

We are deeply saddened to inform the community that Slava Yastremski, Professor of Russian at Bucknell University, passed away on Friday, November 13th, at home, with his wife, Irina, and son, Alex, by his side, after a brief illness. He was 63.

Slava was born and grew up in Moscow. He graduated from the Department of Theater History and Dramatic Literature of the Moscow State Theatrical Institute. He worked at the Taganka Theater, wrote for the newspaper *Izvestia*, and also worked in Russian television and motion pictures as an assistant director. Slava immigrated with his family to the United States in 1975. In 1981 he received his PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of Kansas. For the next 9 years, he served as the coordinator of Russian language instruction at Yale University. During this time, he also taught and produced plays at Middlebury's Russian Summer School, including Nikolai Erdman's *The Suicide*, which was the premier of the play in the Russian language.

Slava joined the Bucknell Faculty in 1990, where, in the course of 25 years, he played an instrumental role not only in leading the Russian Studies Program, but in developing the Programs in Comparative Humanities and Film Studies (where he also taught), and Bucknell's Residential College system (for which he served as a long-time co-coordinator). Slava's main area of research, and great passion, was to bring Russian literature and culture to the broader English-speaking audience via translation. He published many successful translations of works by important Soviet and Russian writers and poets. His most prominent translations include a collection of Vasily Aksyonov's stories *Surplussed Barrelware* (with Joel Wilkinson), a collection of Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry *After Russia* (with Michael Naydan), Andrei Sinyavsky's *Strolls with Pushkin* (with Catherine Nepomnyashchy), which won the The AATSEEL Best Translation Award in 1994, Olga Sedakova's *Poems and Elegies* (with Catriona Kelly, Michael Naydan, and Andrew Wachtel), Igor Klekh's *A Land the Size of Binoculars* (with Michael Naydan), a collection of Olga Sedakova's letters and essays, *Freedom to Believe* (with Michael Naydan), a collection of Nadezhda Ptushkina's plays *The Battle of the Sexes Russian Style* (with Michael Naydan), *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Essential Poetry* (with Michael Naydan), and, most recently, Igor Klekh's *The Book of Slavic Food*, which will bear a dedication to Slava (forthcoming, with Michael Naydan). Slava also leaves us with several works in progress, including Andrei Sinyavsky's *A Journey to the River Chernaya* and Nikolai Gumilev's works on Africa (both with Michael Naydan).

Students in Slava's courses in Russian Theater and Cinema will remember with fondness his stagings of Chekhov's plays; those in his seminars will remember his expansive knowledge of not only Russian but also European art, music, literature, film, and food. His innovative, curious mind was constantly looking for and finding new ways to bring the worlds of Russia and America closer together, not least in groundbreaking courses such as the "Global Manager in Russia," where students from Bucknell were brought into regular live contact with their peers in Russia. His teaching and scholarship reflected his interest in Russian spirituality and philosophy as a potential source of understanding between "East" and "West," extending off-campus to his active membership in an American Orthodox church. On campus, his Bucknell seminar on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky illuminated the works of Russia's two great "teachers of life," as Slava would often say.

Indeed, for many generations of students, Slava was a “teacher of life,” who taught countless students the joys of close reading, how to love good food, good wine, and great conversation, how to love what you do and do it well, how to inspire in others a love for art, literature, music, and film, and how to care for others, help them reach their full potential and accomplish things they would have never dreamed were possible.

Slava invited academic guests from all over the Russian-speaking world, whether from Moscow, or Siberia, or Kazakhstan, always with the desire to bring people and cultures together. Students in Russian, Comparative Humanities, and Film and Media Studies at Bucknell and beyond will remember his dedication to their learning, his unparalleled mentorship, and the pride he took in their accomplishments. Slava immersed himself with passion into every aspect of our community where he acted as a real force of nature. As he himself commented, “the key word to all of my work is ‘engagement’... If you’re not engaged in what you’re doing, then what’s the point?” He will be sorely missed in the many communities he impacted, and, of course, by his wonderful family, who are in our thoughts at this difficult time.