

**** POST PRESS RELEASE ****
EXCLUSIVE BRITISH-RUSSIAN GALA DINNER
Friday 15 March
Skinner's Hall



Assia Webster and Stephanie Gorbounova

- Fashion Show featuring designs by **FELDER FELDER** and **Rohmir**
- Performances by **Polina Gagarina**, **Buranovskie Babushki** (Singing Grannies) and **Bis-Quit Orchestra**
- Special guests included **Ben de Lisi**, **Steve Webster** **Josephine Kime**, **Yasmin Mills** and more

With Spring finally here, Festival Maslenitsa, the week-long cultural festival taking place in London, hosted an **exclusive British-Russian Gala Dinner** at the prestigious **Skinner's Hall** on 15 March 2013, allowing guests a taste of Russian glamour.

Guests were treated to a fashion show featuring designs by the Felder twins of **FELDER FELDER** and Russia's own **Rohmir** by designer Olga Roh. Showcasing the latest in avant-garde fashion, models delighted guests as they strutted amongst the tables of the venue's elaborate dining hall. Annette and Daniela Felder and Olga Roh later joined celebrity guests including designer **Ben de Lisi**, jeweller extraordinaire **Steven Webster**, TV presenter **Josephine Kime** and **Yasmin Mills** for a sumptuous dinner.

Brief speeches were given by key members of British-Russian society including **Mikhail Kalinin**, Head of International Department, Russian Federation Upper Parliament; **Pyotr Skorospelov**, Russkiy Mir Foundation Executive Director **and** **Nikolai Zhdanov-Lutsenko**, Director Moscow House of Compatriots (MDS), Moscow City Government. Zhdanov-Lutsenko remarked, "*Maslenitsa means saying goodbye to the cold winter and hello to spring, birth and new life.*"

Olga Balakeets, Director of Ensemble Productions, co-ordinators of this year's Festival Maslenitsa gave a speech over dinner, saying: "*I would like to thank you all for being here tonight and also thank everybody who helped this festival come together. Thank you to Mr Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, who has supported us for the last five years. We are grateful to the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, Moscow City Government and the Embassy of the Russian Federation in London. A special word of thank you also to all of our sponsors (Polymetal International, ICT Group, O1 Properties, Lycamobile and Green Mark), who have helped us give so much pleasure to those who love Russian culture.*"

NOTES FOR EDITORS:**About Olga Balakleets**

Director of the Maslenitsa Festival and President of Ensemble Productions, Olga Balakleets is dedicated to sharing the arts and culture of her native Russia with the world. A graduate of the Conservatory in St Petersburg, she created Ensemble Productions in 1998 in order to initiate and promote international cultural projects, including the prestigious Maslenitsa Festival held in Trafalgar Square. As a Russian cultural advisor, Balakleets works closely with the Mayor of London, British Parliament, Russian State Duma and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. She has served as the Artistic Director of the British-Russian Cultural Association since 2005 as well as Vice-President of the Swiss-Russian Cultural Foundation since 2008 and was elected a member of the Russian Speaking Council of Great Britain in 2009. For her immense contribution in promoting Russian culture, Balakleets was awarded the Special Medal by Russian President Medvedev and the Order of St Prince Dimitry Donskoi and St Sergey Radonezhsky for Services to the Fatherhood, both in 2010.

About Ensemble Productions

Founded in 1998, Ensemble Productions is a London-based production and events company that specialises in Classical, Jazz, World, Pop and Rock concerts as well as Opera, Ballet and Contemporary dance productions in the UK and internationally. Previous projects have included the Dimensions Festival of Music from Russia and the Former Soviet Republics; the annual Maslenitsa festival in Trafalgar Square; the Operalia Festival in Central Asia; Days of Hong Kong in Russia; the Marbella International Festival in Spain; the Russian New Year Festival in Switzerland; the Cyprus-Russia Gala in the Presidential Palace in Cyprus, the Arab-Russian Gala in Dubai and the Italia-Russia Gala in Rome. Ensemble Productions is proud to play a vital role in celebrating the rich heritage and diversity of the performing arts. For more information, visit www.ensembleproductions.co.uk

Rohmir

Olga Roh founded Rohmir in 2007 and has seamlessly established herself as a designer of luxury ready-to-wear collections with a fierce injection of cosmopolitan glamour. Hailing from Russian nobility with an established career in modelling, she has recently graduated with a Master's Degree in Fashion Design from the Istituto Marangoni in London. Roh is inspired by the timeless elegance of her heritage, fused with the romantic allure of the Garçonne era of the Twenties and Thirties, Louis XIV and Bridgette Bardot. Her flagship store is in London, with stockists through Europe and Hong Kong. For more information, visit <http://www.rohmir.com/>

Felder Felder

Originally from Germany, identical twin sisters Annette and Daniela Felder launched FELDER FELDER while studying at Central Saint Martins in London 2006/2007. Starting with the support of key press and opinion formers, including features in *Vogue*, *Elle*, *i-D Magazine* and *The Sunday Times Style*, FELDER FELDER has developed a cult following. The sisters have established a signature style with their feminine rock and roll aesthetic, which has been embraced by singers and actresses, including Rihanna, Gwyneth Paltrow, Florence and the Machine and Allison Mosshart. The Felder sisters are intrigued by opposites and combine contrasts in their collections, aiming to achieve the perfect balance in each design. Their bold, yet modern and sensual aesthetic, has won FELDER FELDER the respected New Gen Award for three consecutive seasons, a nomination for The British Fashion Awards 2008, a celebrity following and the support of the most sought after stores in the World. For more information, visit <http://www.felderfelder.com/>

Ben de Lisi

Ben de Lisi was born in America and studied at the Pratt Institute of Art in Brooklyn, majoring in sculpture and painting. His first foray into the fashion industry involved him painting designs on fabric, leading to him creating clothing from this fabric. In 1979 his first collaboration for men was stocked at Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's and Macy's. Moving to London in 1982 to pursue his dream of becoming a fashion designer, De Lisi developed a signature style of modern elegance. Joining Debenhams in 1992, his BDL by Ben de Lisi collection has become one of the largest-selling ranges in the Womenswear Designers range. He began showing at London Fashion Week in 1995, later moving into interiors in 2001 as a stylist for Countryside Properties in North West England. Awarded an honorary doctorate for his contribution to fashion by the University of Northamptonshire, he has now added a homeware range to his collection to Debenhams. For more information, visit <http://www.bendelisi.com/>

Polina Gagarina

Polina Gagarina is a popular Russian singer born in Greece. She was a winner of Fabrika in 2003, two years later she released her debut single soon followed by her first album. The main subject of her songs is love and she is greatly admired by all generations. She is one of the most elegant and beautiful Russian female singers of her time.

Buranovskie Babushki

Translated as 'The Grannies from Buranovo' – or better known to us as the 'Singing Grannies' – Buranovskie Babushki is an ethno-pop band comprising eight elderly, yet sprightly, women. After finishing second in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest for Russia, the Grannies became an Internet sensation with more than 30,000 hits in less than a week. They sing in their native Udmurt, and often surprise audiences by singing covers of Tsoi, Grebenshchikov and The Beatles. The grannies are currently using their Eurovision money to help rebuild a local church from their home town Buranovo. For more information, visit <http://buranovskiebabushki.ru>

Bis-Quit Orchestra

Since their formation in 2002, Bis-Quit has been creating a unique sound using a combination of Russian traditional musical instruments with saxophone and drum. Their repertoire includes more than 250 compositions in different genres including Russian Folk, Classical, Jazz, Country, Tango, Latino, Retro and Dance music. The ensemble has played at over 1500 concerts throughout Russia, Europe, Asia, the UK and Scandinavia.