

Alumni & Postdoc Notes



Maksim Hanukai

I received my Ph.D. from Columbia in 2014 and was a Harriman Institute postdoctoral fellow in 2015–16. I have taught Russian language and literature at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where I will be starting a new position as assistant professor of Russian in the fall of 2018. My research falls into three main categories: Russian Romanticism in its European context, post-Soviet literature and culture, and Russian theater and performance. I am currently working on two book-length projects: a study of Alexander Pushkin’s sense of the tragic, which is titled “Pushkin’s Tragic Visions,” and a second study that examines the proliferation of documentary practices in post-Soviet culture. In addition, I am coediting and translating a new anthology of plays from the New Russian Drama movement for Columbia University Press (forthcoming in 2019). My recent articles include “Tragedy in the Balkans: Pushkin’s Critique of Romantic Ideology in *The Gypsies*” (*The Pushkin Review*) and “After the Riot: Teatr.doc and the Performance of Witness” (*TDR/The Drama Review*).

—**Maksim Hanukai** (Ph.D., Slavic Languages, 2014; Harriman Postdoctoral Fellow, 2015–16)



Filip Scherf (né Tucek)

I graduated from the School of International and Public Affairs in 1967 and have spent my entire career with a Swedish bank, working both in Mexico and in France and covering our relations with the Andean Pact countries and African countries. Before studying in New York I had spent approximately eight months working as a tour conductor in the former Soviet Union, and as a tour conductor for Scandinavian tourists in Romania and Bulgaria. It was a tremendous privilege to get the opportunity to study at the Russian Institute and Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs. I served as secretary of the local Columbia University Alumni club here in Stockholm for a couple of years during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This association is still alive, arranging meetings from time to time.

—**Björn Norrbom** (M.I.A., SIPA, 1967)

The Harriman Institute (HI) was central to my life-changing time at SIPA. As a research assistant, I had the pleasure to learn from the most accomplished experts, to organize events with people of global repute, and—most importantly—to become a member of the HI family. Since I left the Institute in 2015, I have done my best to represent it through my work.

After graduation I moved to Brussels to join the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NPA) as a researcher. Having successfully concluded the Tirana, Albania, NPA Summit, I decided to expand my skill set into the world of business. But I could not completely abandon my passion for Russia and Eastern Europe, and I continued to do consulting projects for organizations such as the Eurasia Group and Kroll, and other transnational corporations and investment funds with activities in the region. This was a fantastic opportunity to apply my theoretical knowledge of the region!

In the fall of 2017, I was offered a St. Petersburg–based position at G-TEAM, a major engineering firm, to develop the company’s business interests in Russia and other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. The challenging role combines my desires to study Russia firsthand and to learn new skills through practical work. At the same time, I continue to publish articles popularizing the modern history of Eastern Europe and am working

to launch a series of public seminars on the subject. I also recently became a correspondent for the *Economist's* Intelligence Unit. Often, I think back to where all of this began, and to the wonderful people who work on the twelfth floor of Columbia University's International Affairs Building. Thank you, Harriman Institute.

—**Filip Scherf (né Tucek)** (M.I.A., SIPA, 2015)

I received my B.A. in history and Russian language/area studies from Duke University in 2011 and my M.A. in Russian, Eastern European, Balkan, and Eurasian studies from Columbia University's Harriman Institute in 2013. Currently, I serve as a program manager and energy analyst for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Office of Energy Programs (TDEC OEP). In this role, I oversee various funding and financing programs, energy efficiency and sustainable transportation initiatives, and external communications efforts. I also assist with administration, research, and planning with regard to the State of Tennessee's allocation under the Volkswagen Diesel Settlement's Environmental Mitigation Trust. As a beneficiary of this Trust, the State of Tennessee is expected to receive an initial allocation of \$45.7 million, which will be used to fund environmental mitigation projects that reduce NOx emissions.

In addition to my work at TDEC OEP, I also serve as cochair on the National Association of State Energy Officials' Transportation Committee, coordinator for Middle and West Tennessee Clean Fuels (a U.S. Department of Energy Clean Cities Coalition), and Public Sector cochair for the Tennessee Chapter of the Energy Services Coalition. Prior to joining TDEC, I interned with the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development and the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg, Russia. Most recently, I served as assistant account executive for the New York City-based public relations firm Ketchum, Inc., where I acted as a public relations and communications liaison for both the Federal Government of the Russian Federation and Gazprom Export.

—**Alexa Voytek** (MARS-REERS, 2013)

After graduating from Hamilton College in 2011, the romantic allure of Lermontov's Caucasus prompted me to move to Georgia. I spent a year working in a liberal arts school in Tbilisi, teaching literature and eating as much *khachapuri* as possible. Upon my return, I pursued my interest in Russian studies at Columbia University, earning my M.A. at the Harriman Institute in 2014. Looking to explore the professional sphere, I worked in various organizations throughout New York City, initially in advertising at Saatchi & Saatchi, where I specialized in campaigns for Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Having experienced the fast-paced world of international advertising, I decided to embrace a field closer to my heart: the performing arts. I worked at American Ballet Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera, where I gained vast experience and appreciation for an art form that I decided to pursue academically. Currently, I am a graduate student in the Slavic Studies department at Brown University, where my research focuses on the development of ballet from eighteenth-century Russia through the Soviet era.

—**Tara Wheelwright (née Collins)** (MARS-REERS, 2014)



Alexa Voytek



Tara Wheelwright
(née Collins)