

Milestones

Russian music, balalaika music came to determine my life. I have jotted down some chapters from the 1960s to 2009.



The albums where I played the domra and balalaika



Walter Erdmann takes over my Davydoff balalaika collection, which is now in the Goslar (Germany) musical instrument museum. Had we known we would find back to Russian music in Australia, we might have kept them.

My 'mob' at the very first performance playing Vo Sadu - In the garden.



The next generation (2008)

'My' latest balalaika collection is for the new generation of balalaika players and emigrés in Adelaide.



Historical balalaika collection which I should not have left in Germany.

Historical Novel



The former Associated Press journalist has finally written a book.



Ally always wanted to write a book but our busyness and business did not allow that. Over the years, several topics were contemplated, but the Plevitskaya lifestory was so outstanding that it was a clear choice. To her great delight, she came first to tell the singer's life in full!

Our Mary MacKillop Musical had sell out performances and became part of the official beatification celebrations. The theatre manager was certain it was a licence to print money but Ally and I did not have the capital for a professional production.





BALALAIKA BALALAIKA

THEN AND NOW

.....how the accidental discovery of the Russian national instrument
changed my life!

A memoir of sorts

by Dieter Hauptmann

(www.youtube.com/hauptmannbalalaika)

Play the tune!3

Building balalaikas and setting up an ensemble4

With Iwan Rebhoff backstage and in the limelight. . . .5

A photo from Paris revealed a lie9

The Tschaika and Tschaika Cossacks10

A phase in Port Lincoln16

Rediscovering the triangular instrument for good19

Concluding thoughts21

Achievements:

- » Three albums accompanying Iwan Rebhoff
- » Two balalaika albums of my own group
- » Three vocal albums
- » Recording with Nikolai Gedda and Rita Streich
- » Touring with Boris Rubashkin
- » 1970 Silver Medal
Association de la Musique Récréative
- » Touring in our own right: Athens, Rome,
Teheran, Paris, Holland, Berlin, Geneva,
Strasbourg, Ireland, Australia, etc.

MY ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY OF THE BALALAIKA

Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that my rather mediocre tenor banjo playing in a trad Jazz trio in Frankfurt/M Uni for a bit of pocket money would be my night of fate.

A guy came up and said this to me in a funny accent: *'I am Andrey. I saw your very fast left hand, man, we would need a guy like you, we are playing Russian Folk music.....'* He told me when and where they met. I listened politely, but have to admit, I nearly did not go. For me, in 1962, Folk sounded like German Folk music, brassbands and that sort of thing – no thx.

Why I did go, I don't remember. Was it my grandmother, whose eyes sparkled like never before when she talked about the concert of the Don Cossacks she went to not long before? Or were it the voices of the Red Army soldiers marching past Heidersdorf (near Breslau, Silesia) which I had heard as a toddler, moving forward in endless columns singing and fighting their way to Berlin, to rid us from the Nazi pest that had befallen my country?

The fact is, I did go. In a small flat filled with cigarette smoke there was a group of 'older men'. Andrey, was there and a young chap, Bernd, whose accent displayed a true Frankfurt working class man.

Somebody handed me a small red roundish instrument and said: *'This is a domra, you play the melody'*. Okay, but I had never heard these songs before?!

I listened, my eight years of cello training kicked in, thank you Johann Sebastian. The silvery sound of the balalaikas triggered something in me that has not gone away more than 40 years later. From here on I'll try to keep it as concise as possible or it would become another novel, yes another one.

Our group of old Russian balalaichniks fought about *'the right way of playing this song'*. So the group fell apart three weeks after I joined.

I phoned the only other German of the group, Bernd, but without instruments, where to from here?

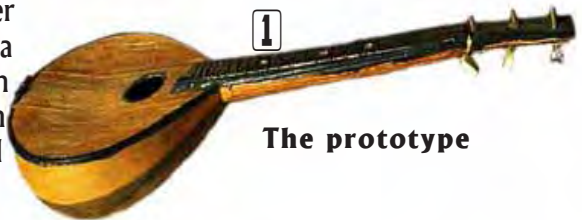
After a bit of sulking I went to a nearby furniture factory and got myself a sheet of the thinnest one layer ply they had. I went home, took the scissors and cut a pattern with seven cardboard segments (think peeling an



orange), bent them roundish, adjusted them to fit roughly and when I was

happy, did so with the sheet of veneer. The ratio of glue to timber was probably 1:3. Luckily I knew a very fast setting glue from my boyhood days when I built model airplanes and the other kids in the street called me *'the engineer'*. I still treasure the result almost half a century later. I strung the 'masterpiece' (1), and played it to Bernd from behind a bookshelf. He gasped and asked incredulously *'Where did you get that domra from?'*. Only then did I dare to show him and he, the toolmaker, shuddered. I challenged him to draw up proper plans, investigate

what timber to use and start building seriously what we needed. Not long after, the first prima balalaika could be lifted from our homemade plaster shell (2). Later, we learned that we didn't even need this plasterbase.



The prototype

THE TRIK STARTS TO ROLL

Bernd persuaded his friend Andrey to start out with these mad two Germans and Andrey even organized a small homemade bass balalaika from Wiesbaden (near Frankfurt). He also persuaded his duo partner Borka Mamula, a brilliant singer and accordionist from Zagreb (then Yugoslavia) to help us.

Through a note at Frankfurt Uni, we got Wolfgang Lucks who had grown up as Valentin Lukievich in the Soviet Union. When the Germans fled East Prussia he was lost in the chaos and picked up by the Red Army. Since he was too young to pronounce his name properly they called him

Valentin Lukievich and put him in a Soviet orphanage. He came out as an adult through the Red Cross.

We built an alto balalaika for Wolfgang, Andrey played prima (which helped me when I lost my way).

In the meantime I fell for Bernd's ex-girlfriend and we got married soon after. Claudia was a good alto (backbeat) player (3).



Here are all of 'my' first ensemble with a freshly acquired bass built just after the war by a homesick Cossack in Wiesbaden.

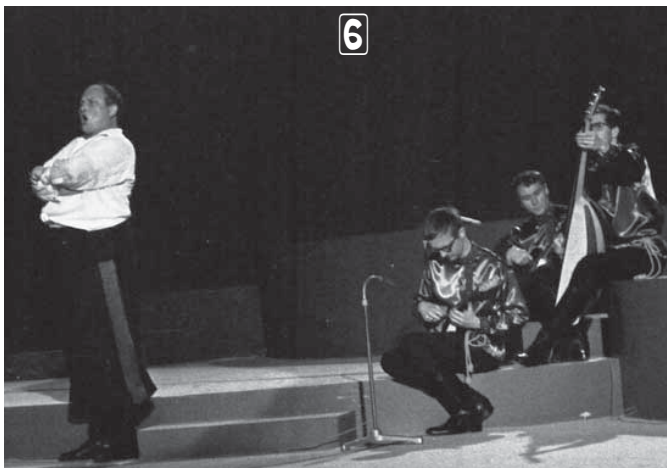
THE TROIKA & IVAN REBROFF STORY

.....HOW IT REALLY BEGAN IN 1966

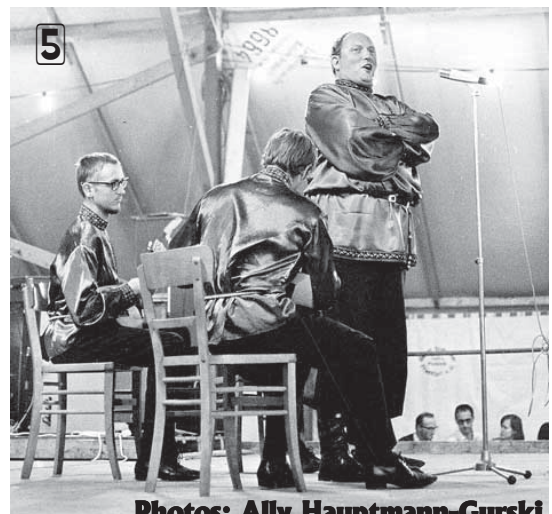
I had since moved to Dreikönigstrasse 30 in the then cheap Sachsenhausen district of Frankfurt. At streetlevel there was a rundown waterhole for hobos. My balalaika group played every weekend at the Volga (Wolga) restaurant (4). From time to time I noticed a bear of a man among the patrons, getting drunk alone while listening intensely to our music.

One day, he came up to us and asked in a friendly, very trained voice: *'Can you play Adnasvutshno gremit in E?'* Of course we could, and of course the voice impressed us!

'Children,' he said, *'how would you feel if we worked together, I am quite sure that this would go down quite well with the audiences?'* Of course we could and soon a local agent Mr. Gudelius arranged a few typical German beertent jobs (5), which are, if truth be told, about the hardest work you can get if you are not a yodler. See the pics of our first gigs. I had no idea at the time how nerdy I looked. I am pretty sure the fee for all of us was 90 German Marks which Ivan generously split in half between him and the ensemble. The shows went very well, the audiences loved us and very soon we did 'Studio Europa' TV. (6)



Studio Europa TV show (rehearsal shot)



Photos: Ally Hauptmann-Gurski
Iwan Rebhoff and the TROIKA, 1966

For the growing number of gigs we badly needed an autograph card. I did a few shots in 1966 in a foyer. I developed and printed all my own films, so I cut, retouched and pasted this card.



Soon, the man who gave me Russian music and took my wife, Andrey, needed to be sheered from this picture. Claudia's mother shouted us a divorce, thx.



A candid shot of Iwan, smoking heavily, talking with Gudelius about the next gigs – praise and promises for dear old Gudelius whom Iwan would let down rather badly as soon as he changed into Ivan. (right)



Quite often we performed at a nightclub called 'Pferdestall' (horse stable), a few kilometers south of Frankfurt which was owned/run by a Frau Roth. One of her buddies was a Mr. Mikulsky, who owned the German franchise of CBS records. Frau was really enchanted with Iwan, and the prospect of making loads of Deutschmarks. So she tried to pressure Mikulski for a record contract. He, like many record company bosses before him, did not see anything marketable in Rebroff.

At the time, the movie *Dr Zhivago* burst onto the market and Frau Roth decided to put her money where her mouth was. Iwan had to sign a contract that he would get no royalties until the album sold 50,000 copies, which, in the normal course of business, was considered out of reach. We were offered 250 DM each – well, it helped at the time. Today, 'best-seller' legislation disallows such disproportionate contracts.

When doing the shoot for the cover, an evening shot at one of the many sandpits south of Frankfurt, I noticed that the young photographer had no flash, using only a 'campfire' for a light source. I was very weary that we had to redo the session a few nights later and suggested to move my Renault 4 over and point its headlights towards us. These turned out to be the only usable shots.

Some of these recordings were later redubbed with new vocals, because instrumental backing of our quality could obviously not be found, or maybe it was just cheaper, much cheaper.....

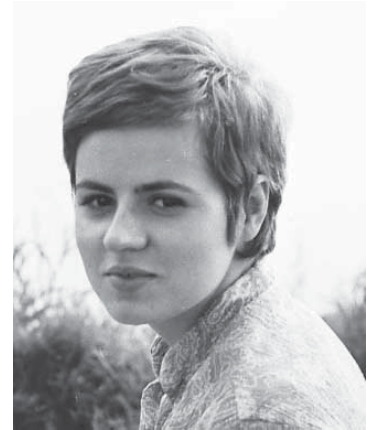


Waldeck Folk Festival 1967
Between recording and releasingthis CBS album.

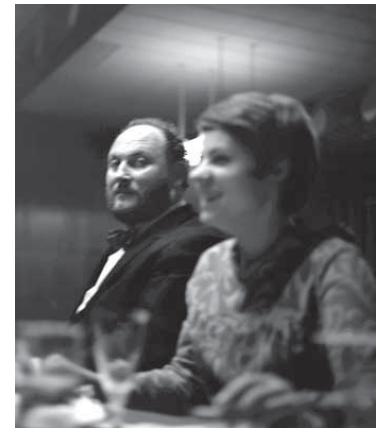


signing Zhivago singles after a gig

There was much change in the air: Ilona Schubina (just out of Leningrad – how and why?) joined the group and promptly had an affair with Bernd, who was married. The effect was that I lost my bass-player. Then, but only then, did Bernd tell me that Claudia had been after Andrey all the time and had used Bernd and me to keep the connection going. By golly, was I glad to get out without serious bruises.



Soon, after a fateful gig at Uni, in a joint show where some poets read their work, a brilliant young lady asked me a thousand questions about Russian music and composers which I didn't answer very well I don't think. At last I had found somebody as enthusiastic about Russian Music as I was. Almuth Gurski was a journalist with the Frankfurt Associated Press News Agency while I was just a 'country journo/photographer' working the south of the State of Hessen for the 'Frankfurter Neue Presse'. Ally's English was very good and she arranged for an interview of Ivan with the AFN (American Forces Network), where she also interpreted. This was Ivan's first 'international' exposure. So, Almuth was part of the team.



Whenever I returned late from a gig I found a few drunks in the staircase, so I went to the brewery and asked if I could take over the pub and turn it into a Folk Pub. Sachsenhausen had just started to get a bit more international with a recently opened Spanish Bodega. As the managers sniffed the possibility of selling more beer they agreed. I changed the inside a lot and painted the outside clean white, added some colourful matrioshkas and soon we were a centre for Folkies from all over Europe. (7)

I'd like to disclose that Ally, as she has now anglesized her name, is still with me and accompanies me competently on bass balalaika and autoharp. The pub 'BALALAIKA', which I opened in 1968 still exists 40 years later. Back then, in 1968, Ally quit her job and managed the TROIKA plus kept the pub running when I was crisscrossing Germany to accompany Ivan.



Another a note on the Uni noticeboard got us a much needed bassplayer. Hasso von Haldenwang, like myself a cellist, switched to the bass balalaika in no time. The same ad also interested Peter Coura, a devoted guitarist, who now successfully runs an international guitar building company. He decided to risk a few years of his life trying to 'live off music'.

The name TROIKA couldn't stay as we were now four. I reaped a nasty courtcase from Bernd, who unfortunately couldn't stomach to see us carrying on while his wife didn't allow him near us (Ilona that is).

I decided to call us TSCHAIKA which means seagull and seemed close enough to Troika to show continuity and also demonstrates that like seagulls we came from all parts of Europe.



...here the new Tschaika practices in the new Balalaika Pub



Ivan had decided to help us in that courtcase by testifying for us, although we no longer intended to be called TROIKA. So in the end, there was not really any argument, but even if we had wanted, we were not allowed to build on the TROIKA name. Decades later I learned that one of my lawyer schoolmates had been an observer in the judge's office at the time. Some of our argument was not upheld, we learned, because of Ivan. He had come across as wearing a mask and not being trustworthy. Millions, including us, had adored the man but these people saw behind the mask even then in 1968!

During one of the last gigs with my 'Troika' doing a TV how at Saarbrücken, the producer stated *'a Russian needs to have a beard'!* When you have a look at how the make up started, you might well agree: Ivan often looked like an overgrown piglet, only Wolfgang and Bernd looked smart, but Ally was working already on my nerdiness by getting rid of my old spectacles!

Ivan had a badly damaged ankle and even with a lot of pain-killers he could hardly get his boots on. Being the pro that he was, his performance was impeccable. They made him sit as much as possible and I could shoot a few good portraits without him trying to 'play character'. With the beard came hair on top, which made all the difference.

CBS was so impressed (and caught by surprise that the albums sold) that they immediately asked for my negative which, in my usual cooperative way, I handed over. They thanked me by not paying a cent and not acknowledging the photographer on the back.



I had thought, we were rowing one boat but got a lesson in corporate dealings: Unless you play hardball, it's not a give-and-take-situation of the two way kind.

We continued to crisscross Germany and often I arrived at venues with the lot of them asleep in the back – there's touring for you. Thanks to the peculiar nature of German insurance policies, I would not have been insured in my own vehicle if I had let someone else drive. I averaged 95 000 km per year just driving from venue to venue. This is what taxidivers do for a living without playing music and recording albums. We had recorded and released two instrumental albums by then.

....how about playing in the legendary OLYMPIA in Paris? I had the albums of Edith Piaf and Guillette Greco of their live performances in the Olympia, but never in my wildest dreams did I imagine to be on that same stage. But here we are, posing proudly under Ivan's poster. Of course, we would not have been there without him, or the French CBS deciding to arrange for high rotation of his recordings in the radio stations.

At the time I had just discovered Peter Leshenko and we had persuaded Ivan to learn (the quite difficult) song Bessarabyanca. Now here in Paris, almost the radio stations and discos played that single. Ivan got a bit blasé about learning more songs. Even on his first album he had ran out of songs and asked us 'Troikas' to record a number or two so he could have a rest.



But now, in October 1968, after his/our success in the Olympia he showed the world what he was made of: The producers offered him the role of Tevye in the French production of 'Fiddler on the roof'. He accepted immediately – without speaking a word of French at the time and only a few months to learn it.

We read all this a few weeks later in the papers and wondered. For whom had we given up our careers? What would we do when Ivan was doing Fiddler every night in Paris?



A highlight in my live recording career: Recording the new Czarevich Album with Rita Streich and Nicolai Gedda in Munich (below, 1968). Whoww, what else will my magic balalaika present me with?

Ivan invited us to Greece to rehearse the third

album as the first two had gone gold. Here in Athens, he haggles (in fluent Greek) to buy a large and a small Russian samovar. With my picture of a bearded Ivan being circulated in all promotions, he decided life must follow art and grew a beard. (Ivan had holidayed in Greece for years and had many Greek friends. He paid voice tuition for one who later became a famous singer.)

It took him two months to decide that in his apartment the smaller one looked cuter and I finally got mine which still greets anyone who visits me today in Ingle Farm, Australia.



Whenever we found some time, I tried to promote our instrumental CDs. We were quite impressed that the CBS valued us to make solo albums. Little did I know then that this was a strategy to tie us to their emerging star. How naive can you be?

The story about the colourful costumes on the left is one that embarrassed me greatly: A fan with great talent in sewing Russian costumes lent Ivan these outfits. She hoped, I learned later, that he would hire or pay for them. Ivan never bothered. Only when threatened with lawyers did he reluctantly ask me to pack them and send them back. I found that embarrassing and vowed that I would never treat people like that.

Right :
Here we

perform at the Waldeck Festival again. Sadly the growing left in Germany decided all music must be political. The microphone wires were cut repeatedly and the festival died. Soon, a Baader-Meinhof-Group gained notoriety.

Left: In Paris Orly Airport, flying back after a TV show. We often travelled in costumes, because there was no time to change on these fly-in/fly-out gigs.





Live Eurovision in Berlin in 1968 for a few million viewers didn't bother me much. But on the return journey my Renault 16 blew the head and I needed money fast as Ivan kept us to the bare minimum. When the fees went from 90 to 900, he split them 300 for us 3, and 600 for him, when they were 9000 he gave us generously 400 etc. He referred me to his manager/buddy Weber who drew up a contract charging me over 12% interest. I was not impressed but had no other option so I signed, grudgingly. Often Ivan travelled with

two young male friends who appeared to be living better than the musicians who worked for him.

Within the Tschaika, the new bassplayer Hasso and the alto player Ilona had fallen madly in love and spent more time 'loving' than rehearsing for Ivan's new LP. I told him that I tried everything to motivate the two lovebirds and could only improve the ensemble's quality by getting new players. He gave me free hand as long as I could raise the standard to the international level we had reached. I had heard a young Ukrainian from Munich who sang streetsongs and played a wonderfully folky accordion.

Ally who ran the pub with various helpers told me about a young ex GI who played a nice guitar and sang with a silvery clear high voice. I asked them both and they were keen to take up the challenge. Peter would stay on and was my trusted sidekick on the alto domra I had built.

Now new life came to our music. For the first time I had seriously committed folk musicians to work with. And while we were waiting for Ivan to return from a movie set in France we had great success playing better than ever and singing the old Cossack songs to the squeezebox of Piotr Bondarenko. Jeff soon mastered the bass and even had the idea of tucking the huge instrument to his belt to be able to dance around while playing - as the rest of us often did!

Apprehensively we drove to Wiesbaden Airbase where the American Air Force had a big do. We waited and waited for Ivan to arrive and the military personal, not at all accustomed to be kept waiting could not understand why the four of us could not kick off the show, which we then had to.

We sang and played, got the audience to sing and clap along when we saw big Ivan appearing in the doorway. Now, he was not amused!? After a few more of our songs, while he discussed with the customers, he made his way to the stage. I'll never forget his face and was puzzled – surely he should be grateful my new crew was able to give him time and make the beginning of the event a success?

Not Ivan, oh no. I heard at once he had a bad cold but he was wild and tried the most challenging of the repertoire, obviously to catch out the new players. But they were good musos and played their heart out smiling along. His voice broke a few times before he relented and sang a few simpler hits, sailing off the stage hissing to me: '*You'll hear about this!*' I had no idea what he was on about, I had done what he wanted, my ensemble was up to the task. A huge embarrassment was prevented. A few days later we got a letter from him with a bold headline *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi* which is Latin and means What is right for Jupiter is not right for the ox.

For a while, I thought Ivan would get over his anger. I also thought he had better manners than calling us ox. Quite wrongly, he felt upstaged. We had no choice, I wrote back to him. The reply came from his bulldog Weber claiming that we breached the contract with Hasso and Ilona by substituting them with 'hippies' and that these two would sue us for performing without them.

But, with this trick they did not get away. Two months before, we had been told the date and name of the venue in Paris where we were supposed to perform with Ivan. A few days before the gig, they told us the event was cancelled, but their voices' vibes revealed they were lying. Since when did they take the instruments home to practice and needed the full costumes including boots for that? Although we had not really anticipated they would sue us, Ally used her international press connections to obtain a photo from their performance in the Paris nightclub. When the court case came up, our solicitor just took out the photo and proved that it was not us who had performed first without the other half of the Tschaika Ensemble, but them!

Why Ivan saw the two young singers in our group as competition, remains a mystery. He could have had the Red Army Choir competing with him and he would still have won over his audiences. He must have felt very insecure. We did not realise he had an achilles heel. He had seemed so invincible, but it was all an act, and I had inadvertently hit his soft spot.

Ivan knew my soft spot, money or rather the lack of it. That's why he and Webers put up those two, Hasso and Ilona, to drag us to court. These two did not have the funds for a court case, either. Webers and Ivan thought, they could finish us off, but Ally's international connections saved that bacon. What the big deal was to make trouble for us, we have never understood. He got what he wanted, new ensembles practically every year (first years are cheaper); and we got out of that situation where we had obligations but no contract.

35 years later, an Adelaide radio personality, Peter Goers, wanted to set up an on air reunion, but Ivan reacted in a cranky manner.

-----End of Phase Ivan-----

We did survive, but hard times were ahead as our bookings went down. Obviously, Ivan had the CBS publicity machine behind them and we were an unknown quantity. We needed an album fast and Helm Koenig, an old friend from the Waldeck Festival times, cooperated, and we recorded an album within a week, then managed to get distribution with Fontana/Philips.



New brochures were done while we sang and played in the Balalaika house, where I had organised accommodation for the new players. Ally arranged another album with the new Cornet label, when Boris Rubashkin, who had just launched his big hit Casachok needed an ensemble to go on tour with. Again we worked the concert halls; Ally sold the albums for Boris and all went well until an event of dishonesty disturbed the harmony. From the musical point of view we liked working with Rubaschkin, but we never saw him again after the tour concluded in Salzburg.



On tour with Boris Rubaschkin. Two Polish musicians reinforced the troope.

As Ally didn't have enough time to run the pub we found an able jazz singer who was keen to lease the Balalaika from us: Anita Bohlaender (right), a New Yorker who had married a German. Even though the pub's name was still Balalaika, the guests loved her blues and personality. We played there whenever we had time.



Ally arranged a tour to Rome and Athens and a tour to Teheran eventuated through Ally's Armenian schoolfriend. We had to work abroad as we seemed to be blocked all over Germany (by Ivan's manager, by Ivan, by CBS influences?). Without TV shows we couldn't raise our profile, although we managed to get this one in Hannover (below). It felt like Ivan wanted us dead and gone.



In those years we also experimented with pop und bouzouki music. One of our pop tapes was illegally broadcast over AFN when a DJ swapped tapes on his last day, ensuring that he was out of the US Army's reach when it went over the airwaves. That was at the height of the Vietnam war and the pop song had a slight oppositional leaning. Spiegel magazine wrote about that incident and that the group was now blocked from the airwaves. They spelt it incorrectly, so we thought it might not have a bearing on our activities. Ally, the producer of these tapes, had not given consent and had no clue. When we later read about CIA blacklists we wondered.



Janos, the ECM collar mic and the instrument connection

I used the new tiny ECM mikes from Sony to attach to our collars and plugged them into the connection which I had made on the topside of our balalaikas. A stereo lead went into the mixer where they were split into 2 mono channels, one vocal and one instrument pickup.

Nearly 20 years later, these mics popped up as a great novelty in Madonna's girly show! We did this 15 years before her guys thought of it, but a girly show is more of an eye catcher than fully clothed cossacks. It was the only way for us to run into the light in floor shows and start without delays caused by shifting mic stands, etc. Even though we picked up a few TV shows, progress was slow and trouble hit when in the jubilation of securing that lucrative gig in Teheran we had to have a number of vaccinations. For Peter that was not as possibility, because he had had a mild polio, his vaccination meant taking the risk of encephalitis.

We knew it meant parting ways and although it was amicable we were wondering, how often would we start again? In our Balalaika pub we had met a very young Macedonian with a lovely bass voice and a cello background who hung around in local pubs. I tracked him down and was impressed. Sasha was

from Plovdiv, Bulgaria. He was a good Russian speaking muso with a more impressive voice than Rebroff. With new energy, a new program was rehearsed and suddenly things moved like in the old days. We had overwhelming success wherever we performed.

A NEW TSCHAIKA

We won a silver medal for our last CBS Tschaika LP from the French 'Association de la Musique Récréative' and collected the medal in a gala performance in the famous Salle Pleyel in Paris. Although we were a bit puzzled why we won relatively late after the launch and now with a very different line-up we were really happy to perform in Paris.

Nowadays, I think the CBS submitted our album to the Association for an award to show Rebroff who calls the shots. There is more politics in the arts than in politics – so it is not as cynic a thought as it may appear.

I was surprised and slightly embarrassed that we 'beat' Nico Stanesco, whose group I thought to be more established.

After receiving the Silver Medal CBS asked us if they could arrange anything for us in Paris and I asked for tickets to see Ivan in the French Fiddler production.

CBS obliged and we were impressed. Ivan was not as humble and sincere as Topol, but in his typical ambiguity he was more theatrical, and the show delighted tout Paris for a very long time.

We returned to Frankfurt on a high. Gigs were coming in and after Ally supervised a demo recording at our old, beloved Walldorf studios, she got a deal with Teldec who saw a new and younger Rebroff in our Sasha. We were flown to Berlin to record. A famous arranger wrote excellent additional parts for a large section of the Berlin Philharmonic, and we had a great time recording. I suggested to extend the name to Tschaika Cossacks as we had taken to quite a lot of that section of the traditional repertoire.



BLINDED BY SUCCESS

This is when young Sasha got the feeling that his destiny was meant to be in opera, not in this kind of 'common' music (which had just 'made' him what he was). No argument could persuade him to at least promote our new LP. Ally was grief stricken and furious, that Jeff, the bassplayer, had encouraged Sasha. She explained how difficult it can be in an opera company, and that people who want to get ahead and rise above a meagre opera house salary all eyed the concert stage, just like Ivan had done for years before our time. Ally talked about her aunt Wanda Gurski who was a Wagnerian alto, but had only had modest success in her younger years and was then left out in the cold. Why would Sasha want to leave a proven successful formula so quickly? What was the attraction in years of trial and error, with very uncertain results? Sasha remained convinced he was destined for the Milan Scala.

Again I thought of quitting. This time Piotr saved us. He wanted to go on, went to London, and returned with Janos Kuruz – not quite the voice of Sasha, but a good bass voice from the Covent Garden Opera choir and keen to learn balalaika, too! He had fled Hungary in the 1956 uprising, so knew a bit of Russian and the songs.

It became a hard fight. Janos's voice proved no match to Sasha's and when the gig was really important his nerves let him, and us, down. So, wenn Alexander Savin, an experienced tenor who had toured Russia a few times, offered his services we were delighted. This Polish Sasha brought some polish to the group. 'Heavens, how do you bow? That looks terrible!' – we kept learning.

When we were practicing the song 'The drunken Monk' with Janos as soloist, Sasha stated, '*Oh yes, that was Stalin's favourite song*'. We looked at him open mouthed, because I had written this song for Rebroff in 1968 and Stalin died in 1953! Sasha would not believe it until we showed him the royalty slips from the composers association GEMA. How fascinating, that he knew the song from Poland where it must have made the rounds as Stalin's favourite song in the early 1970s. It also proved once again how erroneous information or a tall tale can develop a life of its own, an artform that Rebroff had mastered to perfection, although this one did not come from him we believe.

Again, we went into the studio and started to produce another album with our new Cossack sound. The contrast between Sasha's high tenor and Janos's bass voice was highly appreciated by audiences and the improvements in presentation worked.

Things picked up again. Through Janos's London connections we caught the eye of the Norman McCann agency who guaranteed us a month of touring in spring and another in autumn if we included dancing – no touring England without dancers. Only weeks before we had received a call for help from a German agent. 'We have a trio of gifted young Ukrainian dancers here who dance to really lousy tapes. Could you help out with some music?' Of course we could! So Bohdan Wloch, Wassili Romaniv, and Petro Woroniak, whose parents had been displaced persons in the same camp after the war, needed us as much as we needed them.

Sabres were part of our touring luggage.



Imagine going on tour now, after 9/11!

T S C H A I K A C O S S A C K S S I N G A N D D A N C E N O W

Luckily, our album production was just finished and as we had worked with overdubbing, we sounded like a larger group before we became one! Our new members happily posed for the cover with us and the tapes were sent to London.

Touring Britain twice a year became a routine. Things looked up, but sadly a rift started to build between the dancers, our (very undisciplined) 'boys' and Sasha who gallantly tried to improve our presentation even further.

In the end the youngsters' bickering affected the show. For the first time, I had the dirty task to decide and enforce that one party had to give in or go. As



Making a cover that fits the sound

we could go on without Sasha, but not without the boys, it was a sad choice. But I was happy that a few years after I retired from touring I happily worked together with Sasha and then, he was my 'boss' and we had some good time performing it the new Sadko in Offenbach.

Т С Ч А И К А С О С С А К С С О Н О В Е Р А В С Т Р А Л И Я

London arranged our first tour to Australia and I was extremely baffled when my Grandmother gave me a warning: 'Be careful Dieter, one of us disappeared in Australia!' She showed me a book about Ludwig Leichhardt and pointed out that his mother was a née 'Hilgenfeld', and so was she, my Gran Frieda! I didn't take all that in, so much had to be planned, but when I was in Australia and saw how many streets and other places were named after my relative I was moved. Many decades later, I drive through one (which is incorrectly spelt) every day.

We were the first group to perform in Darwin after cyclone Tracy (Christmas 1974). It was a memorable experience to fly from minus 5 in Frankfurt to plus 38 in Darwin. Never moind, the Arts Council ladies looked after us including fluid levels, and from day to day I was more impressed with the land of Oz. Halls were full to capacity, people from Tennant Creek to Lucindale in S.A. were wonderful. After hours of driving into the evening and night from Darwin to Tennant Creek in the Arts Council's van, we stopped at an extremely remote petrol station to refill. Janos and the dancers went to buy some chips. Janos



Arts Council of South Australia presents

A Night of COSSACK Song and Dances..

With the EXCITING Tschailja Cossacks

Direct from a widely acclaimed European Concert Tour

An unforgettable evening of

RUSSIAN GYPSY and STREET SONGS
UKRAINIAN COSSACK DANCES
SOVIET and TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN BALLADS
INSTRUMENTAL ARTISTRY of the BALALAIKA

FESTIVAL THEATRE LAST PERFORMANCE TONIGHT AT 8.15 P.M. SOLD OUT

Country Itinerary:

MARCH	APRIL
17 Kingsgate	1 Pt. Lincoln
18 Maitland	2 Streaky Bay
19 Maitland	3 Ceduna
20 Yorketown	4 Wudinna
21 Angaston	7 Kimba
22 Wollaroo	8 Pt. Augusta
24 Pt. Pine	9 Warreroo
25 Whyalla	10 Gladstone
26 Cleve	11 Oakbank
27 Cowell	12 Clare
	14 Loxton
	15 Renmark
	16 Pinnaroo
	17 Bordertown
	18 Lucindale
	19 Mt. Gambier
	21 Millicent
	22 Naracoorte
	23 Kingston S.E.
	24 Murray Bridge
	28 Woorile
	30 Whyalla

Tschailja Cossacks fly British Airways

returned with a pale face: 'I'll be darned,' he said, 'there were two blokes in there chatting to each other in Hungarian – can you believe it?'

Yes, we learned a lot in Aussieland and after performing in Adelaide's fabulous new Festival theatre with all nights sold out, we were sure we would be invited back. As far as I am aware, we hold the record as the most successful Arts Council tour ever. When we flew out we were presented with bulging envelopes full of \$Aus. We almost didn't want to leave, but I had Ally waiting with many gigs lined up.

'Autobahns', here we roll again! Coming home was a shock. Cold and wet Europe was not attractive at all. Police was everywhere and searching for 'reds', terrorists, and urban guerillas. In our Tschailja Cossacks group we had three 'Nansen' passports, so were held up at most borders. Which terrorists would draw attention to themselves with colourful costumes, sabres, and lousy travel documents? The hysteria was understandable on some level, but from our vantage point it was idiotic, because artists live in the public eye, and we had only one interest: make money with music so the music can keep coming.

Three months after our return from Australia and many gigs we parted for a well earned holiday. Piotr Bondarenko, my right hand in the last six years, was keen to get to Corsica with his girlfriend. I pleaded

with him to take a good night's rest and drive the next morning, because we had had pretty heavy months including some night drives. He shook his head.

A day later, news came that he was seriously injured and his girlfriend had perished after he crashed into banked up traffic behind a truck accident in France. He had been sound asleep at the wheel, there were no traces he had even hit the brakes. So many emotions – I could have killed him – will he recover? How can I carry on without him? He was my right hand and more than that. I am still not over that event, this preventable death.



We sang at the gravesite.

There were fully booked months ahead after the holidays. There was not enough money to pay out the contracts and call it a day. I had to be 'boss' again; we had to carry on, and I hated it. A fundraiser concert was arranged to help with financing Piotr's rehabilitation which would take many months if not years. I heard of a young Russian in town, who played accordion and I hired him for this concert. It was a success and he was keen to fill the void.

Routine soon took over, he was a charming young fellow from Kishinev, Moldova, and had come out through Israel. His voice also proved to be superb. Although it was a smooth transition, for the first time I felt the cold reality that I couldn't be in this game forever. I became worn down seriously by the stupidity of my fellow men. As much as I liked making music, the changes and the responsibilities became weights on my shoulders. So much could have been avoided, with a bit of common sense and goodwill.

Europe between 1975 and 1977 is now a blur. Dodging avalanches in the Austrian high Alps to get to the next 'Super-Hotel', crossing illegally into France to play a concert after being refused entry (against European rules!), sliding over 'black ice' backwards into an autobahn entry to see all following cars smashing into trucks. Cars piled up where we would have been, had I not, against the Autobahn rules, rolled backwards through an entrance. Group members were late and made my driving less safe. Once, I drove on an Autobahn that had not been officially opened yet and dodged a couple of bulldozers. This memorable midnight drive was caused by the fact the Autobahn was due to be opened next morning, but all old signs had been removed so that I could not find the way home. A couple of times I followed the signs, only to end up at a blocked Autobahn entrance. Somehow I got hold of a local who assured me the Autobahn was definitely ready. All I needed to do was to move a barrier at any entrance, drive through, and then watch out for a bit of machinery that was due for removal just before the opening. Easy, but not when you're right in the middle of that situation around midnight. Cars were being broken into, instruments were stolen, publishers shirked paying royalties.

Ally and I decided to call it quits after the 1977 tour of Australia. The offer was a six months tour through Namibia, South Africa, South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. Now we had a nice honest 6 months of no single contracts and did not have to pay forfeit to any agent.

The first Australian tour had been extremely demanding for me without Ally, waking up everyone, make them show up on time, do all the finances, most of the media interviews, brief the lighting techs, wire up the instruments, compere the show, play and sing my parts, translate roadies' instructions into German. I insisted that if a larger tour was planned, Ally had to come along and lighten the load as she had done on our tours in Britain. She also operated the sound and (!) a lighting desk. Africa was an adventure.

Flying to Australia was like coming home. I had kept in contact with many of my billets from 1975 and Ally soon agreed that there was a quality about Australia which was an irresistible magnet.

I soon regretted my decision to be honest and inform the others that this tour was my last. My intentions had been to give them time to regroup and carry on, but what happened was a bitter fight for the leadership! They should have opened their eyes; being the leader was less a privilege but a bag of chores. They had, however, reasons not to trust each other financially, and maybe they saw the leadership as an opportunity. What fed back to us was they did not trust X to be the leader, or Yand Z had cheated them in a card game. They did not re-form.

Only two years later, I joined Sasha the bass, who had failed in his bid to make it into opera, and a group of former Don and Volga Cossacks for a concert tour through Germany. How easy that was; the tour felt like a holiday! Be driven around and play! I could have done this for the next 50 years: don the chapka, tune the instrument and perform!



At the time when we came home from the second Australian tour, we had an even a greater shock than after the first: tour – we somehow had to make a new start. I had more time for TV and radio gigs and as I had taught myself to play the bouzouki, I was contracted to accompany some of the great soloists of the time: Mireille Mathieu and Vicky Leandros. Although I could read the parts perfectly I had the feeling I needed a crash-course in pop music, see photos next page.



(Ally's photos)



Playing bouzouki in live TV Shows:

with Greek soloist
Vicky Leandros

with French soloist **Mireille Mathieu**
and the **Rolf-Hans Müller Orchestra**

I then came across an ad in the paper which said a 'Tanzkapelle' (Dance Band) was looking for a bass guitar player, reading music essential! I auditioned and was in. Now all weekends were booked and I progressed fast, started to write and produce my own songs and enjoyed the extra time with Ally.

In the meantime we hosted a stream of visitors from Australia. On both tours we had been billeted in people's homes and we happily returned the favours to families from Port Lincoln, Balhannah, Charters Towers, just to name a few.

Something peculiar happened to me on one of these visits: Germany drives on the right side of the road, but Britain and Australia on the left. As soon as I started the car in one quiet Frankfurt street, speaking English with our guests, I drove on the 'English' side of the road for a few metres! We had a great time showing them the sights around Frankfurt, went to winter white Austria, and enjoyed travelling 'off duty,' without the commitment to arrive somewhere and perform. But this leisurely pace could not last forever, of course.

We decided to buy a rundown 3 storey house in Frankfurt to renovate and live upstairs. We sold our country hut, the first property we had owned. Ally worked as a journalist again, with the 1980 federal election campaign being a particularly interesting phase. She felt like she was suddenly back



Teaching me how to make 'German' music, brass band or Rheinlieder. Karl-Heinz, Christel, Joseph, Paul,

in show business. The politicians on the hustings sounded exactly like the comperes and comedians she had known on the gala circuit, projecting well rehearsed spin to the citizenry/audience. She became convinced she could hear when they lied. She also worked as a ghost writer for a State Parliamentarian. Both major parties made moves to coopt Ally for their organisations, but Ally feels uncomfortable to represent something she is convinced is wrong, which inevitably occurs in that scenery. So she went to work for an Import/Export company to put bread on the table while I worked every day renovating the house from top to bottom under the guidance of a young architect.

For more than two years any sickness or accident

would have shut us down completely because we were heavily in debt. But we were careful, lucky, and young, so we completed the project. As we were heading towards 40, we became more conscious about the age limit for migrating to Australia, which was then 48. From Germany, Australia had 100,000 applications every year, but the quota was only 4000 visas. Suddenly, migration left the list of what one plans to do in the future, onto the list of 'do it now'.



The Davydoff Ensemble in Berlin. When we aquired these instruments we had no idea they would have accompanied Nadezhda Plevitskaya, who recorded and performed in Berlin often in those times. Ally won the race to turn the Plevitskaya story into a historical novel.

We had one last look at Australia over Christmas 1981 and were sure, that's the place for us.

As we had decided to settle in Port Lincoln, South Australia, I couldn't see that we would need my collection of historic balalaikas there. I wanted to keep them together as most of them were from the Berlin emigré ensemble 'Jean Davydoff' (1920s, 30s), so to some regret now they went to Goslar, Germany (see Milestones page).

DESTINATION AUSTRALIA

In Lincoln we could stroll down to the town jetty (below), enjoyed the fresh air, no driving on snow and ice, friendly country people, andandand. But what about crust?

Luckily my knowledge of chemistry and my lifelong interest in science got me a lab-assistant job in the Catholic St Joseph's High School. Ally was offered the position of Secretary in the Tunarama festival organisation, which she enthusiastically accepted, so both of us soon became a valued part of a typical Aussie contry town.

Even before our arrival, I had been coopted into the Port Lincoln Players drama group to play bass guitar in 'Fiddler on the Roof'. They were a brilliant ensemble of theatre buffs who needed a bass player for their show with rehearsals starting only days after our arrival! The Fiddler musical has quite a few farewell scenes and it was an eerie



We had never known that sea water can be so clear and clean.

Now that is natural beauty, and it was just around the corner!



At the end of this rainbow, on Boston Island, there is indeed that pot of gold.

expiience to go through these in the rehearsals after we had said farewell to so many people in Europe only days before. Art and real life merged, an extraordinary experience.

During the show the State High School booked me for next year's show. My employer, St. Joseph's, did not have a music department but was fiercely competitive and despite being a modest lab-assistant I became more and more involved in their an-

nual productions like 'Godspell', and 'Little Shop of Horrors'. When the head of drama mentioned they were bored with rehashing the standards year after year, I offered to write a musical. In the team was a good librettist and a gifted lyricist. I came up with all the music and did the sound. It was a roaring success.



Never before had I written and staged so many shows, published so many articles, photos, even books as in Port Lincoln. Battle of the Bands' is a teenage comedy/band competition for the teenage market.

With 'This Woman', we celebrated the forthcoming beatification of Mary MacKillop. In 1992, we produced a serious worldclass musical. The production was later invited to the Adelaide stage where it got the thumbs up from Max Harris,

Bob Jesser, Samela Harris, the Bishop, the Sisters, Don Barber, and everyone else who saw it.

Excerpts were invited to the official beatification ceremony in 1995 (excerpts on our YOUTUBE channel hauptmannbalalaika). When we moved to capitalise on these successes, the Adelaide Festival Centre had just closed its musical production unit. The Catholic amateur group rejects new material on principal although the Catholic finance department told Ally she could buy a Therry Society production for about 36,000 \$ (1996). But the other authors could not participate, so that did not eventuate. We decided to aim for a more durable product, an animation TV movie. A pilot is on www.youtube/user/hauptmannbalalaika.

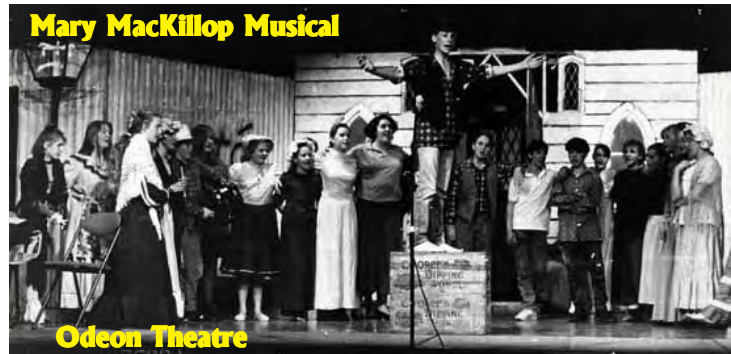
Theatre director Bob Jesser (who saw the show 9 times) had given it in writing, 'Your Mary MacKillop musical is a license to print money'. So far, the producer who might like to print this money has eluded us. We cannot fund a stage production or a movie. The youtube pilot may be mailed around to interested parties who are looking for such a unique opportunity.

There was a time when Ally toyed with the idea of finding production capital where it was plentiful and loose because that segment of the economy had just lost the possibility to advertise and sponsor: 'That's a win-win situation for everyone,' Ally said. 'They look for new opportunities. Our team and the Mary MacKillop cause can provide exactly that for the Tobacco Institute and/or the tobacco companies.' She enjoyed the thought immensely to have a front company disguising the fact where the money came from. After a year or two, after all the accolades were documented and the royalties paid, Ally or the Tobacco Institute would leak the truth in small increments to generate a week of media coverage.

'Who is to know?' Ally asked, 'unless we tell them? Not even the team would know. We just tell them we had been lucky in finding a producer! Would they all send their residuals back? Would Mary MacKillop's cause suffer just because of who provided the production capital? Didn't you read Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* in school?' Ally enjoyed these thoughts immensely but that's what they remained. We were also in Port Lincoln at the time. It obviously caused some chagrin that we could not find or found a production team after we had put resources and time into this. We never knew why there was so much enthusiasm and why it died a sudden death, but maybe it is as simple as show business does not do Catholic and Catholic does not do show business.

For our primary students I wrote music to 'Dumbling', a very funny show based on several Brother Grimm fairytales. I used all the basic song styles of Rock'nRoll thus giving the little ones a good grounding in modern music.

Then a neighbour brought me a little book by a local historic poet, Tom Black. Some of the verse was very moving, others quite funny and as I always liked Irish and Scottish music, I put a few



after our Adelaide
THIS WOMAN shows



of these poems to music honouring an artist who had trodden the shores of Boston Bay so many years before me.

The local choir got interested and as I had built up a little sound studio (where I made quite a few successful commercials), I wrote some more music and produced the very first CD ever made in Port Lincoln. The signature tune of the Tom Black Song Cycle is IN THAT VALLEY BY THE SEA. Shortly after our successful launch, the local National Trust located Black's gravesite in Port Lincoln and finally the bard got a proper headstone and was honoured by a large crowd braving the summer heat. A good time was had by all. Coming to think of it, maybe my Bouzouki CD was first. Both were released in 1996. My Bouzouki

CD, first called Olympic Dreamscapes, then Bouzouki Dreamscapes, built on our work and holidays in Greece between 1968 and 1973. It contains Ally's favourite Tango which she later incorporated in her Plevitskaya novel as Tango Zingarese.



honoring the bard of yesteryear

A few years before, Ally had picked up quite a big translating job from Adelaide (into German) for music tuition books. She also wrote all chapters for a promotional photo book about Port Lincoln and the Eyre Peninsula which we shot over the few free weekends. Ally also organized various small and large projects of local artists



Farewell dinner with Tom Black's relatives

who would have never been able to realize their dreams were it not for our music/photo studio management. I played violin with the local bushband, banjo with Graeme, a local country + Rock'n Roll singer, and joined the State High School teachers as a cellist, performing 'The Trout' with our local doctor, who just happened to be also a trained concert pianist.

Then, after 16 years of working and creating in the regional centre of Port Lincoln another offer from Adelaide arrived just at the time when Ally's translation job had run its course. No income source was on the horizon for her in Port Lincoln, so this time we could not say no.

Never in our wildest dreams could I have imagined how it would all evolve. To be close to my work in Kensington we moved to the fashionable Norwood district where we could only afford a little townhouse after the sale of our Lincoln house with its million dollar view. Soon I was invited to build up and run a sound studio at Marryatville High School, one of the famous specialized music schools. I greatly enjoyed seeing so much talent in one place. How prestigious this school is I had no idea until a neighbour's jaw dropped when I mentioned my work. My technical knowledge was appreciated and so was my photography (my panoramas were legendary).



Б А Л А Л А И К А С С И Н Г А С И Н

Б Е Т Т Е Р Т Ъ Н Е В Е Р

A good two years after we came to Adelaide, I discovered a small sign on one of the churches nearby. It was in cyrillic and I was speechless: This was the Russki Dom, the Russian Community Centre. On their next open day, I saw three balalaikas on stage and waited. Dancers performed to backing tracks, pianists tickled the ivories and a soprano sang. In vain I waited for balalaika players so I asked one of the organizers when the instruments would be played. 'We have nobody who can play them!' was the answer. My heart jumped for joy. Writing commercials, musicals, making Irish music or playing Schubert, is all very nice but balalaika is different. It is deep, it is fun, and it is 'home'.



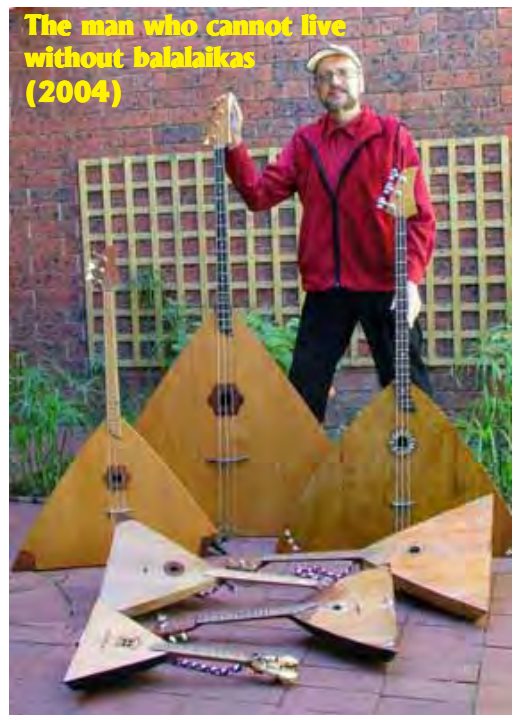
In recent times Ally and I had perfected our show 'Listen to my Pictures' in which we introduced our audiences to 6 cultures on 9 instruments (Greek, Italian, Russian, Turkish-, Croatian and Egyptian). We used posters with photos from our tours and drew the arch from Crete's Minoan dances to the latest Oud hits from Egypt – techno style.

Whenever I had a breather I built balalaikas again in the small back yard of our unit in Norwood, aiming to be the only owner of a complete set of balalaikas in Australia. I also wanted to start a community ensemble based at the Russki Dom whose prima balalaikas had disappeared over the years.

Our first breakthrough was discovering Xenia. She sang and accompanied herself on a classical guitar. Ten I met Mish (whose girls danced at the club) and who has a nice natural bass voice. They knew a young Aussie opera student with a love for Russian music. Soon I discovered more and more talent. Even Jude, whom I had known from the Port Lincoln times as an instrument collector and Marina from Belgium were interested to learn the balalaika. Natasha was already an accomplished player which helped a lot, especially as Ally was still finding her feet on the bass balalaika.

I knew such a combination of talent would probably not last, so I started rehearsals immediately, and planned a CD. Ally had the naming idea of *Zakuski* and Mish added *hot*. The result is one of the most entertaining and varied compilations of Russian Folk Music ever. We launched our CD in the German Club as they had the bigger stage and

their choir joined in to sing the backing for several songs. It was a great afternoon. Wherever we performed, audiences were wrapped, but life got in the way of continuity.



Pelham, our solo bass won a prestigious competition to further his voice studies in Europe. He wants to be on the opera stage, not the concert stage. After seeing her aunt Wanda, Rebhoff and our Bulgarian Sasha Ally wonders, now in 2009, when Pelham might ogle the concert stage as a nice addition to meagre opera income, but that's her opinion. Then, Xenia needed surgery and our tenors needed more time for their businesses and families.

Hot Zakuski was in the freezer but at least I had made a colourful snapshot of Russian song in Adelaide in the early 2nd millenium. For a short while I fell back on my photographic talent and exhibited at the 'Unley About Arts' Show, and in the new Evolution Gallery in Rundle Street. I had close links to the Victor Harbor photographic club where I had been billeted while performing for the Victor Harbour Folk Festivals.

The years went by and Ally finally realized she should tackle her long held dream of writing a major novel – about a Russian Gypsy Singer, of course! 'Our' Russians here were impressed, a radio interviewer scratched his head, why an Australian migrant who was not even Russian, had beaten the writers in Russia. Her historical novel came first to tell the fascinating story about the extraordinary life of Nadezhda Plevitskaya, Soloist to His Imperial Majesty Tsar Nicolas II in full. It became a true samizdat publication, uncensored and available from her or over the internet through the wonderful samizdat supporters www.lulu.com.

Computers have now given creators the tools to turn their ideas into reality. In music, the shift towards self-producing has become overwhelming in recent years and it looks like the book scene is about to follow that path. Credible sources claim that a publisher receives 5,000 (five thousand) book offers per year, but they can accept only two or three. Others say, that only one in 1000 (Australian) writers can find a slot in mainstream publishing. Whatever the figure may be, many among the non-accepted between 999 and 4,997 per anno have something to offer as well, and sales of Ally's 'La Plevitskaya' book have certainly confirmed that. Ally decided not to queue and tells some of her journey as an author on

<http://hauptmannkurski.wordpress.com>.

The years caught up with us. More and more often I wondered how long I'd say yes to any job coming along. As I had worked some years in Germany, Ally assumed I would get some kind of 'pension' from the old country. We wanted to know more and filled out half a ton of papers. Credit is due to Ally who had all the relevant documents handy bar one. That could be recreated in a jiffy, though, through email. In the freelance Gypsy life that we had lived that is quite an achievement.

Then came a surprise: New agreements between Australia and Germany required we apply for the pension in Australia as well! The decision to jump was not difficult as we were both eligible for the pension within weeks. We had already moved from our townhouse in fashionable Norwood to the much cheaper northern suburb of Ingle Farm. An unassuming very average 1970s house in a quiet street near a gully seemed just the right spot. Ally no longer wakes up in the middle of the night from the Melbourne truck traffic on Portrush Road and considers that a huge improvement.

As soon as I had quit my job at Marryatville High School, I had an offer from the Russian School to teach balalaika to two classes there. Could I say NYET to that? Of course not.

But the school had no instruments at all. Every Saturday, I brought all balalaikas I could muster and borrowed some. I built a few primas and 5 piccolos when I saw that some of the younger kids were struggling with the full sized prima balalaika.

And once I heard again the sound of 12 balalaikas I wondered if I shouldn't try and start an adult group again. We are rehearsing again and I plan to bring the junior and senior ensembles together soon: Just imagine the sound of 20 balalaikas!

So, what may the future hold? Hopefully plenty of music as always. So many things have happened that I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams, and in all likelihood this will not stop, just because it is October 2009. We have our own little TV channel now; – well, that's what they call it when you go on youtube, and we plan to make good use of this samizdat slot, too!

From time to time one of the nice people who billeted me/us in the 1975 and 1977 Arts Council tours say hello or we visit them. What a credit to the (now sadly defunct) Arts Council organization that so many friendships endured over the decades.

Ally and I were 'allowed' into Australia due to the lobbying of our Arts Council friends on the grounds that we would be a 'cultural asset'. I think both of us can now say that we have lived up to this expectation and we have many things to be proud of. We are coming full circle, when we play balalaika in the Italian Club for the friends of the Balletts Russes' Petrouchka evening. Scholars have written that two of Plevitskaya's most successful songs were Stravinsky's inspiration for the now classic Petrouchka ballett.

Of course I would have liked my MacKillop Musical to have premiered in Sydney or Adelaide, or Ally's book to be in all the nation's bookshops. We are still working on that, even though we

sometimes say jokingly, many a success has come posthumously.

But the many dreams of artists who I helped on their way, not counting my hours, are very real. In contrast to most Australians my Port Lincoln studio had me working together with excellent Aboriginal performers like Rocky and Mindi. My recordings and orchestrations of Jan Taylor's pretty children's songs were an inspiration to many and 'Schizophrenia' with a gifted singer songwriter was an unforgettable experience in its own right. I would have liked to inspire Port Lincoln and Broken Hill to get behind my Tom Black song cycle but maybe I am a city boy and there is something in the country mentality that I simply don't get, not without explanation anyway.

Nearly five decades have been jotted down in a condensed style. Many people and events are not mentioned but I have not forgotten. I'll get these pages out on the net and we'll see who is interested. I am keen to hear from anybody I have ever worked with. I learnt so much; I think of my former 'travel' companions sometimes, and if you want to pick up the connection, please drop me an email. (artifex2@bigpond.com).

In 2006 and 2007 Sasha, our first bass who never reached the stage of the Milan Scala, and some of his group tracked us down if we could not arrange a tour here in Australia for their Volga Cossacks, who had shrunk from 8 to 4 in recent years. We could not be bothered. We are our own people now.

Jeff, back in Kansas, sent us an email that he often talks to people about his time with us: *'You guys are characters in the grateful history. Every time I get to explain my life (solicited or not) I'm amazed all over again how ya'll managed to herd us balky rowdies to gigs, to countries, through check-points etc. Good memories. Thank you.'*

Now, I'll write a few more arrangements for the senior balalaika ensemble and take the tempo down of the Dark Eyes for the Sveta show. Retired? You gotta be joking.and then there is the weeding in the garden, planting some vegetables, and filling the bird bath for the magpies and the honey bees. We hope for rain – that's Australia. We are glad we are here, even though we would never have imagined which niche we carved out for ourselves here!

Dieter Hauptmann, August 2008, revised October 2009

(This edition October 2009)

I play many instruments, but Ally with her bass balalaika is the most photographed!



Xmas show in the Adelaide Townhall as guests of the renowned Harmony Choir

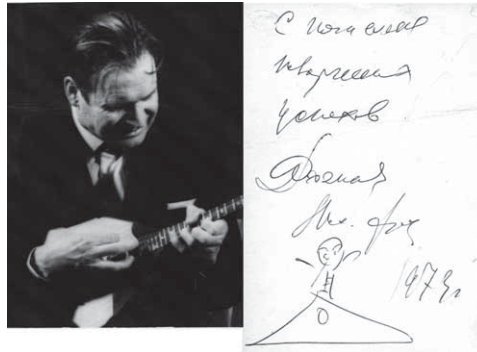


Assorted Memories

Over time, I used all floors of this house



Dreikönigsstrasse 30. Once I decorated all windows with balalaikas. (Before May 1968)
Why? Because I could.



We met Melanie Safka in Queensland 1977



one of my photo exhibitions



We bought the Plevitskaya tambourine on one of our tours Portobello Road, London



Representing the Russian Community in Elder Park

That's Showbusiness!



The manager turned performer.