



HUY THANH NGUYEN/The Battalion

Members of the production crew survey the stage in preparation for the Bolshoi Ballet-Grigorovich Company's debut. The staff of more

than 60 is made up of both Americans and Soviets. Interpreters help the two understand each other.

# Technical crew puts pieces together

**By JOHN MABRY**  
 "Putting it together, bit by bit... Every moment makes a contribution; every little detail plays a part." Stephen Sondheim's commentary on the art of performance holds true for the Bolshoi Ballet-Grigorovich Company production crew. The crew has been putting it together backstage at Rudder Auditorium for the dancers' long-awaited debut. The giant technical crew of 55 Americans and seven Soviets has been preparing the stage for the company for the last two weeks. Set, props, costumes, lighting — every little detail plays a part — and details for the Bolshoi are anything but little. A series of 40 hand-painted and inlaid backdrops, for instance, are used in the set for "The Nutcracker."

## Designer's creations still set the stage

"I could not imagine one of my ballets without designs by Virsaladze." Yuri Grigorovich, artistic director for the Bolshoi Ballet, said these words about famed designer Simon Virsaladze, whose set and costume creations will support the Grigorovich Company's performances at Texas A&M. The two men began their artistic collaboration in 1957 and worked as a team on every Grigorovich production for the next 30 years. Their original productions include the ballets "The Stone Flower," "Spartacus," "Ivan the

Terrible" and "The Golden Age." Born in 1909, Virsaladze first studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Tbilisi. In 1927, he created his first theater design there and was appointed chief opera and ballet designer at the Academy in 1932. In 1937, Virsaladze began his career as chief designer for the Kirov Theater in Leningrad. He designed for the Bolshoi beginning in 1964 and continued to do so until his death in January. One writer noted of his work, "His masterpieces supplement the choreography, stimulating the atmosphere of fantasy."

"I've seen this production at the Bolshoi twice with the original scenery, and it's a beautiful production," he said. Several adaptations have been made to fit the stage to Rudder Auditorium. The huge backdrops, for instance, were too large and had to be modified to scale to fit. Also, the crew had to enlarge the stage floor, adding a full eight feet to the back and four feet to each side. The wooden floor was then covered with a padding substance known as marley. After this was put down, the crew set a giant groundcloth over the marley. Overseeing A&M's assistance in the modifications of the stage and the setup has been Mark Chaloupa, the senior stage manager at Rudder. "Working with the Russians has been wonderful," he said. "They're very understanding and easy to work with, never demanding."

The backdrops, nineteenth-century style furniture and over 200 colorful costumes are duplicates of the traditional designs of designer Si-

mon Virsaladze, who created the Bolshoi look for over 20 years. The stage pieces are brand new and come straight from the workshops at the Bolshoi in Moscow.

In charge of organizing it all is production manager David Bradford, of the Entertainment Corporation in New York, who has described the set as priceless.

# Sister cities foster cultural understanding

**By CAROL GLENN**  
 In a time of unrest in the Middle East, organizations such as the Bryan/College Station Sister City Organization are bridging the gap between the Soviet Union and the United States for a more culturally

aware society tomorrow. After three years of negotiations, the mayors of College Station, Bryan and Kazan have initiated a program enabling students, musicians and citizens to become more culturally aware and receptive to foreign peo-

ple. It also increases people's knowledge of other countries by allowing them to participate in this exchange program. Especially instrumental in the creation of this organization is Michal Barszap, who is president of the Bryan/College Station Sister City Organization. Barszap, who is a specialist in Soviet relations, has made twelve trips to the Soviet Union over the last three years to help organize the program and negotiate contracts with Kazan.

that will be discussed include:  
 • sending a Soviet conductor (not associated with the Bolshoi Ballet) to the B/CS area to conduct performances of the BVSO.  
 • exchanging 10 high school students from the B/CS area with 10 high school students from Kazan.  
 • arranging a tour for the citizens of B/CS to meet with citizens from Kazan.

## BVSO conductor leaves for Soviet performance

**By CAROL GLENN**  
 With all the fury in the Brazos Valley by the visit of the Bolshoi Ballet-Grigorovich Company it is interesting to note that Franz Anton Krager's visit to the Soviet Union and the Bolshoi's visit to College Station are purely coincidentally overlapping. Krager, music director-conductor of the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra (BVSO), travels to the Soviet Union Tuesday until December 12th at the invitation of the National Philharmonic of the Tatar Soviet Republic. The trip is part of the cultural exchange Sister City Organization. Bryan/College Station's sister city, Kazan, invited Krager to conduct two performances of the Philharmonic, the second-rated orchestra in the Soviet Union, on December 7th and 9th. On December 7th Krager will conduct a concert that will include: "American in Paris" by George Gershwin; "Symphonie Espagnole" by Lalo which will include a violin conchordo and a violin soloist; "Beethoven Symphony #7" in A Major; and encores by the late Leonard Bernstein. On December 9th Krager will conduct a concert featuring "Hydn Symphony #88" in G Ma-

minor, "Mozart's Symphonie Concertante" for the violin and viola and concluding with "Copland Appalachian Spring." "I feel very privileged to be invited to Kazan to direct the Philharmonics. It's a wonderful twist of fate," Krager said. Krager is responsible for overseeing that the BVSO is prepared for visiting Soviet conductor, Alexander Lavrenyuk. Krager decides who will be playing in the orchestra and where they will be sitting during the Bolshoi performances. Lavrenyuk will conduct the BVSO in the concerts that will accompany the Bolshoi Ballet in their performances of the "Nutcracker" and their mixed repertoire ballets. Four performances of the Bolshoi Ballet-Grigorovich Company will be accompanied by taped music recordings. While Krager is in the Soviet Union, the performance of "Handel's Messiah" on December 5th will be conducted by Jess Wade who is the assistant music coordinator of the Choral Department at Texas A&M. In keeping with the sister city program Maestro Rashid Skuratov, the music director of the Philharmonic, is expected to visit A&M next fall to conduct a few concerts with a Russian twist.

In conjunction with the Bryan/College Station Sister City Organization, there is an exhibit of photographs at the College of Medicine and at the Walden Retirement Community on Memorial Drive in Bryan. This photographic exhibit titled "Kazan: Life and Culture" includes 102 prints taken by Mikhail (Misha) Medvedev, a photographer for the Soviet news agency and a participant in the sister city organization in Kazan. These photographs depict life in the Soviet Union and will be on display through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Bryan/College Station Sister City Organization will continue working with Kazan as well as possibly expanding to other countries in hopes of decreasing the number of people who consider themselves foreigners and making people more understanding of other cultures.

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