

Dieter and Ally Hauptmann's *lighthearted introduction to the balalaika and Russian Folk Music.*

1) ...the balalaika is a string instrument like a guitar, violin or harp, but what did the first string instrument look like?.



Hunting bow used as a one string harp in Africa today.



Mouth-resonance means no singing!



Gourd-resonance allows singing!



from an Egyptian grave apprx. 2200 BC

performance: Sabre Dance on a turtle shell alto domra

2) ... In the year 988, Vladimir the Great converted the Russian tribes to the orthodox religion in Kiev to get a stronger people united in a common faith - and it worked! The Greek monks he called in as teachers brought with them Greek LIRAS.



African bowed gourd



Russian group ROUSICHI



Greek Lira

A pig's bladder inflated with air is a resonance chamber for a one string fiddle!!!

performance: dance HOPAK on a Russian GUDOK = Novgorod Lira =

Greek Lira = Arabian Rebec, which is the mother of all violins.

3) The balalaika uses a very unique string-mix and tuning: there are 2 nylon strings with the same pitch and a steel string 4 steps higher - plus, she is only played with the finger tips (the flesh, like the old lutes) not with the fingernails like a classical guitar or a pick like a mandolin. This often makes the 2 nylon strings **drone-resonate permanently** - an effect called an 'ostinato' in classical music or a 'drone' in common terms.



performance: Hutsulka, a dance from the Carpathian mountains.

4) ...the balalaika did evolve over the centuries and reached a peak in the Soviet erahere a popular song to show the magic tremolo you can do on a balalaika. No other instrument can produce such a smooth, soul stirring tremolo.



soloist: Boris Feoctistov



The Balalaika Orchestra of the Moscow public transport workers in 1966!!

performance: Midnight in Moscow, a big hit in 1955 was - which conquered the world and is still loved today!

5) At the PARIS World Expo in 1886 one Russian Band caused a big stir: they were loud and rough and played **zhaleikas = folk-clarinets and rozhoks=folk-trumpets**. (...for our experts: the balalaika group impressed Debussy greatly and the Russians heard for the first time the tangos of Argentina, took them to their heart and created many great Russian Tangos until today, the Eiffel tower was brand new.....). Here is my joyful tune to celebrate Napoleon's hasty retreat across the iced up river NARA.



performance: ..The Spirit of the River Nara.

6) **The COSSACKS** stood guard and settled at every new border the Russian army conquered. They had their own privileges but foreigners could join, if they adopted the Orthodox faith. Their songs are legendary. Not so known is the fact that without the Zaporogian Cossacks fighting the all conquering Turks on the Volga(?) Christendom in Europe might have been wiped out: the Cossacks had flat fast sailing ships, landed behind enemy lines and bound 1/3 of the Turkish army in Southern Russia. Twice the Turks came close to conquering Vienna in the 17th century - they would have won had they had that force not tied down in Russia!



BYZANTINE Old Byzantium, the new Constantinople rose as a center of Christianity in 330. Strong Greek roots eventually supplanted Latin influences. European business opened by maritime route freely to Spain and Africa before their conquest by Muslim powers. Crusades, Byzantium, and Islamism unfolded in the Holy Land in the 13th century.

ISLAMIC Withdrawal of both after 430 AD drove the word of Mohammed across North Africa to Spain and into France. Conversion of Muslims weakened their reach on Europe's arctic. In time Christians regained control in Asia Minor and took Constantinople in 1453, toppling the Byzantine Empire.



performance: LUCZE BULO/Schoene Minka

This song was brought to Berlin by the Cossacks invited by the Prussian King to settle in Potsdam 1814. They accepted the offer and founded ALEKSANDROVKA, built a church and wooden houses which still stand today - their song Lucze Bulo became German Folk: Schoene Minka - Beethoven and C. M. von Weber loved the tune and wrote famous variations which are today performed in all concert halls of the world.



7) Many nomadic cultures live within the Russian population. One of them are the Gypsies who gave Russian tunes a special flavour. Interesting is that the Gypsies **do despise** any deeper attachment to 'LAND' as it **'weighs down your soul' and traps your spirit!** Compare that to our Aboriginals who **very much depend on it.** Interestingly both flags (both designed quite 'recently') have graphic 'similarities':



Aboriginal: yellow sun with black sky and red soil



Gypsy: blue sky with a red, forever turning wheel over the green steppes

performance: ...Dark Eyes..one of the most famous gypsy songs:

8) Many different cultures live within the Russian population. One of the most significant are the Jews who blended both traditions wonderfully in their music we now call Klezmer. When they fled to Russia in the 14th century they brought medieval German with them. Over time that mixed with traces of Russian, Polish and Hebrew to YIDDISH. Dieter sings these songs always in Yiddish.

performance: TUMBALALAIKA.

9) A true song of the world is Kalinka, the song about the humble rowan tree.

performance: KALINKA

Dieter and Ally Hauptmann, awardwinning performers, on the balalaika (Sevastopol 2020).
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