

Tetiana Khomenko
Balalaika



Questions for Tetiana Khomenko

By Nancy Wight

1. What is your earliest musical memory?

This is an interesting question! When I was 4 years old and spent my summer with Granny, I got my first performance at culture club with a ukrainian folk song “My darling wants to eat varenyky” (“A miy myliy varenychkiv hoche”). I had a wonderful prize! It was a big doll! It was my first music-prize!

2. How did you happen to take up the balalaika?

When I was a student, my first music teacher (Oleksandr Vinnichenko, Kyiv music school #14) came to our classroom and ask: “Who wants to play the balalaika?” He showed the balalaika. He started to teach me. Even my parents didn’t know about

my new hobby. They knew about it, when director of my music school phoned them and tell about me))). I have been playing for 20 years!

3. What other musical instruments do you play?

I play a little bit the piano, guitar and domra. And I adore the contrabass balalaika!

4. What is your musical education background?

I started my music education in D. Kabalevsky Kyiv Music school in 1994, the class teacher Oleksandr Vinnichenko.

I graduated with honors from R. Gliere Kyiv Institute of Music in 2004, the class teacher Olena Murzha. In the same year I admitted to the P. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy in the class of Honored Artist of Ukraine, Honored Artist the Balalaika and Domra Association of America, honorary citizen of the city of Houston, Texas, Professor Yuri Aleksyk. It was the end of my studying in 2012.

I defended my scholarly work on education and skill level "master of music" "The problem of stress and ways to overcome it in the music and the performance of Balalaika-players".

5. What teacher(s) had an influence on you?

You know, all my teachers had an influence on me. My first teacher gave me a good start. He taught me to love folk music and gave me beginning skills!

Olena Murzha gave me the understanding about my profession. Step by step she taught me to be a musician, not only a craftsman with balalaika!

Olena's teacher in the music academy was Yuri Aleksyk too. We have joint balalaika school!

Then I met my main teacher – Yuri Aleksik. He is not only music teacher. Also he is my life-teacher!

I want to say about my conductor-teachers. In college it was Igor Savkov, in academy – Valery Varakuta, Anatoly Dubina and Volodymyr Marunich. They gave me an opportunity to conduct and play the world music masterpieces! It was great

experience to conduct Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Saint-Saens, Svetlanov and other.

6. What is your favorite music or pieces?

I like to play and listen Ukrainian, Russian and other native folk songs. I like classic music and jazz.

This is not a simple question!

There are many pieces from my repertoire. I like Trostyansky's Nocturne and Grotesque and pondering. When I played the Nocturne, I really felt myself like a profession musician first time in my life. It was on 2004 in the big concert at music academy. I performed the Grotesque like soloist with the orchestra, when I was first-year student. It was amazing! First year at the music academy and I was a soloist!

I adore Hungarian Rhapsody #2 (F. List), because I played it on last exam in the academy. It was my farewell with my teachers.

Also I conducted great piece E. Svetlanov "Kalina krasnaya" (Red Viburnum).

Svetlanov compose it and dedicated it to his friend Vasily Shukshin. This is my favorite orchestral music.

7. Do you play regularly in a group? Orchestra? What is the exact name?

Yes!!! I want to tell you about BRAVO Band.

BRAVO Band unique project that will not leave anyone indifferent! They are Hipsters of folk music. Their work – 100% drive and positive! BRAVO Band collected the repertoire of the world hits for every taste! They perform music from the Renaissance to the present day! The credo of the quartet: "Music can change the world!" This creative collaboration was established in January 2013 and the band have already been in a number of activities: a variety of concerts, festivals, gala events. Quartet BRAVO Band – a frequent guest of the capital activities, radio and television broadcast.

Quartet collaborates with talented instrumentalists and vocalists. BRAVO Band consists of the best ukrainian musicians, winners of national and international

competitions: balalaika – Tetiana Khomenko; domra - Julia Olefirenko; bayan - Oleksandr Moroz; bass - Andry Medintsev.

In June 2013 BRAVO Band won in International competition "Samorodki".

The art leader of quartet is Honored artist of Ukraine Yuriy Aleksik.

Also I work with folk orchestra of R. Gliere Kyiv Institute of Music, with lead Igor Savkov.

8. Have you always lived in Kiev? Were you born there? If not, where?

Yes. I was born in Kyiv. My parents is Ukrainian too. I love Ukraine, I love my native city!

9. Have you traveled a lot performing? What have been your favorite places?

Prizes and Competitions?

I used to travel a lot before my daughter's birthday. Now she is 7. I have a lot of concerts in Ukraine, not in foreign countries. My journey in the United States to the BDAA Convention 2014 in Kalamazoo was a first trip after little break)))

When I was studying at the R. Gliere Kyiv Institute of Music, I won national competitions, such as the Festival of Ukrainian song (Kyiv, 2001), Ukrainian Contest of folk instruments "Provesin" (Kirovograd, 2001), Ukrainian Contest Vojvodin's Dynasty (Lugansk, 2004). When I was studying at the P. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy, I acted in all activities of the folk department of the Music Academy. Also I performed solo concerts in Ukraine and abroad.

From 2000 to 2005 I was a soloist of National Orchestra of Folk Instruments International Center of Culture and Arts of Trade Unions of Ukraine, which led Honored Worker of Culture of Ukraine Victoriia Vasilyeva. This orchestra won the Grand Prix in International Competition "Music World" in Italy in 2003.

In 2002 I was a soloist in the Orchestra of Folk Instruments in Art school № 2. In the same year the orchestra has participated in music festivals in Germany.

I was a soloist in the Orchestra of Folk Instruments of Music Academy. It was conducted by Honored Artist Anatoliy Dubyna. This Orchestra became the winner of the International festival of folk music in Iran.

In June 2011, I was the winner of the International Contest-Festival of Folk Music "Samorodki" in Sevastopol (first prize) as a soloist and in duet (balalaika and piano).

Also I did sightseeing in Poland, Hungary, Austria, Great Britain!

As for me, I fall in love with the United States: New York, Chicago, Kalamazoo, Madison. The USA is amazing country! Traditions, people, culture, education! And the most important thing – opportunities for all people!

10. Do you teach?

Yes, of course. I combine performing, teaching and methodological work. From 2001 to 2004, I worked as a teacher in the Music School № 3 named V. Kosenko. Since 2004 I've been the concertmaster of the orchestra of folk instruments in R. Glier Kyiv Institute of Music, which led Igor Savkov. Also I defended my scholarly work on education and skill level "master of music" "The problem of stress and ways to overcome it in the music and the performance of Balalaika-players".

Today I have few private students.

11. How was your experience at the BDAA Convention in Kalamazoo?

I heard about BDAA convention from Yuri Aleksik. From that moment I wanted to come to the convention. This summer my dream came true. I was delighted with everything I saw: from America, Kalamazoo, the hotel and eating, the rehearsals and lessons. And the most importantly, I met good people at the convention! They are in love with music, with domra and balalaika!

Guys, thanks for everything!

Thank you, Nancy Wight. You were my roommate. You are a good English-teacher! It was great to play with you in duo!

Thank you Maxwell Mc Cullough!

Thank you Judy Sherman. Your smile and warm heart I'll never forget!

Victor Gorodinsky, you became my friend! Thank you for everything you do for me. You, Nancy and Judy were my guides in America.

Thank you, Lynn McConnell. You are a real professional musician. I've never been at convention, so I was a bit worried. You help me to conduct two lessons for beginners balalaika.

I like to sing, but I've never sang in the choir. Anna Gubenkova has a beautiful and pleasant voice. She worked professionally and dynamically with us! My choir friends, I miss you!!! We have to sing together again!

I enjoyed the performances of soloists Peter Omelchenko and Cennady Zut.

Atlanta Balalaika Society with singer Zhanna Ketslakh and Russian balalaika orchestra of Pittsburg were amazing!

Our conductor Alexander Tentser led the orchestra professionally and emotionally. Thank you, Alexandr! I would like to play a solo with the orchestra under your leadership.

I had wonderful students on my beginner balalaika classes! The best of the best was a talented boy – Aaron Mott. I miss you, Aaron!

Now I have a new musician friends. I am glad that we met each other! I hope we will meet each year. And in our music program we have to include Limbo dance. I miss all of you!