



Suggested Study Guide

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Ask the class to brainstorm all they know about Russia and the Russian people.
2. Ask students to locate Russia on a map of the world. How does Russia's large size, geographic location, and climate affect the daily lives of the people there? How has Russia's size, location, and climate affected Russian history?
3. Have students read and discuss the attached information about Russia, Russian daily life, politics, and theatre.
4. Discuss capitalism and socialism as economic systems. Discuss democracy and communism as governmental systems. What are the pros and cons of each system? How would your daily life be different if you did not live in a Western democracy?
5. Consider the daily lives of members of The Moscow Boys Choir in today's more democratic Russia, and in the past, in communist Russia. How do you suppose life would have been better or worse for them under communism? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of life for the boys and their families under the current system?
6. Review the attached vocabulary list or have the students provide their own definitions of some of the words on the list, and share them with the class.
7. Possible talking points for music classes:
 - a. What kind of a singing voice do you have? What musical part would you sing in a choral performance? If you could sing any song for your class, what would it be? Encourage your students to sing their favorite songs in class!
 - b. How and why would certain foods affect vocal quality?
 - c. What would be the best foods to eat for dinner if you had to sing that evening? Which would be the worst?
 - d. How can the temperature of the things you eat and drink affect your voice?

AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE:

1. The Choir performs traditional folk songs, classical music, and contemporary music in their concerts. Why do you suppose they do this?
2. What effect did the different pieces performed by the Choir have on the audience? What was your favorite selection the Choir performed? Why did you prefer that selection to the others that were performed?
3. If someone asked you about the performance you saw, what would you tell them about? Why would you pick that particular part of the show to share with them?
4. How does music convey emotion, even when you don't understand the words?
5. What does the Conductor do in the choir? How does the Conductor's body language and gestures let the choir know what to do during their performance?
6. Consider the gestures and signs we use every day to communicate with others. What meanings or intentions do the gestures we use convey to others? How has the meaning of certain gestures changed over time?

**Please note that this is only a suggested guide. As each group of students differs, instructors may wish to focus on only a few of the proposed topics of discussion or create their own study guide more suited to their particular student group. An original study guide may be derived from the attached background on Russia, the bibliography provided, or by using other sources of choice. The Management hopes that the students enjoy this cultural experience that will deepen their understanding of this unique culture!*



RUSSIA AND HER PEOPLE

A Brief Overview

Russia was first inhabited by nomadic Slavic tribes, at one time known as the Atavars, during the 7th century BC. The name “Russia” is derived from the Atavar word for “north.” It is thought that the word “Russia” was initially used by Norwegian and Swedish explorers to refer to the area occupied by the Atavars as the Vikings discovered trade routes. Viking explorers traded extensively with the Atavars, who were without a formal written language during this time, and the visiting Vikings used the term “russeeyans” to describe their trading partners. Some of the first towns in what is now known as present-day Russia were built by the Goths, who arrived to the region in the 3rd century AD. Since then, Russia has been home to many different people, not all of them peaceful.

The Russians have had a written language since the 9th century AD when the Christian missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, developed a Greek-based alphabet for the Slavic people in order to translate religious texts. In honor of these missionaries, the Russian alphabet is called Cyrillic and it is still in use today, in a modified form.

In 882 AD, the Viking leader Oleg founded the Russian state by combining the main trading centers into a kind of province, governed by the city of Kiev. In 988 AD, the ruler of Kiev, Vladimir I, converted to Christianity. It is believed that he chose Greek Orthodoxy over Roman Catholicism because of the heavy trading Kiev did with Constantinople, the capitol of the Byzantine Empire. The faith was adapted to become the Russian Orthodox Church. At this time, and for many centuries to follow, Russia’s economy was based on feudalism. This is an economic and social system in which land worked by serfs was held by vassals or boyars in exchange for military and other services to their kings and princes. There was a vast difference between the quality of life for the upper classes and that of the lower classes. Princes and boyars (or landowners) comprised the upper classes. The boyars were granted land rights by powerful kings and princes and these two groups lived in comparative luxury while the common people lived a difficult and impoverished existence.

Ivan IV reigned as the first czar of Russia (pronounced “tzar”; also spelled tsar) from about 1550 AD. The term “czar” is an adaptation from the Roman Empire’s title for their supreme leader, “Caesar.” Ivan IV adopted this title and for many centuries thereafter, the leader of Russia was known as the Czar. Ivan was born in 1530, and is better known as Ivan the Terrible for his fierce temper and habit of torturing and executing those who opposed him, even members of his own family, which is why Ivan had no suitable heir to his throne. Therefore, the lines of succession to the Russian throne were fluid for almost two hundred years after his death. Traditionally, when a Czar died, he was succeeded by the person who held the most power in the government. Czar Paul (1796-1801) brought back the law of primogeniture, in which the inheritance of power or kingship is bestowed upon the eldest son.

Czar Alexander II (1855-1881) finally freed the serfs from servitude in 1861. Since the serfs could not own land individually, land titles would be held by the commune, or “mir,” to which the former serfs belonged. By setting up land stewardship in this way, Alexander II unknowingly planted the seeds which later developed into modern-day communism.



In January 1905, the working classes rebelled and a battle ensued between the Czar's troops and the people. This battle became known historically as "Bloody Sunday," and the people demanded the abdication of Czar Nicholas II. In October 1917, the October Revolution occurred, which overthrew the oligarchy in power at the time, and called into question Czar Nicholas' divine right to rule Russia. The divine right of kings is a theory of government that holds that a monarch receives the right to rule directly from a god and not from the people over which that monarch rules. After the revolution, The Czar and his family were exiled to a remote province of Russia for a time, and later, executed by the leaders of the rebellion. The leaders of this rebellion became known as the Bolsheviks. The vast majority of the Russian people went on strike against the Czar and the imperial form of government, and the first Socialist State was formed. These events ushered in the rise of communism in Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. Over the course of the coming years, adjacent countries also embraced communism, some willingly and some by force. These countries joined with Russia to form the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Thus, Russia became a 20th Century super-power and a major force in the development of socialism and the communist form of government.

For much of the 20th Century, the Soviet Union was based upon the principles of socialism, where a country's means of production and distribution is owned by that society rather than by individuals or private companies. Communism is a governmental form of socialism as interpreted by the political leader Vladimir Lenin and the economic theorist Karl Marx, among others. Communism promotes common ownership of property and goods. Under the communist regime in Russia, the government owned and regulated everything pertaining to the daily life of the people. People were not allowed to speak out against the government, vote, or leave the country without permission from the Communist Party leaders.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader. Gorbachev wanted to move the Soviet Union into the modern world, and institute a more democratic, open style of government. This new way of thinking became known as glasnost, meaning "openness" and the Russian government adopted the policy of perestroika, meaning "reconstruction" or "rebuilding." In 1991, amid much political strife and social chaos in Russia, Gorbachev resigned as head of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union officially disbanded.

In recent years, the Russian government has in many ways successfully made their transition to democracy and capitalism, the economic system currently in use by the majority of the world's governments. Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production and distribution of most goods and services is privately owned and operated for profit. After over 70 years of one form of government, it continues to take time for Russia's government, and her economy, to evolve into truly democratic and capitalist entities. Since 1991, Russia has made great inroads towards becoming a more democratic society. Although remnants of the communist system still remain in Russia, the country continues to move toward a more capitalist economy, and a more democratic system of government. Visitors traveling to Russia today will find modern cities, replete with stores filled with goods, people in tune with the latest technologies and culture, as well as a bustling commercial sector.

As their long and rich history has proven, the Russian people are innovative, resilient, and determined, and their hopes and dreams for a prosperous and bright future will be realized through their hard work and the vision and willingness of their leaders to allow economic and political freedom for all to flourish.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR®

Russian children begin attending primary school at the age of 6 or 7 and stay in school until the age of 16. At age 16, they can choose to enter trade school and attend a technical or professional institute, or, continue their formal education until age 18 where they prepare to take exams for entrance into a University. The Russian school year is the same as the normal school year here in the West, beginning around the first of September, and ending in early June.

To become a touring member of the Choir takes a lot of talent and perseverance. The boys are chosen from over 400 students in the Moscow Boys Capella, the school they attend in Moscow. In addition to their vocal training, each boy takes a variety of classes. They study mathematics, geography, science, history, and usually take a foreign language (such as English, German, French, or Chinese). They also learn how to play a musical instrument, such as the piano, the violin, the bassoon, the trumpet, the drums, or other musical instrument, to round out their musical training. The boys begin studying music and voice at about age 5, but are not allowed to perform publicly until they are at least 9 years of age.

Boys between the ages of 9 and 14 comprise the bulk of the touring Choir. These young men sing the soprano and alto parts of the songs in the repertoire. When you see THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR in performance, you will notice that there are older members in the Choir. These performers are graduates from the Moscow Boys Capella, and they sing the tenor, baritone, and bass parts of the music.

When they are not in class, most of the boys live with their parents, or other family members, in Moscow and in the suburbs around Moscow. While at home and on tour, they are always mindful of their voices and, therefore, observe strict bedtimes and dietary restrictions to stay in top vocal form. You will often find the boys sipping warm or room temperature liquids. This is not only because it is Russian custom to drink most beverages warm, but, because it is also relaxing to the throat and aids in the preparation for the evening's performance. They also adhere to a very healthy diet that includes a minimum of dairy products, which can inhibit breathing and adversely affect the vocal chords. This is not to say that they don't enjoy an occasional trip to McDonald's or Pizza Hut, which they do as often as possible!

A typical day on tour for them consists of early mornings on the bus to drive to the city where they will perform that evening or the next day. Upon arrival, they go to their hotel and get settled into their rooms. Then, they go to the theatre where they prepare for their performance. After the performance, there may be a reception or brief party where the Choir members meet and greet audience members, as well as chat with students and children their own age. After this, it's back to the hotel, where everyone has a good night's sleep before starting all over again the next day. During their time off, they often organize a quick game of European-style football, which we call soccer. They also play video games, go to the movies, enjoy a swim at their hotel, read a book, or send e-mails and text messages home to their families and friends on their cell phones. In essence, these youngsters are very much like their Western counterparts, only they travel the world sharing their incredible musical gifts!



The boys see a great deal of North America while on tour and enjoy meeting people from all walks of life in their travels. When they return home to Moscow, they have a wealth of memories that they eagerly share with their families and friends. Becoming a member of the Moscow Boys Choir means hard work, and being far from home for long periods of time, but it also offers benefits such as travel and fun! Here are only a few of the Choir's many accomplishments over the years:

2012 marked the Choir's Twelfth North American tour. On previous North American tours, they have been invited to perform at Disneyland, Six Flags Over Texas, Dollywood, and the Crystal Cathedral in Southern California. They have recorded many television specials in Russia and in North America, including a high definition TV Special for HDNet Television, and they recorded a performance for National Public Radio's program, "Performance Today." They appear regularly on television nationally and internationally performing on such programs as Russia's *Steps* and *Culture TV*, CBS' *Christmas Eve Holiday Special*, and Reverend Robert Schuller's *Hour of Power*.

In December of 1999, the boys visited the White House where they sang for and met President Bill Clinton, his wife and our current Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and their daughter Chelsea Clinton! The boys have toured extensively in Europe performing for members of the British Royal Family at The Royal Albert Hall in London, and many prestigious venues in their own country such as the Bolshoi Theatre, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, the Olympic Hall, and the Kremlin for their Presidents and other dignitaries. They have performed with many famous singers from around the world, including Andrea Bocelli on Red Square in Moscow. They have toured many countries in addition to Russia and the United States including South Korea, Japan, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Holland.

And yet, with all of these incredible accomplishments, members of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR are very much like young people anywhere in the world...except they have incredible talents that they share with people everywhere, bringing joy to millions, and the gift of music to the world!

The above is provided by tour management to enhance the performance the audience will see by THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR®. These documents are intended to be used as an introduction to Russian history and daily life. Instructors may wish to use the above information as a foundation for further, more intense study of Russia.

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SUGGESTED VOCABULARY LIST

a capella--to sing without accompaniment.

accompaniment--a musical term referring to a musical part supporting a vocal part.

alto--the lower range of the human voice between tenor and mezzo-soprano.

audition--a hearing to try out an actor or singer.

baritone--the medium range of a male voice between tenor and bass.

bass--the lowest range of a male voice.

Bolsheviks--original members of the majority faction that came into power after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

boyars--landowners controlled by royalty in feudal economies.

capitalism--an economic system in which the means of production and distribution are predominantly privately owned and operated for profit.

communism--a type of socialism in which the people are ruled by a central government which controls all industry.

Cyrillic--the alphabet for the Russian language created by the Christian missionaries Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century.

Divine right of Kings--the right of a sovereign to rule as set forth by the theory of government that holds that a monarch receives the right to rule directly from a god and not from the people.

feudalism--economic and social system in medieval Europe, in which land, worked by serfs, was held by vassals in exchange for military and other services to kings and princes.

forte--a musical term meaning loud.

oligarchy--a government in which power belongs to a few persons.

Orthodox Church--the Christian church that is dominant in Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and parts of North Africa.

perestroika--Russian term for the policy adopted by that government meaning to rebuild or reconstruct.

perseverance--to continue a course of action despite difficulty or opposition.

primogeniture--a social system in which an inheritance or political power is bestowed upon the first-born son of a ruler or landowner.

repertoire--the stock of songs that a singer or troupe is always prepared to perform.

socialism--a theory by which a country's means of production and distribution are owned by that society rather than by individuals.

soprano--the highest range of the human singing voice, usually in women or boys.

tenor--the highest range of the adult male singing voice.

czar--(also spelled tsar) the Russian word for ruler or emperor.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources for this Study Guide

This study guide is intended to enhance your student's enjoyment of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR's performance. Information sources are listed below, but there is so much more to know about Russia and her people. For further reading, there are many internet websites with information on Russia, her past and her present. Or, suggest that your students pay a visit to their local public library sometime soon!

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Resnick, Abraham. *Russia, A History to 1917*. Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc., 1983.

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