

2018 Workshop Staff and Guest Artists

David Cooper – Festival Orchestra Conductor



David grew up in a family of musicians and has studied numerous instruments, including the prima balalaika, which he studied at the Glière Institute in Kiev, Ukraine. David graduated from the University of Illinois with degrees in ethnomusicology and social work, where he was a member of the famed UI Russian Folk Orchestra. He has served as Music Director of the Atlanta Balalaika Society since 1986 and also leads a Caribbean steel drum ensemble. Previously, David has been featured as a solo balalaika player for the BDAA, has taught numerous workshops, and often serves as the jammeister of the evening jam sessions. This will be Dave's fourth appearance as conductor of the festival orchestra.

Elina Karokhina – Balalaika Technique / Balalaika Soloist



Originally from St. Petersburg, Russia, Elina is a world-renowned balalaika virtuoso. She began her formal training at the Musorgsky Music College of St. Petersburg and continued her training at N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory, where Elina studied under the famous performer and composer Alexander Shalov. Elina completed her education with a Doctor of Musical Art degree in the Balalaika and went on to be a soloist with the St. Petersburg State Russian Concert Orchestra and the Kupola, Izba-Trio, and Troika-Express ensembles. Elina moved to the US in 2009 and currently works as a music director and soloist with the Russian music, song, and dance ensemble Barynya.

Peter Omelchenko – Domra Technique / Domra Soloist



Until recently, Peter was a member of Moscow's Osipov Balalaika Orchestra, and is a domra virtuoso, arranger, composer. Previously, he was a featured soloist with the Nekrasov Radio and Television Folk Instrument Orchestra. He spent his childhood in the south of Russia, surrounded by the rich folk-music traditions of the Cossack people. Peter studied at the Gnessin Academy with Alexander Tsygankov and has subsequently won many prestigious competitions, such as the Cup of the North in Cherepovets. Peter moved to the US last year and is currently a lead musician and soloist with the orchestra of the Washington Balalaika Society, with whom he has both soloed and conducted as a featured guest artist.

Volodymyr Marunych – Bayan & Accordion Technique / Folk & Gypsy Ensemble



Volodymyr is a bayan virtuoso and an acting professor at the National Music Academy named after P.I. Tchaikovsky in Kiev, Ukraine. At the academy, Volodymyr teaches conducting and instrumentation and continues to express his talent in other roles, such as the artistic director and conductor of the National Music Academy of Ukraine Student Folk Orchestra. During 2002-2011, he has been a part of the instrumental ensemble Dyvohray of the National Philharmonic of Ukraine. Volodymyr collaborates with multiple musical organizations, such as the Folk Orchestra of the Teleradio Company of Ukraine, the Ukrainian National Orchestra of Folk Instruments, and the National Male Choir named after L. Revutskyi. He also arranges and composes pieces for the Marunych Duo with his wife and domraist, Natalia Marunych.

Natalia Marunych – Domra Choir / Folk & Gypsy Ensemble



Natalia is a prominent professional domra soloist and an artist at the famous folk ensemble Ridni Naspivy of the National Philharmonic of Ukraine. She teaches at the Kiev Institute of Music named after Reingold Glier. As young musicians, Natalia, her husband, Volodymyr Marunych, and Iryna Honcharova started a musical trio and became laureates of the National Ukrainian Contest in 1988 and 1989, as well as laureates of the International Music Contest in 1991. Today, many of Natalia's students have also gone on to become laureates of the same contests. Natalia and Volodymyr have traveled and performed an extensive repertoire as the Marunych Duo and continue to tour and entertain audiences across the US and Europe.

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Zhanna Ketslakh – Vocal Soloist



Zhanna fell in love with Russian and Belarusian folk songs as a child listening to her grandfather sing and play the garmoshka. A native of Minsk, Belarus, she studied voice and choral conducting at Minsk College of Folk Choir and performed as a soloist with the State Song and Dance Ensemble of Belarus. Zhanna graduated from the University of Culture in Minsk in 1987, specializing in voice and choir. She moved to the US in 1989 and was a soloist with the Balalaika Orchestra of Detroit and the Atlanta Balalaika Society. Zhanna has created several vocal ensembles, and works with two Russian schools teaching children to sing and perform and currently resides in Las Vegas, NV.

Tetiana Khomenko – Balalaika Choir / Lecturer



Tetiana lives in Kiev, Ukraine, and is a graduate of the Glière Kyiv Institute of Music. She earned a master's degree and studied conducting at the P. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy, under Yuri Aleksyuk. She now plays in Ihor Savkov's orchestra at the Kyiv Music Institute and with her quartet Bravo Band, which she calls the "Hipsters of Folk Music," whose credo is "Music can change the world," and who went on to win the International Samorodki Competition in 2013. Tetiana attended her first BDAA convention in 2014 in Kalamazoo. Since then, she has performed as a solo artist with multiple Russian orchestras in the US and was the balalaika soloist at the Akron and Bloomington conventions.

Zhenia Leshchinskaia – Chorus



Zhenia is a native of Irkutsk, Siberia, who recently moved to the US and settled in Atlanta, Georgia. She first became interested in music when she was very young and heard her father play guitar and sing at family gatherings. At age 9, Zhenia was accepted into music school and started on piano. After high school, Zhenia attended a linguistics university to study her other passion, foreign languages, and then returned to music college in her fourth year. After moving to the US, she discovered the Atlanta Balalaika Society and learned to play balalaika and began singing folk songs with Zhanna. Zhenia is also a composer and piano teacher and plays keys and sings in an up-and-coming synth/dark wave band called Low Valley Hearts.

Natasha Lozovsky-Burns – Folk Dance



In 1989, Natasha Lozovsky-Burns founded the Vancouver Russian dance group RCC Yablochko Dance Ensemble. She has continued as the artistic director for almost 20 years, choreographing over one dozen character dances, centre exercises and 15 original dances. Her dance training began at age 5 with classical ballet, followed by Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian dance. In addition, Natasha's experiences are capped by two years of dance study in Kiev, Ukraine, focusing on Russian and Ukrainian folk forms. Over the years, she has travelled across Canada and the US, teaching both Ukrainian and Russian dance workshops. Natasha also teaches the RCC Russian Children's Dance Ensemble and conducts the RCC Balalaika Orchestra of Vancouver.

Liz Nunan – Folk Crafts



Liz Nunan has been in the BDAA since 1983 and the Atlanta Balalaika Society orchestra since 1981. She has taught folk dance and craft classes at the conventions often. This year the craft class will be making greeting cards and perhaps some collages using reproductions of Russian and Ukrainian folk images, rubber stamp images, paper scraps, and whatever else she can find at the local dollar stores! It will be an easy, creative, and relaxing way to spend a few hours at the convention!

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Jason Schreiber – *Beginning Balalaika / BDAA Board Member*



Jason is a music educator, arranger, and ethnomusicologist / biometricologist in Flagstaff, AZ, where he teaches music for an arts & science magnet elementary school. He holds a B.A. and M.M. from Northern Illinois University, where he focused on steel band, music theory, and ethnomusicology. He has performed and conducted fieldwork on the organology of steel pan in Trinidad & Tobago for the World Steel Band Festival and Panorama competitions, and in South Korea for the Seoul Drum Festival. Recently, he worked with the Hummingbird Monitoring Network to analyze hummingbird vocalizations. In addition to balalaika, he performs on steel pan, tenor banjo, guitar, mandolin, accordion, trumpet, upright bass, piano, and voice.

Jennie Bukowski – *Beginning Domra / BDAA Board Member*



Jennie is a Ph.D. student at Colorado State University, where she does research in atmospheric physics on severe storms and air pollution. She received her M.S. from the University of Michigan in atmospheric and space sciences in 2016. Although she currently works in a STEM field, Jennie majored in Russian language and literature and Soviet history at UW-Madison. It was there that she met Victor Gorodinsky and joined the UW-Russian Folk Orchestra on domra. Since then, she has been active in the BDAA: serving on the board, working with the Youth Initiative, and teaching beginning domra. In her free time, Jennie enjoys running, biking, hiking, surfing, gardening, and storm chasing, as well as playing violin, erhu, accordion, and guitar.