

Ring for Jeeves: A Party in Moscow

Reported by Masha Lebedeva

Sleeping Beauty spent several years waiting for the Prince before she finally got the kiss that was the breath of life for her. That kiss was akin in some respects to the support for the writings of P. G. Wodehouse that was provided by the charitable foundation Kislod through their recently organised 'Ring for Jeeves' event, held on 15 February 2015. It was run with support from The Russian Wodehouse Society and paid tribute to Wodehouse, who passed away 40 years ago.

To create the atmosphere of the early 20th century, the event took place in a small café named (and decorated) after the famous French movie *Les Enfants du Paradis*. As the café owner is a close friend of the Kislod foundation, all entrance fees were voluntary and went to the charity. Those who paid their fees got handmade bowties (men) and red and yellow paper flowers (women). The flowers were reminiscent of Tamaki Morimura's buttercups at the 2009 US Wodehouse Society convention in St Paul.

The party was opened with a short speech from Kislod's president, Maya Sonina, who briefly introduced the audience to the Foundation's aim, which is to help those who suffer from mucoviscidosis, the condition also known as cystic fibrosis. (NB. The Russian word for 'oxygen' is 'kislod', hence the name of the foundation.)

The first presentation was by singer Thais Urumidis and her jazz band, Estate. Thais started with the song of songs, 'Sonny Boy'. It was her good luck that neither Bertie Wooster nor Tuppy Glossop preceded her, and so she managed to escape the misfortune of Cora Bellinger. Moreover, Thais confided to us that she liked the song very much, and promised to include it in her repertoire. Thus, 'Sonny Boy' climbed onto the Russian stage.

After performing several other jazz compositions, Thais had to leave; however, her jazz band remained to provide musical accompaniment for the subsequent portion of the proceedings.

The next performer was the young actor Dmitry Vozdvizhensky, who amused the audience with a reading of the first chapter of *The Code of the Woosters*. However, the big hit was a retro fashion presentation by Asiya Aladjalova, the fashion collector and historian who runs a retro fashion studio. Girls from the studio demonstrated dresses from the mid-1910s to the end of the 1920s. Some of the dresses were replicas, and some were originals from Asiya's own collection. The presentation was accompanied by informative explanations from Asiya, worthy of the first pages of *Milady's Boudoir*.

After the fashion show, several ladies from the audience were lucky enough to get made up in the style of the 1920s, courtesy of Asiya. Additionally, those who so wished were photographed in retro style by Elena Chereda; one model is seen in the photo, left.



While girls revelled in the past, the rest of the audience enjoyed the charity auction. Among the items submitted was a manuscript piece by the late Inna Bernstein, the prominent translator who introduced Russian readers to Jeeves and Wooster. The item itself was a very interesting collation of excerpts from

texts of the Soviet author and satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko, whose stories, written in the 1920s, helped the translator find the right language and tone in her work on the Jeeves and Wooster saga.

Another auction item was an English policeman's helmet, although it was such a small size that it raised a question as to the age at which people start police service in the UK. It also prompted another question regarding the moral qualities of a person who allows himself to steal a helmet from the head of a child-sized policeman.

The most impressive item of the auction was a cow-creamer – definitely modern, though maybe not a Dutch one. Even if it was not silver, but just silver-coloured, its appearance was ugly enough for both Uncle Tom and Sir Watkyn Bassett to have approved of it.

Having finished with the main programme, the lucky audience passed to the browsing and sluicing with gusto, especially as the chef at the café had added to the *carte* two special items: cucumber sandwiches and a Jeeves cocktail. I didn't order the cocktail, but observed it to be a reddish liquor. The sandwiches, however, were quite acceptable. The culinary theme continued with a specially published paper, 'From the Cook-book of Blandings Castle', by Svetlana Panich, a translator who is interested in Blandings cuisine.

In conclusion, I would like to offer special thanks to long-time Wodehouse devotee Maria Batova, the art manager of Kislod, who organised such a wonderful party. She proved yet again that Wodehouse's works always bring sweetness and light to the world, and support and help to those who seek it.