

Appendix

Synaesthesia & an Interview with the author, Bulat Galejev

by John Mandelberg¹

In late September 2007, as part of a joint research project on Synaesthesia, my academic colleague David Sidwell², a New Zealand composer, and I visited the Theremin Centre at the Moscow Conservatory, meeting with Andrei Smirnov, the director of the Centre and Stanislaw Kreichi, composer and key exponent of the pioneering Russian electro-acoustic instrument, the ANS Synthesiser. We also visited Sergei Zorin at his Optical Theatre, the Museum House of Alexander Scriabin and the Glinka Museum of Musical Instruments in Moscow. In most places I filmed a series of interviews and the surroundings in which they worked. However, the main reason for our research trip was to meet the internationally renowned art and music experimenter, researcher and exponent of Light-Music, the director of the Prometei Institute, Kazan, Bulat Galejev.

In the late 1990's, I corresponded with Bulat whilst I was researching a documentary project about Australian composer and eccentric performer, Percy Grainger. Our correspondence included sending Bulat digital audio recordings of Grainger's 1930's *Free Music* and *Beatless Music* theremin compositions, and videos of these premiere performances at the *Beaming the Theremin* event, at the Grainger Museum in Melbourne in October 1998. In return Bulat sent me a signed copy of his book on the life of Leon Theremin,

¹ Film maker & Moving Image tutor, School of Media Arts, WINTEC, Hamilton, New Zealand

² Musician, Theatre Director, Composer, Programme Manager School of Media Arts, WINTEC, Hamilton New Zealand

“*Sovietskyi Faust*” which he had published in 1995. I had read some excerpts from his book online at the Theremin web, and articles that he had written about Theremin for MIT’s Leonardo & Leonardo Music Journal, of which he was an International co-editor. Subsequently, I read excerpts from *Sovietskyi Faust* in Albert Glinsky’s book “*Theremin: Ether Music and Espionage*” (2000) but still did not have an opportunity to read the whole book, as I don’t read Russian. With this first publication in English of the original book, I am now able to see the story of Leon Theremin’s life, as Bulat Galejev was able to articulate it.

As part of our original research project into Synaesthesia (first applied for in 2004), David Sidwell and I wanted to create a synaesthetic work incorporating composition for theremin and other instruments, video, colour and light, and performance. So in 2010 David completed a composition entitled: *Conversation Between Soprano and Theremin* for small ensemble, which includes a visual component which I created from material shot on our research trip and includes visual elements based on Alexander Scriabin’s colour scale that ascribes colours to notes that he used in his Prometheus Symphony, *The Poem of Fire Op. 60* (1909-1910) included a colour organ.

Rashid Kullimulan, composer and director of the Tatarstan Union of Composers, officially invited us to Kazan. He asked if David could send one of his music scores to be performed at “Mus-Transit”, Kazan’s yearly contemporary music arts festival. As well as attending a performance of David’s “*Recuerde el Pasado*”, we also screened a video I had just completed, *Contemporary New Zealand Composers*, to a group of young Tatar Composers; at the Prometei Institute we presented selected recordings

by New Zealand Composers, experimental videos by some of my Moving Image students from the Waikato Institute of Technology in Hamilton; and a selection of film works by the world famous New Zealand experimental film maker, Len Lye.

Whilst in Kazan I filmed at the Prometei Institute including a video interview with

Bulat Galejev. It was filmed on 27th September 2007, at 2pm in the director's office:

I am Bulat Galejev, head of this small scientific centre called Prometei (*Prometheus - T.N.*) Institute. Officially we deal with issues in Experimental Aesthetics.

The Prometei Institute was so named in honour of Scriabin who created the world's first light-music work of art. It happened nearly 50 years ago that we made one of the first, practically very first, full light performances of Scriabin's "Prometheus" here in the Soviet Union. It was in honour of this – our work collective used to be a group of amateurs then and they were mainly students – that Prometei was so named, in honour of this composition.

- **Can you please tell us, share with us, the history of your work at Prometei?**

Myself... in those Stalinist, if you will excuse me, times... still studying at school, being a 7th or 8th form boy (*13 or 14 years old - T.N.*)... a sudden thought flashed across my mind when I first saw abstract pictures in the

Encyclopedia of Art. I asked myself why abstract painting was so difficult for people to perceive – anyway, abstract art was sort of banned in the Soviet Union – and the idea struck me: its own deficiency was inherent in it because it was static. I thought: if it's motionless, that abstract painting, it might happen that it had lost some image but did not acquire anything new, more significant, in its inner content, in its essence. Then it occurred to me – I was very young at that time, just a kid – that it would be a great idea to learn how to control the colours of abstract painting and combine them with music.

And afterwards, when I became a university student, I once came across a book called “Scriabin” and found out that there had been another mad person before who came up with this same idea. And until that point I had lived for about five years with this dizzy feeling of thrill because I, myself, had discovered a new phenomenon, a new direction... But then I was, on the contrary, gratified to find someone else who turned out to have the same idea - especially someone of such magnitude as Scriabin.

However, Scriabin was not yet standing so high then. Even though his music was performed at that time, he was labelled an avant-garde musician (*used pejoratively – T.N.*) and for all that he was not so “close to people”, compared to, say, Glinka or Tchaikovsky... he was not so entirely understandable. That is why even in encyclopaedia's Scriabin was called a mystic and a proselytiser of idealistic conceptions of art. Those were such times, you know... And the idea of light-music was also linked to avant-gardeness that was officially considered useless to the

Soviet people. Nevertheless, I had noticed that the first publications on this subject already began to appear in different cities of the country. A group of engineers that sprang up in Moscow decided that Scriabin was not well liked because he was doing it the wrong way. The right target, therefore, is a creation of a computing device with a screen showing not the composers' ideas, say, Scriabin's compositions, indeed, or someone's personal musical vision – no, it should be a totally automated machine that will work like, you know, a meat-mincer: you put some music here, turn the handle, and there you go – an automatically produced piece of light-music is ready! This idea was quite popular sometime around 1958-59, when I was just about to graduate from the university. I immediately started to write about this for the press, wherever possible, and my first student publication was written in protest against it. And in that student paper of mine I wrote about a mistake made by Kandinsky, the founder of abstract painting, namely, that he must have set colours in motion. A little later I came across information that Kandinsky was dreaming about the same thing. This instilled in me so much hope that, though Scriabin and Kandinsky were walking together, in fact, never crossing paths with each other and Scriabin never knew Kandinsky personally, they were still heading towards the same goal...and now me, in the confidence of youth, have chosen to – just imagine – accompany them!

The whole thing inspired me a lot. But when these engineer groups emerged ... well, all the same, they stood up for us, so to say, for our idea. New electronic musical groupings, experimental light-music

groups sprang up in many technical institutes all over the country. It was like a kind of craze that was spreading around. In the Moscow Aviation Institute (*another name is the Moscow State University of Aerospace Technology – T.N.*) and then here, in the Kazan Aviation Institute (*now the Kazan State Technical University – T.N.*), a student group together with conservatory students performed Scriabin’s “Prometei” and the next day I came there and told them that it was just what I’d been doing for ages. I was making a light piano at home – I started this hobby as a first-year student – which mainly performed the function of jamming television broadcasting at my neighbours’ places. That happened because of sparks under the contacts that I used in this light piano. I didn’t have my own TV set, by the way. I would sit up late at night and study with the usual background drone of some distant television. As I started using this thing, that is, playing the light piano, with sparks jumping around, televisions began rustling and rattling in all the flats of our block ‘cause the sparks switched them off or noised them working as electronic jammers. That was my really big invention! Well, this is a joke, of course. Just in case - to be understood correctly by Maori people (*Bulat smiles*).

Now to the story of how I found... how I ended up finding the right literature. At that time nobody here knew whether or not any special literature existed anywhere in the world. Yes, apart from only one book, the memoirs of Scriabin, this had a little bit of useful information. And as I took my first trip to Moscow, I immediately went to the Lenin Library. There were no books in Russian at all, but I found one book in English. It

was a 1926 edition published in England. One of the very first books about light-music, quite a sizeable volume, by the way. I went through the book – ah, so interesting – and taking precautions, copied some of its pages right there, on the windowsill. It’s forbidden to make copies there, in Moscow libraries and, I imagine, you wouldn’t be allowed to do it anywhere. But what could I do in such a situation? All of a sudden, I noticed a piece of paper on the last page – somebody left it in this book. It said: “I, such-and-such, was the first to borrow this book and read it, in nineteen-thirty-something. Should somebody take it next time, here is my address and telephone number...”. Of course, the phone number was no longer usable – it was a 5-digit number – and yet, following the address, I managed to find the man, 20 years after he had written that note - and nobody borrowed the book since then. So I found one more colleague before the times of all those engineering-computing knick-knacks and funny things alike.

And then we decided that everyone interested in this idea should gather at a conference in

Moscow. Of course, we quickly became a much-fancied team at the Scriabin Museum since we were raising all those issues. We searched through all the files at the Scriabin Museum – they gave us a pass to all their archives so we could burrow through them. And we dug out the documents of which existence they weren’t even aware. Well, there was some obscure correspondence and they had no idea even as to who was the correspondent. I went through it and saw... good heavens, it was an

English light-music performer of the beginning of the century (*20th century – T.N.*) and he met with Scriabin.

All in all, we collected plenty of interesting material there and in nineteen-sixty-something we decided to hold a conference in order to bring together all Moscow-based people. We, people from Kazan, were also supposed to go there – by that time a group had already been organized here, at the KAI (*the Kazan Aviation Institute – T.N.*). However, we were forbidden to do it because just then it was the time of the anti-abstractionism campaign. So we were not allowed to. But we gathered quietly, just like some Bolsheviks at their illegal congress, very quietly, without any posters and press publicity, without any publications. We had a one-day meeting and thus got acquainted with each other, to know each other personally.

Later on I had several years of continuous fighting, trying hard to organize a conference in Moscow, at the Scriabin Museum – but still in vain. Then I let it all hang out and our first all-union conference was held here, in Kazan. And after that, we convened all the fifteen conferences – all-union, all-Russian and international ones – here, in Kazan as well.

Now we are preparing documents for the next year, in hope to get a grant for holding our next conference in 2008. We were supposed to hold it in 2005, but there was this accident – and I stopped the process, just because the whole building was in a mess and we were thrown out into nowhere... Could we think of a conference? Not likely. So I pulled up

sharp then. And now we have to strive towards receiving a grant – like them as well (*Bulat nods his head to the right*) – and those grant-givers are not terribly generous, anyway.

That's how it was. Well, at that time it was a collective made up of mostly students from the aviation institute – and the conservatory. And that's what has saved us in the long run! While there was a triumphant march of the idea of machine-made translation of music into colour around many other technical institutes and even when we performed at the Moscow conservatory, many people there believed that the computer would be able to create light-music – you see, professional musicians believed in that – well, as to us, graduates of the aviation institute...though I majored in physics and mathematics, not in aviation, but all the same, we were technical students – techies, in a word – and we told them: “Don't believe it! No machine can substitute the man and no machine can be compared to a musician”. This is just a paradox: at that time even musicians were already convinced that the computer would be able to compose music as well as light-music, while our team came out in favour of the man, the composer that would always take precedence over the machine.

For that reason, our good friendship with our conservatory and, finally, this idea that we successfully implemented in practice proved that, yes, indeed, it was quite so true.

For many years we had developed a variety of specialized equipment for concerts and later switched to filming of light-music genre films as they

didn't require special auditoriums and could be shown at any cinema hall. However, nobody needed that kind of art. Under the Communist regime they didn't put obstacles in our way as to making such films or organizing light-music concerts: you can do it, no problem – but there was no financial support whatsoever. However, there was a high demand for cafe and restaurant design and we received a lot of orders. We dug in our heels at first, but it was obvious that we had to earn our living, especially as we had heaps of equipment available.

We ran conferences, issued books – we had already published 20 books by then, with our own earnings. We had to make money with a design of light-music equipment intended for primarily *light*, not *serious*, purposes – it was used in the entertainment industry. And even there every effort was made to produce the best possible music facilities, not like those at discotheques: blink-blink, you know all those flickering or flashing lights...

We also worked for cosmonauts. I have already mentioned that on the instructions of Korolev – this is the key figure in our space research program and rocket engineering – he sent his representatives to us and they said: “Come on, guys, we will fly to Mars soon. It's time to prepare, to design special equipment”. So we made heaps of technical equipment for them. But launching a single gramme into space cost millions of roubles at first. And while we were working hard at these projects, time flew by so fast and, finally, Korolev died. Afterwards, perestroika began – and all that game was over for us. So our chance to become

cosmonauts had been missed. We weren't assigned to the cosmonaut team. However, we were lucky to visit them many times at their numerous firms. Well, I have never felt like all that work was a waste of time because we had learned then how to make good technical equipment...

Right, and when the Soviet Union broke up, all those projects with cosmonauts and other clients were closed, of course. No more money was received and we were making money for ourselves. And then criminals with these gang tattoos approached us and said: "Let's design and decorate casinos, brothels, and parlour houses". To which I said: "No thanks, we'd better close our design studio". I even came up with a publication in "Soviet Music", the journal issued here, and there's also a journal "Leonardo" in America, they have similar areas of specialization as ours, so I published this material "Prometei's Farewell Conference", where I wrote that it was the end for us, together with the Soviet Union, that we were dying, but would never give up. That we would go on working slowly, but they'd better disregard us as if we no longer existed...

It was under the Communists that we had already shown our equipment and films in 20 countries. This means that we were already well known abroad at that time. During the time from 1985 to 1987 I was invited to do lecturing at the Sorbonne, the University of New York, and some other universities. Perestroika had just started then. I mean, we were famous, but... it was the aviation institute: we were not allowed to go

and work abroad at that time. And later I realized that I was a bit too old, it was already hard for me to learn a foreign language. Yet I travelled every year with my fellows, we went abroad till nineteen... till the year 2000 – and we've been to many countries over the years. But now we don't travel as often as before. Getting old, you know (*Bulat smiles*). Nay, previously, as we were going on invitation, the trips were usually at *their* expense. Actually, now there are already so many Russians working abroad and they invite more and more. Yes, to have money for the trip – that's the problem. Just now I'm waiting... I need to make a call to Moscow today: grant money has been allotted to us specifically for our trip to Prague.

There the Leonardo International Conference will be held – this is our Leonardo Journal, where I am on the editorial board. At present I'm an Honorary Member of the editorial board – together with Ray Bradbury, in one team – while at first I was a collaborating editor. First I was just an ordinary editor, then I was a co-editor, and now we're going to play the role of dinosaurs – I have already been promoted to Honorary Editor. So we're going there in a month...

Well, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, for about five years, we lived without any income at all, practically without a kopeck. As a result, all the staff ran away. Only three of us stayed here. I was later summoned by our President and Prime Minister. So they say: "How are you?" I say: "Kaput!" They say: "What do you need?" And I say: "It would be great to start a scientific research institute". Because it was then that the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences had just been organized... You

probably know the story of the drive for sovereignty in Tatarstan, it was at that time, yes, and it caused much stir. The only good thing that they hatched amidst all that fuss was the appearance of our own Academy of Sciences. However, the sovereignty came to an end. That's it. But thank heavens, the Academy exists... they were going to close it two or three years ago. There were rumours about a decision to close all those new academies, but ours was apparently... They have already closed the academies in Bashkiria and other neighbouring countries, everywhere! But here in Kazan it has survived. So, apparently, we've got a result, that is not *us*, but the academy. There are five or six institutes attached to the academy. Our institute was the very first one – and it was also the smallest.

At present, we're mainly engaged in scientific research. As to practical activities, we still carry on scientific work, organization of conferences and the publication of books. Also we hope to have enough energy for hosting festivals. The city authorities have been quite supportive: they have even preserved the city light-music studio. It was by means of its facilities that some time ago we could create that auditorium over there (*Bulat points to the right*). That's all about this story. Finished.

- **Thank you, Bulat. Could you share with us anything more about synaesthesia in relation to light-music – that you haven't already talked about?**

It turned out to be one of the most controversial issues in the theory of art and psychology, in the first place. Here I can proudly say that it's likely that nobody has gained better insight into synaesthesia than me. It's simply because I have been dealing with it for a long time. I have written a few books on the subject. And I had to study the aspect of psychology. Scientists in many countries analyze synaesthesia as a biological phenomenon and they think that it cannot have any regularity because it's like having hallucinations or daydreams. It is considered that if Scriabin says that he sees a certain image, views music in a certain way, like in "Prometheus", you know... Anyway, they seriously believe that Scriabin really saw all those things. Just like it happens when one's perceptions are affected by LSD or mescaline – they also can see some pink elephants, right? Many authors write it in a serious way, both in this country and abroad. Well, I had to retrieve archival records to prove that Scriabin was not one of those (*Bulat taps his index finger to his temple*), that it was his imagination and pure symbolism, just an artistic way of perceiving music. Then everything falls into place and it's possible to find patterns or regularities.

OK, now in the United States I've got ...actually I have already published so many articles on synaesthesia – there was a longstanding debate there – and, finally, I got this article published. It's about synaesthesia regularities that are grounded not in those biological abnormalities that very rarely happen, maybe, in one per million people. Well, any waking dream can always happen somewhere, right? I mean normal synaesthesia, for example, when all of us say: "bright sound", "light

sound”, OK? “Light colour”, “heavy metal” – it’s really not like that, music is not really heavy, right? They say: “heavy metal”, “hard rock”... What is heavy about it – you can’t put it on the scales, can you? These are phrases that refer to synaesthetic perception. That’s why I’d like to say that even in the language, such as Russian or English... OK, just the usual everyday Russian may provide about one thousand synaesthetic epithets.

Anyway, I have begun to test the waters of linguistics. Now I’ve got around 50 works on linguistic fundamentals of synaesthesia. And at the moment I’m looking for someone who could make a comparative analysis that is to research synaesthesia in English and Russian, and also in the Tatar language – comparatively. That would be very exciting to do that kind of research: if you compare, then the distinction between the incidental and the general becomes evident at once. And after all, studying synaesthesia in the language, we use some free laboratory for scientific research into synaesthesia. For instance, our Alexander Alexandrovich (*Bulat’s colleague – T.N.*) studied musicological phraseology. He observed the language of various musicologists and found lots of examples of the use of synaesthetic characteristics when they describe music. This is another unexpected source of material for our research that can be used for free. You don’t even need to run any experiments, it’s just a document left to us by other people. There you go – it’s rather an unexpected turn, isn’t it?

By the way, synaesthesia will be the topic of our next conference and we're planning to invite linguists, psychologists, musicologists as well as artists and musicians – this goes without saying. Nowadays, authors of the majority of publications on synaesthesia are actually linguists, not psychologists. At first it seemed pretty much puzzling to everyone, but now I'm taking a great pleasure from this kind of research. I realized that language is a rich repository of synaesthesia created a thousand years ago, you see? It was just left unnoticed by people. Poetic quirks, on the other hand, always attract attention; they're amusing, aren't they? Rimbaud wrote Sonnet of the Vowels (*A. Rimbaud "Les Voyelles", 1871 – T.N.*), where he gave each vowel a different colour. A young boy, 17 years old, was just playing the fool with all this. But some doctoral dissertations have been written about this 14 line sonnet. And now here, near at hand, lies a huge gold mine of synaesthesia in the usual language. It's been noticed only a short time ago and, to my countrymen's credit, it happened in this country. My first work on the subject was published in 1973. How many years have already passed since that? Almost 30. No, more than that – 35.

- So, Bulat, what do you think is the future for this research, for further light-music applications?

At the moment I see a surge in interest to the phenomena that were not previously noticed at all. Nobody knew Len Lye, nobody knew McLaren then. Now the Museum of Len Lye exists in New Zealand, the Museum of

McLaren – in Canada, and the Fischinger Museum – he is actually German, but when Hitler came to power, he ran away to America – there is a huge museum there now. Laser discs are now released to the public. I mean, after a break of some 50 or 60 years, all that was done before is suddenly perceived as normal in our time. Yeah, they were way ahead of their time. But then, while doing all those things, they were, well, just smiled at: what on earth are these guys doing? Something incomprehensible... So an intensive exploration of the past is underway. And a new vision of the past now helps to correct history.

As to what is new in this area... well, I don't know, but it seems to me that we have already dug deep into the theory in this area, that is, not only in the history, but in the theory too. For instance, the theory of light-music, to my mind, is only a further extension of choreography, of dance. In ancient languages "dance" was called "music for eyes", for example, in ancient Greek and Egyptian. And in ancient Chinese one hieroglyphic character stood for two words: "music" and "dance". So dance was regarded as "music for eyes". As time passed, music obtained its special musical instruments. So apart from the voice, lots and lots of brass, wind and string instruments appeared. But music for eyes – it only existed in dance and that's why it was not possible that instrumental music for eyes could appear before the discovery of electricity and controllable light and light-music which... By the way, this is my own contribution into the theory of light-music: that light-music is a further developed art of dance, whereas usual music is a further development of singing that is musical sound made by a human.

This here is the only instrument used at first (*Bulat points at his throat*). Such a simple explanation - and now it sounds quite natural, doesn't it? And light-music is making further steps in its development - now it is mostly in variety music shows. This period is quite necessary, though. Why, at the beginning we were fighting against restaurants and discotheques. We insisted on dealing with Scriabin's music first. Or Stravinsky, Schoenberg: they also composed that kind of music. But later on it became clear that everything they have done - Scriabin and Schoenberg and Stravinsky - was a bit too simple, they just couldn't... it's because of a lack of experience. The ideas that came across their mind are good, but if you look at the screen - nothing special at all. And when you watch these modern variety music performances, even on TV here, oh, light-musical things they show are really splendid. Though meaningless! But you have to go through this period. People need to get used to this new material, at least to get used to rhythmical management of light. Because there is a famous quote that is popular among musicians: "In the beginning was the rhythm" - it's about music. The same refers to light-music too - in the beginning was the rhythm! Or even: "In the beginning there be rhythm", if you say this in the Old Slavic language (*«В началъ бѣ ритмъ»* - T.N.). Or like the Bible says: "In the Beginning Was the Word". Now we're rephrasing the quote so far. It was Von Bülow who first said it... That's why I think that when people feel they're fed up with all this discotheque and show-business light-music (*Bulat's fists move as if he were playing drums*), they will find it easy to perceive Fischinger, Lye, McLaren, any serious light-music works. That's exactly what is happening now. Virtually, even if at first

Fischinger and McLaren were...well, not properly understood... Now all this is perceived like something normal.

Let's also take Disney's films, such as "Fantasia" – there are also some light-music pieces. Then I could only view them on a private screening, in the Moscow Film Archive that was closed to the public. It was a long time ago, maybe 50 or 40 years. Now, recently I went to Elbrus – it's our local market, a usual market where they sell various goods – and I saw Disney's films on sale there. That means that we have already reached the point of time when even the common people...well, if they sell it at the market, it's already... it's just like with Nekrasov (*N.A. Nekrasov (1821-1878), Russian poet – T.N.*) who was dreaming about the future time when books by Belinsky and Gogol would be carried in bags from the marketplace (*the original line is «Когда мужик не Блюхера и не милорда глупого – Белинского и Гоголя с базара понесёт» – T.N.*). And now Disney and McLaren are carried in bags from the marketplace. This time has come at last. Thus and so, history goes in such circles and spirals (*Bulat draws circles in the air with his fingers*). What has been done by the pioneers is currently being explored. Yes, all that the pioneers have done before is receiving wide advertisement now. As to the classes they are currently delivering for students, it's likely that...well, the youth should be able to bring in something new as well!

But in my country I can't see any results yet and it's because there has been a rush to raise money and gobble up food. Now when I go to international avant-garde festivals I hardly meet my countrymen – no

one shows up (*Bulat makes a gesture of desperation with his hands*). In Soviet times we used to have the avant-garde, so where are all of them now? I'll tell you: everyone is trying to make a buck. But it looks like the things are about to work out. Recently certain changes have come about: Moscow and Yenali have already hosted festivals, in the last two or three years. Hope by now they have already gorged themselves with all those foreign freebies: kiwi, banana... yes, I mean real kiwifruit.

However, from what I can see, there are no recent outstanding achievements yet – not only here, but also in the world either. Everything goes into business, anyway. Apparently, we just need to pass through all this. It's like with music in general: there is variety and there is serious music. After all, it took music one thousand years to gain its experience – and here it's only one hundred years, so to expect masterpieces... Anyway, McLaren has a few films that are really well made (*Bulat holds his thumb up*). As to Fischinger, not everything is so great there. And talking about the conferences that I... we organized here – I say, why did they have such an important role? The answer is: we simply showed that these phenomena exist. When we had our evening previews – they turned every conference into a mini-festival...

Once we organized a real festival here in Kazan. It was 20 years ago exactly, and it lasted for ten days. Ten concert halls and two exhibition centres were devoted to our guests. 500 people arrived from different cities. It was a grant event. All the places were closed in the city: shows, performances, the Opera House – they stopped their work and gave us

all the stages available. Gave for free! Yes, then it was possible to hold such festivals... Today, to organize such a festival, we would have to rent these concert halls and it would cost us several billion roubles. That can show you the advantages of socialism on the borderline, at the time when the USSR was beginning to fall apart. Then the Communists didn't take drastic measures against us any longer. Though previously they had rather negative attitudes to our exhibitions... Oh yes, there was a big scandal over every exhibition. But in 1987 – well, it was already the time of perestroika. Ah, the Communists came to their senses a bit too late. It didn't help them survive.

- **Spasibo. Bolshoe spasibo! (“Thank you. Thank you very much!” in Russian – T. N.)**

Bolshoe (“Big” in Russian – T. N.). You know, we have the Bolshoi Theatre and
bolshoe spasibo...

- **Is there anything else that you would like to add to what you've said just to finish off?**

I'm pleased that at last we're seeing such times right now. We're still few – the

devotees who are dealing with those things so thoroughly – not enough groups and persons either. That’s why I’m happy that the globe is round, like that (*Bulat shows with his hands*). Here we have this spot on the globe...and that spot over there. You and we have been keeping correspondence for 3-4 or even 5 years and have now met each other (*Bulat’s both hands move towards each other*). Glad that now it’s the time when... if only you have a willing mind, you can practically do it... We’re living in the Arctic and you – in the Antarctic, and yet, we can meet! It gives me great optimism: now all depends on us, that is to say, personally. The state or somebody else should give us possibilities and even in this country, where the economic situation in, say, 1993, was rather difficult, we were given an institute, though a small one, but it was still an institute, right? Some people are given grants to go wherever they want... I mean, the situation has globally changed and the attitude to these issues has changed too. Now we’ll just have to work, we’ll just need to prove that everything will be OK!

- **Thank you for everything, Bulat !**

Translation by Yelena Petrenko