

# Hot jazz played by cool Soviets

A Leningrad combo  
fires up students  
at a Phila. school.

By John Corr  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Boris Ershov was whacking away on his red-hot banjo in a rip-roaring rendition of "Darktown Strutters Ball" and putting a little spin on the lyrics:

... Dance off those my shoes  
When they play das jellyroll blues.

The thing is, Boris is from the Soviet Union, and he doesn't speak English. But he and his colleagues in the Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band made music at 11th and Catharine Streets yesterday as if they had grown up on Bourbon Street.

The eight-member band was scoring a smash hit in the auditorium of the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts. The 500 students in attendance were delighted.

They cheered and yelled and applauded throughout the 45-minute show, and gave the band a standing ovation when it was all over.

Nobody seemed to care about small irregularities in the lyrics.

And everybody soon forgot that the musicians, all dressed in gray suits with blue ties and black shoes, presented a rather cool, even formal, impression on stage.

Although their music was classic Dixieland played with appropriate gusto, their demeanor on stage suggested that they were playing Mozart.

"It's because they're Russian," said John Ballard, a producer who arranged to have the band come to the United States for an 11-city tour. "Jazz musicians in Russia don't jump around on stage. It's just not done."

"Here in the States, the audience usually is rather quiet and reserved, like them, for the first few minutes of the show. Then they start getting into the music and they loosen up."

The band was in Philadelphia to play a concert last night at the Painted Bride Art Center, 230 Vine St. Myer Savits, director of music for the Philadelphia public schools, heard about the visit, called the Painted Bride, was put in touch with Ballard, and finally arranged for the band to play for an assembly at the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, one of the city's magnet high schools.

"The musicians don't seem to be reacting very much to the enthusiasm of the audience," Ballard said. "But, actually, they love it. They have been in America just about three weeks, and they keep saying over and over again how friendly and appreciative Americans are."

"They say they are very impressed with how open and friendly everyone is. They like it here."

Ballard, who has arranged for several other Soviet entertainers to visit America in the past, said the band had a strong reputation in the Soviet Union.

"There are a lot of jazz groups in Russia, all sorts of groups. People love jazz over there," he said. "This band has been in existence for 25 years and is one of the best known in Russia."

"The organizers of the Sacramento [California] Dixieland Jubilee, which is an annual spring event, have been

(See JAZZ on 4-D)



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On the bus afterward, Constantin Dyubenko plays a tune.

## Hot jazz from 8 Soviets

**JAZZ, from 1-D**  
trying to get the band to perform there for years. I was finally able to arrange it this year."

The band is to head for Boston today and will wind up its United States tour Sunday night with a performance at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington.

"They are having a great time, and I think they will be sorry to leave," Ballard said.

Whether or not they were having a great time at the South Philadelphia high school yesterday, the audience certainly was. So was Seditz, who got up on stage with his trumpet toward the end of the show and joined in the concluding number, "Down by the Riverside," to the cheers and applause of the students.

Finally, when the musicians from Leningrad had finished, the musicians from the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts took over. The Soviets took seats in the audience and the teenage jazz quartet took over the stage.

The Soviets smiled. Nodded. Applauded.

Trumpeter Oleg Kuvaitsev said: "Good. Yes. Good."

"Darn right," said school principal John R. Vannoni, who hastened to point out that, in April, these same students took first place in the Downbeat Jazz Festival for high school students in Chicago.

"Our students have to be good," he said. "We only accept one in 10 applicants, and only two out of three admitted stay in this school long enough to graduate. You have to be good to get in and work hard to stay in."

In addition to musicians, the school also admits aspiring artists and writers.

"They have to audition, show their portfolio or present extensive samples of their writing," Vannoni said.

The school has been in existence for 10 years, he said, and members of its graduating classes have won more than \$1.5 million in scholarships.

Before the performance by the school's jazz combo, which played a more modern strain than the Lenin-

grad band, the Soviets were presented with the school's current yearbook and responded with gifts of band posters for the school bulletin boards.

After the school's combo finished, the Soviets waved goodbye and left to even more applause.

"They seem cool, but they are really friendly," Ballard said. "In a lot of places they have hung around after their show to jam with the local musicians. They will jam for hours, just for fun."

"They even sing, although they sometimes have a little trouble with the lyrics."

... *Stutter night at these darts on matters ball.* ...

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