Moscow Times Columnist Wins Prestigious Language Award

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Courtesy of Pushkin Institute

The Moscow Times' Arts Editor and columnist Michele Berdy has won a Pushkin Institute professional achievement award for her "creative contribution to the advancement of Russian language, literature and culture."

Berdy has been writing her The Russian Word's Worth column — which explains complicated Russian grammar and vocabulary with clarity and wit and is popular with students of the language all over the world — since 2002.

"It was a great honor to receive the award, especially since the Pushkin Institute is my Alma Mater. I studied at the institute after graduating from college, and that was my gateway to a career in Russia and in Russian," she said after the awards ceremony on Tuesday.

The Pushkin Institute was founded 55 years ago by prominent linguist Vitaly Kostomarov to develop and support teaching and advancing the Russian language and culture around the world. It is the main center for foreign students studying Russian, and works with many

organizations in Russia and around the globe to provide a variety of language support.

This year's recipients work in diverse fields and contribute to the advancement of Russian in different ways.

Cosmonaut Sergei Ryzhikov was recognized for his project Word in Space after becoming the first person to recite Alexander Pushkin's poetry in the International Space Station. Yevgeniya Dvoskina is an artist who was honored for her work illustrating Pushkin Institute projects. Anatoly Gavrilenko heads a project to translate common Western financial terms into Russian and Maksim Sharapov leads a program to provide language studies for future journalists.

Maksim Liksutov, the head of the Moscow city department of transportation, was honored for his work to organize Russian language instruction and Moscow history lessons for cab drivers as well as joint projects with the institute about Russian language and literature on the Moscow metro. Other recipients work in radio, develop language competency programs and testing, and support Russian language learning abroad.

This year's awards ceremony was held at the Stand Up Patriki comedy club.

"Ahead of time I joked that we'd have stand-up comedy routines in between awards," Berdy said, "but that's exactly what happened. Seva Moskvin, a linguist-turned-comedian and singer, was the emcee and performer. Linguists throw a great party."