



SYDNEY BALALAIKA ORCHESTRA

# NOVOSTI



December 2018 | Issue No. 26/2018

## SAINT SERGIUS OF RADONEZH

21 OCTOBER 2018



Every year the Sydney Balalaika Orchestra plays at the retirement home in Cabramatta named after the famous Russian Orthodox Saint Sergius of Radonezh, and this year was no different. The orchestra plays free for the residents who are amongst our most appreciative of audiences.

*'For many years at St Sergius, I have introduced the orchestra using the Russian language,'* says musical director Victor Serghie. *'But more and more I now find I am using English,'* he said.

*'Sadly the core of our original Russian-born audience members are getting fewer and fewer with the passage of time, so it is inevitable that English is creeping in. Anyway, the musicians like it. You can barely count the number of native Russian speakers in the orchestra on the fingers of one hand!'*

The repertoire of the SBO is now enormous, so with an audience like this it is an excellent opportunity to revive some of our older items. *'On the program today, were Volga River and Towards the Stars,'* said singer Sophia Markovtzev.



*'Many audience members would remember these songs from our CDs years ago,'* she said. *'Volga River is one of the earlier songs recorded for the SBO, while Towards the Stars goes back to the days of the USA and USSR space race. I suppose you could say it was the Russian equivalent of Elton John's Rocket Man. But*

*Towards the Stars was written a lot earlier,'* she said.

The staff of St Sergius put on a lunch for the orchestra giving musicians a chance to wander round the newly created gardens surrounding the retirement home.

## ROBERTSON CONCERT

28 OCTOBER 2018

In spring, we performed in the Southern Highlands village of Robertson, famous for its fogs, potatoes and cheese. The last time the SBO performed here was in 2007, eleven years ago. We arrived at the School of Arts Hall, a charming building that was improved in the thirties, but dates back to the late nineteenth century.

Fortunately the fog for which *'Robbo'* is famous held off. Unfortunately so did the audience, which was not enormous – but then neither was the orchestra full-strength. And that was just as well. If the full orchestra had been able to come, we would never have fitted everyone onto the School of Arts' tiny stage!

Fortunately the audience was bigger than the orchestra (*just*), which made for an intimate concert with some very appreciative responses. *'We absolutely loved the music and would love to come again. Not only was the orchestra fantastic but the singer was outstanding,'* wrote Anabel Parbury.

*'I just wanted to let you know how much my friends and I enjoyed the orchestra,'* said Robin White. *'It was an uplifting and unusual experience and I was most impressed with the enthusiasm and camaraderie,'* she said.

What a lot of people didn't know, was that the person after whom the *'Robbo'* was named had a Russian connection. The village was named after a feisty politician, Sir John Robertson, who was Premier of NSW, 1868–1870.

Sir John became father-in-law to the internationally renowned Russian scientist and naturalist, Nicholas Miklouho-Maclay, who married Robertson's daughter, Margaret Emma. She went back with him to Russia. Sir John Robertson never forgave Miklouho-Maclay for taking his daughter away.



## SBO CHAMBER GROUP – ‘SMALL’ IS BECOMING POPULAR!

The SBO's players often form small groups where there is a need for fewer musicians or 'pop up' mood music.

On Sunday, 4 November, a group of six SBO musicians played a few numbers at the Pioneer Theatre in Castle Hill. SBO members donated their time to the event, as the Hills Harmony Choir had arranged it as a fundraiser for Lifeline. 'We were feeling a bit thin on the ground with only a fifth of the usual orchestra on stage, so we invited the Harmony Choir to join us for our last number,' said domra and guitar player, Matt Morgan. 'About a dozen of them (all men) stood on a riser behind us and hummed along to Volga Boatmen,' he recalled.



On 11 November, nine players assembled at the Art Gallery of New South Wales during a special showing of Masters of Modern Art from the Hermitage, of St Petersburg renown. And they certainly set a very Russian mood.



'We had a set list of a dozen numbers we intended to play and we enjoyed the opportunity to relax and play in the background, rather than performing to a set audience in a concert hall,' said Matt Morgan. Though they didn't remain in the background for long. 'We managed to "catch" guests who loved our music, stopped to listen then came up to ask about our instruments,' he explained.



This was not a new experience for Matt. 'I remember visiting the Hermitage in St Petersburg on my first overseas tour with the SBO, so seeing Paul Gauguin's The Month of Mary (pictured) again brought up a lot of nostalgia for that trip,' he said.

'I think everyone involved with these smaller concerts is eager for more of them. They present a challenge – without a conductor, we are forced to look and listen to each other much more closely,' Matt explained.

The SBO is often asked to play smaller gigs so it looks as if we will see more of these 'chamber' groups in the future.



## A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS



The Sydney Balalaika Orchestra would like to wish all our supporters a very Happy Christmas & New Year.

The hot, summer celebrations in Australia are so different to the snowy, Russian festive season – in more ways than the weather!

In Russia, 'Santa' is known as Дед Мороз (D'yed Moroz) or 'Grandfather Frost'. He is usually accompanied by the 'Snow Maiden' or Снегурочка (Snegurochka).

But in Russia, Дед Мороз wears blue.

And while children more typically receive gifts on New Year's Eve than on Christmas Day, Christmas itself falls on 7 January because the Julian calendar is still used by the Russian Orthodox Church.



**A very Happy  
Christmas & New Year to  
you all and we'll see you  
in 2019!**

## CONCERTS

### UP AND COMING

Conservatorium of Music - Sydney  
Slavic Festival - Brisbane September 2019  
Tour USA, November 2019

### UNDER NEGOTIATION

The Hub - Springwood  
Pioneer Theatre, Castle Hill  
Sacred Hearts - Singleton  
Ulladulla Community Centre

### 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.

**[www.balalaika.com](http://www.balalaika.com)**