



## Russia's Spiritual Culture Days held in South Africa for the first time



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From September 5 to 8, Russia's Spiritual Culture Days were held in the Republic of South Africa for the first time.

They started with a performance by the 'Moscow Soloists' Chamber Ensemble under the direction of Yuri Bashmet, People's Artist of the USSR. The concert took place in the Linder Auditorium, a concert and cultural venue located at the Education Campus of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

H.E. Iliya Rogachev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of South Africa greeted the visitors and read out a greeting sent to the participants in the

Russia's Days by Ms. Olga Lyubimova, Russian Minister of Culture. The greeting reads: 'This project is aimed at showing the richness and diversity of Russian culture in foreign countries. The event is being held in South Africa for the first time. It helps to shape guidelines for the long-term humanitarian cooperation between our countries. I am confident that the event will let to know Russian culture better and become the starting point for our fruitful cooperation.'

Mr. Vuzithemba Ndima, acting director general of the Ministry of Sports, Arts and Culture of South Africa, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Minister Gayton McKenzie.

On the same day, the exhibition "Novodevichy Convent. The 500th Anniversary of its Founding" opened in the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Johannesburg. Visitors saw reproductions of artworks and photographs from the collection of the State History Museum telling about the formation and life of the ancient abode.

On September 6, a round table "United in Spirit: Cultural Heritage and Traditional Values as the Basis for Humanitarian Cooperation and Mutual Learning between Russia and South Africa" was held at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, the capital of the country. The main topics of the discussion were spiritual and cultural diversity that ensure national identity; the role of libraries and museums as flagships of preserving and developing spiritual and cultural heritage; prospects for cooperation in consolidating and popularizing the values contained in the national traditions and literature of the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Africa. Participants could see the history and culture of the two peoples from an unusual perspective, through the prism of the biographies of such outstanding people as Alexander Pushkin and Nelson Mandela. Also, a high-profile topic of the discussion was the mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in the life of South Africa and the enhancing of Russian-South African relations.

Attending the round table with the blessing of Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), was hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin), a DECR staff member. He told the participants about the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church's ministry on the development of spiritual and cultural ties between Russia and South Africa.

The South African side was represented at the round table by the University of South Africa, the National Library of South Africa, the Apartheid Museum dedicated to the history of the struggle against apartheid, and by the Russologists well known in the country.

On September 7, master classes were held and classics of Soviet and Russian animation by 'Soyuzmultfilm' were shown in the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Johannesburg.

At the end of the event on September 8, the Moscow Synodal Choir sang liturgical hymns by the famous Russian composers such as Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Georgy Sviridov, Dmitry Bortnyansky, Pavel Chesnokov, Alfred Schnittke, Nikolai Diletsky, and Alexander Nikolsky. Among the guests of the concert performed in the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh was Russian Ambassador Rogachev.

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