

# Deafland is a Myth

## **A wonder lab for hard-of-hearing students has been created at Bauman University**

*A unique multimedia/distance learning laboratory-studio has been opened at Bauman MSTU, to be more exact, at the Leading Research and Methodological Center for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, which is based within this University. The Complex has been created by BMSTU in cooperation with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), USA, with the support of a grant from The Nippon Foundation within the framework of PEN-International project, which envisages the creation of an international network of postsecondary education for people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. The Opening Ceremony was attended by Mr. Ishii Yasunubu, Executive Director of The Nippon Foundation, who came to Moscow for this purpose. Participating in the project are also Tsukuba College of Technology (Japan) and Tianjin College for the Deaf (China).*

### **Natalia IVANOVA-GLADILSCHIKOVA**

**“I like web design.”**

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students have been trained at Bauman since 1934. Since then more than a thousand handicapped people have graduated from this “most difficult” University. Presently 170 students are studying at the Center and 50 students are taking a pre-University course. The main objective is to put deaf people on a par with hearing students.

I am speaking to a pretty girl, her name is Anna Romanchikova. She is studying in an engineering research program. Her speech is a bit monotonous (she is wearing a hearing aid), but on the whole Anya is just like her peers, there is no evident difference, “After the third year we joined the mainstream. We studied together with “ordinary” students (we have a lot of friends among them). Now along with doing my course, I am conducting laboratory training in the first year of the mainstream of BMSTU.” Her friends are standing nearby. One of them, Ira Bakhur, is learning a second foreign language – French.

“What would you like to do in the future?”

“I’d like to work in the field of internet technologies”.

“And I,” says Yulia. “am majoring in information safety. I like web design.”

At the Center it is possible to get a degree in different majors: informational technologies, mechanical engineering, robotics and comprehensive automation. Deaf students are studying here together with hearing people. It became possible because hard-of-hearing are equipped with special “radio-classes”, which help them comprehend lectures. Unique specialists are working with the students of the Center.

Valery Safronov is the technical director of PEN-International in Russia, and his assistant is Olga Oreshkina. She is speaking about the peculiarities of her job, “We help freshmen understand the theory of the subject. For this, it is necessary not only to understand really well what is to be taught but also help adapt the material to make it easier for the hard-of-hearing to perceive it (Bauman disciplines are difficult to support by the sign language – too many English terms).”

### **Our deaf do not keep silent but speak**

The Opening Ceremony of the new multimedia laboratory was attended by hard-of-hearing students from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, which is a partner of the Bauman Center. Naturally, it was interesting what impression they had of what they saw.

“We have more sign language interpreters, but your hard-of-hearing students can speak (and indeed, American students are communicating with the help of sign language interpreters only). At the Center for the Deaf they teach to use residual hearing.”

“All our programs are supplied with captions. Every deaf person has his/her own phone (with special operators). But all in all, we are really impressed by how Russians are devoted to the idea of education. Another thing that we liked is that education here can be free.”

I asked the American students whether they liked the idea of BMSTU deaf students studying together with the hearing and they said, “Yes, sure. We live in a hearing society.”

Robert Davila, Vice President of RIT for NTID, said that there is no limit to what the deaf can do. Deaf education in the USA started with engineering courses. However, nowadays there are doctors, over forty lawyers, a great number of engineers and social workers among hard-of-hearing people...

### **WONDER LAB**

The main event of the day was the Opening Ceremony of the laboratory for hard-of-hearing students. The tape was cut by Igor Fedorov, Rector of BMSTU and Robert Davila, Vice President of RIT for NTID. A laboratory of this level is the first in Russia. There are very few in the world, too. From this room it is possible to carry out videoconferencing. The monitors of the state-of-the-art computers can go down by pressing a button, and the tables themselves can be moved transforming rows into one round table for a master class. The screen above allows everybody to see the sign language interpreter. The big “interactive board” is also impressive, it is in fact a huge computer display, which can be operated by an object looking like an ordinary pen. Or the mirror board, a less sophisticated but not less convenient invention of BMSTU (hard-of-hearing students can see the teacher, with his/her back to the audience, articulating words)... All this put the deaf on a par with hearing students. That was what Igor Saprykin, Head of the Department of Social Support of Moscow’s Administration, spoke about.

The most prominent figure in this outstanding project is Dr. James DeCaro, Director of PEN-International, who made an important contribution to the education of the deaf all over the world.

At the end of the Ceremony Dr. James DeCaro presented awards to those who contributed to the implementation of the project. Among them were Sergei Burov, the architect who designed the lab, Victor Saprykin, President of *METTEM* Company, who helped to fit out the lab. Maria

Shustorovich, a Professor of Mathematics of NTID, was noted for her special contribution into deaf education. From the very beginning, she has been the Coordinator of PEN-International for Russia, and according to Alexander Stanevsky, Director of the Center for Complex Rehabilitation of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, her services connected with the creation of the laboratory are invaluable. In conclusion, Alexander Stanevsky emphasized the uniqueness of PEN-International project, which consolidates intellectual and material resources of the great powers and makes the universal education space accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing people of the whole world.