

**SBO SUTHERLAND SCHOOL OF ARTS
13TH FEBRUARY**

Our first concert for the year got off to a good start. The feedback suggests it was a resounding success with a full house and enthusiastic applause. The concert as usual, consisted of great Russian folk music, augmented by skilled soloists and the lovely voice of singer Sophia Markovtzeva.

We are now blessed with several new young soloists. Prominent among them are Oliver Rathje and Matthew Morgan who gave renditions of "People Blame Me" and "I Met You" respectively on prima domras. Our accordionist Richard She gave a spirited solo of the "Russian Sailor's Dance" from the ballet "Red Poppy".

As always our brilliant cimbalist Lucy Voronov, her hammers darting across her 76 strings, brought the most enthusiastic applause. On this occasion, it was an outstanding solo rendition of "Concerto for Domra", played on cimbalom.

But the highlight of the evening was the new costumes. The audience saw us for the first time in our resplendent Russian garments, specially made in Russia. Fortunately most were too far away to see the sweat dripping off our brows.

Russian folk music tends to inspire romantic images of frozen steppes and jingling troikas pulled by a team of horses across the endless snow. This was in stark contrast to Sutherland that evening. It was 30°C but on the stage under the bright lights, it felt more like 40°C!

NEW COSTUMES

Our magnificent new costumes were hand-made for each of our musicians by professional costume manufacturers in the Russia's far-eastern city of Blagoveshchensk, where SBO performed several concerts in September 2016.

Tanya Jephtha, our prima domra player, being one of the few native-Russian speakers in the orchestra, managed the whole process of measuring each musician and ordering. This provided the vital liaison between the SBO and the Blagoveshchensk costume designers to produce authentic Russian costumes but with an Australian climate in mind.

The men's shirts are the most elaborate yet made for the SBO. The embroidery is of floral designs studded with black stones, radiating out across a crimson background. The shirts are made of cotton and there is a hint of the firebird as the central motif. Said bass domra player Patrick O'Neill,

"The waist line has a magnificent gold-braid belt, which I'm yet to learn how to make stay on. Some of the more amply waist-lined members like me are working on how to stop them from falling off."

But it's the women's costumes that are most magnificent. They are of a similar design with an embroidered crimson skirt, white blouse and beautiful vest, topped by a magnificent traditional Russian kokoshnik.

The SBO is most grateful to Anneke Palfy, a former SBO domra player, for her generous contribution towards the purchase of what are the most elaborate costumes the orchestra has ever had. The costumes with their unique design are authentic examples of Russian artistry and are proudly worn by the members.



Victor Serghie, Musical Director, introducing the orchestra's instruments to the audience at the Canberra festival

NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

On the 17th – 18th of February, the SBO travelled to Canberra for the National Multicultural Festival. This was a massive cultural celebration of the many different nationalities that make up today's Australia. The festival coincided with the Lunar (Chinese) New Year so unsurprisingly there were dragon dances and many displays from south-east Asia.

The SBO was invited to present two concerts of 45 minutes each; one on the Saturday afternoon the other on the Sunday morning on stages specially erected in different parts of the central Civic area.

“Planning for an event like this was always going to be difficult,” said musical director Victor Serghie. “We had very little time to set up. We had to get large instruments like the contrabass balalaikas into position, in pedestrian only areas, which means everything had to be carried in. Also, everywhere you go, there is the sound of other groups, drumming, dancing, singing, all within earshot,” he said, while he was trying to squeeze 25 musicians onto a stage.



Richard She, accordion and Sophia Markovtzeva, vocalist

The SBO proudly wore their magnificent new costumes, which competed very well with the other performers in this carnival atmosphere. Everywhere you looked there were people in diverse national costumes, including a troupe of Russian singers and dancers from Melbourne.

“What the organisers of the festival basically want is noise, lots of noise,” said Victor. “A festival like this is not the place for the sort of subtle dynamics for which the SBO has become so well known. A Multicultural Festival is ‘in your face and in your ears’, which means that I had to choose the program very carefully,” he said.

“It was a nightmare for the sound engineers,” said contrabass balalaika player Bruce Barker. “During the first concert, they had not turned off the background music coming out of

one of the loud speakers on our stage. So we had to fight against that!” he said. “Then for the Sunday concert, we had to fight against the diesel generator roaring away behind us. But despite all of that we all sounded pretty good.”

Lucy Voronov got rapturous applause for her rendition of “Two Step” while singer, Sophia Markovtzeva got a brilliant reception for “Those Were the Days”. “It’s actually a very old Russian folk song,” said Sophia, “but whenever I sing it, the only thing the audience can hear, is the Seekers’ version, ‘Those Were The Days My Friends’, so I sing it half in Russian and half in English.”



Prima domra players, Matthew Morgan and Oliver Rathje, did some walking around at the height of the festival. “From what we could see, it seems we drew one of the biggest crowds in the festival on the Saturday afternoon,” they said.

Amongst the audience was a large turnout of staff from the Russian embassy who had contributed valuable financial assistance to help the orchestra participate.

CAN YOU HELP ?

The SBO is always seeking to perform at new venues and maybe you know somewhere that we can visit and introduce a new audience to our beautiful Russian folk music.

We also need **additional musicians** so if you come up with any ideas please contact our Musical Director, Victor Serghie on 0409 058 895 or our Secretary Oliver Rathje on 0417 603 356

UP AND COMING CONCERTS BY THE ORCHESTRA

THE RUSSIAN CLUB - SYDNEY

Sunday, 29 July, 2018

Concert starts at 2:30 pm

5-7 Albert Rd, Strathfield NSW

Ticket prices: \$35 adult / \$30 concession & students
\$10 children under 12

Tickets & enquiries 02) 8850 3623

Tickets available at the door or buy your tickets online

Click on web link: [Try Booking](#)

ROBERTSON SCHOOL OF ARTS

Sunday, 16 September, 2018

Concert starts at 1.30 pm

Hoddle Street, Robertson NSW

Ticket prices: \$30 adult / \$25 concession & students
\$10 children under 12

Tickets available at the door or buy your tickets online

Click on web link: [Try Booking](#)

CONCERTS UNDER NEGOTIATION

Illawarra - Shellharbour City Auditorium

Ulladulla - Entertainment Centre

Taree - Manning Entertainment Centre