

ARTS

Folk culture thrives under Soviet rule

by Richard Watts

The recent shooting down of a civilian airliner by a Soviet fighter plane has provoked displays of public anger throughout the West.

At least one of these reactions is inappropriate and unjustified.

The Kasatka Cossacks, due to play in SUB Theatre October 27, 28 and 29 have been forced to drop three cities from their cross-Canada tour: Edmonton NB, Moncton NB, and Vancouver BC.

Mr. Goggi Bestavichvilli, Artistic Director of the company, says they have been warmly received in the centres they have played, in spite of these cancellations.

The main aim of Kasatka Cossacks, explains Bestavichvilli, is to bring Eastern European Folk Culture to the West through professional stage performances. After every number the performers change costume and enter into a different dance, derived from a different ethnic background.

"Variety is one of the hallmarks of Kasatka Cossacks; after every number there is a complete change of costumes, change of theme, a complete change of mood and style," says Bestavichvilli.

"For example," he continues, "the first dance is a Georgian one which is very fierce, very warlike, and the men don't touch the women at all. The next one is a Russian dance where the women take part and the music is a little more subdued."



London-based Kasatka Cossacks bring Eastern Europe to SUB Oct. 27, 28, and 29.

Although he is not a Soviet citizen Bestavichvilli did discuss the Soviet Government's treatment of Folk Art within its own borders.

"It (folk art) actually fares very well under the Soviet system and their treatment of folk expression is one of the better sides of the Soviet Union," he says.

The Soviets, through massive state sponsorship, have taken Slavic Folk Art from isolated peasant expressions and turned them into a massive theatrical event, he says. Every separate soviet within the Soviet Union is encouraged to preserve their ethnic heritage and every soviet has a state sponsored music and dance company.

Although Bestavichvilli does admit that some aspects of artistic expression, such as writing and painting, do suffer at the hands of the Soviet government he maintains, "we in the West could learn something from the Soviets and their sponsorship of the arts."

Ironically, although the Kasatka Cossacks are performers of Eastern European folk art, not one of the company's members is a Soviet citizen; the company is actually based in London, England.

The company was formed in 1977 by a group of Soviet expatriates and other people with Eastern European background. The performances, it was decided, would be based on music and dance of Eastern European folk art. The performers, on the other hand, would be chosen on the basis of talent.

Bestavichvilli expands, "yes, when it came time to choose the performers, we drew on the best talent we could find, and as a result we have dancers and musicians from all over the world: Australia, England, Canada, and even Israel."

Connery brings back the old 007 panache

Never Say Never Again
Capital Square, Londonderry, West Mall

review by George Koch

The real Bond is back! After a long absence from the role of 007, Sean Connery has returned to once again do battle with the evil forces of SPECTRE, swaggering from one tight spot to the next. Just as the James Bond series had degenerated into a string of loosely tied together high-tech stunts, and Roger Moore's lame efforts descended from the barely laughable to the truly pathetic, we are given a delightful remake of *Thunderball*.

Granted, the bizarre gadgets, outlandish plots, and incredible escapes are there as always, but so are some respectable actors and a decent script to do them justice; a tongue-in-cheek attitude prevails that prevents *Never Say Never Again* from taking itself too seriously.

Rather than Bond becoming a vehicle for the special effects department to demonstrate its expertise, the emphasis throughout the film is on the man himself,

on how he outwits the archvillain and eludes his goons and finally destroys his plans to blackmail the world; and above all, how he gets the girl! Connery simply fits the role so much better than Moore; where Moore seems baffled by the action around him, Connery controls it. Connery's acting abilities are also more than sufficient to lend credibility to the role of secret agent extraordinaire. Moore's one-liners invariably fall flat. He never appears truly dangerous; in fact, he looks like he would be more comfortable behind a desk than out in the field.

The film opens with the newly reinstated Bond on a training exercise. The action is tense and exciting, and just believable enough. Bond fares remarkably well for a man nearing 60; "M" however, feels he has grown flabby and slow, so he is carted off to a health farm, to undergo such tortures as lentil soup and herbal enemas. The audience's sympathy is misplaced, however, as Bond not only smuggles in a suitcase full of goodies but in short order manages to bed his therapist. When told by

a nurse standing on the other side of the room that he must fill a beaker with urine, he innocently replies, "what, from over here?"

Never Say Never Again continues in this vein of alternating action and tongue-in-cheek dialogue, as Bond chases the SPECTRE baddies who have made off with a pair of armed cruise missiles. Luckily for Bond, they always choose nice warm places, near good hotels and bars; to do their dirty work, so that neither James nor the girls are ever bored. Luckily for the audience, the buffoonery stops when the action gets going. The baddies aren't the incompetent morons of previous Bond films, and 007 must employ all his cunning and experience - as well as "Q's" handy gadgets - to survive the repeated attempts to liquidate him. Connery, very fit for his age, and with a face that becomes downright mean when he is menaced, is eminently believable as a hardened veteran of the British Secret Service; the audience never doubts that he earned his license to kill.

The film is enhanced by a strong supporting cast, actors too good to stick to the inane clichés that made the last few Bond films so tiresome. Klaus Maria Brandauer lends a new dimension to the term "villain" in his almost Shakespearean portrayal of the mastermind Largo. Intelligent, witty, a lover of art and other beautiful things, he is marred by an uncontrollable lust for power and recognition that turns him to evil. Charming on the surface, he becomes sinister when crossed: "Why don't you join me for dinner tomorrow, Mr. Bond - if you are around." Edward Fox as "M" is delightfully British, the best "M" so far. And Barbara Carrera as the crazed villainess Fatima Blush is, well, bizarre. Only Kim Basinger as the leading lady is weak - vacuous and transparent.

For Bond fans, *Never Say Never Again* is a must. For lovers of fun and adventure, it is certainly worth seeing. For those of you who insist on something meaningful, something more than mere entertainment, don't bother going, you're bound to be disappointed.

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Twistin' the night away in Versailles

L'Apotheose de la Danse
a Versailles
La Grande Ecurie et la
Chambre du Roy
Jean-Claude Malgoire, dir.
Columbia M37822

review by K. Arthur

All people and nations of the world have an instinctive impulse to express their feelings or recreate themselves in the dance. The dance has evolved with infinite variety throughout history, to express the entire gamut of emotion from religious solemnity to frenzied hysteria. This particular record presents dance music played for the court of Versailles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Most European court dances reached the aristocracy by way of the country village green. The dances in most use by the polite circles achieved great refinement and polish, but their rhythms and musical idioms still betray their country's origins. The most popular eighteenth century dance was the minuet, a dance rhythm which went on to further glory as a movement in the symphony, sonata, and string quartet.

For this particular recording Jean-Claude Malgoire has chosen a selection of

dance music drawn from various operas and entertainments of the period. The most important composer represented here is Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764), court composer of Louis XV. Other composers on the album include Lully, Couperin, and Marais. Malgoire presents the album as an extended suite of dances, with each dance providing a contrast of rhythm and instrumentation. As we listen we discover a gold mine of music from which Mr. Malgoire had to choose.

In terms of the actual performance, Malgoire points the rhythm very nicely, which is essential for effective performances of dance music. The consort of instruments he chooses is of the proper size, and his orchestration includes some rarely heard instruments, such as the hurdy gurdy. The oboes squeal delightfully and tambourines tap out rhythm after infectious rhythm.

To add to the presentation Mr. Malgoire discusses the history of eighteenth century French dance in his own liner notes. Aside from a warp on my copy, the recording and packaging are very good. In short, the music itself is inventive and delightful, and Malgoire and his forces ensure well played, idiomatic performances.