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FEATURE

The Russian Duo Inspires the Audience

Feature by Donna Allen | December 3, 2013

GRAFTON, VT – I was overjoyed to think that I would be able to hear The Russian Duo again –this time at the White Church in Grafton, VT on Sunday, Dec 1. I couldn't wait as I picked up a friend to go with me. We traveled from Chester to Grafton talking of the last performance we had been to in 2012. We were in awe at the last performance and knew we would be transported at this performance also.

We came early so we could get front row seats and we stopped for lunch in Grafton at Lisai's Country Store. We ate in the car across from the White Church. The church filled as others came to be enthralled with the music too. We sat in the front row, taking in the fresh balsam of the Christmas tree set up earlier in the day, and waited to feel the effervescence of the music. We were not disappointed.

From the moment they came to the stage to the very last note, we were just captivantly absorbed. Once again Oleg Kruglyakov (balalaika) and Terry Boyarski (piano) took us on a joyous journey through the balalaika's history with "Volinka" starting the trip.

The balalaika is a three stringed, old Russian folk instrument that is played with a finger. In 1648 it was very popular, but was destroyed as a pagan culture instrument when Christianity began to gain popularity. It used to have only five frets and now has many. Peter the Great allowed it to be played again during his reign.

More music – "Kukushka" by Louis Claude Daquin, and "Polonaise" by Vasily Vasilievich Andreyev.

By the 19th century the balalaika was made a concert instrument. A Polish Music Master and retired navy officer in St. Petersburg was the only one who would make the instrument. Music was created for the balalaika.

More music – "Passacaglia" by George Frederic Handel warmed our hearts.

As the afternoon darkened with the winter clocks, Terry took the microphone and exclaimed, "We love Vermont. We love it here!" She continued, "My father grew up in Burlington."

Oleg responded in a low tone, "I grew up in Siberia."

"My dad and Oleg get along marvelously," Terry chimed in.

Then we went to Argentina with "Tango" by Roland Dyens feeling the dancers as they danced the tango. The music slowed and then built up to a crescendo and slowed again to reach once again a crescendo in finality and one could see the dancers bent over; the female's head almost touching the floor

The "Grotesque & Reflection" by Evgeny Trostyansky gave the soft and lovely notes on the piano and then the dispute on the balalaika with the pleasant to the argument. "Moscow Nights" by Vasily Solovyov-Sedoi let Oleg sing to a rather lively tune. "Katyusha" by Matvel Blanter was sung by both USA and German troops during the War and slid us to "Tico Tico" by Zequinha de Abreu about a bird that sweeps under a hammer to steal grain to eat.

"Volga Tunes" seems to carry us across the waters to Italy to ride in a gondola. And their final "Oy! Kalina" lets us see how hard life is – lets us see the forest for the trees.

"Wonderful," "Outstanding," and "I want them to play for hours more." were heard in the audience as the Russian Duo finished their second encore.

After two encores Oleg and Terry gathered folks around and answered questions.

Oleg is a protégé of Yevgeny Grigorovich Blinov, the foremost balalaika virtuoso of the Soviet Union, who performed the world over and added many beautiful pieces of music to the balalaika-piano duo repertoire. The balalaika that is played by Oleg belonged to Blinov.

Terry Boyarsky, pianist, is a movement specialist, singer and ethnomusicologist who believes that every person is musical. Terry is a Teaching Artist for Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio, the Kennedy Center's Ohio State-Based Collaborative Initiative, and Ohio Arts Council.

What a breathtaking concert once again. Oleg and Terry transported us to new heights. Bravo!

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