

Side of Jazz

A Bethel pizzeria offers gourmet jazz along with gourmet food; and your library may be booking the hottest talent in town

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By Dan Barry

Have you checked if your local library offers a concert program? You might be surprised to discover that not only do they have regular concerts, but that the quality is stellar. Sadly, local seniors seem to be the only ones clued in, but I've attended excellent library shows in Farmington (traditional folk), Middletown (raging sea shanties), and Hartford (superb bebop). What's more, these shows have always been free.

On Friday I went to the Cheshire Library, where the hard-touring **Russian Duo** had landed for the night. There's no getting around the fact that Oleg Kruglyakov and Terry Boyarsky have a wonderfully nerdy look. They wear traditional Russian clothes, and Kruglyakov's haircut could be from the day after the Beatles' appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show." But contemplating their nerditude left me completely defenseless against the Duo's explosive talent, which had roughly the same effect on me as written accounts of the Ramones's first concert.

You see, Oleg Kruglyakov is a master of the balalaika, the traditional Russian stringed instrument that looks something like a triangular-bodied guitar. Unlike the guitar, the balalaika is played with a constant tremolo-picking that would leave most shred guitarists spent after two songs. While Kruglyakov dances flamboyantly up and down the frets, Boyarsky matches him seamlessly on piano. This is no small feat, as the Russian folk songs they play come to screeching halts, change tempos with ruthless unpredictability, and regularly dip from shouts to whispers and back again. If you want to see these dazzling musicians in action, you can catch them at the Avon Free Public Library this Friday, Oct 23, at 7 p.m.