy. I found it most interesting that in the Russian system of music education, elementary age students begin wind study on the recorder (blockflute) and continue to study that instrument for two to three years before "declaring" a major wind instrument. They develop rather amazing technique and control at an early age, in part because they practice many hours, and in part because they are strongly supported by their parents, who attend their private lessons. I heard a ten-year old girl named Masha, who had only played oboe for one year, and was already performing with great skill the Bellini *Concerto for Oboe*. It is not uncommon for these students to practice four hours a day. The students at the academy were quite advanced and many were preparing for international competitions. Following my week in Moscow, I spent two days in St. Petersburg, hosted by Professors Nikolai Neretin, oboe, and Kirill Sokolov, bassoon, of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. I enjoyed a memorable 3-hour double reed recital/master class in the conservatory founded by Anton Rubenstein and named for Rimsky-Korsakov. A number of oboe and bassoon students of Professors Neretin, Sokolov, and Valery Sobolev (oboe) performed in the concert, and again the performance standard was very high. The oboe students were very interested in trying my oboe and reeds, and although the French conservatory system (Lorée) oboe that I play was very familiar to them, my reeds were quite foreign; the long-scraped reeds were much more closed than they were accustomed to playing. My hosts were incredibly gracious during my brief visit to the "Venice of the North," and I left Russia with the feeling of having acquired a new family of double reed friends who speak the same musical language. Both in Moscow and St. Petersburg many double reed players were most

interested in the activities of IDRS, and wondering if perhaps IDRS could ever hold a conference in Russia.

In this issue you will find more information about the IDRS'99 Madison conference, including a housing application and conference registration form. In Madison we are working hard in planning what promises to be a very exciting conference with a Wisconsin flavor. I hope that many of you will be able to attend. As you know, our conference in 2000 will be in Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 10-14. Andrea Merenzon, IDRS second-vice president and conference host, has been busily working for more than a year to prepare for this important event, the first venture of IDRS to Latin America. Ed Lacy has been working with American Airlines to assemble a pre-conference tour of Latin America for those attending the conference from North America. More information will be forthcoming in future issues. Lastly, the IDRS executive committee has accepted a proposal from Terry Ewell, professor of bassoon and chair of the music division at West Virginia University, Morgantown, to host the 2001 conference. Conference dates for 2001 are August 7-11.

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