

'Onegin' House to Be Destroyed

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko. The campaign group Living City has a register of what it says are more than 100 historic buildings in the city that have been destroyed since she took off **Denis Grishkin**

ST. PETERSBURG — A classical music concert will be held next week in St. Petersburg to draw attention to the plight of an endangered historic building in the city's historic center known as the Abaza Mansion, after Alexander Abaza (1821-1895), a statesman and one-time minister of finance whose family lived there from the 1840s until the 1917 Revolution.

In 2007, the St. Petersburg city government handed over the building to developer Fontanka-Otel, which is planning to demolish the building to make space for a 250-room hotel with an underground parking lot.

Abaza's wife, the singer Yulia Abaza, was famous for her musical evenings, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera "Eugene Onegin" premiered in the mansion. Other famous visitors include writer Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Last month, 117 descendents of Abaza, members of their families and members of the Russian Assembly of the Nobility from around the world wrote a letter to President Dmitry Medvedev asking him to prevent the demolition. The petitioners suggested that a music museum could be established in the building, but called for the building to be saved even if the plans to build a hotel cannot be canceled.

“In Paris, Rome, Amsterdam and other European cities, they realized a long time ago that a hotel in an ancient mansion in the center is no less attractive to tourists than a modern building without history,” they wrote.

“It is pleasant and prestigious for people to stay in a small hotel with authentic 18th-century walls, and they don’t need an underground parking lot at all. There is no doubt that this understanding will come to St. Petersburg as well. However, it will be an unacceptable loss if the mansion of Abaza’s glorious family does not survive until those times.”

The planned demolition also endangers three historic buildings next to the Abaza Mansion, the petitioners said.

Campaign group Living City has a expanding register of more than 100 historic buildings in the city that have been destroyed since City Governor Valentina Matviyenko took office in 2003.

A major preservationist rally, the March for the Preservation of St. Petersburg, has been scheduled for April 4.

The concert in defense of the Abaza Mansion takes place March 7 at 4 p.m., Kochneva House, 41 Naberezhnaya Reki Fontanki. St. Petersburg. Tickets can be ordered by calling +7 (962) 700-2216.

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