

Dear 21 Club members:

As a FINAL reminder, in case you have not yet registered, the first meeting of the UNM 21 Club is on **Monday, September 18, 2017, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., UNM SUB, Santa Ana A and B**. As many of you know, this particular room has an attached outdoor patio – a pleasant setting for our customary social hour (6 to 7 pm) -- and, let's hope for nice fall weather! Our speaker will be Professor **James Thorson** (English) speaking about “**The Practical Uses of Artistic Prominence: the Cases of Boris Pasternak, Kurt Masur, Nodar Dumbadze, and Svetlana Alexievitch**”.

Please see below for details about the dinner and talk.

Abstract/Title/Bio

Title: The Practical Uses of Artistic Prominence: the Cases of Boris Pasternak, Kurt Masur, Nodar Dumbadze, and Svetlana Alexievitch.

Abstract: It is fairly rare for artists, whether literary, musical, or creators of other art forms to have a noteworthy impact on practical, or political events. This talk will examine the stories of four artists, each of whom had a powerful impact on historical events in the on-going saga of East-West political relationships. While I will cover almost sixty years of political conflict between the Soviet Union, its vassal states, and its successors with the United States and its allies, the views will be highly selective.

The name of Boris Pasternak will be familiar to those of us who were alive in the 1950s, but his story of being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1958, the refusal of Nikita Krushchev to allow him to accept the Prize, and the complexities of the CIA involvement in the publication of *Dr. Zhivago* are worth retelling for many in my audience. In fact, part of the story was only declassified in 2014.

Kurt Masur, the internationally famous conductor of several of the greatest symphony orchestras of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is perhaps a more familiar name to some in my audience. I will highlight his role in calming the potentially violent suppression of the Monday night peace demonstrations in Leipzig that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the freeing of many of the satellite countries.

I will be surprised if the name Nodar Dumbadze will be familiar to anybody in the audience, but I will briefly introduce this popular novelist of the Republic of Georgia in this talk. He was a winner of the Lenin Prize for Literature, and also a member of the Politburo of the Soviet Union before his premature death in 1984, but he is also a distinguished patriot of Georgia, one of the former Republics of the Soviet Union.

The last artist/writer is the 2015 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Svetlana Alexievitch. I will talk about her powerful writing and her impact both in the Soviet Union, where she wrote

and published, and in Belarus, where she grew up, got her education, and now lives. Her recent writings have not been published in Belarus.

All four of these artists played significant roles in the demise of the Soviet Empire, though their work is not done.

Bio: Joined English faculty at UNM in 1965 after Ph. D. from Cornell, Bs. In Ed (math) in 1956, MA English, 1961, both from Nebraska (Lincoln). United States Navy, 1956-59. Retired from UNM, 2002. Fulbright awards, Skopje, Macedonia (former Yugoslavia) 1971-2; Muenster, Germany, 1985-6; Halle, former DDR, 2000-2001; Minsk, Belarus, 2005-6. Elected Senior Research Fellow, Jesus College, Oxford, 1976-77. Has taught and directed doctoral research in Republic of Georgia since 2013. A doctoral student from Tbilisi will be at UNM in the fall of 2017 as a Fulbright post-doctoral scholar.