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MONITOR PRESENTS

# VIRTUOSI OF THE ACCORDION BALALAIKA & DOMRA

WITH ORCHESTRAS  
OF FOLK INSTRUMENTS



A Monitor International Compact Disc

## INTRODUCTION

The piquant and highly rhythmic quality of the Russian folk instrument orchestra is as unique as it is ingratiating. Although in its usually constituted form the Russian folk instrument orchestra may contain anything from birch-bark whistles to wooden spoons, the presence of three instruments produce this fundamental and recognizable quality: the Bayan (or Accordion), the Balalaika, and the Domra. Russian folk dancers and folk choruses require this trio in instrumental accompaniment as surely as the *Song of the Volga Boatmen* requires a bass voice!

This recording pays tribute to these instruments and to the remarkable virtuosi who play them with such incredible agility.

## THE BALALAIKA

Of all the string-pizzicato instruments the Balalaika is the most popular Russian folk instrument. It is three-stringed and bears a resemblance to the Domra.

The outer appearance of the Balalaika, as it was known in the 18th century, changed gradually and the very well known traditional Balalaika, created and improved by V. V. Andreyev, consists of a long neck and a three-cornered body, slightly rounded off at the bottom.

The flat sounding board and the neck are on different levels at obtuse angles. There are 19 frets on the flat surface of the neck.

The Balalaika is played with four fingers; the thumb is used for the pizzicato only and the rest of the fingers, with the exception of the little finger, for the melody.

The Balalaika is an indispensable part of every Russian folk instrument orchestra.

The major balalaika work on this recording is the Balalaika Concerto by Yuri Shishakov (b. 1925) who is on the faculty of the Gnessin Pedagogical Institute in Moscow. The Concerto pays thematic homage to the Balalaika's Tartar origins. There are but two movements. The first is an engaging *Molto moderato*, the second a free-wheeling Finale marked simply *Vivo*.

## THE ACCORDION (Bayan)

The other major work on this recording is the Concerto for Accordion (Bayan) by Nikolai Chaikin. As befits a son of the Ukraine, Nikolai Chaikin (b. 1915) is a product of the Kiev Conservatory. At present he is on the faculty of the Gnessin Pedagogical Institute of Moscow - where one of his prize students, incidentally, was the same bayan virtuoso Yuri Kazakov who is featured in this recording. Several of Chaikin's works have earned considerable acclaim in Russia, among them a comic opera based on "All's Well that Ends Well" and the Concerto herewith, which Kazakov has performed with the country's leading orchestras.

Like all the other music on this program Chaikin's Concerto is harmonically and otherwise orthodox. The movement markings are in turn *Moderato poco maestoso*, *Andante non troppo*, and *Allegro vivo*.

Special interest attaches, nevertheless, to Chaikin's elegantly grateful writing for the solo instrument. Most of our western musical institutions do not take the accordion very seriously, but in Russia the bayan may be elected as a major by any student of applied music in the various state academies. Consequently there has developed a sizable repertory of "classical" works for it, of which the Chaikin Concerto enjoys the widest appeal.

Accordionists will want to know that the bayan is straight-tuned, so to speak, which obviates its use for tremolo-laden polkas, waltzes and such. By definition, then, it is a "long-hair" instrument on the Russian musical scene. Compared with the standard 120-bass accordions it is rather small in size. The treble keyboard consists of three rows of buttons (tuned chromatically) comprising five octaves. There are eight stops with which to alter tones or, if necessary, to raise or lower any given note by an octave. The bass keyboard is unique in that it can provide chromatically tuned single basses or the usual array of fixed chords; the player has only to throw a lever.

## THE DOMRA

The existence of the Domra can be traced as far back as the 16th century. It is a descendent of the Oriental musical instrument, the *Tunbar*, a kind of lute with a very long neck, but the appearance of the Domra changed with time.

At first the Domra had only two strings; the present Domra is three-stringed, its body is round, slightly protruding at the bottom, and flat at the top. The moderately long neck is divided by frets; the strings are stretched on top of the frets. The sound comes from an opening in the middle of the flat side.

The Domra is played with a plectrum; only the pizzicato is played with the thumb. Domras come in four sizes. The smallest has the highest tone, the largest, the lowest. They are mostly played in folk instrument orchestras together with other string instruments. Instruments courtesy R. Bab Co.

Cover Photo: Michael Stillman

# VIRTUOSI OF THE ACCORDION, BALALAIKA & DOMRA

## THE BALALAIKA

CONCERTO FOR BALALAIKA (Yuri Shishakov) 11:28

1. Molto moderato (6:38)
2. Vivo (5:20)

Mikhail Rozhkov, Balalaika

State Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments conducted by Victor Smirnov

3. VARIATIONS FOR BALALAIKA (F. Odinets) 8:50

Boris Feoktistov, Balalaika

Moscow Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments (A. Novikov)

Conducted by G. Stolyarov

4. CONCERT VARIATIONS on a Siberian Humorous Song "Vatalinka" 8:00?

Eugene Aksentiev, Balalaika

Moscow Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments

conducted by I. Gulyaev

5. TOCCATA FOR BALALAIKA (Reznikov) 3:17

Eugene Aksentiev, Balalaika

## THE ACCORDION (Bayan)

CONCERTO FOR ACCORDION (Nikolai Chaikin) 25:12

6. Moderato poco maestoso (9:37)
7. Andante non troppo (9:58)
8. Allegro vivo (5:34)

Yuri Kazakov, Accordion

Symphony Orchestra of the Moscow Region

conducted by Veronica Dudarova

9. SNOW FLURRIES from "Suite for Folk Instruments" (Y. Zaritski) 3:00

Vladimir Boyashev, Accordion

Andreyev Orchestra of Folk Instruments conducted by A. Mikhailov

10. CONCERT VARIATIONS (Y. Vorontsov) 5:08

Ivan Rudenko, Accordion

The Voronezh Folk Instrument Orchestra conducted by P. Smatko

## THE DOMRA

11. DOMRA from the "Suite for Folk Instruments" (Y. Zaritski) 7:22

Emmanuel Sheikman, Domra

Andreyev Orchestra of Folk Instruments conducted by A. Mikhailov

Total Playing Time: 73:13



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# Virtuosi of the ACCORDION, BALALAIKA and DOMRA

## CONCERTO FOR BALALAIKA

(Yuri Shishakov) 11:28

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2. 2. Vivo

Mikhail Rozhkov, Balalaika

3. **VARIATIONS FOR BALALAIKA**

(F. Odinetz) 8:50

Boris Feoktistov, Balalaika

4. **CONCERT VARIATIONS FOR BALALAIKA**

(A. Novikov) 8:00

Eugene Aksentiev, Balalaika

5. **TOCCATA FOR BALALAIKA**

(Reznikov) 3:17

Eugene Aksentiev, Balalaika

**CONCERTO FOR ACCORDION**

(Nikolai Chaikin) 25:12

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7. 2. Andante non troppo

8. 3. Allegro vivo

Yuri Kazakov, Accordion

9. **SNOW FLURRIES FOR ACCORDION**

(Y. Zaritski) 3:00

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10. **CONCERT VARIATIONS FOR ACCORDION**

(Y. Vorontsov) 5:08

Ivan Rudenko, Accordion

11. **DOMRA**

(Y. Zaritski) 7:22

Emmanuel Sheikman, Domra

Total Timing: 73:13

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