

Don River Dance

Cossack dancers twirl into Rudder



PHOTO COURTESY OF DON COSSACKS OF RUSSIA

BY NONI SRIDHARA
The Battalion

Lively, fierce, mighty and brave are some of the words Olga Cooke, adviser for the Russian Club and an associate professor of Russian, uses to describe the way the *Don Cossacks of Rostov* are depicted in literature and history.

In a program sponsored by the MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society (OPAS), *The Don Cossacks of Rostov* dance ensemble will perform Russian folk dances from the Don River region of Russia on Thursday night. Jeremy Byrd, OPAS chair and a senior psychology major, said the dance troupe will perform many pieces, including songs of praise, patriotic choral and acrobatic dancing.

"Every once in a while, we try to bring something international to [Texas] A&M to expose students to new cultures which they aren't exposed to as often," Byrd said.

Sara Peeples, OPAS public relations chair and a junior accounting major, said *The Don Cossacks of Rostov* have been performing for four centuries now.

"This was established to help preserve Russian folklore," she said.

Craig Stansfield, president of the Russian Club and a senior international studies major, said he saw a performance by a different troupe of Cossacks this past summer during a visit to St. Petersburg, Russia.

"Most of these performances are folk dances," Stansfield said. "They were performed primarily when events such as going off to war or courting rituals took place."

The Don is a river in what is now the Ukraine where the Cossacks originated.

"Rostov is a city on the Don," Cooke said. "There are different places where Cossacks are located. This particular group are from southern Russia."

The troupe's dances and songs illustrate the life of the Russian people who lived on the plains along the Don River.

Cooke said she assumes the men and women of the Cossacks will be attired in traditional folk-dance dress. "It is customary for the men to wear big, puffy pantaloons with a white shirt, which has a very decorative collar in some dances," she said. "They are usually also in boots and have a sash around the waist. This is not only [the costume] in Cossacks dancing but a lot of traditional [Russian] folk dancing."

The Don Cossacks are most known for singing at family gatherings on weekdays after chores were done. A whole village would gather to sing when a major event occurred.

Cooke said the Cossacks' performances are not only artistic performances but also are rich in history. She said the closest comparison to the Cossacks she knew of for a lay person to understand was a film known as *Taras Bulba*.

"[The film] is the Hollywood version," she said. "It [the film] depicts an epic struggle of life — of warring, romantic intrigues and patriotism to Mother Russia."

"Even though they [Cossacks] are very independent, they are at the same time fiercely patriotic."

Cooke said the Cossacks changing alliances forged a colorful history.

"The famous Cossacks incorporate historical songs," she said. "They have a real rich folklore. They have had different allegiances over time. They are an independent group of warriors."

Cooke said many songs the Cossacks sing are based on seasonal cycles.

Anatoli Kvasov, who heads the ensemble, said in a press release that the ensemble tries to incorporate modern-day Russian life as well as history in its 21-piece program.

"The ensemble strives to present the Don Cossack folk songs it performs not only as beautiful relics of the past but also as the living art of the present," Kvasov said.

According to the press release, one of the features of this program is a small song cycle unified by common subject matter.

The troupe's orchestra consists of a flute, four accordions, three trumpets, percussion instruments, balaikas [a triangle-shape, three-stringed Russian folk instrument] and a double bass.

It is tradition for the folk songs to be sung without accompaniment.

Tomorrow's program will commence with a piece titled *My Little Meadows*, a female lyric love song about a girl who meets her love only to lose him in a war on foreign soil. The song is performed by a female singer a capella.

Another piece, illustrating the seasonal cycles, is *Winter Frolic*. This song depicts winter along the Don River, a festive time period featuring snowball fights, competitions and games.

One of the military pieces is *Razin's Revolt*, about the Cossack hero Stephan Razin, who led the Cossacks in a historic rebellion against their oppressors in the 17th century.

Tomorrow's performance will conclude with *Mother Evening*, a piece of vocal and choreographic composition about a Cossack and his love gathering apples in a garden.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Rubin and wife expecting child

WASHINGTON (AP) — State Department spokesperson James P. Rubin and his wife, TV reporter Christiane Amanpour, are expecting their first child next spring.

"Like hundreds of millions of happily married couples, we are hoping to have a healthy child," Rubin said yesterday.

Rubin lives in Washington while working for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Amanpour lives in London while serving as CNN's chief international correspondent and a contributor to CBS's "60 Minutes."

Gehry to design new skyscraper

NEW YORK (AP) — Architect Frank O. Gehry, who designed the

ultramodern Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, Spain, has been hired again by Guggenheim.

This time he will be designing a dramatic new building in New York City.

Gehry has designed a building that rises about 45 stories out of a cloud-like shape, *The New York Times* reported yesterday.

The structure would be on a platform above piers, along the East River near Wall Street.

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ELC Engineering Leadership Conference

Friday October 1, 6:30 pm - ? and Saturday October 2, 9:15 am - 4:15pm

The ELC is a two-day conference designed to build unity and leadership skills among engineering students, although it is open to all students. Included are socials, workshops, a design project competition, and dinner and lunch.

Cost \$5.00. You can register by filling out registration forms found outside 204 Zachry and 219 Wisenbaker and placing them inside the box marked "Engineering Leadership Conference" along with your \$5 registration fee. Registration Deadline: September 29 at 5pm.

For additional information, call the Student Engineers' Council at 847-8567 or visit us online at <http://sec.tamu.edu/elc>

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