

AMERICAN BALALAICA SYMPHONY

NEWS RELEASE

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American Balalaika Symphony Holds International Music Competition

The American Balalaika Symphony (ABS), under the directorship of founder and artistic director Peter Trofimenko, held the first annual 2006 ABS International Music Competition on December 29-30, 2006 in Alexandria, VA.

The competition, which brought together musicians from several different countries including Belarus, Israel, Japan, Mexico, USA, Russia, and Ukraine, is designed to foster international competition, creativity and friendship among aspiring classical artists, particularly those engaged in study of the instruments used by the American Balalaika Symphony.

The competition was conducted in four rounds. In Round One, participants were required to play an instrument used by the ABS and to perform a selection chosen for them with the entire symphony orchestra. Instrument choices included the Russian balalaika, domra, gusli, cimbalom and bayan, as well as the more usual brass, percussion, mandolin, banjo, guitar, and accordion.

In Round Two, musicians performed a solo presentation of a required composition. Round Three consisted of a solo performance of a freestyle piece.

Judging the competition was a panel of five highly qualified practicing musicians, teachers, concert performers, and laureates of national and international competitions: Dr. P. Trofimenko, chairman (USA), E. Belashova (Russia), U. Biassonau (Belarus), David Chaney (USA), and Ye. Mansurov (Uzbekistan).

After the preliminary selection, eight participants advanced to the final solo rounds, each delivering exhaustive performances. The winners were unanimously decided as follows: 1st Place awarded to Alexander Shpak (Russia), bayan; 2nd Place awarded to Gregory Rivkin (Israel), trumpet; and 3rd Place awarded to Annie Trimber (USA), flute. The judges also awarded special Diplomas for accompaniment to Karina Bruk and Joseph Lawson (USA).

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“This small competition gives me great faith in the future of classical music, and especially in the future of instruments that are so central to the American Balalaika Symphony,” Trofimenko said.

“Each of these young people is so talented, so dedicated not only to the music and the instruments, but to performing and promoting it around the globe – it’s simply inspiring,” Trofimenko said. “The first annual ABS International Competition was a great success, and I look forward to many more.”

About the American Balalaika Symphony

The American Balalaika Symphony is a full symphony orchestra comprised of an internationally diverse mix of professional and dedicated amateur musicians from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Founded in 2001, the American Balalaika Symphony performs a range of music from beloved Russian folk melodies to classical favorites to rarely heard symphonic masterpieces. Renown virtuoso soloists from the Russian Federation perform regularly with the Symphony each concert season.

A balalaika orchestra is similar to a traditional symphony orchestra, but uses Russian plucked string instruments, such as the balalaika and domra, rather than Western bowed instruments such as the violin and cello. Sustained “string” tone is produced by the frequent use of rapid tremolo playing, which gives the balalaika orchestra its distinctive shimmering sound. Today there are less than a dozen or so balalaika orchestras in the United States.

Unlike most of the others, The American Balalaika Symphony rounds out its traditional balalaika ensemble with full wind and percussion sections similar to those of a conventional symphony but with unusual additions, such as the bayan (Russian button accordion), gusli (Russian table harp), and cimbalom (similar to a hammered dulcimer).

About Peter Trofimenko

Founder, artistic director and conductor Peter Trofimenko, who lives and works in the Washington, D.C. area, was classically trained in Kiev in balalaika performance, conducting, arrangement and composition. He came to the United States in 1993.

By embracing the rich traditions of the Russian Music School, while drawing on the best of European and American musical traditions, founder, artistic director and conductor Peter Trofimenko has created a unique orchestral group unlike any in the area, or indeed, the Nation.

For more information, visit the ABS website at: www.balalaika.biz.

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