

# AMERICAN BALALAIKA SYMPHONY



## Unique Virginia Orchestra Selected to Perform at Strathmore Music Center January 16

The Alexandria-based American Balalaika Symphony (ABS), one of only seven such orchestras in the United States, will perform at the Music Center at Strathmore, January 16, 2010. Selected from among 33 other groups in a tri-state performing arts competition hosted by the Strathmore center for the arts in Bethesda, the ABS will present a stunning program of Russian and Ukrainian music by composers both well known and virtually unheard of in the United States.

Much of the music, such as Kulikov's *Rhapsody on Volga Themes*, Andreyev's *Bright Moon*, and the haunting *Evening Bells*, derives from ancient folk traditions that evoke the rivers, woods, and steppes of old Russia. Other selections, including the rousing *Zaporiz'kyi Cossack March*, Kornev's *Volga Quadrille*, and *Dance* from the *Polesskaya Suite* by Glebov, recall the hearty peasant life of old Russia. More recent selections include a bitter-sweet waltz from one of Shostakovich's *Jazz Suites*, and the hard-driving overture to *The Children of Captain Grant*, a Dunayevsky film score for based on the Jules Verne novel of the same name.

A similar program will be performed for Virginia fans of the ABS on January 23 at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, the orchestra's home base in Alexandria.

For those unfamiliar with a balalaika orchestra, it is similar to a traditional symphony orchestra except that it uses Russian plucked string instruments, such as the *balalaika* and *domra*, rather than bowed instruments such as the violin and cello. Sustained string tone is achieved by rapid *tremolo* playing, which give the orchestra its distinctive shimmering sound.



What makes ABS different from most other balalaika groups in the US is that it compliments its unusual instruments with full wind and

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[www.ABSorchestra.org](http://www.ABSorchestra.org)

includes rarely heard melodies from folk songs to symphonic masterpieces in its repertoire of classical favorites – often with virtuoso soloists from around the world.

Led by Arlington resident and Artistic Director Peter Trofimenko, the orchestra blends the richness of the Russian Music School with the best of European and American music to create a truly unique American orchestra. The majority of its 60-plus musicians are residents of Northern Virginia.



Trofimenko, who also conducts the orchestra, said he was delighted to have the opportunity to perform at the Music Center. “This will give so many people the opportunity to experience the unique sound of our instruments as well as the timeless beauty of the music,” he said. The program, *From the Cities to the Steppes: Music of Old Russia* will run for one night only.

For great music and a fascinating glimpse into Russian music and culture, don’t miss the American Balalaika Symphony at the Music Center at Strathmore on January 16.

*For more information, visit [www.Strathmore.org](http://www.Strathmore.org), or the American Balalaika Symphony at [ABSorchestra.org](http://ABSorchestra.org).*