



WELCOME TO THE
**RUSSIAN
LOUNGE**

*“I could be bounded
in a nutshell and
count myself a
king of infinite
space.”*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *HAMLET*

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees, it is my special pleasure to welcome you to the Russian Lounge. The arts foster an alternative means of communication, and it is our hope that this renovation will highlight the potential and excitement of arts and cultural exchange, and in turn, bring people together for a better understanding of each other, our cultures, and our countries.

The Kennedy Center has long supported Russian arts and artists, playing host to the Mariinsky Opera and Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, presenting countless performances of works by Russian masters, and in 2009, began a two-year cultural tour of Russian arts with *Focus on Russia*, which celebrated the rich cultural influence of Russia in the performing arts.

We are enormously grateful to Mr. Vladimir Potanin and the Vladimir Potanin Foundation whose generosity made this design and renovation possible. The Foundation's unparalleled commitment to the Center and our mission to increase mutual understanding between our nations is exemplary.

I would also like to acknowledge the impressive work of those associated with the Russian Lounge: Ms. Natalia Zolotova, curator of the Lounge; Mr. Sergey Skuratov, the architect; Mr. Valery Koshlyakov, the artist; and Ms. Oksana Oracheva, General Director of the Vladimir Potanin Foundation. The renovation of the Lounge has not only elevated the grandeur of our most popular constituent site, it has also exposed the Center's patrons to the exhilarating work from two of Russia's leading artists.

Thank you so much for coming to visit the newest addition to the Center. I hope that you enjoy this incredible new space.

Sincerely,

David M. Rubenstein
Chairman

Dear Friends,

It is my privilege and honor to welcome you to the Russian Lounge of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. I have long admired the activity of the Kennedy Center and its role in fostering understanding between various countries, encouraging cultural links, and presenting different cultures—including Russia's—to the American people.

Over the 40 years of its history, the Kennedy Center has welcomed the Russian opera and ballets of the Bolshoi and Mariinsky theaters. For 17 years, the great maestro Mstislav Rostropovich was the Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra. These are just a few examples of the Center's outstanding record of presenting international arts.

So the Russian Lounge for me is an opportunity to mark this contribution to cultural exchange between our nations. Culture is something that is absolutely international and has no boundaries. I strongly believe that arts offer powerful channels for establishing stable, long-lasting, and cordial relations between our countries.

I hope that the Russian Lounge, with its simple architectural forms, plain rather than dominating colors, and quite expressive paintings, none of which evoke the usual associations, will present an image of contemporary Russia to the American audience, stepping beyond the clichés about our country.

Designed by prominent Russian artists Valery Koshlyakov and Sergey Skuratov, the Russian Lounge offers a unique vision of Russia, a new image created through architecture and painting. Bringing together multiple ideas and faces of Russia, this space reflects our sincerity and hospitality, our specific traits and features, our openness and complexity, our care for the past, and our aspiration for the future.

For more than 20 years, I have been involved in philanthropy in Russia, supporting cultural and educational projects in various regions. This has given me an opportunity to learn more about our country, about Russian history and culture, which still keep revealing themselves in all their variety and profound meanings. This is what I would like to share with the American people. I hope that guests of the Russian Lounge will experience their own unique feelings and views of Russia, will become interested in our country, and will open something new for themselves.

I would like to express my special gratitude to David Rubenstein, Chairman of the Kennedy Center and to the team of the Kennedy Center for their support and ongoing assistance in the implementation of the project, which could not have been so beautifully accomplished without their help.

Vladimir Potanin



THE PROJECT

Located on the Box Tier of the Opera House, the Russian Lounge was made possible thanks to a generous gift by Russian entrepreneur, Mr. Vladimir Potanin. Given on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Kennedy Center, Mr. Potanin's contribution has provided an opportunity to present American audiences with an image of contemporary Russia stepping aside from traditional historical and cultural clichés.

To implement the Russian Lounge project, the Vladimir Potanin Foundation held a closed design competition. The concept of the project was developed by its curator, Ms. Natalia Zolotova. The winning design by the artist Mr. Valery Koshlyakov and the architect Mr. Sergey Skuratov offers a unique and new vision of Russia, jointly created by architecture and painting.

Natalia Zolotova, the Project Curator:

Designing a new space to create the atmosphere of a Russian cultural presence in two rooms with a low ceiling and without windows was a serious challenge, and at first, did not seem like an easy task. These were also not just any rooms, but prestigious spaces at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where for more than 40 years hundreds of performances have been presented, new sets have been designed, time and space have been miraculously transformed, and various magical worlds have been created across its many stages.

Kennedy Center patrons have had the opportunity to witness Russian culture in its most renowned and amazing forms, from Tchaikovsky to Rostropovich, who was the National Symphony Orchestra Music Director for 17 years. Their stages have also welcomed the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky theaters.

Could we hope to amaze the sophisticated audience of the Kennedy Center?

From the time I was invited by the Vladimir Potanin Foundation to work on this project, an agreement was made to avoid any historical or visual clichés overused by the tourist industry and mass popular culture. We also decided against incorporating specific ethnic references, considering Russia's multicultural diversity. Furthermore, we decided to broaden the challenge by going beyond a simple renovation and refurbishment, and instead chose to involve artists and creators.

When a century ago Sergei Diaghilev brought the *Russian Seasons* to Europe and the United States, he also introduced new Russian names and images. Igor Stravinsky, Vaslav Nijinsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and other famous artists who shaped Diaghilev's *Seasons* did not use any preconceived ideas and instead broke traditional expectations by creating a new image of the Russian culture of their generation.

We wanted to follow in the footsteps of these great artists and do something similar. A design competition was held and famous Russian architects and artists were invited to take on the challenge of the Russian Lounge. We asked them to strip the previous interior and to create in its place, a new image, new mood, and a true artistic experience—something different from the battered cultural clichés, something that would introduce the Russian Lounge at the Kennedy Center as a part of the visual arts world and a reason to contemplate contemporary Russian culture.

The Russian Lounge now is the implementation of the winning project selected together by the Foundation and the Kennedy Center. The Russian Lounge is the work of two outstanding and famous Russian artists—architect Sergey Skuratov and artist Valery Koshlyakov.

These artists were given the unique opportunity to reshape the space and interior with certain structural limits and minor additional conditions (for example, the crystal chandeliers in the Lounge were to be preserved).

Thanks to Sergey Skuratov, the renovated room has been transformed to include: spectacular architectural forms—the shining white corridor of the bar which ascends from semitransparent entrance doors to infinity through endless mirrors; unexpected bottomless light wells in the ceiling; a grandiose painting by Valery Koshlyakov, brimming with confidence and energy, interacts with the architectural space. An unusual feeling of air and dynamics in a closed space is an allegory of the eternal ambitions of humanity to aspire above and beyond, a thirst for movement, and the illusion of overcoming material borders. The acuteness of this aspirational movement, of air and free space, is intentionally strengthened and dramatically limited by the powerful stone walls and simple square volumes.

The Russian Lounge provides us with an opportunity to witness an extremely rare occurrence in contemporary art—the interaction between an architect and an artist. Prior to this effort, Sergey and Valery had never worked together, but it seems their dialogue began long before this joint project. Mr. Koshlyakov is known for his love of architecture. The artists found more common ground in the cross-boundary European art language; the eternal time of classical culture; how to express movement in architecture and painting; the flexible tension of the changing urban space; and fragmentariness and dystopia in contemporary art.

Visitors to the Russian Lounge can simply be amazed by the scale of changes and feel this unexpected transformation of the space, potential for change, and the burst of creative energy. They will understand and feel an emotional and philosophical image of Russia created by Sergey Skuratov and Valery Koshlyakov.

We hope that this new image, while fulfilling functional tasks, also presents the new aesthetics of the Russian Lounge. Not contradicting the general architectural style of the Kennedy Center, the Russian Lounge is a powerful art space where the energy of its creators is skillfully balanced with the atmosphere of leisure and communication.





Sergey Skuratov, born in 1955 in Moscow, is one of the most renowned and popular modern Russian architects. He is the author of more than 30 implemented projects and more than 40 competitive ones. A participant of many Russian and international exhibitions, including La Biennale di Venezia, 2008, 2010; Russian Architecture, New York, USA, 2010; Moscow-4, Mendrizio, Switzerland, 2006; and 10 Best Moscow Architects, London, UK, 2001, Mr. Skuratov has been awarded numerous awards and prizes, including the Bazhenov Medal (2009), four Gold Prizes of the *Zodchestvo* International Architecture Festival (2003, 2004, 2008, 2009) and the title Architect of the Year at the I Moscow Biennale of Architecture. He is a graduate of the Moscow Architecture Institute (1979).



“I BELIEVE THAT AN ARCHITECT SHOULD PROVE WITH HIS WORKS TO SOCIETY HIS RIGHT TO INVENT FOR IT FORMS AND SPACES, MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT.”

“ONE CAN SAY THAT A MISSION OF AN ARCHITECT IS TO RECONCILE A HUMAN BEING WITH LIFE AND HUMANITY – WITH HABITAT.”

Valery Koshlyakov is a Russian artist with international fame who was born in 1962 in the town of Salsk in the Rostov-on-Don region. In 1985, he graduated from the Grekov Art college. He is a participant of numerous exhibitions, including *The Return of the Artist*, 50th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy, 2003; *Russia!* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; and *Russian Utopias* at the Garage Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia, 2010. He has also presented a number of personal exhibitions: *Landscape. Space for Life*, Paris, France, 2004; *A Cloud* at the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia; as well as the MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome, Italy, 2005; *The Temple* at the Barberini Residence, Rome, 2008; *A Retrospective Exhibition* at the PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art, Perm, Russia 2010; and *Contrepoint russe. De l'icône au glamour en passant par l'Avant-garde*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, 2010.



“I DON'T BELIEVE IN THE DOGMA OF INNOVATION AS A CRITERION FOR ART EVALUATION AT THE PRESENT MOMENT.”

“ALCHEMY IS THE RIGHT WORD TO DESCRIBE WHAT I DO – RELEASING ENERGY FROM A STONE ON THE ROAD.”

Natalia Zolotova was born in Moscow and graduated from Moscow State University holding a degree and a PhD in art history. She worked as a researcher at the Institute of Art History under the Academy of Arts (1979–1998), a co-author of the encyclopedia *European Painting* (Moscow 1999); and curator of Russian and international exhibitions, including *The French Style in Russia*, Moscow, 1996; *Moscow-Saint Petersburg. When Russia Spoke French*, Paris, 2003; and *The Process* at the Museum of Architecture, Moscow, 2008. She is an editor and writer for the magazines *Domovoy*, *Vogue-Russia*, and *Interior-Design*. She was awarded the French *Ordre des Arts et Lettres*.



THE FOUNDATION

VLADIMIR POTANIN FOUNDATION



The Vladimir Potanin Foundation was established in 1999 by Russian entrepreneur Vladimir Potanin who has devoted a portion of his time and resources to charitable projects throughout his business career. In February 2010, Mr. Potanin made a public commitment to give a majority of his wealth to philanthropic causes and in February 2013 joined the Giving Pledge.

Today, the Vladimir Potanin Foundation is one of Russia's largest private foundations. The aim of the Foundation's work is to foster the development of knowledge and professionalism, to encourage volunteer activity and individual creativity, and to elevate the development of philanthropy in Russia. The Vladimir Potanin Foundation supports those who wish to promote change and are ready to help and serve others.

The Foundation's commitment to change is realized through programs in the areas of education and arts and culture that:

- develop human capital
- advance creativity and knowledge
- strengthen educational and cultural institutions
- promote collaboration between individuals and institutions

The Foundation's programmatic activities:

- address current problems
- aim to have long-term impact
- are based on transparent, open competition
- are led by independent Expert Committees in each area

In addition to grant-making in core areas, the Foundation works on promotion of a common vision for strategic philanthropy, strengthening of philanthropic collaboration, and development of philanthropic infrastructure in Russia.



THE KENNEDY CENTER

The Kennedy Center opened to the public on September 8, 1971, but its roots date back to 1958, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed bipartisan legislation that created a National Cultural Center. The National Cultural Center Act authorized the institution's construction and required that it be an independent, self-sustaining, and privately funded facility. In addition, this Act gave the National Cultural Center an educational mission and an artistic mandate to present a wide variety of both classical and contemporary performances.

As a lifelong supporter and advocate of the arts, President John F. Kennedy placed the prestige of his office firmly behind the endeavor. He took the lead in raising funds for the new National Cultural Center, holding special luncheons and receptions, and appointing his wife, Jacqueline, and Mrs. Eisenhower as honorary co-chairwomen.

Two months after President Kennedy's tragic death in November 1963, Congress designated the National Cultural Center as a "living memorial" to Kennedy, and authorized \$23 million to help build what is now known as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Additional support came from private sources as well as nations around the world, which donated funds, building materials, and artworks to assist in the project's completion. In December 1964, President Lyndon Johnson turned the first shovelful of earth at the Center's construction site, using the same gold-plated spade that had been used in the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Lincoln Memorial in 1914, the Jefferson Memorial in 1938, and the Kennedy Center's own expansion to open in 2017.

From its very beginnings, the Kennedy Center has represented a unique public/private partnership. As the nation's living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center is a government facility and receives federal funding each year to pay for maintenance and operation of the building. However, the Center's artistic programs and educational initiatives are paid for entirely through ticket sales and the generous support of individuals, corporations, and private foundations.

Today, the Center is recognized as one of the world's most well-respected and unique arts organizations, housing two renowned artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera. The nine theaters and stages of the nation's busiest performing arts facility attract audiences totaling two million; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more. This array of programming allows the Center to fulfill the original artistic and educational vision of Congress and President Kennedy by:

1. Commissioning, producing, and presenting an unmatched variety of theater and musicals; dance and ballet; orchestral, chamber, jazz, popular, world, and folk music; and multimedia performances for all ages.
2. Creating and implementing school- and community-based residencies and partnerships that augment the standard educational curriculum and provide students, teachers, school administrators, and artists with access to innovative arts opportunities both in and out of the classroom.
3. Developing careers in the arts for young people and aspiring professionals through fellowships, internships, and pre-professional training programs.
4. Promoting access to the arts for people with disabilities.

The Center strives to focus these opportunities on those in underserved communities, those with disabilities, and limited access.



The Kennedy Center

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