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STAFF PHOTOS BY MICHAEL A. BELL

Russian artists perform at Zebulon Elementary School Jan. 27.

Russians

From page 1A

They had pets and went to school. I just thought it was really cool."

(Contact Staff Writer Michael A. Bell at 269-6101 or mbell@nando.com.)



CULTURAL LIAISONS



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL A. BELL

Russian natives Boris Kipchakov, holding the contrabass balalaika, and Olga Orlova wait backstage before a performance at Zebulon Elementary School last week.

Moscow nights come to light at ZES

By MICHAEL A. BELL
STAFF WRITER

ZEBULON — Much like the 1963 James Bond movie of the same name, a group made a transatlantic trip to Zebulon Elementary School Jan. 27 to offer songs from Russia ... with love.

As part of the school's cultural arts program, Moscow Nights, a duo musical group led by Vitaliy Bezrodnov on Bayan accordion and Golden Gates, a child group of girls that dance to traditional folk music, performed to an enthusiastic audience itching to learn more about the world. Some kids even got to play the foreign instruments. "I chose them because

that's a great thing for students to be exposed to," said music teacher Rhonda Evrard. "A different culture and different music."

In weeks past, the school has seen performances from Spanish dancers and more. About once every two months, the PTA-sponsored program draws in acts from all walks of life for the children. "The kids love it," Evrard said.

"It's things they wouldn't be able to experience at home."

For Bezrodnov, it's about meeting a new audience and making new friends. "It's building a bridge for a better cultural understanding," he said. "Kids everywhere are just the same" and enjoy musical acts that have toured to more than three dozen schools across the country. The groups were returning from a recent stop

in Orlando, Fla.

Boris Kipchakov, who played the contrabass balalaika, charmed the audience with his carols. It was an impressive display of the mastery of the rare Russian instrument for the students.

"I thought it was pretty good," said fifth-grader Hamilton Brantley. "I like the songs and they sounded good, too. Even though they screamed sometimes, it was good."

Added fifth-grader Greta Albritton: "It was really cool the way they dance. I've never seen anyone dance like that. They were a lot like us."

EVENT FACTS

WHAT — Russian artists perform as part of a cultural arts program.

WHEN — Artists from various countries show their skills about once a month.

WHERE — Zebulon Elementary School.

See Russians, page 5A