

NATIONAL SHEVCHENKO

MUSICAL ENSEMBLE GUILD OF CANADA

BULLETIN

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WORLD OF STRINGS

Six outstanding guest artists join the TMO



Launching another season of exciting concerts, the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra presents "World of Strings" featuring amazing solo artists on a variety of stringed instruments: the Chinese pipa, domra, middle-eastern oud, Ukrainian bandura, classical guitar, and the violoncello – all accompanied by the mandolin orchestra under the baton of Artistic Director Alexander Veprinskiy.

The program, comprising ancient eastern music, traditional Ukrainian, clas-

sical and contemporary music, will take the audience on a tour of beauty, harmony and tranquility so passionately sought in today's troubled world.

See pages 6 and 7 for full details about the exceptional talent which will appear with the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra on Saturday, November 11, 7 pm at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre for the Arts.

Get your tickets now!

Call 416-533-2725

Email info@shevchenkomusic.com

There is no "us" without "you"!

The Shevchenko Musical Ensemble, one of the finest exponents of Ukrainian choral and orchestral music in this country, reaches out each fall to its members and friends for urgently-needed financial assistance.

The Shevchenko Musical Ensemble's high quality of performance for over 70 years is thanks to the moral and financial support from Canadians of diverse backgrounds, from people like you. We could not have done this alone.

Our Sustaining Fund Drive in support of the Ensemble is currently underway and we turn to you once again, dear readers, for your support.

Please give generously to help us continue to share Ukrainian and other musical traditions with our audiences. All donations are tax deductible (Reg. No. 11905 1910 RR0001).

Thank you sincerely.

Singing Together

A choral celebration of diversity

Last April, a bouquet of beautiful voices (and languages) rang out at “Singing Together”, a choral fest held at the Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church. The participating groups in this community event, which was established in 1995, represented the Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Caribbean and Ukrainian cultures.

Although the choirs are, for the most part, made up of volunteer performers, the level of professionalism was admirable, particularly the appearances of the Chinese and Korean choirs. They not only performed at a high level, but were also dressed in beautiful traditional attire

which displayed a uniformity so aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

The Shevchenko Ukrainian Choir, with Artistic Director Alexander Veprinskiy, also performed at a notable level of professionalism, and received (to this reviewer’s ear) among the loudest and longest applause from the audience. What would have enhanced Shevchenko’s wonderful performance, however, would have been consistency, for both the men and women, in their traditional dress.

Coro San Marco Italian Choir, conducted by Daniel Colla, president of “Singing Together” who has dedicated many years

to this community organization, completed its set with the well-known *Volare* and invited the audience to sing along. La Petite Musicale Caribbean choir was most colourful and energetic in its presentation which ended with a song by Bob Marley. Cantemos Spanish Choir is a professional chamber ensemble which presents mostly *a cappella* repertoire.

The grand finale of this feast of diverse cultures brought all the voices together to perform a Cree-Dene song, *Waniska (Wake Up)* and *Four Strong Winds* by Ian Tyson. Can’t get more Canadian than that, eh?

– GK



Songs of Peace and Love

Annual Concert showcases our Ukrainian roots with a focus on peace

The program, presented at the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble’s Annual Concert on June 3, rang out once again for peace and love of humanity in the face of the disastrous war in Ukraine. The first half of the program comprised Ukrainian songs and music, both folk and contemporary, in celebration of the rich culture of Ukraine; music by Mykola Lysenko and Denys Sichynsky; and works to the lyrics of Taras Shevchenko. Contemporary compositions, such as *Odna Kalyna* (One Guelder Rose), performed by soprano Eugenia Topolskaia and choir, sent the message: “Fate, take everything... but leave us one Ukraine, for other lands we have none...”.

The second half of the program was a celebration of life and cultures throughout the ages. Fine performances were given by baritone Sergei Stilmachenko in *Invoca-*

tion from the opera *Faust*, and by Oleksandr Kurmazenko, a new member of the choir, who performed *Go Down Moses*. Tanya Podolskaia and Sergei joined to sing *Une Vie d’Amour* from the film *Tetهران-43*. A highlight on the program was Tetiana Khomenko’s outstanding performance on balalaika of the *Theme* from the film *Schindler’s List* which was loudly applauded by the audience.

The choir and orchestra ended the annual performance with *Hands United in Peace* calling for: “A human rainbow never ending sea to shining sea. Hands united in freedom. Hands united in peace.”

The Souvenir Program contained articles and pictures of creative street art in Ukraine – outdoor murals which have become a powerful tool for the revitalization of cities and a vehicle of expression for solidarity with the Ukrainian people

in their current struggle for independence and peace.

Other articles acquainted Canadians with a form of Ukrainian folk art known as *Petrykivka*, the traditional decorative style of painting from the village of Petrykivka; the folk art painted by Maria Prymachenko for which the year 2009 was declared *The Year of Prymachenko* by UNESCO; and the beautiful floral paintings by Kateryna Bilokur. Bilokur’s love of flora, seemingly inherent in the Ukrainian soul, was also brought to Canada by Ukrainian immigrants: “Whether on a homestead, in a town or urban centre, every “baba” tended a huge flower garden, every kitchen table hosted a bouquet of freshly cut flowers, and one would not visit a neighbour without flowers in hand.”

– GK

TMO in Orillia

After numerous postponements due to COVID, The Toronto Mandolin Orchestra’s performance in Orillia finally took place on Sunday, May 7 – the very day that a memorial was being held for the legendary Canadian artist Gordon Lightfoot who died on May 1.

Arriving at the theatre, we saw that the bust of Gordon Lightfoot, on the square in front of the theatre was adorned with flowers in his memory. We learned that the public visitation, attended by more than 2,400 fans, was being held not far from the theatre at St. Paul’s United Church where Lightfoot once sang as a choir boy.

The day before our concert, a previously-planned concert tribute to Lightfoot at the Orillia Opera House became a celebration of his life and memorable career in Canadian music.

A footnote: our concert, *Movies by Mandolin*, which played to a full house, was warmly received by a very enthusiastic audience. And by the way, the old outdoor hoist to get instruments onto the stage that we experienced on our very first visit to Orillia, has been replaced by a state-of-the-art elevator in this beautiful 100-year old heritage Opera House.

– GK



Goodbye...

We wish Tetiana all the best



In the last issue of the *Bulletin*, we introduced Tetiana (Tanya) Khomenko as our new administrator who was hired in March. In a short period of time, she quickly learned to manage the tasks of the Ensemble office in support of the choir and orchestra, and especially in preparation for the Annual Concert in June.

In addition to office work, Tanya played tenor mandolin in the orchestra and did some teaching and coaching of newcomers to the orchestra. She also invited three of her friends in the Balalaika and Domra Association of America to perform with us at the annual concert where her balalaika solo in *Theme* from *Schindler's List* was a highlight on the program.

Unfortunately, after four months with the Ensemble, and her husband still waiting for his Canadian visa, Tanya and daughter decided to return to Poland to reunite the family. We will miss Tanya's laughter, boundless energy and strong support for the Ensemble, as well as her amazing talent on the balalaika. – GK

Hello!

Meet Olena Maksyuta



With Tetiana returning to Poland, we were once again back at the drawing board in search of an administrator for the Ensemble office. After reaching out to a few capable people the Board has hired Olena Maksyuta who fled Kyiv with her daughter at the start of the war in Ukraine.

No, Olena does not play an instrument, nor sing in a choir, but what she has is a BA from the Kyiv University of Trade and Economics, and years of experience as an office administrator.

During the interview with Olena, Board members found her to be a very positive, confident person who is eager to face any new challenges in looking after the needs of the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble and Guild. – GK

Congratulations Fred

Long-time Shevchenko Choir member receives Civic Award



Fred Panasiuk, an original member of the choir since its inception in 1951, in addition to attending weekly rehearsals, has also been active in his home community of Mississauga. Since his youth, Fred has been involved in activities beneficial to the community, whether in baseball and other sports, or at his place of work where he chaired the Social Committee for many years organizing golf tournaments, outings, and particularly a Christmas party for the children of fellow workers. Always with the Ensemble in mind, he hired the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra to perform *Peter and the Wolf* for that festive event.

His community awards are numerous. Among them, in 1996 Fred accepted a Silver Anniversary Award on behalf of the Shevchenko Male Chorus presented by the Hon. N. Jackman, then Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. In recognition of 25 years of volunteerism Fred received a certificate, signed by Elaine Ziemba, then Ontario Minister of Citizenship. He received awards and accolades from Data Business Forms, his place of employment and where, always with the Ensemble in mind, he sold hundreds of the Ensemble's lottery tickets over the years.

Most recently, in recognition of his many years of volunteerism, Fred received the *Civic Award of Recognition* presented to him by Mayor Bonnie Crombie and Councillor Chris Fonseca at Mississauga Council Chambers on September 27. Although Fred had been active in the sports

community and his workplace, the officials chose to speak of his long devotion to and activism for the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble, thereby introducing our group to an audience of nearly 500.

We in the Shevchenko community know Fred for his never-ceasing promotion of the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble and we extend our sincere congratulations to Fred on his achievements, not only for the Ensemble, but for his fellow citizens of Mississauga. – GK

From left, Councillor Chris Fonseca, Fred Panasiuk, Mayor Bonnie Crombie, at Mississauga Council Chambers

World of Strings

Mandolins playing Chinese music? Ancient Middle Eastern melodies? This is what music lovers will hear when they attend “World of Strings” at Trinity – St. Paul’s Centre. Featuring six outstanding stringed instrument soloists and the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra under the artistic direction of Alexander Veprinskiy.



Internationally acclaimed **Wen Zhao**, pipa virtuosa (*above*), who combines East Asian musical traditions with a western classical repertoire has performed throughout Canada, as well as in Asia and the USA. She teaches pipa at the Royal Conservatory of Music and York University in Toronto, and is also the co-founder of the Lute Legends Collective, a performing group of musicians who represent ancient plucked-string traditions.



Roman Smirnov (*above*) is an award-winning guitarist in classical and flamenco styles. He is also a producer, arranger and composer whose works reflect the emotions of various cultures and traditions in music. He is also inspired by such genres as baroque, jazz, world, folk and even rock music. Roman obtained his musical education at the Tallinn Music Conservatory in Estonia, the Rubin Academy of Music in Israel, and the Academy of Music in Kassell, Germany.

Manar Naeem (*right*) is a self-taught oudist, as well as an instructor and composer. She performs with the Canadian Arabic Orchestra and teaches at the Canadian Arabic Conservatory of Music. Manar left her home in Syria with a full scholarship to study physics at Wilfred Laurier University, and has now completed her master’s degree in Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo. Participating in concerts across Canada, Manar experiences music as a global language of love which brings different cultures and communities together.

Zhenya Kobylanska, (*right*) a renowned Ukrainian-Mexican cellist who has earned international recognition for her talent and skill, is also known for her rich and expressive interpretation of classical repertoire. Born in Odesa, Ukraine, Zhenya began her musical studies at the age of 5 and excelled on both piano and cello. She earned a Bachelor of Music Pedagogy degree from the Mykolaiv State Pedagogical University in Ukraine, and completed her master’s in music performance at Valencia International University (Spain). Zhenya pursued a musical career in Mexico, performing as a soloist with several orchestras. She also worked as co-principal and principal cellist in orchestras such as the National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet in Odesa, Ukraine.



TICKETS ON SALE NOW

416-533-2725

info@shevchenkomusic.com



Domra virtuoso, **Iryna Pidperyhora**, (*below*) graduated with honours from the Kyiv Academy of Music (Conservatory) where she was also a senior teacher on the folk instrument faculty. She is a Laureate of international competitions in Italy and Poland where she won second place. She has performed extensively in Ukraine and most recently was a performing artist with the Academic Orchestra of Folk and Popular Music of the Television and Radio Company of Ukraine.



Bandurist **Victor Mishalow** (*above*) has made a significant contribution to Ukrainian music in Canada, both through his performances and writings. He formed the original *Canadian Bandurist Capella* in 1991, and introduced many young people to this ancient Ukrainian instrument.

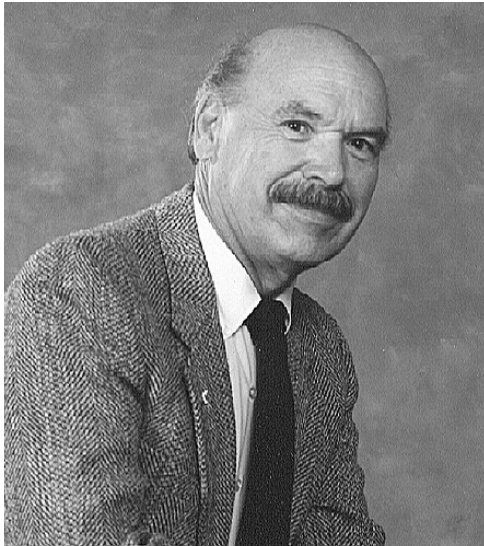
Born in Sydney, Australia, Victor was the first person in that country to do his high school practical music performance exam on the bandura. Since then, Victor has made it his life’s passion and work. He graduated from Sydney University with a double major in Musicology and Ethno-Musicology, and did his postgraduate studies at the Kyiv Conservatory for master’s in music. Victor has performed in North America, Europe and Australia, and has played solo performances in Carnegie Hall, Massey Hall, and the Sydney Opera House. He completed several concert tours in Ukraine, with over 70 solo concert recitals.

These amazing solo artists will be accompanied by the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra whose members have been acquainting themselves with the new and unfamiliar (for them) rhythms of traditional Eastern music. The entire program has been wonderfully arranged for the orchestra by Alexander Veprinskiy who continues to amaze with his keen sense and knowledge of the traditional music of other cultures.

– GK



Dear friends we've lost...



From left, composers
Morris Surdin and
Nikolai Budashkin
with Myron during
SME 1970 Concert
Tour of Ukraine

Myron Shaltulsky

Myron Shatulsky, who passed away in Winnipeg this past July, is fondly remembered, not only for his long and fruitful association with the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble, but also for his outstanding contribution to Ukrainian music and dance in this country.

Myron was a compatriot of Eugene Dolny, founder of the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble. In the early 1950s they studied together at the Conservatory of Music in Kyiv where Myron also attended the Choreographic Institute. Back in Canada, as musical and dance director of the AUUC in Winnipeg, Myron worked with the Bandurist Male Chorus and other groups, and continued to collaborate with Dolny in Toronto. In 1961, for a Toronto festival marking the 100th anniversary of the death of Ukrainian poet and artist, Taras Shevchenko, Myron choreographed the *Canadian Dance Suite*, with music arranged by Dolny.

In 1968, Myron and his wife Olga moved to Toronto where he became the associate conductor of the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble in preparation for its 1970 tour of Ukraine. A few years later, although Myron and Olga had relocated to

Coquitlam, BC, the collaboration with the SME continued. In 1979, Myron conducted a two week dance seminar in Toronto for dancers of the SME and others interested in this form of folk art. Myron also did a number of orchestrations, including dance music, for the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble. For many years, Myron was also vice-president from Western Canada on the board of the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble Guild.

Based on his extensive knowledge of the history of Ukrainian folk dance, and its traditional choreography, Myron wrote the book "The Ukrainian Folk Dance", published in 1988, and "Games and Songs" for children for the Manitoba Ukrainian Arts Council. In 1996, marking 75 years of the Winnipeg Mandolin Orchestra, Myron also wrote a short history of the orchestra which was established in 1921.

Returning to Winnipeg in 1984, Myron was soon back to organizing

and participating in cultural events locally and western Canada. Among his later cultural achievements was the formation of the Winnipeg Mandolin Quintet. The Quintet's appearance at the 2002 convention of the Classical Mandolin Society of America sponsored by the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra, was to be his last collaboration with the SME. We remember with great respect and fondness, the decades of cherished friendship with Myron Shatulsky, an exceptionally talented, creative and wonderful human being.

- Ginger Kautto



Myrna Forgach

Myrna Forgach, who passed away on July 17 this year, came to the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra after a life-long career as an opera virtuoso. She performed in Hungary, the land of her birth, and throughout Canada and the USA. Myrna grew up in Lethbridge, Alberta where she learned to play the mandolin as a child at the Ukrainian Hall. As she matured, her wonderful soprano voice was discovered and then nurtured, resulting in a very successful international operatic career.

In retirement in Toronto, through her love of music, Myrna once again picked up the mandolin. Although she had suffered a minor stroke, she found that she could still play the mandolin after it had lain on a shelf for decades. Soon after her brother Bill Hosso, who sang in the Shevchenko Choir, introduced Myrna to the orchestra, its members and making music became her favourite things.

Myrna was a very friendly, generous and loving person who doted on her two nieces, Carol and Linda. Myrna and her warm smile will be sorely missed by orchestra members, but will also be fondly remembered by all.

- GK

Saga of a Mandolin



At a recent Shevchenko Ensemble garage sale, a young man by the name of Aaron Luxton showed interested in our musical instruments, particularly the mandolin. Because the mandolins for sale were not of very good quality, and learning he was the grandson of Lily Luxton who had played in our orchestra many years ago, I promised him I would find a better one and get back to him.

Weeks later, on a visit to the Shevchenko Museum, I learned they were planning a folk instrument display. When the curator, Lyudmyla Pogoryelova said they had a domra, I asked to see it. What she showed me was actually a mandolin and inside the instrument was a sticker saying: "On loan from Lily Luxton, March 29, 1999". I couldn't believe my eyes. Then

I recalled that for one season, when the Ensemble offered free mandolin lessons to immigrant children, we had borrowed instruments from our members for this purpose. Among them was this mandolin which was recently donated to the museum by Lily's niece. We then learned that this very mandolin originally belonged to Mary Kostiuk, Aaron Luxton's great-grandmother, who played it on the Ensemble's tour of Ukraine in 1970.

Once I told Lyudmyla the story of the mandolin she graciously said it must be returned to the family without hesitation. So, four generations later, this humble mandolin has found its rightful home in the hands of young Aaron Luxton where we know it will once again make beautiful music!

- GK

In Fond Memory

The National Shevchenko Musical Ensemble Guild of Canada extends sincere condolences to family and friends in memory of the following:

Wanda Pratt
2023

Myrna Forgach
2023

Myron Shatulsky
2023

Regina's Poltava Ensemble performs in Portugal and Spain

On the invitation of the International Council of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts, Regina's Poltava Dance Ensemble this July departed for Lisbon, Portugal and Spain. This would be the Ensemble's third visit to Portugal and its second to Spain to perform in this folk art festival. Twenty dancers under the direction of Lisa Wanner, 10 musicians under the direction of conductor Vlad Tsymbal, and a number of assistants of the Poltava Ensemble were to experience 18 days of sharing the stage with professional groups from Argentina, Georgia, Bolivia, Tahiti, Africa, Venezuela, Mexico, Ecuador and Portugal, and performing for thousands of people (a closing show estimated 10,000). It was 18 days of getting to know people from

around the world; being hosted in small town restaurants with home cooked food made by local cooks and workers. It also meant rehearsing in +40 weather and performing each evening at 11:00 pm at night. Our program, with mandatory live orchestra, included 6 dances: Vitayemo, Zakarpatskiy Krucheniy, Sailors Dance, Podolyanochka, Moldovan Gypsy Dance and Hopak. Since performances were continuous, some dancers had to wear two costumes in order to make a costume change in less than one minute. Although the Festival organizations paid for all travel, food and accommodation within Portugal and Spain, Poltava was responsible for flights and insurance, and costs for additional luggage of cos-

tumes, instruments and technical equipment. Although the participants paid for their individual flight, the Ensemble initiated many fundraising events and financial assistance was also received from the Regina and National AUUC. The rewards of such a tour are many: performing in a monastery and a castle, meeting people from far and wide, and witnessing the folk art of others. It was also rewarding to be able to share our organization's history with dignitaries, the public, and journalists responding to their question "How is Poltava able to maintain the Ukrainian culture brought to Canada over one hundred years ago?"
- Zoya Shmyr | poltava.ca



Poltava Ensemble at the Claustro do Mosteiro (Monastery) in Celenova, Spain.



Do you play
mandolin, domra,
kobza or guitar?

Граєте на домрі,
мандоліні, кобзі
або гітарі?

PLAY WITH US!

Грайте з нами!

If you play any of these (or any other) instruments, can read music and love to perform in front of live audiences, the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra is for you.

The Toronto Mandolin Orchestra is a mostly amateur group comprised of the mandolin family of instruments along with percussion, accordion and woodwind. Our repertoire includes Ukrainian folk music arranged for orchestra as well as the folk music of many other cultures plus classical favourites. Our home stage is Trinity-St. Paul's Centre at Bloor and Spadina but we also perform around the GTA and southern Ontario. Rehearsals are every Monday evening near Wilson subway station in North York. The orchestra enjoys highly professional artistic direction under conductor Alexander Veprinsky. Contact us to find out more...

Якщо ви вмієте грати на одному з цих інструментів та любите виступати в різноманітних концертах перед вдячною аудиторією, тоді Toronto Mandolin Orchestra – це те, що вам потрібно!

Toronto Mandolin Orchestra – в більшості самодіяльний колектив, який складається з цілого сімейства мандолін, а також акордіонів, дерев'яних духових та ударних інструментів. В репертуарі оркестру - українська народна музика, музика інших народів, а популярні класичні твори. Багато наших концертів проходить на сцені Trinity – St. Paul's Centre, але ми виступаємо також в інших концертних залах великого Торонто та провінції Онтаріо. Репетиції оркестру проходять кожного понеділка увечорі у Borochov Centre біля метро Sheppard West у North York. Якщо ви зацікавилися або хотіли б знати про нас більше...

Coming events

Saturday, November 11, 2023 • 7:00 pm

Toronto Mandolin Orchestra

"World of Strings"

Featuring outstanding artists on bandura, cello, domra, guitar, oud and pipa

Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre

427 Bloor St. W (west of Spadina)

Tickets: 416-533-2725 or info@shevchenkomusic.com

February 2024

Toronto Mandolin Orchestra

with Vocal Soloists

Date to be announced

April 20, 2024

Shevchenko Choir

"Singing Together"

Shevchenko Choir and choirs of the Chinese,

Vietnamese, Italian and other communities

Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church

67 Scarsdale Road, Toronto

June 2024

Shevchenko Musical Ensemble

Annual Concert

Date to be announced



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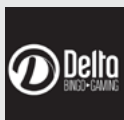
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Thank you sincerely.