

Oboists from Around the World in St. Petersburg

By **Andrei Petropavlov**
St. Petersburg (Russia) Radio and TV Music Editor

During the last few years the number of music festivals and contests held in St. Petersburg has been growing steadily to the point where it's hard for even the most experienced music lovers to keep track of all the events of interest. Nevertheless the past season has given birth to yet another musical festival that has all the prerequisites for becoming a tradition - "Oboists of the World in St. Petersburg". Without a doubt, this festival did not get lost in the multitude of "musical soap operas", although by all standards, its time span was out of the ordinary - the four concerts were given on November 23, January 29, May 27 and June 7 at the Smaller Hall of the Philharmonic Society of St.



Khaniafi Chinakaev

Petersburg. A very discerning audience (the author had not suspected that the city had so many oboe lovers and aficionados!) was honored to hear **Alicia Kordoba Tait** from the USA, **Helen Jahren** from Sweden, **Francois Leleux** from France - all world-renowned soloists. Despite the fact

that they all represented very different oboe schools and possessed strikingly different personalities, they had in common an exceptional professionalism and spirit in performance with their new collaborator, the "Soloists of St. Petersburg" ensemble, conducted by Michael Gantvarg. The music performed was mostly of the 18th century - concertos of Vivaldi, J. S. Bach, J. C. Bach, Marcello, and Albinoni. Adherents of the "authenticity" movement might have been disappointed by performances of baroque compositions in a too "emotional" style to be authentic, but happy faces in the audience during the performances and unanimous ovations after them, testified to satisfaction with the performance styles chosen.

This impressive oboe festival was born through the efforts of a remarkable musician, soloist of the honored academic symphony orchestra of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society, **Khaniafi Chinakaev**. His position as a member of the international oboe association (IDRS) helped him to organize some kind of

annual IDRS-like conferences at which concerts and masterclasses are being held. His part in the organization of "Oboists of the World in St. Petersburg" was not limited to concert organization, however. He took the stage with his famous colleagues during every performance, which led the audience to compare and make judgments. It is worth noting that Maestro Chinakaev has never given audiences any doubt about the level of the Russian oboe school of which he is a most distinguished exponent. He was the true leader though he tried never to emphasize that. His performances always had some special warmth and intimacy not always possessed by the foreign musicians. The culmination of every concert was a performance of a concerto for two oboes, which allowed the soloists to perform at their very best.

The warm welcome given every concert by enthusiastic audiences makes us hope that the interesting initiative of Khaniafi Chinakaev will be continued into the next Philharmonic season.

SOME COMMENTS BY KHANIAFI CHINAKAEV

Laurate of international competitions

Honored Artist of Russia

Soloist of the Honored Academic
 Symphony Orchestra of the St. Petersburg
 Shostakovich Philharmonic Society

The international oboists' association IDRS which unites a huge number of professional and non-professional musicians as its members, and has associate societies in many other countries, holds annual conferences in which many oboists participate. Conference programs included performances by world-renowned oboists, masterclasses, lectures, showcases of practically all the world's oboe makers, and exhibitions of oboe music printed by the best-known publishers. At these events, premiere performances of oboe pieces by contemporary composers are regularly heard.

In August of 1999 I was invited to take part in the 28th IDRS conference at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I played a solo recital and was honored to be a member of the jury

for the Fernand Gillet International Oboe Competition which was held under the aegis of the Society. My impression of these events was so positive that I decided to organize something similar in St. Petersburg. The musical project "The best oboists of the world in St. Petersburg" has as its goal acquainting music lovers and professional musicians with the art of the greatest oboists in the world.

This program will include solo concerts by invited musicians, joint performances with St. Petersburg colleagues, masterclasses for students at the conservatory, music colleges, and music schools.

During the 1999-2000 concert season, three well-known oboists from the USA, Sweden and France will visit St. Petersburg. On November 21 and 23, concerts will be given by **Alicia Tait**, professor at Benedictine University near Chicago. She will play at the Menshikov Palace with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Quintet and at the Smaller Hall of the Philharmonic Society with Michael Gantvarg and with me. On November 19, Dr. Tait will give a masterclass at the St. Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory. In February, 2000, a well-known Swedish oboist, **Helen Jahren**, will visit St. Petersburg with a similar program, and in May, 2000 we expect the brilliant French oboist **Francois Leleux**.

Contact with such great musicians will bring immense pleasure to all oboe enthusiasts, and masterclasses will give students a priceless opportunity to receive advice and instruction from these artists and to become acquainted with the different oboe schools of the world.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

by Marc Fink

On December 12, 2000, I had the great privilege to perform at the invitation of Khaniafi Chinakaev on the series, "Oboes of the World in St. Petersburg." Our concert was held in the Small Hall of the Philharmonic, a beautiful hall seating approximately 400. The concert hall was completely packed with standing room only for our performance, a real tribute to Mr. Chinakaev's efforts in promoting the oboe and this series in St. Petersburg. The Ensemble of Soloists, comprised of members of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, conducted by Alexander Chemushenko, provided a truly outstanding accompaniment to the oboe concertos and was featured in Mozart's *Divertimento in D Major, K.V. 136*, and Handel's *Concerto Grosso No. 4*. The remainder of the program was devoted completely to oboe

concertos by Vivaldi: *Concerto in A Minor* (I was soloist), *Concerto in C Major* (with Khaniafi as soloist), *Concertos for 2 Oboes in A Minor and D Minor* (featuring both Khaniafi and me as soloists). In addition, Khaniafi performed Crusell's wonderful *Divertimento in C Major, opus 9* with the full ensemble.

It was great to take part in this series inspired by the IDRS conference in Madison, Wisconsin. **Khaniafi Chinakaev** is an outstanding artist (those who heard him perform at the Madison conference can attest to this) who is dedicating himself to promoting the oboe through this very successful series of concerts in St. Petersburg. The concert was recorded for future broadcast over the state-run St. Petersburg radio station. The audiences were incredibly warm and demonstrative, calling us back for many bows and several encores. In addition, I was invited to give a masterclass at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where I enjoyed seeing my friends, **Nikolai Neretin** (professor of oboe) and **Kirill Sokolov** (professor of bassoon), and hearing the excellent oboe students of the conservatory.

My congratulations and *bolshoi spacibo* to my good friend, Khaniafi. I wish him continued success in his excellent efforts.



L to R: Khaniafi Chinakaev, Marc Fink, Alexander Chernushenko (conductor).