



**~~Christmas Around the World Tour~~**

GENERAL PRESS RELEASE ~ Eight (8) Pages Total

**BRILLIANT BOYS CHOIR LIGHTS UP THE HOLIDAYS WITH SONG!**

*"I cannot begin to your how grateful we are to you for your appearance at the White House during the Holiday Season! Your performance so enhanced this special time of year. The President and Mrs. Clinton join me in extending many thanks for your time and talents which greatly contributed to the beauty of the White House this Christmas!"*

*~ Capricia Penavic Marshall, The White House, First Social Secretary*

*"Throughout their entirely memorized program, an amazing feat in itself, each member of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR maintained incredible discipline and technical excellence, weaving together various parts, textures, and rhythms flawlessly! A rare mid-concert standing ovation, when the audience leaps to its feet before the last, lingering notes of a song, is perhaps the greatest compliment of all! Their combined talents mesmerized those fortunate enough to be part of the capacity crowd!"*

*~ The Barrie Examiner, Barrie, Ontario, Canada*

*"The packed auditorium was filled with an audience of several hundred listeners of all ages - and what an experience it was! Discipline, precision and poise were the hallmarks of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR performance." ~ The Des Moines Register*

*"The diverse audience packed the house, ranging from ages 3 to 103! THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR deserves all the applause it received and more! A return engagement is in order! Talent like this needs to be appreciated more often! ~ The Billings Montana Gazette*

*"The finely blended, exquisitely balanced MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR can sing with as much delicacy as anyone, but no other ensemble can sound this strong!" ~ St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

*"If indeed there is such a thing as a heavenly chorus, it must sound like THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR!" ~ St. Joseph News & Press*

*"THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR quickly won the hearts of the audience...the sopranos sang into the stratosphere with flutelike clarity, never once lapsing into shrillness!"*

*~ Vero Beach Press Journal.*

*"With close and smoothly flowing inner harmonies, THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR illustrates its talents and skills at their very best." ~ Anchorage Daily News.*



Founded in 1957, this choir is among Russia's most prestigious all-male choirs. In Moscow, members of the choir attend a special school called The Moscow Boys Capella that provides both general education and musical training. Being selected as a member of the touring company of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** is no easy feat. Handpicked from over 400 students, these highly talented youngsters have the voices of angels. However, they must also have the discipline to match their talents. There is a level of honor for these boys to be members of the choir, but there are no lifestyle advantages. They must work and study like everyone else. The boys traditionally begin their life in music as early as age 5, but are not allowed to perform for audiences until age 9.

The commitment and dedication displayed by **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** to their art truly raises the bar of the modern choral experience. Despite the strict discipline and rigors of touring, there is a strong family atmosphere present when **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** is on tour. Mrs. Victoria Smirnova, Choir Mistress and Conductor of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**, tries to make the boys realize that they are giving something very special to their audiences each time they perform. Over the years, she has watched as the boys grow up, get married, and have children of their own. In many ways, Mrs. Smirnova is a mentor to the boys as they develop their musical skills and life paths.

Born in 1980 in Minsk, Belarus, Victoria Smirnova began her life in art at the tender age of eight. She excelled in her studies at the National Opera Theatre in Minsk, and her beautiful soprano voice opened many doors for her early on in her musical career. Her vocal talents took her all the way to Moscow, where, from 1999, Mrs. Smirnova began working at New Opera Theatre there. While at the New Opera Theatre, Mrs. Smirnova performed as leading lady in many operas including *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti, *The Tzar's Bride* by Rimsky-Korsakov, and *Iolanta* by Tchaikovsky to name only a few. Mrs. Smirnova is the recipient of many awards for her singing and opera performances. She feels strongly that her opera background and stage performances prepared her immeasurably for her work with the singers in **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**.



In 2000, Mrs. Smirnova married Leonid Baklushin, then conductor of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**. During their 11 years of marriage, Mrs. Smirnova bore four children, while continuing her work in music and the arts. From 2003 to 2007, Mrs. Smirnova attended the Moscow State Institute of Music and earned a degree in Choral Conducting. Since 2007, Mrs. Smirnova has focused on training the soloists in **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**. In her capacity as *capel* mistress for the Choir, she has participated in many concerts and Russian recordings by the Choir including *Ode to Joy* by Beethoven, *Requiem Mass* by Mozart and *Stabat Mater* by Pergolese.

The driving force which has propelled the choir to the success they enjoy today can in part be attributed to the work of Mrs. Ninel Kambourg, Choir Mistress, and Artistic Director for **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** for over thirty years. It was in 1966 that Mrs. Ninel Kambourg became Artistic Director for the choir and under her direction, the choir grew and developed until their reputation became highly regarded both in Russia and abroad. A native to Russia, Mrs. Kambourg was an extremely accomplished individual. She was a graduate of the Russian Music Academy and, for her body of work the Russian government bestowed the coveted “Merited Worker of Arts for Russia” award upon her. This is an honor given only to a very few, outstanding artists who make great contributions in the development of arts and culture. Under her direction, the choir mastered the most complicated works of Russian, European and American composers. In addition to her work conducting and instructing **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**, Mrs. Kambourg was a lecturer, teacher, and author of many articles published in musical encyclopedias and other publications including *Musical Life*. Mrs. Kambourg also wrote several of the musical arrangements that the choir still performs today.

Mrs. Kambourg passed away just prior to the 2002 US Tour, which was dedicated to her memory by the Choir. Her work remains the cornerstone of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR’s** incredible sound and her musical signature is still legible in the high standards of performance this outstanding group of young men sets with each passing year. In January 2005, the choir again honored Mrs. Kambourg by dedicating their performances for the annual Gala at the House of Teachers in Moscow to her memory.



In 2002, the baton of Artistic Director for **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** then formally passed to Choir Master Leonid Baklushin. Heir apparent as Artistic Director, Mr. Baklushin was under Mrs. Kambourg's tutelage from a very young age. He rose in the ranks to become a truly gifted tenor, arranger, and conductor. He appeared in many operas at the Stanislavski Music Theatre and at the Moscow Chamber Theatre. In 1988, Mr. Baklushin graduated from the Music College at the Moscow Conservatory and received his degree in bassoon and conducting. In 1993, he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied under S. Kalinin, with a Master's Degree in conducting. In 1999, he was awarded a Medal of Honor for his work in the arts by the Russian government.

At the culmination of their 1999 North American Tour, Mr. Baklushin was honored to meet President Bill Clinton, Hillary Rodham-Clinton, and their daughter, Chelsea, in a private audience when the Choir performed at the White House (see details on pages seven and eight). In 2004, he was privileged to be appointed the conductor and ambassador of The Novospassky Monastery Chorus, who are famous in Moscow for performing Russian Orthodox music for audiences around the world. Mr. Baklushin was the recipient of many awards and accolades and he traveled the world sharing his music with the people of many countries including Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, England, Greece, Japan, and South Korea. With his youthful exuberance and elegant conducting style, Mr. Baklushin guided **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** to new heights in the musical world during his short life.

Sadly, in December of 2011, Mr. Baklushin passed away. His death, in the prime of his life, was devastating for his family, the Choir, and the musical communities of Moscow and Russia. It was at this time, that Leonid's wife, Victoria Smirnova, an accomplished and classically trained soprano and choral conductor in her own right, was appointed Choir Mistress and Conductor of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**. Victoria Smirnova had been working with the Choir as assistant to Leonid Baklushin since 2007, and actively participated in the Choir's concerts and recordings. Mrs. Smirnova strives to carry on the important work of the Choir, the foundations of which were so carefully laid by Mrs. Kambourg and Mr. Baklushin. In their concerts, **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** dedicates part of their music to the memory of these two musical giants, who are greatly missed by all who knew them.



An important part of the choir's activities has been their participation in operatic productions which include Bizet's Carmen, Puccini's La Boheme, and Tchaikovsky's Queen of Spades. **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** premiered in a performance of Songs About Forests on Russia's "Culture TV" dedicated to the memory of Dmitri Shostakovich. Their repertoire is varied and extensive, including works by contemporary Russian composers as well as Russian, American, and European classics. The Choir performs works by composers such as Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Rachmaninov, and Bernstein. Additionally, the choir performs religious compositions by Russian, American, and European composers as well as popular Russian folk songs.

**THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** enjoys an international reputation for excellence. They have appeared in a Command Performance at The Royal Albert Hall in London for members of the British Royal Family. The choir has toured South Korea, Japan, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Holland, where they performed in the Stanislavski Theatre's opera production of Boris Godunov by Mussorgsky. In 2004, the choir participated in Jubilee Concerts dedicated to Alfred Schnittke at the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, which is among the most prestigious venues for classical music performances in Moscow today. In 2005, members of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** were invited, once again, to take part in Yuri Grigorovich's ballet Spartacus at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses. They originally performed in its premiere in 2003.

The year 2007 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Moscow Boys Capella, the school at which the boys study their craft, and there were many concerts and celebrations surrounding this momentous event. Some of these included performances in the city of Volgograd, a Gala concert and party dedicated to the composer Aleksandr Klevitsy at the Tchaikovksy Concert Hall in Moscow, and a concert at the Slobodkin Concert Center located on the famed Arbat Square in Moscow. They performed a gala performance at the beautiful Roman Catholic Cathedral in Moscow as well as at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music in honor of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. All of these events, along with many other special events, hailed a half-century of artistic excellence, awards, accomplishments, and touring for **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**. Sharing their beautiful and transcendent music with the world has been the hallmark of the Choir's success, and they look forward to many more years of carrying on their tradition of excellence well into the future.



**THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** are very active in Choral Festivals, performing in December 2011 at the Fourth Annual International Christmas Festival and at the Festival of Russian Culture in Japan in November 2011. They came away with the Grand Prix Award (first prize) at the All Russia Choral Festival in October 2011, held in Novgorod, Russia. They performed at the Moscow Music Festival dedicated to Contemporary Russian Music as well as the International Festival of Boys Choirs and at the Festival of Choral Music in 2007. Over the years, **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** has performed many and varied compositions in well over two dozen different Choral festivals, taking top awards in most of the competitions in which they participated. They participated in the world premiere of *The Christmas Oratorio* by the Orthodox Bishop Illarion. These performances took place at various Russian Orthodox Churches in New York City, Boston, MA, and Washington, DC. **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** travelled to Washington, DC to participate in this very prestigious event in 2007.

While at home in Russia, the choir's activities are numerous. They have performed in ceremonies for Russia's prestigious National Cinema Awards. They performed in the Moscow Festival of Choirs, dedicated to the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Moscow, plus many performances at the Olympic Hall in Moscow, and at the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. They are regularly featured on Russian television programs dedicated to the work of **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**, including one of the most popular Russian TV shows "Steps." They performed in November 2010 with the Moscow State Symphony Radio Orchestra at the Moscow Composer's House.

The choir has made numerous appearances at the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow State Duma and at the Kremlin, where they were honored in performances with the Presidential Orchestra on several occasions. They have performed many times at such prestigious venues as the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, the Pushkin Literary Museum and the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses. The choir has given recitals at the Central House of Literature Workers, today's Russian equivalent of the American Algonquin Round Table of the early twentieth century. The choir has performed at the Moscow House of Music, a beautiful and modern facility that hosts such musical superstars as Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras. In 2005, the choir was invited to perform in a grand concert at Red Square for International Children's Day where they performed their renditions of *Ave Maria* and *Evening Bells* with the famous tenor Andrea Bocelli.



Produced by IAI Presentations, Inc., **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** embarked upon their premier US Tour in October of 1993 and played to standing ovations, receiving rave reviews across the nation. This 40-city tour took them all over the United States, including a week in Alaska and (much to the delight of the choir...) a performance at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, where they were treated to a day enjoying the "happiest place on Earth!" During their 1996 US Tour, they were invited to perform at the Crystal Cathedral in Southern California for Rev. Robert Schuller's TV program *The Hour of Power*. Their performance was broadcast both nationally and internationally and was seen by a worldwide television audience. They were also featured on the CBS Christmas Eve Holiday Special, which was broadcast throughout North America.

On their third North American Tour in 1997, they treated audiences to their incredible sound in cities throughout the US. On this tour, the Choir visited Canada for the very first time. The performances for Canadian audiences by **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** were highly successful, and they performed to standing ovations and enthusiastic audiences. They returned to Canada during their 2005 North American tour only to find audiences there just as passionate. On their 2009 North American Tour, they returned to Canada to equal acclaim, and **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** will visit Canada again on their 2012 North American Tour. In February 2004, they debuted in South Korea where they won the hearts of the people there as they have done the world over. During their US tour later that year, **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** recorded a performance for National Public Radio for airing on that network's program, "Performance Today."

**THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** concluded their initial Christmas Around the World Tour in December of 1999 with an invitation from the White House to perform for President Clinton, the First Family, and their friends at a private Holiday Gala. After being greeted warmly by White House Staff, where they were treated to a special tour of the White House, visiting many rooms usually closed to the public, the choir performed their Holiday repertoire in the Main Foyer of the White House before the famed State Reception steps. When the concert was over, the choir was treated to refreshments, and then came the truly thrilling part of the evening - a private audience with the President of the United States! The choir was ushered into the Diplomatic Reception Room where they performed several selections,



including *America, the Beautiful* for President Clinton, First Lady Hilary Rodham-Clinton and their daughter Chelsea Clinton beneath the image of our first President, George Washington. President Clinton then addressed the Group, pointing out the historic significance of a choir from Russia performing at the White House, and how he hoped to visit them someday in Russia. It was a truly magical evening, one that the choir and those present will always remember!

On their 2005 North American Tour, **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** performed in a Holiday television special for HDNet Television. This television show, *Christmas Around the World*, featured the choir in performance and is now broadcast nationwide each year throughout the United States on HDNet Television during the Christmas season. **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR's** *Christmas Around the World* DVD can be purchased, along with their CD collection, at all public performances in the US or, on-line at [www.iaipresentations.com](http://www.iaipresentations.com). Their work with HDNet exemplifies **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR's** innovative spirit and displays their hallmark cutting-edge style. The significance of becoming among the very first boys choir to be broadcast in the new and exciting medium of high-definition television is a tribute to their tremendous talents and will no doubt bring more awareness of and accolades for this truly 21<sup>st</sup> Century ensemble!

The choir's renown will continue to grow under the guiding hand of IAI Presentations, as they begin their Twelfth North American Tour in November of this year, presenting a special Holiday Program to audiences throughout the Christmas Season. The powerful sound of this all-male choir will perform music of the Season from around the world. Audiences will be musically transported to far away places including Russia, Europe, the Americas, and more as the choir show cases Christmas Classics as well as new and vibrant pieces, many sung in their language of origin. Featured will be favorites from previous tours and new and vibrant pieces. Russian and Western Classical Compositions, rousing covers of traditional Russian Folk Songs, as well as many whimsical holiday treats such as *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *Jingle Bells*, and their hauntingly beautiful rendition of the holiday classic, *Silent Night* are part of this exciting and inspirational program, not to be missed by music lovers of all ages.

**THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR** will perform at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Performance time (s) is/are \_\_\_\_\_ and tickets can be purchased at the box office, on-line at \_\_\_\_\_ or by telephone by calling \_\_\_\_\_.

*Revised April 2012.*