

# Novosti

Balalaika  
NEWS

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**P**estilence, war and flood! The Sydney Balalaika Orchestra has always been drawn together by, and united, through one single thing: MUSIC. And we are staunchly non-political. In difficult times, music can foster hope and joy, and it is with these intentions that we continue to enjoy one another's company, and have persevered through lockdowns and restrictions, rehearsing to ready ourselves to play music for you.

Many of you know (and we are proud to repeat!) that we are a multicultural group indeed. Our 25-plus members are drawn from numerous nationalities across the globe - we are Armenian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, American, Irish, Chinese, Malaysian, Danish, Indian, Serbian, Japanese: in a word, Australian. Music is said to be the great unifier and it is this camaraderie that music brings, that matters to us most of all.

In light of world events we have taken the decision that the concert scheduled for 22 May 2022 at the Russian Club will not take place. Future dates are to be advised.

We are, however, looking forward to returning to Richmond on Sunday 29th May, 2022 for a concert at the Richmond Club Ltd (corner of East Market Street and Francis Street, Richmond). Last year in May we performed at North Richmond Panther's Club and we are delighted to return to the area.

During our recent floods, this area has been particularly badly affected and the Orchestra will be donating all the proceeds from this concert to the flood-affected local community. We hope you will join us in supporting this cause and in so doing, enjoy an uplifting afternoon of music with the Sydney Balalaika Orchestra.

**Richard She**  
President, SBO



## BALALAIKA ORCHESTRA FUND RAISER

On Sunday 29th May the Sydney Balalaika Orchestra's performance at the Richmond Club will donate all proceeds from the concert to the Hawkesbury's Helping Hands organisation to assist flood victims.

Hawkesbury's Helping Hands Inc (HHH) was founded in 2011 by a young Cassidy Strickland, when she saw a homeless man rummaging through their family garbage bin for food. Cassidy was aged 8 at the time. Cassidy thought that food was dignity, and dignity was fundamental. Her mother, Linda, supported her daughter's instinct - and so Hawkesbury's Helping Hands was born.

Every Saturday and Sunday evening HHH serves free meals to its friends in a local park. That's over 500,000 meals in over 10 years, served without judgment. HHH also provides clothing, breakfasts, back-packs with school supplies, and are also very active working with other charities to help with flood relief.

"The Sydney Balalaika Orchestra is delighted to be lending a hand to Hawkesbury's Helping Hands," said musical director, Victor Serghie. "We ourselves are a not-for-profit organisation. None of our players gets paid and our mission is to bring music to as many people as possible," he said.

"This will not be the first time we have donated concert proceeds. Some years ago we did a concert tour in New Zealand. It was shortly after the Christchurch earthquake and the proceeds from one of the concerts went towards earthquake relief," he said.

The concert will be held in the Richmond Club at the corner of East Market Street and Francis Street, Richmond, starting at 2.00PM.

For more details please refer to our website  
[www.balalaika.com.au](http://www.balalaika.com.au)



Geoff Brain

**G**eoff Brain is our talented and accomplished flautist who teaches high school music by day. He picked up the flute aged 12 and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Music. He has tutored many students at various levels of musical achievement and, apart from shepherding senior school students through the critical years of the HSC, Geoff prides himself on encouraging his pupils to ready themselves for performance.

“There are so many people out there who are musically talented who never get to show it off,” Geoff told *Novosti*. “At school during COVID, performances were banned and our faculty concerts were cancelled. It’s important to showcase the creative arts, and it will be great when concerts start up again soon, post-COVID. Extracurricular music at school definitely takes a lot of energy to co-ordinate. It takes a lot of energy from the students too, of course, and it can be stressful for them to play in front of others, especially when they might not be used to it. But it’s an important art – performance – and can bring so much enjoyment to musicians, singers, and audiences alike.”

“I first connected with the Orchestra through a performance. That’s a bit of a comedy, actually,” Geoff laughs at the memory. “It was through Lina, who was SBO bayanist at that time – and who became a close friend of mine. She had turned up in my class in the University of Western Sydney’s music degree program in the first week, after she had just won a public raw onion eating contest in Orientation Week.

This was in front of literally hundreds of people. When I spotted her sitting behind me in Music I instantly said, ‘Hey, you’re the onion girl!’ We hit it off. Lina took me to an Orchestra concert in

Strathfield a while later, where I met Victor and heard the music. Tanya Jephtha (prima domrist) started at the same time, I remember. Victor started arranging a part for the flute for me, because at that point there was no flute player in the group.”

“I didn’t really come from a musical family as such, not in the sense of professional musicians. But a number of members of my family were musical. Both of my maternal grandparents, who were English, played the piano, and my grandmother sang also. My dad’s mum sang, too. My mother still keeps her grandmother’s piano in her house, despite the fact it can’t even be tuned any more. It’s a memento. I have some of her piano studies and English folk sheet music that has been kept in the family, one of which is so beautiful, illustrated with line drawings, that I’ve had it framed and hung on a wall to appreciate.”

“It’s going to be great to get out in front of people again in May and play to an audience. We rehearse regularly, which we all enjoy, but it’s the audience that really makes the day. So I’m looking forward to our Sunday afternoon concert at the Richmond Club.”



Tanya and Geoff

### CAN YOU HELP?

The SBO is always seeking to perform at new venues. Maybe you know a venue where we can introduce our beautiful folk music to a new audience. 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 President, **Richard She on 0402 179 098.**

