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Voronezhskie Devchata
("Voronezh Girls")
make the sexy
photo pose,
yes?

Kiss Me, I'm Slavic

Third year for the Slavic Festival

I'm betting you've never seen a "Kiss Me, I'm Slavic" T-shirt on a thrift store rack, but Matt Ivashov and the organizers of this year's Slavic Festival hope that someday you will. For a number of years the Slavic Festival was only for members of the Slavic community. But the Slavic Festival was opened to the public in 2006, and the response has been great. "With every festival it's growing year after year," says Ivashov, who was born in the Soviet Union and emigrated to the United States with his family in 1986. He's been in Eugene since 1997, and in addition to his volunteer work around the community and for the Slavic Festival, he's focused on becoming a U.S. citizen.

Many people simply do not know what Slavic culture is, according to Ivashov, nor do they appreciate its great diversity and richness of heritage. Slavic people include Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Croats, Bosnians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bulgarians. "Our mission is diversity, so people can learn about other cultures and be aware of other cultures," Ivashov says. "A lot of people perceive Eastern Europe as just this former communist bloc, and there's a lot more to it than that. And for a long time people couldn't travel and they couldn't spread their culture."

Slavic Festival 2008 encompasses special events at various venues over January 17-26. Visit Springfield's Regional Sports Center January 19-20 for an entertainment stage with an amazing array of talent, a kids' area and food prepared by Eugene's Eastern European grocery store and deli, Zolotoy Petushok ("Golden Rooster"). The kids will get to make Russian *beregynya* (rug) dolls, decorate Easter eggs (*pysanka*), decorate plates, make clay animal figures and make and decorate traditional Russian head-pieces (*kokoshnik*). If that's not enough to keep them happy, there's a marathon of Russian

cartoons, and Slavic music and storytelling.

The entertainment lineup sounds thrilling. Russian vocal and dance ensemble **Voronezhskie Devchata** ("Voronezh Girls") performs lyrical songs sung by women. Their performances are versatile enough to find them interpreting both traditional Russian choral folklore and contemporary pieces. Ukrainian violin virtuoso **Sergey Ryabtsev** (who also performs with New York's "gypsy punk" band Gogol

Bordello) will appear, performing solo as well as with his group Barynya. Barynya performs Russian, Ukrainian, Russian Gypsy, Cossack and Klezmer dancing and music. **Vilona** features two lovely girls who will amaze you with their violin takes on folk, classic and rock tunes. And Eugene's own **Trio Voronezh** performs their repertoire of the classical works of Bach, Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky and Schubert, Russian folk music and popular tunes. Dance ensemble **Veselka** will present Ukrainian traditions through dance and song, and **Ivan da Marya** presents folk dance and musical modernizations of traditional Russian folk music. One North Dakota couple with Czechoslovakian ancestry, **Richard and Judie Kardmas**, plays Czech and German songs from the '40s and '50s. There's even a professional opera singer, **Anna Kazakova-Simpson**, booked.

It's difficult to choose which of the additional events is the most exciting. The musical play *An Old Fairy Tale in New World or How the Style of Three Made a Joyless Princess Laugh* is a modern retelling of an old folk tale. The Hult Center's "Star Filled Russian Nights — The Slavic Wonderland" brings together many of these performers for a one-time only gala concert with dance, songs, music and costumes from their many Slavic homes. "It brings together people who love life, love having a good time, and learning about other cultures," Ivashov says.

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