

Lowcountry by Day, Moscow by Night

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 13 January 2015 10:39



Riddle me this: What time is it in the Lowcountry when it's midnight in Moscow? You don't have to guess, it's Sunday, January 25th, 5:00 pm, when Fripp Friends of Music presents Moscow Nights!

Okay, full disclosure: it's Moscow Nights AND Golden Gates—but the two add up to what will be for one lucky audience a thoroughly entertaining (and winter-blahs-busting) evening of music, dance, humor and outright, rollicking fun that will warm attendees' hearts, the more so because it's Beaufort and not Moscow, where you'd freeze your face off in Red Square after the theater!

Of course, the performance will be followed by a unique gratis catered reception where concertgoers and artists mingle, converse, enjoy each other's company and delight in the tasty hors d'oeuvres prepared by celebrated Lowcountry chef Harry Merrill Jr. The reception, just one of the perks included in the price of a concert ticket or membership in the non-profit Friends of Music, follows every performance and is appreciated by both music lovers and artists (one popular singer-songwriter incredulously asked her wildly-applauding audience, "Y'all want an encore, when there's food out there?!")

We hope you're getting the idea that Fripp Friends of Music has slated an evening of

entertainment for one and all. “Moscow Nights,” a Russian folk song from the ‘50s, was picked up by the British group Kenny Ball & his Jazzmen, who popularized it in the west under the title “Midnight in Moscow.” This version rocketed into the stratosphere of American pop record charts in 1961.

Little wonder, that nearly every American who listened to a clunky, battery-powered radio at the beach or tuned their car radio to their favorite AM station in the early ‘60s, can hum the Russian tune from which an exciting, versatile, folk music ensemble from St. Petersburg, Russia, drew its name. In the 1990s, the three classically-trained artists spoke no English, but decided to call themselves Moscow Nights, because it was the song most frequently requested by American tourists attending their concerts! (The song is well-known in Russia, too; for decades its first few bars introduced the half-hourly time-signal on Radio Moscow.)

When Moscow Nights’ musicians permanently relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina, they were exposed to a Tarheel brand of English, but their music is solidly, authentically Russian, as they strive to preserve their culture’s folk music traditions. Their repertoire is centered on masterpieces of Russian folklore and represents the diversity of the culture, ranging from gently humorous songs, to the elaborate lyrical, to music that’s outwardly cool, but vibrant at its core. The artists respect the old folk melodies and treat them as the raw material for an exhilarating musical performance that combines lilting Balalaikas, the dynamic Bayan Accordion, unique humorous and athletic dances, and superb vocals to entrance and delight their audience.

Moscow Nights’ stage companions are the Russian and Georgian dancers of Golden Gates, an accomplished company of young, highly musically-talented and athletic performers who sing, recreate carefully-researched Russian folk rituals and recount folktales from Russia’s long history. Audiences are amazed by the group’s skillful artistry, authentic, colorful costumes and syncopated, leaping footwork. The vigor, even ferocity, of their dancing is mesmerizing.

The Moscow Nights-Golden Gates team has toured Russia, Asia, Western Europe and North America. In the past two decades they have amassed medals and awards from national and international competition, and been invited to perform as soloists with prestigious orchestras and to judge musical competitions. They have produced numerous albums. They collect accolades wherever they perform. The Cleveland Plain Dealer characterized their performance as, “In a word—fantastic!” A critic writing at the Wildflower Music Festival said, “The performance was outstanding...entertaining... musically superb. The audience loved them (and their) quick wit and banter.”

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It's no longer a riddle. Russia is as nearby as a southerly drive on Route 21 to Fripp Island, Sunday, January 25th. Moscow Nights & Golden Gates perform at 5 pm, Fripp Island Community Centre, 205 Tarpon Boulevard. Tickets at the door: Adults \$25 per person/\$10 students. All attendees get a free pass at the Fripp gate and are invited to join the artists at a complimentary catered reception following the performance. Russian folkart will be available for purchase. For more information, visit <http://www.islc.net/friendsofmusic/> or call (843) 838-6655.