



The Soviet Far East White Sail Dancers perform a humorous dance about ravens at the Glasnost Folkfest Feb. 24.

Glasnost Folkfest — a time for peace

by Jennifer Gordon

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It was a time for laughter, tears, dance and song. But above all, as Soviets and Americans raised their voices and hands together at the Glasnost Folkfest — it was a time for peace.

The festival was performed to a sell-out audience Feb. 24, at the Evangeline Atwood Concert Hall, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts.

The program opened quietly, with dimmed lights, as voices of Yupik Eskimos told of the relatives they had missed since the border between the two countries closed.

The quiet was broken, however, as the White Sail Dancers came on stage.

The traditional Eskimo dancers are from the Chukotka Peninsula in the Soviet Far East, and many have relatives in Alaska.

"A song is the soul of the people," said Dmitri Pokrovsky, leader of the The Pokrovsky Singers.

The group startled the crowd by coming in from a back entrance, singing and dancing the whole way. They sing traditional Russian folk songs and have only recently emerged from the Soviet underground since *glasnost* came into effect.

The dancing was stopped momentarily for Dixie Belcher, musical director for the folkfest, to speak. Belcher is the executive director and chairman of the board of directors for Camai, a nonprofit organization established to increase international understanding

through the arts.

The Chevak Dancers and the St. Lawrence Island Dancers took the stage, showing traditional dance and ending with a blanket toss.

The gospel sound of the Martin Luther King Anchorage Community Choir was joined by the Alaska Performing Artists for Peace and the Anchorage Children's Choir, who sang a song in both Russian and English.

"People to people, we're taking down the walls, saying no more shall we live in fear," sang Susan Osborne, an internationally known singer.

Finally, the Soviet rock group Stas Namin joined the people already on stage, singing "I Love Rock'n'Roll" and "Back in the USSR" by the Beatles.