



Tatiana and Sergey Nikitin are among the most well-known and revered folk music singing duos in Russia. If one has never heard them, however, it is not easy to define the musical genre that they have helped create over the years. They are equally at home sharing the stage with Pete Seeger, a jazz ensemble, or a symphony orchestra. Indeed, the Nikitins' music lends itself to instrumental interpretation, featuring a variety of styles, from classical to jazz to Russian village chant.

We could define the Nikitins in terms of theatre, because, as their audiences have often remarked, their performances unfold like musical dramas. Their ties to film and theatre are lasting and strong. Sergey Nikitin has composed dozens of soundtracks for films and theatre productions in Russia. In 1980, the duo wrote and performed the soundtrack for the Oscar winning Russian film "Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears." The dramatic opera based on Chekhov's "The Proposal" is still running at the School of Contemporary Drama Theater in Moscow, after more than 1,000 sold-out shows.

When Tatiana and Sergey Nikitin are on stage, the means of expression are sparing: a seven stringed guitar and two voices. So what is the secret of their success - millions of records sold, high accolades, sold-out performances around the world, several generations of Russian children who have grown up listening to their songs? Perhaps, it is their impeccable taste in poetry that Sergey puts to music - from William Shakespeare to Boris Pasternak. Or maybe, it is the insightful musical treatment that poetry receives in the Nikitins' renditions - when the sole purpose is to bring out the melody already ripe in verse. Or perhaps, it is their conversational tone, as though they were among friends, their utter lack of all artificial show-biz luster, while professionalism of the highest level rules supreme.

However we define their musical genre - folk song, poetry put to music, musical theatre - the fact is, Tatiana and Sergey Nikitin are among the very few artists in any country who have transcended the limits of the genre that they themselves once helped to establish.