

For immediate release

## **The London Library hosts The Rossica Prize at London's fifth annual SLOVO Russian Literature Festival, 20 March 2014**

Celebrated contemporary Russian writers and critics gather in the heart of the capital this month for London's **5<sup>th</sup> Slovo Russian Literature Festival – Academia Rossica's** annual festival of Russian literary culture in the UK. The jewel in the crown of Festival events – **The Rossica Prize** – honours the best English translation of Russian texts, and this year is announced in a prestigious ceremony, hosted for the first time by historic Mayfair literary oasis **The London Library**.

Established in 2005, **The Rossica Prize** promotes the best of Russian literary culture in the English-speaking world, rewarding and encouraging translation of a broad range of authors, genres and periods. The Rossica Prize judges – Professor Andrew Kahn, Professor Donald Rayfield, Dr. Oliver Ready and Dr. Jamie Rann – award a prize of £3,000 to the winning translation, to be split between the translator and the publisher at the judges' discretion.

Titles in this year's **Rossica Prize** reflect the rich collection of Russian volumes in housed in The London Library – works by **Pushkin**, folklore anthology ***Russian Magic Tales from Pushkin to Platonov***, poetry by Vladislav **Khodasevich**, Marina **Tsvetaeva's** verse drama *Phaedra* and contemporary fiction feature in the running. Of the 50 languages represented in The London Library's notable 130,000-strong foreign language titles, a unique resource of **15,000 books and 50 periodicals and journals are available in the Russian language**. Particular strengths lie in Literature, History, Topography, Art, Biography, Bibliography and Fiction – including notable highlights among Tolstoy's famously banned works. Sir Isaiah Berlin recognized the Library's visionary acquisition of Russian titles, describing them as 'truly remarkable', containing '*among other, better-known works, a number of rare and fascinating books some of which are not to be found in the British Library or anywhere else in Britain*'.

The **Rossica Young Translators Award** – the younger sibling of the Rossica Prize – is also announced at the ceremony. Inspiring the next generation of aspiring translators up to the age of 24, the Award challenges participants to translate extracts from some Russia's most exciting contemporary prose. Passionate and talented translators are essential for the future health of Russian literature and its impact on the English-speaking world – the Award now has a global reach, and previous winners and shortlisted entrants have gone on to successful careers as professional translators and editors. The winning entry is awarded a prize of £500, and the competition offers the exciting opportunity for all young translators to come into contact with their literary role models.

The evening's celebration of literary translation includes a talk by Rossica Prize judge Dr. Oliver Ready on his translation of *Crime and Punishment* (Penguin Classics, 2014), in the elegant setting of the Victorian London Library Reading Room.

The Rossica Translation Prize is awarded by Academia Rossica with the support of the Russkiy Mir Foundation.

## EVENT DETAILS:

**The Rossica Prize / The Rossica Young Translators Award**

Thursday 20 March 2014, 7pm.

The London Library, 14 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LG.

[www.londonlibrary.co.uk](http://www.londonlibrary.co.uk) /

Tickets: £10 <http://academia-rossica.org/en/literature/slovo-5>

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## Notes to Editors

### **About The London Library**

Founded in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle, the London Library in elegant St James's Square is one of the world's largest independent lending libraries. It was built to provide "the Metropolis of Great Britain with a Library from which books are taken out to be read at home". Carlyle's original vision remains the Library's primary purpose: to provide generations of readers and researchers with the riches of a national reference library for use in their own homes or workplaces.

Over successive generations, the Library's membership has included many of the most important writers, opinion-formers and academics of the day, alongside general readers with a keen interest in literature and learning. The Library's position at the centre of the intellectual life of the nation is reflected in the roll-call of past and present members. They count among their number Charles Dickens (who carried out extensive research for his novels using the Library's resources), George Eliot, Charles Darwin, Arthur Conan Doyle, Virginia Woolf, Winston Churchill, and Agatha Christie, 4 Poets Laureate and 9 Nobel prize-winners. Current members include hundreds of prominent writers, academics, social commentators, journalists and influential figures in all walks of public life – Sebastian Faulks, Jeremy Paxman, Antonia Fraser, among many others. The Library's current President is Sir Tom Stoppard; past Presidents include Tennyson and T.S. Eliot.

Membership of the Library is open to all, there are reduced rates for young people and a trust fund exists to support potential members who do not have the means to meet the subscription cost. The Library currently serves 8,000 personal and institutional members including over 200 arts and media organisations and a range of public library authorities who rely upon the collections to supplement their own holdings and so meet the reading and research need of people across the country. The Library's founding principles remain a blueprint for providing the most direct and liberal access to knowledge.

With books dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the latest publications in print and electronic form, throughout its history the Library has sought to be contemporary in every age. It has a long-held belief that books are never entirely superseded: almost nothing, therefore, has been discarded from the collection and books are never rejected merely because they are old, idiosyncratic or momentarily unfashionable. As a result, the unrivalled collection now exceeds 1 million volumes, 97% of which is housed on over 14 miles of fully browsable bookshelves, and 98% is available for loan. The Library holds remarkably extensive collections in History and Biography, and a fascinating range of works on Topography, travel and exploration. The Literature and Fiction sections include a huge range of novels, poetry, plays, essays, literary criticism and causeries. The Art Room houses a substantial collection on the visual arts and architecture - a collection which is growing at a rate of 68 feet of extra book-shelf a year. Also among the Library's treasures is a wealth of scientific material for the specialist and the general reader, as well as fine coverage of the history of science, the social sciences and philosophy. The Religion collection houses an exceptional range of theological texts and studies in comparative religion, and the foreign languages are served with books in over 50 languages, with particular riches in the French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian collections.

For those who may not be able to visit the Library in person, there is a postal loans service which will dispatch books and periodical volumes to readers anywhere within Europe.

**Photos, interviews, further info:**

Chloë Brookes, Press & Marketing Manager, [chloe.brookes@londonlibrary.co.uk](mailto:chloe.brookes@londonlibrary.co.uk)

tel: 020 7766 4796

**Quotes from notable members**

'I've been a member of the London Library from the day I became a writer. Next only to an available theatre and some good actors, it has been the most indispensable part of my playwriting life.'

(Sir David Hare)

'The London Library is an oasis of tranquillity in the middle of the capital... I so enjoy working there.'

(Michael Palin)

'During the last fifty years and more the London Library has been a unique and invaluable resource.'

(Sir Ludovic Kennedy)

'The London Library is the lodestar. When I need a book it's the first place I turn to. I can't imagine work, or indeed life, without it.'

(Artemis Cooper)

'I've been using the Library for 30 years to research countries I'm travelling to, to read around subjects that interest me, to find books that are unobtainable elsewhere. But there is a quality of serenity I find in the London Library that makes it special and conducive to work and reflection.'

(Paul Theroux)

'One of the most thrilling places in the city. There is no place I know of in the world that better embodies or promotes the romance of books.'

(Simon Callow)

'I can't imagine life without the London Library and certainly don't want to try.'

(Lady Antonia Fraser)

'The London Library is my favourite place in the whole of London. A unique resource and a wonderful place in which to read and research.'

(John O'Farrell)

'The London Library lies at the heart of the nation's literary and intellectual life.'

(A.C. Grayling)