

AMERICAN BALALAICA SYMPHONY

From Russia with Love: The American Balalaika Symphony Bringing Russian Music and Culture to Washington, D.C.

A distinctive feature of Russian musical culture is the large balalaika orchestra, which first arose in Russia in the late 19th century, evolved vigorously over the last 100 years, and soon appeared in other countries as well. Today, with only seven balalaika orchestras in the entire United States, the Washington, D.C. area boasts one of the best and most versatile – the American Balalaika Symphony.



The ABS is a full symphony orchestra comprised of an internationally diverse mix of 50-plus musicians from the Washington, D.C. metro area. As Russian audiences know well, in a balalaika orchestra, the customary bowed strings of the violin family are replaced by plucked balalaikas and domras in several sizes. Sustained string tone is achieved by rapid *tremolo* playing, which gives the orchestra its distinctive shimmering sound.

Unlike most other balalaika orchestras, the ABS augments its balalaikas and domras with full wind and percussion sections, and presents a stunning range of music from beloved Russian folk melodies to classical favorites to rarely heard symphonic masterpieces – often with prominent virtuoso soloists from around the world. Indeed, by blending the richness of the Russian Music School, with the best of European and American music, founder, artistic director, and conductor Peter Trofimenko – himself a balalaika virtuoso – has created a truly unique American orchestra that, with each concert, produces a rare and wonderful experience for DC music lovers.

Although a young orchestra, the American Balalaika Symphony is developing a dedicated following throughout the Washington metropolitan area for its distinctive performances and uncommon repertoire, including rare and seldom heard pieces, all individually arranged for a balalaika orchestra by Maestro Trofimenko, who also lectures, teaches and conducts in Russia every year. But the ABS has also been recognized for its achievements far beyond its home base in Alexandria, VA.



In 2007, ABS was awarded the Grand Prize in the 2007 International Music Golden Trophy Competition, held in New York. A panel of six distinguished judges from the United States, Japan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine selected the ABS from among 87 participants from around the world. Also in 2007, ABS was honored at the 5th annual international competition, “Musical Vladivostok 2007,” held in Vladivostok, Russia under the auspices of Russia’s Federal Culture and Cinematography Agency. In May 2008, ABS conductor and artistic director, Peter Trofimenko was appointed to the prestigious Russian Academy of Folk Music – the only living conductor of a folk orchestra to be honored in this way. And, in 2009, the American Balalaika Symphony was selected as the winner of the Music Center at Strathmore’s 25th Anniversary competition, besting 34 others for a fully sponsored performance at the Music Center on January 16, 2010.

For great music and a warm and hospitable atmosphere that provides a fascinating glimpse into Russian music and culture, the American Balalaika Symphony is not to be missed. In addition to its performance at the Strathmore on January 16, the ABS will perform at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center in Alexandria on January 23. For more information about the American Balalaika Symphony, visit their website at www.ABSorchestra.org.

The American Balalaika Symphony: *Experience It!*
www.ABSorchestra.org