

Permaculture in practice

'Russian Summer' and counterintuition

Russian Summer ... in Santa Fe? When I first heard the idea last winter, a "celebration" of Russian culture in the heart of the American desert seemed to me to scream "flop." Fortunately, my instincts were wrong.

At the official website, www.russiansummer.com, a calendar of events as expansive and diverse as the Motherland herself shrieks of success. Dance, music, history, politics, food, fashion, and even the theatrical acrobatics of the Flying Karamozov Brothers are all represented during the season-long program.

Since it is "in Santa Fe" the visual arts dominate the scene, including not only old standby fields like painting, sculpture, photography, and film but less-familiar genres such as vintage posters, portraiture, antiques, jewelry, wood carving, painted eggs and lacquer boxes. For kids the Santa Fe Children's Museum is highlighting Russian-oriented storytelling, dancing and puppet making throughout the summer.

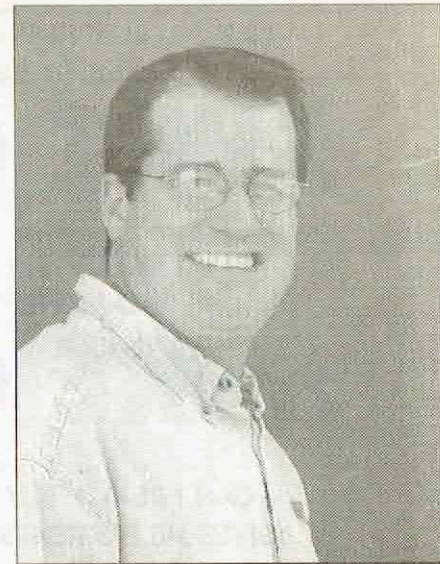
Unfortunately, the "city-wide extravaganza designed to explore, understand, enjoy and celebrate Russian culture" lacks a significant proportion of bibliophilic events. St. John's College tutor David Starr did offer a lecture last month called "Dostoyevsky's Religion of Love" and a Dostoyevsky seminar is scheduled at the college for July 11, but considering Russian literature's overwhelming international influence and critical acclaim, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Nabokov and company are strangely underrepresented. However, leaving aside my writer's bias, the bottom line is that organizers should be proud of creating so many diverse opportunities in our community. Kudos!

And how does subject relate to permaculture? "Everything is counter-intuitive," Bill Mollison, the granddaddy of permaculture, once said during a class in Santa Fe. For me, Russian Summer is a perfect example of this. Counter to my intuition, this ambitious attempt to transplant a culture has taken root in the City Different,

to the point that our civic leaders and, indeed, anyone interested in promoting locally owned businesses (as all good permaculturalists do) should consider making the promotion of some foreign culture an annual occurrence.

But Russian Summer is also a perfect example of the particular type of diversity that permaculturalists believe to be crucial for the stability of any system. As Mollison explains in *Permaculture: A Designers' Manual*, it is not the number of diverse components in a system that leads to stability, it is the number of beneficial connections among the various components that does so. In other words, when it comes to constructive diversity, the quantity of different elements matters less than the quantity of meaningful relationships among various elements.

At russiansummer.com we learn not only that there are scores of different aspects of Russian culture to explore throughout the season, but we also learn that there are ongoing tours of all of the participating galleries and that there are a



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number of lectures about Russian culture itself that endeavor to connect the various events. With a dozen local restaurants also participating, the greatest connector of people of them all - food - will serve to make the entire summer even more fulfilling for all those who participate.

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