

AMERICAN BALALAIKA SYMPHONY

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American Balalaika Symphony Wins Strathmore Concert Competition

ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American Balalaika Symphony (ABS) has been selected as the winner of the Music Center at Strathmore’s 25th Anniversary “Great Strathmore Giveaway” competition. The announcement was made Tuesday, April 21, as part of Strathmore’s presentation of its 2009-2010 concert season.

Thirty-three artists from throughout the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area competed for a fully sponsored performance at the Strathmore next year. As the competition winner, the ABS will perform in the Strathmore’s main Concert Hall on January 16, 2010.

Founded in 2001, the American Balalaika Symphony is a full symphony orchestra comprised of internationally diverse mix of musicians from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Each concert season, ABS performs 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.

Unlike a traditional symphony orchestra, a balalaika orchestra 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 created by rapid *tremolo* playing, which gives the balalaika orchestra a distinctive shimmering sound. Today there are fewer than seven balalaika orchestras in the United States. Unlike most of the others, ABS rounds out its balalaika ensemble with full wind and percussion sections and unusual additions, such as the *bayan*, the *gusli*, and *sopilka*.

ABS Artistic Director and Conductor Peter Trofimenko 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 these instruments as well as the timeless beauty of the music,” he said. For its appearance at the Strathmore, the American Balalaika Symphony will perform a program of seldom-heard 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*, the haunting *Evening Bells*, derives from ancient folk traditions and evokes the rivers, woods, and steppes of old Russia. Other works will include Gutsal’s rousing *Zaporitz’kyi Cossack March*, and *Waltz No. 2* from Shostakovich’s *Jazz Suites*.

The American Balalaika Symphony, a resident orchestra of the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center in Alexandria, VA, is also the winner of International Music Golden Trophy Competition held last year in New York City, and the Russian competition “Musical Vladivostok 2007.”

Founder, artistic director and conductor Peter Trofimenko was classically trained in Kiev in balalaika performance, conducting, arrangement and composition. He came to the United States in 1993. For more information, please visit ABSOrchestra.org.