

# Soviet jazz band fluent in international language

By Tim Roets

Jazz is an indigenous American art form — a musical synthesis of this country's cultural influences and a showcase for individual expression through improvisation.

But Thursday night at the Performing Arts Center's Bradley Pavilion, the Leningrad Dixieland Band, — the first Russian dixieland band to perform in the Western Hemisphere — gave credence to the claim that jazz isn't only an American musical tradition but also an international language.

Under Mikhail S. Gorbachev's recent policy of "glasnost," or openness, Western-style jazz and rock bands are becoming more popular in the Soviet Union, and the state-run newspapers are even starting to dabble in musical criticisms.

But this octet has been playing in the Soviet Union and Europe for almost 30 years, and it showed.

They've wowed capacity crowds at each stop on their 12-city tour with their chops and strong jazz vocabulary.

Led by alto saxophonist Oleg Kuvaitsev, the band rolled through their beefy repertoire of traditional jazz classics with unmistakable relish. They had an undeniable grasp of the intricacies and improvisational dynamic of dixieland and modern jazz and the blues.

So when they slid into the laconic "Memphis Blues" — a version that ambled with the bluesy lobe of Constantin Dyubenko's piano and the lazy call-and-response horn playing between clarinetist Alexander Usyskin and trombonist Anatolyy Chimiris — it was no surprise that their delivery seemed purely instinctive.

The night ended when several local musicians joined the band for a jam session that was a lesson in the power of jazz's joyful noise.