

Weekend

The New York Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2002



Top, Eifman Ballet; above, Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

Russian pleasures: The Eifman Ballet dancing "Pinocchio" and the St. Petersburg bookstore on Brighton Beach Avenue in Brooklyn.

A Little Russia On the Hudson

By CELESTINE BOHLEN

For the full impact of a certain Russian experience, nothing quite beats "War and Peace." The book is long, and so is the opera. It has falling snow and ballroom dancing, soul-searching and vodka-bingeing, honor and dishonor, not to mention the main themes, which are, of course, war and peace. ("Some subject, eh?" as an American tourist said upon exiting the Leo Tolstoy Museum in Moscow.)

But Prokofiev's "War and Peace," now on at the Metropolitan Opera in a stunning production with the Kirov Opera of St. Petersburg, is also a sign of something else. The Russians are here, and what's more, they are all over the place — not only Russians but also Russian-speakers from all over the former Soviet Union, recreating in different ways and in different places what they used to do back home in the old U.S.S.R. There are flashes of Odessa, the

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Black Sea port city, in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn; of Bukhara and other exotic stops on the Central Asian Silk Route in Rego Park, Queens; of the overheated salons of Moscow and St. Petersburg in Midtown Manhattan; and of the cutting-edge Russian art scene in SoHo.

While Tolstoy is on at the Met, Turgenev is in previews on Broadway with "Fortune's Fool," an adaptation of the 19th-century writer's play "A Poor Gentleman," directed by Arthur Penn and starring Alan Bates and Frank Langella. Chekhov, the great dramatist whose "Seagull" took over Central Park last summer, is now on the big screen with "The Cherry Orchard," produced and directed by Michael Cacoyannis, starring Charlotte Rampling and, again, Mr. Bates.

These are the golden oldies of

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