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RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK: WRITING IN THE AGE OF PUTIN
PREMIERES DECEMBER 2013
ACROSS DIGITAL AND BROADCAST PLATFORMS

Actor Stephen Fry Hosts New Documentary Film

November 6, 2013 – New York, New York – Some of the greatest literary achievements of the 19th and 20th century are Russian: Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Readers in the West may have stopped hearing about Russian literature after the USSR collapsed, but that doesn't mean the Russians stopped writing. ***RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK: WRITING IN THE AGE OF PUTIN***, directed by Paul Mitchell (*Putin, Russia and The West*) and Sarah Wallis (*We Were Young and at War*) asks the question: Who is the new Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Gogol waiting to be discovered by the English-speaking world?

A co-production of Intelligent Television and Wilton Films, ***RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK*** will premiere nationally on PBS member stations beginning in New York on THIRTEEN on Saturday, December 28 (check local listings for additional PBS airdates). The Intelligent Channel (INT.), YouTube's new online platform for enlightening nonfiction programming, will preview the PBS premiere with a digital showcase beginning on Friday, December 13.

The producers and THIRTEEN will partner on developing a national outreach campaign to local PBS stations to promote audience discussions at leading universities nationwide. PBS Distribution will manage ancillary sales of ***RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK*** to consumer and educational markets.

To view the trailer for ***RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK***: <http://youtu.be/nUPNbUlp6HA>.

Hosted by actor, author, and activist Stephen Fry (*Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, *Jeeves and Wooster*, *The Hobbit*), ***RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK*** celebrates contemporary Russian authors who are carrying on one of the world's great literary traditions - yet doing so on their own terms. Each author is interviewed extensively in the film, with contributions from their literary critics, publishers, and peers. Excerpts from the authors' recent works are brought to life by vivid animated sequences created exclusively for the film and voiced-over with dramatic readings in English by Fry, who currently stars in the new Broadway production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

“You may think Russian literature is no more than a catalog of suffering and misery and woe, but actually it’s so much more than that. There’s so much joy, there’s so much hope, there’s so much about the human spirit in it,” says Fry in the film. “These six Russian writers and their contemporaries must grapple with the past, live in the present, and create fictional worlds that will continue to exist in the future.”

The sheer size of Russia, its brutal climate, the violence of its history, and the heroism and genius of its people all have contributed to a world of literature like no other. Unique among documentaries on this subject, ***RUSSIA’S OPEN BOOK*** focuses on six writers in Putin’s Russia whose vibrant, idiosyncratic work continues to gain traction with a global audience:

Dmitry Bykov (b. 1967) - Dmitry Bykov is one of Russia’s most colorful, versatile, and recognizable public intellectuals. He writes poetry, fiction, biographies and criticism, and is a co-founder of the Citizen Poet project. His biography of Boris Pasternak won Russia’s 2006 National Bestseller and Big Book awards; he won the National Bestseller again in 2011 for *Ostromov, or The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*.

Zakhar Prilepin (b. 1975) – Referred to by *Newsweek* as “Russia’s Young Hemingway,” Prilepin is a veteran of the war in Chechnya, on which his 2005 novel, *Pathologies*, is based. His novel, *Sankya*, was a finalist for the 2008 Russian Booker Prize, and *Sin* won the Super National Bestseller Prize in 2011. Prilepin writes for the opposition paper *New Newspaper* and is an activist in the National Bolshevik movement.

Mariam Petrosyan (b. 1969) – Born in Armenia when it was part of the Soviet Union, Mariam Petrosyan started writing her only novel, *The House, In Which...*, as a teenager. Once published, it became an instant bestseller and received several awards and nominations, including the 2010 Russian Booker Prize.

Vladimir Sorokin (b. 1955) – Described as “the Tarantino of Russian literature,” Sorokin’s books were banned during the Soviet era. One of Russia’s best-known contemporary writers, Sorokin received the People’s Booker Prize in 2001 for *Sbornik Rasskazov* (*Collected Stories*). He has written eleven novels, including *Day of the Oprichnik* and *The Blizzard*, as well as numerous plays and short stories. His work has been translated throughout the world.

Anna Starobinets (b. 1978) – Compared to Stephen King, Edgar Allen Poe, and George Orwell, Starobinets’s short stories and novels defy the traditional horror genre by crossing over into fantasy, mysticism, and futuristic dystopia. Her short story collection, *An Awkward Age*, was a finalist for the Russian National Bestseller Prize in 2006 and has been translated into seven languages. She is the author of seven published books, including two novels for children.

Ludmila Ulitskaya (b. 1943) - Ludmila Ulitskaya is one of Russia's most popular and celebrated writers. Her first novella, *Sonechka*, was published in the literary journal *Novyi mir* in 1992 and nominated for the 1993 Russian Booker Prize. *Medea and Her Children* was shortlisted for the Russian Booker in 1997 and *The Kukotsky Case* won the 2001 Russian Booker. *Daniel Stein, Interpreter* won the 2007 Big Book Award and was shortlisted for the 2007 Russian Booker as well as the Russian Booker of the Decade. Her novel *Under the Green Tent*, about the modern Russian dissident movement, is being published by Farrar Straus & Giroux in 2014.

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RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK is co-directed by Paul Mitchell, who won a 2012 Peabody Award for the BBC/NatGeo television series, *Putin, Russia and the West*. Since 1990 Mitchell has lived in the UK, producing award-winning films for the BBC, Channel 4, France Télévision, and PBS, among others. His films have covered subjects as diverse as the history of perestroika and rock and roll in the USSR to the fate of the orphans of Argentina's dirty war. His multipart series *The Death of Yugoslavia* (1995) is ranked no. 87 on the British Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest British television programs ever to have been screened. Mitchell's films also have won the du Pont-Columbia Award, the Peabody Award, and the Emmy, BAFTA, Royal Television Society, New York Festival, and the Greirson awards.

RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK co-director Sarah Wallis is a Russian speaker and a published author with over 20 years of documentary film experience, including eight years with the BBC. Credits include *Letters from St Petersburg*, *The People's Century* (which won both the DuPont Peabody and Emmy awards for her episode, "Master Race"); and *Homecoming*, about Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Royal Television Society Award). Wallis's books (with Svetlana Palmer) include *A War in Words* (Simon & Schuster) and *We Were Young and at War* (Harper Collins).

Executive in charge for THIRTEEN is Stephen Segaller. Executive producer for THIRTEEN is Julie Anderson.

Intelligent Television (www.intelligenttelevision.com), based in New York, produces innovative films, television, and online video in close association with leading cultural and educational institutions and renowned directors and cinematographers worldwide. INT also produces the Intelligent Channel (www.youtube.com/IntelligentChannel) with Google's investment and support on YouTube.

About WNET

In 2013, WNET is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of THIRTEEN, New York's flagship public media provider. As the parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#), [Charlie](#)

[Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJ Today](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. WNET is also a leader in connecting with viewers on emerging platforms, including the [THIRTEEN Explore iPad App](#) where users can stream PBS content for free.

Read Russia (www.readrussia2013.com), founded in 2012, is a new initiative based in Moscow, New York, and London to celebrate Russian literature and Russian book culture. Through innovative programs, projects, and events supporting the English-language translation and publication of Russian works, Read Russia provides international audiences with fresh opportunities to engage - in person, on screen, and online - with Russia's literary leaders and heritage.

RUSSIA'S OPEN BOOK is generously sponsored by:

The Institute of Translation

The Institute of Translation is a pioneering new project from twelve of Russia's most prestigious cultural organizations designed to inspire excellence in literary translation from and into Russian and to consolidate Russia's place at the heart of global culture.

The Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center

The Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the institution of the Russian presidency and the development of civil society, democratic institutions, and the rule of law.

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