



Photos by Leon Chuck, Pressbox Photo

On Sunday afternoon, St. Paul's Episcopal Church presented a performance by The Russian Duo as a part of the church's 2019-20 Music Series. Approximately 175 music lovers enjoyed the performance by Oleg Kruglyakov and Terry Boyarsky.

Russian Duo serenades St. Paul's Church

By James Leach

On a sunny, Sunday afternoon, more than 175 music lovers turned out to St. Paul's Episcopal Church to enjoy The Russian Duo in concert. As the first of three concerts in the second year of this new concert series, St. Paul's Presents, The Russian Duo presented more than a dozen songs in 90 minutes featuring the virtuosic performances of Oleg Kruglyakov, balalaika, and Terry Boyarsky at the Steinway grand.

Based out of Cleveland, the duo's set list included traditional Russian folk songs, Polish polonaises, and contemporary tunes composed in Ragtime style. Dressed in black boots, black pants, and a black Russian-style satin shirt (custom made by Terry), Oleg's virtuosic technique coaxed out of his instrument the most amazing variety of tone colors, dynamics, and emotions.

Anyone who has ever seen the movie *Dr. Zhivago* is well acquainted with the sound of this traditional Russian instrument. As Kruglyakov

explained and demonstrated his triangular, wooden instrument to an attentive audience, he compared his balalaika to the mandolin. In a humorous demonstration, he managed to keep a song going while flipping, spinning, and rotating his instrument up and down, all around, and even under his leg.

The three playing techniques he employs alternate among a simple strumming pattern, a rapid tremolo, and individually plucked notes—without a pick—which had no trouble projecting in the reverberant acoustical space of St. Paul's nave. Kruglyakov also uses a flashy, right-hand, circular fanning technique as well as a method of producing vibrato on long, sustained notes.

Boyarsky was no mere piano accompanist as she went note-for-note in many speedy passages, making it all look much too easy to keep up with the Siberian master. And not just a talent for stitching together music passages and tailoring varied pro-

grams, Boyarsky wore her very own hand-made sleeveless, v-neck formal gown in burgundy velvet that looked stunning. She brought to mind Ginger Rogers in high heels keeping up with Fred Astaire and looking fabulous every step of the way.

Toward the end of the program, Kruglyakov created a Russian *Trio* when he belted out a couple of Russian folk songs in a full, strong voice. It was so effective that I wished he had been alternating vocals throughout the program. One vocal was a strophic tune with verses about a famous Soviet general who faced down the Germans in World War II. The other vocal was a traditional tune from the Urals.

Their program created many moods as they alternated among songs cheerful and doleful, dancing and lyrical, folk and classical, virtuosic and simple, including a hypnotic passacaglia by the Baroque composer, George Frideric Handel. Earlier in the day, during communion at the 10:30 a.m. service at St. Paul's, the duo treated



the parishioners to a beautiful serenade by Franz Schubert.

St. Paul's Presents will present Glorious Pipe and Shining Brass with the University of Dayton Faculty

Brass Quintet and U.D. organ teacher Alan Kimbrough on at 3 p.m. Sunday, January 26, and the Dayton Opera Artists-in-Residence on March 15, 2020.

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