

INTERNATIONAL MIDWEST

**INTERNATIONAL MIDWEST BUSINESS,
EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE**

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World-renowned pianist Vladimir Viardo will perform in “the noble style” of Russian piano on September 21st at 1900 Building ([//www.internationalmidwest.com/im-magazine-arts/september-21st-2018](http://www.internationalmidwest.com/im-magazine-arts/september-21st-2018))

9/21/2018

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Author Lana Yeager writes and edits for the Russian Kansas City section of The Russian America newspaper.

This Friday at the 1900 Building, one of the most outstanding pianists of modern times, Vladimir Viardo, will perform a concert of works by Schubert and Debussy and a Master Class centered on works by Liszt and Prokofiev. Viardo is a graduate of the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory. At 21, he won the Prix du Prince Rainier of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition, and, in 1973, won the Gold Medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. He is a Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of North Texas, and a world-renowned piano professor and performer.

Mr. Viardo will play in Kansas City for the ICM 1900 Building Series, a program of Park University's International Center for Music which offers a full season of faculty, student and guest performances.

It was my pleasure to speak to Maestro Viardo this September about his amazing life story and his music.

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V. Viardo, M. Hyder and H. "Van" Cliburn



M. Rostropovich and V. Viardo

A visit from a Russian-American

After we greeted each other, Mr. Viardo asked right away, "Are there a lot of Russian-speakers in Kansas City?"

"Quite a lot!" I replied, "And since most of us are fans of classical music, we're looking forward to your concert!"

The ensuing, relaxed conversation wove stories of a remarkable immigrant life with unique insights about creative practice and musical sensibility.

"Kid, come here!"

I was born in the Caucasus, in the village of Krasnaya Polyana, which is a famous resort now. It was the center of the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games, but it used to be a small village. This town has a special place in my heart. I was involved in building a church there, and I feel proud about that. And a local school gave my name to a small museum. In Krasnaya Polyana I feel humbled. My homeland is always in my thoughts.

While his travels to Russia usually take him to the major concert halls in cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, he returns occasionally to his hometown. He told me a lighthearted story about visiting Krasnaya Polyana after attending a music festival in nearby Sochi. Mr. Viardo was asked to attend a concert of non-professional musicians in Krasnaya Polyana and, just after the program master introduced him as a famous countryman, an elderly lady from the audience loudly said, "Kid, come here!"

And I was more than fifty years old. I approached the elderly lady.

"Was your mother a singer?" she asked, "Did she teach music?"

"Yes, she did!" I answered.

"Guess what? I nursed you when you were a baby. I even remember that you peed on my dress!" She was laughing.

Others in the crowd decided to make their contributions, too. "What do you do abroad? Come back home! We're going to build you a house here." And, "Well, if you don't come now, at least come back when you are very old, to be buried here, in the homeland."

Mr. Viardo went on to describe his childhood and the influence of his mother and grandmother on his later career.

My mother was born in Sochi. She was a classical singer. With a group of performers, she traveled from town to town through the region, performing concerts. My grandmother was in jail for "political reasons," as many other people were at the time. When she came home I was six years old. My grandmother is the one "to blame" for my taking up music: she made me play music for four hours every day. I cried; but even when I could, I didn't quit music.

Although his grandmother was not a musician, she valued everything that concerned the arts. An

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understanding of the profound social value of artistic study was part of her family heritage and Mr. Viardo's mother became a pianist and singer thanks to his grandmother's efforts and her effect on the family. This family commitment to artistic study would direct his career.

When I turned fourteen – we were living in Zaporozhye at that time – my mother decided that that city was too small for my musical education. She bought a train ticket and sent me to Moscow. Lucky for me, she had friends at the conservatory. I stayed with the Naumov family and I entered the Gnesinsky College in Moscow, where Irina Naumova was my teacher. My next step was the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where Lev Naumov, a genius musician as well as professor, became my teacher. Sadly, Lev Naumov and Irina Naumova are already gone, but I am very close with their children and grandchildren. We are like family.

His mother's decision to send him to Moscow and her contact with the Naumov family were decisive in launching Mr. Viardo's career, and he relished remembering it. The following years spent touring the USSR were, of course, also crucial to his musical growth; however, they also brought political confinement to his art.

I worked at the Moscow Conservatory and was a soloist in the Moscow Philharmonic. I traveled all over the USSR. For 11 years, I was not allowed to travel abroad, as was the case, indeed, for many others, for example, the cellist Natalia Gutman, and Sviatoslav Richter, the legendary pianist. Then, I left Russia to work in the USA.



N. Naumova, V. Viardo and L. Naumov



V. Viardo and L. Naumov

The Noble School of Music

Rigorous traditions of classical music and piano training are ingrained in Russian culture, and Mr. Viardo and I spoke about that as a cultural contrast with the United States. He emigrated to the US in 1989.

In Russia, there are stylistic schools that belong to specific regions. Is there an American school of classical piano performance? No. In Russia and the former USSR, large cities such as of Moscow or St. Petersburg were always considered to be unique cultural centers. Piano "schools" of Russia and the former USSR differ from each other – Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev. I'm even able to guess by ear which school a pianist represents. There is one thing in common for all the schools of Russia and the USSR, though: they are noble. Even in remote areas of the US, it is known that Russian training in performance skills is the best, and this is because of its traditions. Russian schools took the best of the world's principles of musical creation and teaching methods. There is a joke: "What makes an American

conservatory? It is when the professors are Russians and the students are Chinese." This is true at my school, too! And, a performance school is not only the learning process, it is also how the pianist creates music on-stage. The beauty of every school is love, and how we as professors promote love for the art in our students.



V. Viardo with students

Today, I played as never before!

We are lucky that Friday's Kansas City performance will include a Master Class, allowing us a glimpse of Mr. Viardo's instructional expertise. But while he is renowned in his role as Distinguished Professor, he also knows the freedom inherent in great performance, and wishes it for his students.

[...] Yes, there are concerts when I play "as never before." During my best concerts... I can't even describe what I'm doing. I can't explain. It's like someone is guiding me. A blessing of the unknown – this is how I can name it.

I want to share a story about my student Ivan Sokolov, who is well-known in Moscow. We were working on one Prokofiev Sonata for a piano competition. The student and I conquered every single note. At the performance, he played beautifully,... but the opposite of what we had done during preparation! After the concert, I asked, "What did you do? It was incredible!" "I don't know," he said. I hugged Ivan.

This is what I am talking about: when you are not you, and you cannot explain what happened. This is what I call true creativity. I use this technique with my talented musicians. I ask them to play five-six variations of the same music. It's like changing the accent in the phrase I love you, I LOVE you, I love YOU – the meaning is different every time. I never know how my students will play on stage, where their musical impulse will be. Going on stage, I do not know how I will play today. I never know. Of course, the basics of the music are one thing, but the state of my soul is different. What affects it? Many things. Everything affects it!

Vladimir Viardo on Schubert and Debussy

On September 21st, Kansas City will be able to hear where the state of his soul leads Vladimir Viardo as he plays Schubert and Debussy. He reflected briefly but richly in our interview on what he hears in these composers.

Schubert is brilliant! His music comes from pain and from the fear of death: he had an unhappy life, and maybe that's why he expressed those feelings. But that pain in Schubert's music is generative, not destructive. This is the beauty of Schubert.

Debussy includes hidden citations in his compositions, allusions to the music of other composers, but he is all the while an innovator. He was a pianist at the home of Nadegda von Meck, Tchaikovsky's

patroness. He was impressed by *Khovanshchina*, the Mussorgsky opera. Debussy was influenced by Mussorgsky, who didn't follow strict compositional principles, and in fact, didn't know them. So, Russian culture played an important role in his music, but Debussy was very creative in his allusions to these influences.

Mr. Viardo is looking forward to sharing his experience with Schubert and Debussy with a Kansas City audience when he plays this week: "I hope my listeners in Kansas City will feel my love and admiration for the talent of the composers whose music I will play." I encourage classical music fans in Kansas City to experience the unique performance by one of the world's great piano masters, this Friday at 1900 Building.



V. Viardo (third from left), First Lady Betty Ford (center)
and Mrs. and The Honorable A. Dobrynin, USSR Ambassador to the US (at right)

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The only voice of ancestors is in our selves...

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The only voice of ancestors is in our selves...

Mikhail Tarkovsky, 1979

This is an interview by Lana Yeager with Natalia Tarkovskaya, who speaks about belonging to the renowned Tarkovskys family, a lineage that continues to produce talented Russian artists.

On September 19, 2018, Tivoli Cinemas in Westport will screen Stalker, by Andrey Tarkovsky. Tarkovsky's name is a symbol of an era in Russian movie making, a stylistic current that makes Time the main character of every movie. Andrey Tarkovsky created a new language for cinema, one that interprets life with such purity that life's imperfections become beauty.



N. Tarkovskaya



N. Tarkovskaya and M. Tarkovsky

Recently, I spoke to Natalia Tarkovskaya, a visual artist and writer who is the great granddaughter of the renowned Russian poet, Arseny Tarkovsky, and the grandniece of Andrey. Natasha's father, Mikhail Tarkovsky is a well-known Russian poet and writer.

LY: Natasha, it is very nice to talk to you after our recent graduation from the Gorky Literature Institute. It is interesting that we studied together for many years but didn't have the time until now to exchange our stories. What can you tell me about yourself?

NT: For me, it is always difficult to tell about myself. I can start with a standard biography. I was born in Moscow, have two graduate degrees in the humanities and an associate degree in fine arts. As a child, I traveled a lot to central Siberia. My parents worked there. After school, I went to Italy for art college, but I had to return to Moscow. It was a challenging time for me and my whole family back then: my mom was diagnosed with cancer. She wanted me to stay in Italy to continue my education. I couldn't. I came back to Moscow.

The next page in my life is at the Gorky Literature Institute, studying poetry, and the Russian State University of Humanities, for theater criticism. And I never stopped drawing. Poetry, theater and fine arts: this is what I love. I also want to say that I love to travel. It is how I connect with my inner self.

LY: You are a very creative person. Did your famous relatives influence your creativity? And if so, how?

NT: This is a very interesting question. First, I was interested in drawing, and saw it as my life and my future profession. Even though I loved literature, I never thought that I would get into that sphere. I always wanted to have my own way, without influences and interconnections with my relatives who were writers: Arseny Tarkovsky, Andrey Tarkovsky and my father Mikhail who by the way graduated from the same Literature Institute as you and I. But I was artificially pulling myself away from something that was already a part of me. It was meant to be that I would study literature.

LY: You are involved with different types of art. Which one is more significant and valuable for you?

NT: For many years I've been trying to choose, but I realized that I cannot stay with only one. What is most intriguing for me is to blend different arts in one and create my own synthesis. It is a combination of word, image, color, movement, voice. From there, the dimension of performance and performative

theater with the fusion of poetic imagery is born. This is the project that I dream about.

LY: *Do you feel a burden of responsibility because you have a "loud" last name? Sometimes, it seems that the descendants of famous people are trying to prove that they are as talented as their famous relatives. Have you tried to prove that you are you and not they?*

NT: For a very long time, I was afraid to express myself openly in writing. I always wanted to find myself in a different medium, something different from the others, and not to live in the mindset of competition. At one point, I realized that all of this was just in my mind. Despite my last name and the achievements of my great ancestors, I have my own path, my life and my journey. Don't take me wrong; it is very important for me to preserve the cultural values of our family dynasty. I cannot describe it well, but I feel connected with my relatives not only by blood, but also in soul. Perhaps it is my primary responsibility to convey and share the inner values that I have inherited from my talented ancestors



Arseny Tarkovsky and N. Tarkovsky



M. Tarkovsky and N. Tarkovsky

LY: *Tell me about your grandfather, the poet Arseny Tarkovsky. What relic from his life surprises you the most?*

NT: I love my Great-grandfather's poetry very much. As a child, I saw him only a few times. Unfortunately, I do not remember those days, but we have photos of him and me. I experience a connection with him through the imagery of his poems. I recognize myself in his work. I know that it is not only a genetic link, but also a spiritual one. Poetry for me is basically a window, a portal to another, higher reality. My Great-grandfather's poetry helps me see that. I read his poems and feel them, I recognize myself in them. Please understand me, I do not dare to compare myself with the poetic level of my Great Grandfather.

What surprises me... Probably the combination of Arseny Tarkovsky's life story and the level of his talent. I am always fascinated by the way in which life turns affect someone's art, how the power of human spirit transfers into creative work. What surprises me is how the essence of time continues through the family, in my grandmother Marina, his daughter, and my dad, his grandson. In each of us I see the continuity of one heritage.

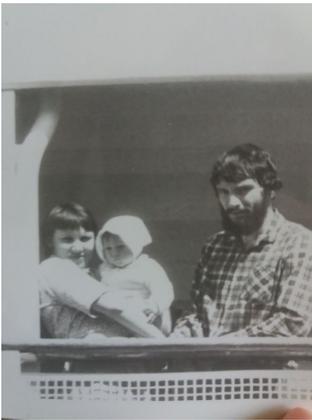
LY: *Can you share an unusual or surprising story about the director, Andrey Tarkovsky?*

NT: I only know about Andrey from stories of my grandparents. I read a lot of books about his work. I am fascinated by the story about creating the movie, *Mirror*, which is an autobiography. It contains footage from real life. In the background of the scenes, you hear the voice of Arseny Tarkovsky reading

poems. For me, all this together is like hearing a confession. Watching it, I witness a sequence of confused memories, and see simultaneously with the eyes of a child and an adult. I've always wondered how it was for him to make such films. In them, there is an incredible inner flair of the director's mind, and the courage and strength to follow an artistic idea. It is exceptional. Andrey shows the magic of cinema. This is not about control and mechanics. This is about the internal movement of the soul, which is read between the lines, in the background of scenes, beneath images.

LY: *You already know that soon in Kansas City the Tivoli Cinema in Westport will be screening Stalker by Andrey Tarkovsky. How do you understand the creativity of Tarkovsky? He's better known as a filmmaker, but he is a poet and a theatrical director. What's his main talent for you?*

NT: True, he had many, different talents. For me, Andrey Tarkovsky is the movie director. I love rich, slow motion footage, the psychology and drama shown in his cinema, always very discreet, and almost ascetic. I also drown in the depth and simplicity of his films.



N. Tarkovsky with her parents

LY: *Tell me about your father, Mikhail Tarkovsky. He is the grandson of the poet Arseny Tarkovsky and the nephew of Andrey Tarkovsky, right?*

NT: Yes, he is. My father lives in Siberia. He chose the road of solitude and almost escape from the big city's influences, and the opinions and expectations of others. Dad writes prose about the life of the Russian people of Siberia. His writing is about a Siberian village, its everyday life, simple but very challenging at the same time. Perhaps he is looking for connections to his spiritual and folk roots. For me, he's always just a dad. And then, he is a writer and a researcher.

LY: *Now it is time for you to speak without questions. Feel free to share your thoughts.*

NT: My grandmother, Marina Tarkovskaya, and my grandfather, Alexander Gordon, both wrote interesting memoirs. Marina was Andrey Tarkovsky's sister. My grandpa was a movie director as well, and also a classmate of Andrey, his brother-in-law. My grandpa is an example of incredible kindness and nobility for me, and sometimes it occurs to me that he had a big burden – to be a director next to Andrey Tarkovsky. My grandpa, Alexander Gordon, has always devoted his life to the family, and now he writes memoirs about Andrey. One day I hope to write a book about my grandpa and his work as a film director.



N. Tarkovsky (at left), Grandmother Marina (center), the sister of Andrey Tarkovsky, and Mother of Mikhail Tarkovsky

LY: *What did you wish for our readers and the viewers of the Andrey Tarkovsky's film, here in Kansas City?*

NT: I am very glad that Andrey's films are shown in other countries. When I was in college in Italy, I went to see Tarkovsky's *Andrey Rublev*. I was surprised that most viewers neither understood nor connected with the story. Scenes describing Russia of the 15th century for a foreigner are sometimes too difficult to comprehend. At that moment, I realized that to "tune in" to this type of movie, viewers should be prepared. It is not an entertaining cinema, but instead it is an art that requires internal work and reflection. Not everyone loves slow cinema-thoughtfulness and cinema-meditation.

LY: *Thank you, Natasha, for your sincere conversation. I look forward to watching the movie by the great Russian director Andrey Tarkovsky when it screens in Kansas City on September 19, 2018. I am preparing myself to tune in to this unique cinema from my homeland.*

September 15, 2018

Lana Yeager

Images: Natalia Tarkovsky family archives

[Join the event: Stalker by Tarkovsky at Tivoli Cinema on September 19 at 7 PM.](https://www.facebook.com/events/1058437250989452/)
(<https://www.facebook.com/events/1058437250989452/>)

co-hosted by Svetlana S. Yeager and [Russian Cultural Association "Russian House of Kansas City"](http://www.russianhousekc.org/)
(<http://www.russianhousekc.org/>)

[The Russian version of the interview in the Russian America newspaper, the Russian Kansas city section.](https://issuu.com/therussianamerica/docs/rususa_-_2018.09.15) ([https://issuu.com/therussianamerica/docs/rususa - 2018.09.15](https://issuu.com/therussianamerica/docs/rususa_-_2018.09.15))

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Being memorious: two events of May, 2018, in Kansas City (<http://www.internationalmidwest.com/im-magazine-arts/two-events-of-may-2018-in-kansas-city-being-memorious>)

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May 9th, 2018, *Victory Day Celebration*, Jewish Community Campus, Overland Park, KS

May 23rd, 2018, *An Evening Celebrating the Music, Art & Culture of Lithuania*, 1900 Building, Mission Hills, KS



Guests at the 2018 Kansas City Victory Day Celebration set balloons in the air on the Jewish Community Campus. Russian House of Kansas City, and Jewish Family Services co-hosted the event on May 9th

"Lo recuerdo (yo no tengo derecho a pronunciar ese verbo sagrado...)"

"I remember him (I haven't the right to speak that sacred verb...)"

These are the opening words of the Jorge Luis Borges story, *Funes the Memorious*. The story's narrator recounts his experience with young Ireneo Funes. Funes, an agile, vivacious youth, suffers a head injury that leaves him paralyzed, and he has to live out his days lying on the cot in his suburban bedroom. With his injury, though, there comes an unexpected change in him: he remembers everything – every thought, word and physical contour of each lived moment. The narrator, who listens to Funes speak throughout all of one night, is surprised to hear the apparent victim exalt in newfound liberation as he moves in a world of memory.

Borges offers an allegory in Funes of how people survive paralyzing blows with acts of memory. He points to an artful manner of memory with his latinism, *memorious*. Being memorious is not just thinking about the past. The narrator suggests, in fact, that memorious Funes might not have thought at all, because his vivid recollections prevented thinking, the generalities we call "ideas." Funes felt that others existed in a prison of the abstract, while he, confined to his cot, passed freely among the rich contours of well-preserved experience.

In the story, being memorious transforms an isolated individual; but i've recently found that the character of Funes extends beyond him. While *Funes* echos *funeral* and seems at first to suggest memory's mortal fate, the Latin word *funes* means, in fact, a band, a bonding tie. Funes is more than the young man who dies in the story's last sentence; and after my recent experiences at memorial celebrations, i understand his character as a way forward in the injured histories i share with others. Borges's narrator builds on this allegorical possibility for Funes, pointing to options for how we hold and share memory. "Platonic" memory, the narrator suggests, fixes past events in generalities and ideas. It would seem to be the ground of inflexible identities that protect their histories as their own. Another form of memory, though, is embodied in the character of Funes and his nightlong recounting

of memory to someone who doesn't know him well, but lends an open ear. With such bonding acts of recollection, people move forward from injurious losses with supple, creative minds, discovering the freedom to do so as they share out the past. It results in a poetics of survival i've recently found in the modesty of local, memorial celebrations.

On May 9th, i attended, along with a hundred and fifty others, a celebration of the end of World War II. Seventy-three years after the war's destruction of over 25 million lives in the Soviet republics, Kansas City's Jewish Family Services and Russian Cultural Association inaugurated an annual Victory Day commemoration in the Social Hall of the Jewish Community Campus. When i arrived, the organizer, Lana Yeager, greeted me, saying, "Welcome, Anne! You are now part of this global movement!" A little perplexed by the unsolicited membership, i wondered what the "movement" might mean for me.

I held, as many Midwesterners, only vague ideas of the Victory Day tradition – mainly images of military parades in Eastern Europe. But the event i attended was an extension of household commemorations. For decades, some Kansas Citians have brought back names, faces and stories of people who perished from 1941 to 1945, that is, between Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union and its surrender. While the loss they felt doesn't appear in the images of my lineage, i shared with them the impulse to build a memorious sense of time. I'm tempted to say, "a memorious way of *thought*," but that would leave me arguing with Borges (an unnerving prospect) whose narrator says of Funes:

"He had effortlessly learned English, French, Portuguese, Latin. I suspect, nonetheless, that he was incapable of thinking. To think is to forget differences. It is to generalize, to abstract. In the crowded world of Funes there was nothing except almost immediate details."

I don't know what people were thinking as we passed near the samovar on a table at the back of the Social Hall. The teapot spoke a Slavic language that most of the people were speaking as well, and like them, it quietly steeped the past in the present. Arranged around it, photographs of perished loved ones looked at us from their side of an injury that would have erased them. All the guests had been asked to give a photograph of someone lost in the war and i set on the table a picture of my Grandfather Gatschet, a native Kansan killed in 1945 when the plane he piloted crashed outside Karachi. A set of Russian nesting dolls was spread out near it, hand-painted with flowers. From behind a big frame filled with photographs of hatted soldiers in posed regiments, the picture wire poked out, holding the imprint of a nail it had recently hung on. I was still uncertain about my own part in a "global movement," but could see that the contours of its details reached me more fully than grander images of its history.

The conventionality of the room filled with "10-top" convention tables was challenged by the unpredictable, diverse memories appearing among us. A Farsi accent and a Russian one stopped their conversation beside me for the start of a program. Projected images and mild voices described tremendous loss to families. The audience entered into this with a singularly quiet activity of ear and eye. Ordinary voices carried us through the details – dates, professions, proper names – of riven

families and perished ancestors and my mind returned to Lana's word, "movement" as i, with a room full of strangers, observed doorframes, lapels, hairlines, handwriting in letters to husbands who would not return, handwriting of the husbands. This felt like a concerted movement, but it was not contained in a given image or idea: there was no blueprint, no score, no map to follow as our singular memories labored together. One man said that after the Siege of Leningrad in which all his family members perished, and after mass burials, "family treasures were traded on the open market. We have so few objects to maintain memory." Attentively, the people



Fatkulín Nasyb died in the Kursk

Battle of World War II. in the room gathered the remnants of the brutal blow.

A class of sixth graders in Russia's town of Ulyanovsk appeared on screen in a video, holding large-format photographs of their ancestors. As memory becomes "globalized" and we find ourselves daily amidst one other's traditions, we can count on the resilient, candid perception of children to navigate our awkward course. When this group of kids greeted "Kansas City" in English and Russian, the room grew animated and our polite airs relaxed. Then, the youngest around us joined middle-aged folk musicians and people across the Social Hall sang along in Russian. Lana's 10-year old son, Oliver, spoke about his great grandfather whose remains had been lost in battle and discovered in Belgorod in 1975. I had not brought my own children to this event nor to any such public event – not ever. Had they considered, in their great-grandfather's photo that lay near the samovar, three sets of gold wings pinned on his uniform, the question in his right eye and kindness in his left?

"A circle drawn on a blackboard, a right triangle, a rhombus– we fully intuit these shapes; the same happened for Ireneo Funes with the stormy mane of a pony, a herd of cattle on the hillside, a dancing flame and its innumerable ashes, the many faces a deceased person has throughout a very long wake..."

On May 23rd, i attended a concert at the 1900 Building in Mission Hills, KS, called, "An Evening Celebrating the Music, Art & Culture of Lithuania." Steve Karbank hosted the event in his venue's art gallery and its intimate listening room, The Rose Hall. Ben Sayevich, a classical violin master at the International Center for Music produced it, calling on the talent of his wife, pianist Lolita Lisovskaya Sayevich, and his extended family who came from Israel for the occasion. Steve and Ben had known for years that they shared Lithuanian Jewish heritage, and they undertook to make what Ben called "a collage for celebrating that world."

Of the 200,000 Jews in Lithuania in 1940, nearly all were massacred in the Holocaust – close to 195,000 lives in four years. Ben's parents were among the survivors. They lost their two children. After the war, they returned from separate concentration camps to Lithuania, and started a family again. Their offspring would be artists with an exceptional ability to build and explore cultural memory. Some weeks after the Lithuanian celebration, Ben explained to me his motivation for creating it. He had personal interest in opening his heritage to descendants of Lithuania's Jewish world; but there was another meaning within that motive. "Culture is on the outside of people," he said, "It identifies a group, not the individual. Every person is afraid of pain, everybody wants to love and be needed, and if you shoot him he'll die. Culture is the wrapping..." To find my way in Ben's words, i returned to the allegory with which i'm familiar: the protagonist who listened to Funes could not experience his injured condition while he listened in darkness to his voice recount awesome and unique memories, but, he said of the incredible recollections he witnessed, "these things he told me, not then nor ever have I placed them in doubt." Similarly, the lived heritage of loss that was around me on the evening of May 23rd belonged to others "wrapped" in another culture, but its truth came to me in details they conveyed: names, melodies, personal objects, and, especially, the stunning contours of faces.

When Ben told me about the event's initial concept, he said, "We decided to present windows, snapshots of a life." The changing daylight pours constantly through the windows of the 1900 Building's Fountain Room. This present tense played a fugue with the past when the guests looked into Aviad Sajeveitch's paintings, realist views on a fourteen hundred year heritage. Our eyes passed from one another's faces to the face of a medieval merchant and that of an eighteenth century Talmudic scholar and on to many others, including portraits of people in the artist's family. I studied the painted light in an old woman's eyes and turned to the daylit face of the grandson who had portrayed her – and i introduced myself to him. Aviad told me how he had imagined these scenes from Lithuania's past – children, artisans and intellectuals whom he and i recreated between us,

carrying particulars into our present and back again to his family's past. From a portrait of his uncle, holding open an accordion and looking at the viewer with a weighty, steady eye, i turned to the gallery's crowd: that same eye poured like a long note among the perambulating guests. I approached the man, Shmuel Sajevitch, and he intoned in the same key as his gaze. Through a strong accent, he spoke very softly about the voices of the accordion, its ability to sound like a whole band. Then he pressed on to tell me, with a stream of words i could hardly hear and can't now recall, his understanding that "peace is very complex." We parted suddenly so that he could play the piano in the concert.



Mazal Tov (The Wedding at the Synagogue in Kaunas) Aviad Sajevitch, Israeli, b. 1989. Digital Painting, 50 X 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



The Maestro (Mulia's Portrait) Aviad Sajevitch, Israeli, b. 1989. Digital Painting, 50 X 70 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

In The Rose Hall, Steve Karbank welcomed the eclectic crowd. His address moved between scenes of childhood and figures of popular renown as he catalogued traits of the people he called "Litvaks," a term from the Yiddish, for Lithuanians. He made us laugh ironically at Litvak traits: sarcastic humor, a critical mind, dispassionate drive. This steely profile was obviously belied by the gentle nature of the host himself and by the warmth of the gathering. The deeper irony: as we were invited to smile in the paradox of a certain, cultural imagery we were at the same time sharing in that culture's shrewd and unrelenting survival. It is both an incisive and delicate voice that calls the stranger or the public to join in matters of memory without closing around itself the "wrapping" of culture. Borges opens his story with similar irony and humility: as he launches into the long recollection of Funes the Memorious, he dis-claims any right to enact remembering, even "to speak that sacred verb." This rhetorical paradox points to a greater-than usual-reserve in the storyteller, a humble courage that welcomes listeners, audiences and strangers into memorious acts.

That evening, the Sayevich family invited us into memory with audacious gentility: the alchemy of family memory. What Ben called "...I don't know, maybe a family selfishness" was, onstage, a convocation of experience that brought folkloric voices into jazz riffs and classical music into popular culture. I was both delighted and nonplussed by the idiosyncrasy of the program, as if I'd unexpectedly appeared in the Sayevich household.

As the concert's poetics presented a range of Lithuanian Jewish inheritance and personal style, it

reminded me of the other motley, moving, singular displays of the memorious that i'd recently known: the cataloging style of the host's address, the painter's row of "windows" peeking across fourteen centuries... and i heard also the voice of Borges, renowned for odd, obscure and sometimes fanciful literary references that cross time's and space's inconvenient boundaries. I couldn't resist looking around to take in the differing responses in The Rose Hall. One that i'll not soon forget was Margarita's: Ben and Lolita's 8-year old daughter stood by the stage, dancing at her own party, and threw an easy thumbs-up to me where i sat, a little dazed, in the shadows of the audience.

Borges's narrator listens through all of a night to the vast recollections of *Ireneo*

Funes, whose first name derives from an ancient Greek word for "Peaceful." At the close of the story, the darkness that has shrouded the paralyzed savant gives way to dawn. "Then I saw the face of the voice that had spoken all night long." Twice last May, faces were revealed to me that would have remained in darkness had not their children and grandchildren brought them into light. They appeared in unassuming settings flooded with vivid detail. They looked ancient to me and they came from histories i can't and wouldn't try to claim, but neither then nor later did i doubt that they belong in me, in the movement of a memorious light that falls, too, on the face and the name of Ireneo Funes: *Peaceful Bonding Tie*.

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March 2018

Anne provides arts education program services through

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Two Perspectives on Civility and Destruction: Anselm Kiefer and Thomas Demand in the Bloch Gallery of the Nelson-Atkins Museum
([//www.internationalmidwest.com/im-magazine-arts/two-perspectives-on-civility-and-destructionanselm-keifer-and-thomas-demand-in-the-bloch-gallery-of-the-nelson-atkins-museum](http://www.internationalmidwest.com/im-magazine-arts/two-perspectives-on-civility-and-destructionanselm-keifer-and-thomas-demand-in-the-bloch-gallery-of-the-nelson-atkins-museum))

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Thomas Demand, German (born 1964). *Vault*, 2012. Chromogenic print, 86 3/4 x 109 1/16 inches. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Gift of the Hall Family Foundation, 2017.61.9.



Anselm Kiefer, German (born 1945). *Lichtfalle (Light Trap)*, 1999. Mixed media and applied elements (e.g. wire cage and painted glass) on canvas, 149 x 220 x 11 inches. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust through the George H. and Elizabeth O. Davis Fund, in honor of the passionate volunteers for all that they do to bring art to life for our community, 2016.26.1-195.

We rely on our memory of art and artifact to measure both our accomplishments in living together and our social failures and calamities. We collect and display artworks, and as we maintain them in physical spaces we keep collective memory. Beyond the art works themselves, then, our treatment of them becomes a site or a study of civic possibility. In Kansas City's Bloch Gallery at the Nelson-Atkins Museum, a single vantage allows us two, profound views on the keeping of civic memory in art and artifact. As the authors of both images are contemporary Germans, the gallery's significance may take still broader, historical dimensions in geography and biography. In any case, a gallery in the Nelson-Atkins currently offers a unique opportunity to reflect on how, as keepers of art, we hold social memory. This unique vantage appears in the display of two, large-scale works, by Thomas Demand, b. 1964 and Anselm Kiefer, b. 1945.

Demand's piece arrived at the gallery in March, 2018. It is *Vault*, a 2012 color photograph measuring about 2.2 X 2.7 meters. Its calming palette and alluring range of shadow appear through thick glazing, a water-like surface that softens as it augments our gaze, ushering the eye into Demand's realist details of a quietly lit room. The viewer is brought seamlessly into a modern storage space for artworks, where the works themselves are not visible, but their care and protection fascinates. They are meticulously wrapped, stacked, shelved or leaned against the vault's windowless walls. The modest, corporate interior is lit and shadowed with incandescent domesticity where the eye feels free to find traces of personal touch: pressed bits of tape, foam paddings, folds of plastic— artifacts of the care for hallowed artifacts.

Another work in the gallery came to the Nelson in 2016 and has dominated its space with awesome size and dark emotion since then: *Lichtfalle* is a 1999 painting by Anselm Kiefer, 3.8 X 5.6 meters in size. Heavy, ashen impasto – a crust, like burned bark— almost completely covers its canvas. The painting's top portion, a sky above the wide, encrusted wall, is covered in matte, black paint with a white spatter of stars. The work's surface is repellent but fascinating. A real, rusted steel cage – a rattrap, in fact – hangs off the canvas, near center. It is filled with inscribed, glass shards that would seem to imitate draftsman's rulers. The white, thin vectors of a map overlay the whole, immense canvas. These plot-lines crumble and sink into the painting's ashen ground, their meeting points marked with numbered labels that recall holocaust tattoos. The jagged surface requires our eyes to readjust in an endless alternation between figure and ground, while the map's decaying vectors and

the cage of work-tools remind us that the labor of seeing and measuring this wall may be as unpleasant as it is unfinished.

Demand's *Vault* calls us into the protection of artistic legacy. Kiefer's *Lichtfalle* makes us step back, then farther back, until our eyes accept the finality of a prison wall and make out battlements where guards would lurk against a night's motionless sky. They would seem to make two, opposite gestures: one, an invitation into the calm where honored works are selflessly cared for; the other, a rough warning against the calculating arts of destruction and power.

However, the artists take perspective still deeper. How far inside Demand's safe interior can we enter? How distant are we from Kiefer's forbidding bulwark? Demand's realist portrait of a modern office interior lined with human artifacts is, in fact, the record of his own, small scale sculpture: he created the impeccable, miniature diorama of a storage room, out of paper. The place in it where we find ourselves, instantly at rest, curious but reassured, was destroyed as soon as the artist finished taking its picture. Pink, stacked boxes, there, bulging slightly with the weight of some treasured, human good, never held anything. Frames, carefully wrapped in protective sheaves, never framed anything but the works of our imagining. Conversely, Kiefer's rough prison wall and its nearly invisible sky draw us into visual play as the ground consumes its figures of map, masonry, tower and stars, beckoning us into a spectacle where distances are illusions: its surface takes on galactic proportions and the vectors of its superimposed map encourage us to explore. We become strangers to our own wonder and desire when we realize we are fascinated at the prison wall of genocide. In one, small gallery in a Midwest, American city, two German artists, born mid-twentieth century—near an impossibly difficult memory for civilization – ask us to see not only the craft of civic memory, but also what and how we want *while* we look at it.

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