

St. Patrick's Day Parade Along Arbat 'Best Ever'

By [Robert Lee](#)

March 18, 2012



Irish street artists Macnas donned eccentric, oversized animal heads while performing for the singing and dancing crowd during the Arbat parade. **Misha Japaridze**

St. Patrick's Day parade returned to Moscow as hundreds of people paraded along Arbat as weeklong celebrations of Ireland's national holiday continue.

The pedestrianized street was a mass of waving flags, shamrock badges and singing young Russians on Saturday, with the revelers even managing to get a smile out of the normally stony-faced Moscow police.

Russian fans of Irish culture sang out of tune to Irish folk classics like "Whiskey in the Jar," which belted out from a large speaker system, buskers played Irish music on anything from panpipes to bagpipes, and the International School choir sang as part of the celebrations.

"It started in the 90s with the big opening up of Russia, and it has grown and grown," Irish Ambassador Phillip McDonagh said in an interview before the parade. "We at the embassy are very pleased with this and feel that this year is the best set of arrangements for the parade ever."

"It's the best-ever St. Patrick's Day parade," said Ivan Dontsov, writing on his Vkontakte account.

The parade, which first began 20 years ago, returned after it was refused permission last year. That year saw hundreds take to Arbat without permission, and a number of stilt-walkers were arrested and later released after the impromptu parade.

The official parade was not allowed last year after the city said the traditional location of the parade, Novy Arbat, was inconvenient because of traffic disturbances.

One of this year's highlights was a performance from renowned Irish street artists Macnas. The troupe, famous for their diverse mix of artistic disciplines and fantastical props, was mounted on a podium, dressed in suits and wearing oversized animal heads. This was their first show on Russian soil.

"They are possibly the best-known group of Irish street artists in the world and have performed in many cities. That they are coming to Moscow for this particular St. Patrick's Day is again a sign of the growing importance of this celebration here," Irish Ambassador McDonagh said.

The musical and artistic celebrations continue after the weekend, with a performance from harpist Lily Neill at the All-State Library for Foreign Literature on Monday.

The celebrations were not limited to Moscow, with events linked to St. Patrick's Day taking place all over Russia. Days of Irish culture ran over the weekend in Nizhny Novgorod and Ioshkar-Ola, the capital of the Marii-El republic. Omsk celebrations were led by two dancers who won gold medals at a recent All-Russia Irish Dancing competition.

Lily Neill performs Monday at the All-State Library for Foreign Literature, 1 Nikoloyamskaya Ulitsa. Metro Taganskaya. www.veresk.ru

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/03/18/st-patricks-day-parade-along-arbat-best-ever-a13362>