

THE INFLUENCE OF BULGARIAN
FOLK MUSIC ON
PETAR CHRISTOSKOV'S SUITES AND RHAPSODIES FOR SOLO VIOLIN

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Blagomira Paskaleva Lipari
B. M., State Academy of Music, Sofia, Bulgaria, June 1996
M. M., Louisiana State University, May 1998
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ABSTRACT

Petar Christoskov, born in 1917 in Sofia, is among the most prolific of Bulgarian violinists, pedagogues and composers of the twentieth century. Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin represent both an internal evolution of Bulgarian music and an incorporation of the Bulgarian musical tradition into the larger world music scene. Bulgaria's folk musical tradition was routinely infused and enriched over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Christoskov's efforts were presaged and made possible by a host of earlier composers and performers. But the evolution of the Bulgarian style was also shaped by larger historical trends and regional dynamics. During the period between 1396 and 1878, the Ottoman Empire allowed the Bulgarian folk tradition to be preserved and even continue to develop without external influence. Following the liberation of Bulgaria in the late 19th century, Bulgaria's classical musicians were exposed to Russian and Western European stylistic methodologies.

With the onset of the Cold War and Soviet ascendancy in the Balkans, the forces influencing Bulgarian music shifted yet again. The Communist ideology of the Bulgarian government discouraged Western influences and promoted the use of Bulgarian folk "Primitivism" as a means to make music more accessible to "the People." Christoskov began composing under this musical paradigm. The folk structures, melodies, ornamentations, rhythms, and performance practice of the Bulgarian countryside were employed by Petar Christoskov to bring a new level of originality and expressiveness to Bulgarian professional violin literature and performance. By incorporating Bulgarian folk technique with the Western and Russian professional music traditions, Petar Christoskov created an original, distinctive violin style. His efforts enriched the Bulgarian violin professional music with a new virtuosity, sound, and timbre. His Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin are among the most important compositions in the Bulgarian violin repertoire because they embody the distinct historical evolution of contemporary Bulgarian professional music.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Bulgarian violin music found inspiration from its traditional folk string music. At that time, Bulgarian culture was in the process of rejuvenation as the country finally acquired its independence from the Ottoman Empire after five hundred years of occupation. Because of the preservation of Bulgarian culture and folk music under the Ottoman Empire, contemporary Bulgarian composers were able to use the authentic folkloric musical traditions in their compositions. The vocal and instrumental music associated with the folkloric tradition served as a reservoir from which the traditions, spirit and a new sense of Bulgarian nationalism could be drawn. Over the course of the twentieth century, Bulgarian violin style continued to develop and deepen from this rich folk tradition. The Bulgarian violin style of the twentieth century became a highly expressive music that blended the nineteenth century modern virtuoso style tradition with the primitive Bulgarian folk style.

Petar Christoskov is among the most prolific of Bulgarian violinists, pedagogues and composers of the twentieth century. He began composing instructional violin literature in 1952 and shortly thereafter his passion grew into the creation of more serious professional literature for the violin in nearly every genre. His compositions are organic combinations of both professional violin and Bulgarian folk music enriched with Bulgarian national intonations, rhythms, and characters. “Petar Christoskov’s compositions have equal importance to the Bulgarian violin literature as the compositions of Wieniawski to Poland and Paganini to Italy.”¹ The solo genre maintains a special place in Christoskov’s works. His Rhapsodies and Suites for

¹ L. Mankova, “Avtorski koncert na Petar Christoskov,” *Bulgarska Musica* 7 (Bulgaria, 1965), 53.

solo violin were influenced by the Bulgarian folk free improvisatory style, melodic structure, compound rhythms, ornamentations, and interpretations of the folkloric vocal and instrumental traditions.

1.1 Bulgarian Music at Early Stage

Bulgarian musical culture was founded, developed and determined by the integration of the three basic ethnic groups that united into the Bulgarian State in 681: the Traci, the South Slavs, and the Bulgars. In the late fifth and early sixth centuries the Slavs, carrying their material and social culture along with them, migrated to the Balkan peninsula and assimilated into the Thracian tribes. The Slavs “brought their songs, customs, stories and legends,” and a wide variety of string instruments. According to the seventh century Byzantium historians Simokat and Teofan, each of the three major East, West and South Slaves tribes “did not carry armory but only their string instruments-lyres.”²

During the seventh century the Bulgars, a Turkic tribe from central Asia, migrated to the Balkans and organized the Slavs, the Traci and other tribes into the Bulgarian State in 861. During the ninth century, known as the “Golden Century” of Bulgarian culture, there was already an established tradition of using string instruments to perform folk music.

After the introduction of Orthodox Christianity in Bulgaria in 865, folk and church music developed separately with no influence on each other. Since Orthodox Christianity only allows a cappella singing, the folk instruments and music developed separately from the religious chant music. According to Presbyter Kozma, a tenth century Byzantine observer, the Bulgarians

² H. Pashunkova, *Narodnoinstrumentalnie Istoki Skripachnogo Iskustva Bulgarskih Kompozitorov 20 Veka i Problemai Interpretazii ih Proizvedenii*. Ph. D diss., (Moscow Conservatory, 1981), 22.

“...run to dance and not to church...they are no Christians, for with rebecks [a string instrument similar to the gadulka], dances and songs, they drink wine, yielding to the evil.”³ A manuscript collection of fourteenth century Orthodox sermons define the Bulgarian folk dances as “devilish...leading a man away from God and taking him to the bottom of hell.”⁴ Unlike most musical genres which developed in conjunction with religious expression, the Bulgarian folk tradition remained distinct from the dominant Christian cultural conventions.

In 1396 Bulgaria fell under Ottoman rule for five hundred years. Under the Turkish empire the traditions of playing string instruments were preserved and even continued to develop. Because of the hilly and mountains topography of Bulgaria, the contact between villages was difficult and limited. The long isolation of Bulgaria from other countries during the Ottoman Empire and the specific landscape factors made possible the great preservation and development of Bulgarian folkloric traditions.

The instrumental music developed as an imitation of the vocal singing and performance practice, “Bulgarians believe that their instrumental traditions developed in emulation of singing.”⁵ Passed orally between the generations, the Bulgarian folk music was performed during work and for entertainment. “This music was an oral tradition performed for calendrical and life-cycle rites...Contemporary scholars and musicians describe such music as “authentic” and “traditional.”⁶ The folkloric tradition and music were learned through observation and imitation, by singing and playing along with elders at community social events.

³ Raina Katarova-Kukudova, *Bulgarian Folk Dances*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, Inc, 1976), 9

⁴ R. Katarova-Kukudova, *Bulgarian Folk Dances*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, Inc, 1976), 9

⁵ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (ii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Seasonal music,” 571.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 571

The character of folk music was directly related to the everyday life of the population, a majority of which made a living by farming or stock-breeding. “The villagers musical performance was not a profession but an integral aspect of everyone’s daily experience inseparable from the community’s social life. Music accompanied every aspect of labor.”⁷

Gadulari were musicians who lived by traveling from city to city, playing the *gadulka* to accompany their narrative-based epic ballads. This unique manner of performing is preserved nowadays in southwestern Bulgaria and in the mid-western *Shopska* region famous for its epic recitative.

1.2 Development of Bulgarian Professional Music

Until the nineteenth century, the predominant musical culture in Bulgaria was expressed only through folklore. Professional music gradually developed in major cities under the influence of musicians and pedagogues from Western Europe and other Slavic cultures. “During the last years of Ottoman rule Turkish administrators, Balkan merchants, and emigrant workers maintained continuous inter-city contact, spreading new styles through the Balkans. Their popularization marks the beginning of both professional and amateur institutionalized musical activity.”⁸ In the middle of the nineteenth century amateur and professional music associations were organized in various cities in Bulgaria and became the basis for the foundation of the Bulgarian Music Union in 1901.

The Bulgarian professional violin music was influenced by musicians and pedagogues from other Slavic (Czech, Russian, Hungarian, Polish) and Western cultures. In the 1850s, the

⁷ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (ii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Seasonal music,” 571.

⁸ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (vii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Rhythm and metre,” 578.

first violin school and orchestra were founded in Shumen by Mihail Shafran, a Hungarian violinist, composer and conductor. Shafran and his Bulgarian violin student, Dobri Voinikov, composed one of the first pieces for violin and orchestra that incorporated Bulgarian folk music elements. Voinikov, who organized the first school orchestra in 1859, became the first Bulgarian violin teacher in the Shumen violin school after Mihail Shafran left Bulgaria in 1853.

Gradually, the violin professional music expanded to other cities in Bulgaria such as Plovdiv, Razgrad, and Sofia. In Plovdiv the Italian Marinetti a student of P. I. Tchaikovsky organized an instrumental ensemble that performed regularly. Professional musical life began in Razgrad in 1862 when Burni Burnev, Tzanko Markov, Kancho Jekov and Dimitar Filkov studied with visiting Romanian violinists. In 1863 the Russian violinist and teacher Alexsei Shulgovski organized the first student choir and orchestra in Razgrad.⁹

After Bulgaria acquired its independence in 1878, the professional violin solo and chamber concert life began developing rapidly. In 1904 the first private School of Music opened and later in 1921 became the State Academy of Music, the major institution which prepares professional musicians. During the initial decades of the twentieth century, its students qualified to receive training in Italy, England, the United States, Belgium, Prague, and Paris. Violinists such as Neda Fitcheva, Petko Naumov, Sasha Popov, and Nedyalka Simeonova became world-class concert violinists.

After World War I, young Bulgarian composers professionally trained in Austria, Germany, Italy and France returned to Bulgaria. They combined contemporary European and

⁹ H. Pashunkova, *Narodnoinstrumentalni Istoki Skripachnogo Iskustva Bulgarskih Kompozitorov 20 Veka i Problemai Interpretazii ih Proizvedenii*. Ph. D diss., (Moscow: Moscow Conservatory, 1981), 45.

Russian traditions with authentic Bulgarian folk music to create the basic Bulgarian national music style. Composers such as Pancho Vladigerov, Dimitar Nenov, Lyubomir Pipkov, Marin Goleminov and Veselin Stoyanov composed instrumental pieces for violin and chamber music for such genres as Rhapsody, Suite, Sonata, Theme and Variations, and Paraphrase. Most violin compositions were in neo-Romantic style and embedded with Bulgarian primitive folk music. The first generation of professional Bulgarian composers “...created the basis of the Bulgarian musical tradition in all genres, and through their teaching were a prime influence on the generation of composers after World War II.”¹⁰

The 1944 socialist revolution in Bulgaria brought further musical development and education. The new ideology of social realism changed the musical life. “The more it is among the people, the closer it is to life!” became the new ideology. Following the doctrine of “social realism,” folklore replaced the neo-Romantic trend of the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, cultural activities became centralized and all music performing institutions became subsidized by the state. New secondary music schools, opera houses and symphony orchestras were founded throughout Bulgaria. Most young composers and performers were not permitted to study abroad or assimilate contemporary European music and were only allowed to specialize within the Soviet Union. However, under the influence of Soviet violinists and pedagogues the Bulgarian violin school flourished during the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s. Composers such as Benzion Eliezer, Krasimir Kyrkchiiski, Petar Christoskov, Simeon Pironkov, Tsvetan Tsvetanov, and Vasil Kazandjiev further deepened the Bulgarian chamber music and violin repertoire in the genres of Sonatas, Suites, Rhapsodies and Capriccios for solo violin.

¹⁰ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, I: Art Music,” 570.

Under the influence of the Soviet Union's best composers such as Shostakovich and Prokofieff, the Concerto and Concertino genres flourished in Bulgaria during the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, when socialist politics became more progressive during this period, analytical and new experimental music were allowed to combine with Bulgarian folkloric traditions. This in turn, led to the development of a new generation of Bulgarian composers in the 1980s.

1.3 Petar Christoskov: Biography

One of the most important musicians to emerge from this developmental period was Petar Christoskov. "Professor Petar Christoskov is one of the most prominent, outstanding and artistically manifested Bulgarian musical performers, also known for his competent, demanding and goal-oriented teaching."¹¹ Petar Christoskov was born in Sofia in 1917. He graduated from the State Academy of music as a student of the renown Bulgarian violinist Sasha Popov. Between 1940 and 1943 Christoskov specialized in violin and chamber music at the Berlin Academy of Music with Gustav Havemann and Hans Malke and was an active performer in Germany and Austria. After his return to Bulgaria, Christoskov became concertmaster of the Sofia Philharmonic and one of the major Bulgarian solo and chamber music artists. His piano trio partners included the composer and pianist Dimitar Nenov, and the cellist Konstantin Popov. After the death of Dimitar Nenov, Peter Christoskov began performing duo with his wife, the pianist Zlatka Arnaudova. Since 1945 Christoskov has been on the faculty of the State Academy of music in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 1950 Christoskov was awarded with the academic title, Professor.

¹¹ P. Christoskov, *Caprices for Solo Violin*, Boyan Letchev, preface. (Sofia: Musica, 2000), 4.

Petar Christoskov began composing in 1952 and shortly thereafter his compositions incorporated the genres Capriccio, Suite, Rhapsody, Concerto, Concertino, Poem, Prelude and Dance, Theme and Variation, Fantasy, Improvisation, Sonata, Prelude, Vocalize, and Symphony. Christoskov's compositions feature works for violin, piano, violoncello, double base, and various chamber ensembles.

Christoskov's compositions incorporate elements of Western European and Russian professional violin with Bulgarian folk intonations, rhythms, and characters. His Rhapsodies and Suites for solo violin were influenced by the free improvisatory style, melodic structure, compound rhythms, ornamentations, and interpretations of the folkloric vocal and instrumental traditions of the *Shopluk* or *Shopska oblast* from the Middle West Bulgarian music folklore region.

CHAPTER 2. BULGARIAN FOLK MUSIC

As a specific part of the folk vocal and instrumental practice, the improvisatory quality adopted from folkloric music is used as a major structural element. The influence on the vocal folklore in Christoskov's violin music is generally expressed in the character of his second themes of the faster movements and in the slow movements in his compositions.

Passed orally between the generations, the songs could vary from village to village. The young women learned the lyrics and the embellished melodies by listening to the singing of their older female relatives. Knowing the contours of the song, each singer can demonstrate talent, imagination, and mastery of her voice by improvising and embellishing the melody. The younger singers usually form groups of two or three to learn and practice the songs. These duos and trios can last a lifetime.

2.1 Vocal Folk Music

The well preserved harvest songs in the *Shopska* region are connected to the specific lifestyle of the population. They could be performed at different moments of the working day. The songs are non-metrical called *protiajni pesni* (slow and sustained songs) or *dalgi glasove* (long melodies), with free melodic development and expressive character. The harvest songs and other agricultural work songs performed during field work are "...unpulsed, rubato, improvisatory, densely ornamented songs generically termed *bavni pesni* (slow songs)."¹

The diaphonic vocal style, which is specific to the *Shopluk* region, is expressed in the use of occasional parallel motion between the voices in major and minor seconds. Performed

¹ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, "Bulgaria, II, 2 (vii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Rhythm and metre," 577.

antiphonally and only by women, the songs are highly dissonant which makes them sound loud, forceful, sharp and sudden. This serves as a representation of the wide ranging temperament of the regional population. While one singer performs the top and moving voice, two or more women sing the second static voice on the fundamental. Usually the first voice *izvikva* (cries out), *vodi* (leads), *izviva* (whines) or *trese* (shakes), while the second voice *buchi* (roars), *slaga* (lays), or *vlachi* (trails behind). Performed with an open throat and intense sound, the harvest songs could be heard by working women in neighboring plots: "...the women projected their voices to produce an open-throated, focused and intense sound that could be heard from a distance way."² The drone voice usually sustains on the fundamental or moves to the seventh degree of the mode while the first voice sings the root. The women perform the drone voice louder in an effort to overwhelm the first. The singers prolong the dissonant notes to produce a resulting pulsation of different notes that "ring like bells." Singers frequently prolong a phrase's final note by focusing on the ringing sound. In harvest songs sung during rest periods, the first voice often embellishes the melody by *tresene* (shaking), a open throat technique.³

The Bulgarian vocal categories divide into two classes: *chist* (clean) and *piskliv* (reedy), or *debel* (thick) and *mazen* (buttery). "When singing antiphonally a 'reedy' group was often juxtaposed with a 'buttery' group."⁴ In some villages around Sofia in the *Shopska* region, the voices can perform three-note clusters of adjacent pitches, an intensification of the parallel seconds. The singers of the drone voice divide to produce three voice clusters. One singer

² Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, "Bulgaria, II, 2 (v): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Texture and timbre," 576.

³ L Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgraska Narodna Musica*, (Sofia: IK Sviat. Nauka, 2000), 52-56.

⁴ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, "Bulgaria, II, 2 (v): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Texture and timbre," 576.

performs the melody, the second sings the fundamental and the third drones on the leading note. The harvest and other agricultural songs from the *Shopska* region usually have narrow tone range, a minor third or a perfect fourth and a limited, simple melody. However, the development of the monotonous melodic line is succeeded by the highly improvisational and richly ornamented performance.

The trill-like ornamentation *tresene*, (shaking), is a vocal technique performed with an open throat. *Tresene* is performed by subdividing the long note into small and fast irregular portions.⁵ “In harvest songs performed during rest periods, the first voice enhanced such moments with *tresene* (shaking), a vocal technique comprising a trill-like succession of glottal stops”⁶ performed by the first voice often on the first degree from the fundamental. *Tresene* is a popular ornamentation for epic recitatives and harvest songs.

Atsane, another trill-like ornament and a variation of *tresene*, is a fast repetition of one tone at the end of the melody with a cadence or half-cadence. *Azane* is performed by the first voice which frequently rises to the octave and subdivides it on fast, irregular portions performed with a loud sound by an open throat. Later, the voice moves to sub-tonic and descends back to tonic with glissando.⁷

Izvikvane or *provikvane* is a loud, ornamental, scream-like portamento in unison on the perfect fourth, minor seventh, or eighth interval of a drone voice. Often, *izvikvane* is a cadential formula at the end of a phrase or in the middle of a word on the vowel sound *eee* followed by

⁵ L. Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarska Narodna Musica*, (Sofia: Sviat. Nauka, 2000), 49.

⁶ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria: Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Texture and timbre,” 576.

⁷ St. Djudjev, *Bulgarska Narodna Musica*, Vol. 2, (Sofia: Musica, 1975), 195.

descending glissando with a decrease in volume. In harvest songs *izvikvane* follows *tresene*.⁸

The ornamentation *zadarjane*, or prolonged note, is an emphasis on the leading notes of the mode, on dissonances, clusters, or on a syllable preceding a pause.

Epicheski rechitativi (epic recitatives) belong to the category of Bulgarian folk songs performed *na trapeza*, or “at the table.” They are performed on different occasions connected to the life of the community. The *epicheski rechitativi* originate from the tenth century. Male musicians, called *gadulari*, made their living by traveling from city to city performing epic recitatives accompanied by the *gadulka*. This tradition is currently preserved in the *Shopska* region.⁹ Epic recitatives are selections from the Bulgarian epos genre. They include both historical and mythological ballads, as well as heroic epics describing the exploits of the Bulgarian heroes Momchil and Krali Marko, who fought against the Ottomans in the 14th century. *Epicheski rechitativi* (epic recitatives) could be performed by solo vocalists (men or women) or accompanied by a *gadulka*.

The epic recitatives contain a small number of similar, improvised, and non-metrical melodies with a tonal range of a perfect fifth. Each melody consists of three parts. The introductory section contains richly ornamented flourishes on the vowel *e* or the word *hei* starting on the melody’s highest pitch. The introduction includes several phrases, each ending with fermata and *tresene*. The second section is a recitative spread over several descending sequential passages. The structure of the last section of the epic recitative is similar to the introduction.

The rhythm of the epic recitative is based on the metric structure of syllables from the

⁸ L. Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarska Narodna Musica*, (Sofia: IK Sviat. Nauka, 2000), 55.

⁹ Stioan Petrov and Hristo Kodov, *Starobulgarski Musicalni Pamentnizi* (Sofia: BAN 1979), 15.

text. “Phrase structure and rhythm generally follow the text’s syllabic structure”¹⁰ Each line of the text is constructed of six, eight, ten, or twelve syllables.

The historic lyric songs and ballads as part of the Bulgarian epos are performed in moderate tempo with *vlacheni glasove* (drawn-out melodies). Bela Bartok classifies those songs as melodies in *parlando rubato* rhythm.¹¹ The epic unmetred recitatives are distinct from the harvest songs because of their shorter note values and their faster tempo. In the folkloric terminology the unmetred epic recitative melodies are called *seceni* (chopped up).

Improvisation is the main factor in the melodic development of the epic recitative. The performer can improvise to show imagination, talent, and mastery of singing by speeding up the tempo at climatic strophes and embellishing the melody by prolonging particular notes. The instrumentalists provide interludes between the verses with improvisation based on the main melody.

Historic ballads describe more recent events from the fight for liberation from the Ottoman empire. Numerous historical ballads present episodes of the Bulgarian rebel *haidutsi* (fighters) and *voivodi* (leaders). The *haidutsi* and *voivodi* organized attacks against the Ottoman empire brigades from hidden recesses in the Bulgarian mountains.¹²

The historic and mythological ballads are sung “at the table” and at *sedyanka*, when the women get together to do their handwork and needlework during the evening hours of the fall and the winter. Both historical and the mythological ballads are unmetred songs with wider

¹⁰ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (vii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Rhythm and mere,” 577.

¹¹ L. Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarska Narosna Musica* (Sofia: Musica, 1988), 115.

¹² Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (iii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Instruments,” 573.

tonal range, rich ornamentation, large interval leaps from the fundamental, and highly improvisatory melodic development. Each phrase ends with a large and ornamented cadence.

Mythological ballads are part of larger ballad families found in the Balkans. They are legends of mythological creatures interacting with humans. Popular legends include those of dragons and their human lovers, supernatural human heroes fighting demons, fairies protecting humans, and other miraculous stories.

2.2 Instrumental Folk Music

Playing instruments and singing are gender based activities in Bulgarian folk traditions and are determined by the division of labor in the village. The women are engaged with agricultural and domestic work, while men are animal farmers and shepherds. The men created earphone instruments *kaval* and *duduk* to entertain themselves by playing music while working. The folk instrument's timbres blend with the sound of *zvanzi* (bells) hung around the neck of their animals. Boys learn to play instruments by individual experiment, observation, and playing by ear along with the older men at community celebrations. The Bulgarian folk instrumental traditions derived from the imitation of singing. This is "expressed metaphorically and in song texts that praised the vocal quality of instrumental performance...*kaval sviri govori* (as the flute plays, it speaks)." ¹³ The instrumental music performed by young men includes imitations of vocal slow songs and accompaniment of fast chain, couple and solo dances called *hora*.

The instrumental melodies that are not danced are based on the unmetered, vocal melodies. They are free improvisations showing the talent, mastery, and personal imagination of the performer. They are called *bavni melodii* (slow melodies) or *svirni*. A portion of these

¹³ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, "Bulgaria, II, 2 (iii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Instruments," 573.

melodies are shepherds' melodies, freely improvised, while others are imitations of vocal slow songs. Certain long notes from the melody are performed with highly expressive, wide vibration. The influence of the instrumental dance and not-danced folk music from *Shopska oblast* on Petar Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin is expressed in both the fast and slow movements. The fast and temperamental instrumental dances called *hora* (plural) contain free improvisational character, unique intonations, complex compound rhythmic structure and ornamentations.

Performed by young women and men, *hora* (singular) is central to the social and domestic life of the Bulgarian countryside. *Hora* are traditionally performed at family celebrations on large, spacious verandas called *chardaks*. The *hora* dancers form a human chain by holding each others hands, waistbands or shoulders. The Bulgarian *hora* are danced mainly with light, small and fast steps. Cries and shouts are occasionally heard from the dancing men.¹⁴

The people of the *Shopska* region are known as some of the finest *hora* performers dancing in fast tempo with complicated steps, hands placed on the waist, and body leaning forward to stress the spring-like movements of the legs. *Rachenitsa* is the most popular *hora* in the *Shopska* region. It is danced by couples or solo. Each dancer has its own combination of figures, movements, and steps that are based on 7/16 rhythm. The performers compete against each other by inventing more complicated steps, speeding up the tempo, and dancing as long as they can. When exhausted, the dancers slow down. After a brief rest they suddenly begin dancing with even greater speed.¹⁵

¹⁴ R. Katzarova-Kukudova, *Bulgarian Folk Dances*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, Inc, 1976), 33.

¹⁵ R. Katzarova-Kukudova, *Bulgarian Folk Dances*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, Inc, 1976), 32.

The most popular and widespread duple meter dance is *Pravo horo* (straight dance) in 2/4. Also known as *Shope horo*, the dance is described by contemporary musicians as “in two” but has “compound duple character of 6/8.”¹⁶ “The gender mixed *Shope* dance is performed in every village of this ethnographic region. The dancers always form an open circle.”¹⁷

The accompanying musician stands near the *horo* center and “improvises a dance tune on brief melodic fragments (*persenkove*) that he developed in longer phrases called *kolena*, usually within the interval fifth. These *kolena* were irregular in length due to their improvisatory character...”¹⁸ The *kolena* are developed to inspire the dancers. Some *hora* are based on one melodic fragment, others on three or four *kolena*. In some places the musicians change the rhythm of the dance to 7/8, 2/4, 3/4, or 9/16 beat, greeted every time by the dancers with a shout.¹⁹

The form of the Bulgarian dances are freely improvised with variations. Usually a simple melody of the thematic material develops through repetitions of fast and short rhythmic motives, ornamentation, as well as dynamic and rhythmic contrasts. The climactic section of the dance is a “vamp” of one or two measures of small rhythmic motives, heard each time faster and faster.²⁰ The impulsive instrumental dances are enriched with trills and trill-like ornaments, mordents, and grace notes on the fourth or seventh intervals above the root. The characteristic short rests in the dance magnify the impulse of the melody.

¹⁶ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (v): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Rhythm and metre,” 577.

¹⁷ R. Katarova-Kukudova, 33.

¹⁸ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Bulgaria, II, 2 (v): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Texture and timbre,” 575.

¹⁹ R. Katarova-Kukudova, *Bulgarian Folk Dances*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, Inc, 1976), 32.

²⁰ H. Pashunkova, *Narodnoinstrumentalni Istoki Skripachnogo Iskustva Bulgarskih Kompozitorov 20 Veka i Problemai Interpretazii ih Proizvedenii*. Ph. D diss., (Moscow: Moscow Conservatory, 1981), 32-33.

The rhythmic variety of symmetrical and asymmetrical (or irregular) meters is one of the most distinctive features of Bulgarian folk music. Characteristic of most song types, dance, and instrumental music, the irregular rhythms are formed by combining simple duple and triple meters.

The *Shope* dances are based on the greatest variety of complex rhythms of 2/4, 3/4, 5/16, 7/16, 9/16, 10/16, 11/16, 12/16, 13/16 and others.²¹

2.3 Instruments

Peter Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin are influenced by the performance practice and expressiveness of the Bulgarian folk instruments *gadulka*, *tambura*, *kaval*, and *gayda*.

Gadulka is the most common Bulgarian string folk instrument distinctive for its flexibility and its dark viola-like timbre. Every melody from Bulgarian folk music can be played on this instrument. The *gadulka* is a bowed three string instrument with a pear shaped, rounded body and a short neck. It is a wooden lute played vertically by resting it on the knee or on the belt as player stands. *Gadulka* performance practice is different for each folkloric region in Bulgaria.

The *Shopski* style of playing the *gadulka* is characterized by sudden exchange of staccato and *detache* strokes, double stops, triplets, and by the highly expressive, wide vibration to embellish repeated and slow notes in the not-danced melodies. Other typical sound effects are *sul ponticello* and portamento. *Shopska gadulka* strings are tuned as follows: *a-e-a'*. In the *Shopska* region, the *gadulka* exists in two varieties: the traditional one and the so called *gusla* or

²¹ L. Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarska Narodna Musica* (Sofia: IK Sviat. Nauka, 2000), 53.

kemene s duno. It is violin shaped with a flat back and softer sound.²² The *gadulka* is the most popular string folk instrument in Bulgaria and is used to accompany dances and epic recitatives, to play instrumental, not-danced melodies, in combinations with other folk instruments.

The *tambura* is a wooden lute with a long neck and rounded back that is popular among Islamic Bulgarians. The *tambura* existed in several sizes with two, four, six, eighth, and twelve strings. Before the 1950s, the eight-string *tambura* was the most common of all varieties. The contemporary *tambura* has four metal strings tuned *d-g-b-e*. The performers play chords or a melody by plucking the strings. Christoskov writes four voice pizzicato chords with texture that imitates the sound of this instrument.

Kaval (a semi traverse, rim-blown flute) is a unique Bulgarian folk wind instrument with warm, mellow, and harmonic-like sound. The *kaval* is a shepherd's instrument with a large, flexible range resembling the human voice. The *kaval* is typically played as fast, scale-like passages and triplets. The *Shopski* style of a *kaval* performance presents a tense sound expression combined with irregular vibrato produced by the fingers. The *kaval* could be played at home, at the pasture for not-danced melodies and to accompany the *horo*.²³

Gayda (bagpipe) is a favorite folk instrument for accompaniment of weddings and outdoor celebrations. *Gayda* is able to perform double stops with one moving and one drone voice.

2.4 Modes

The most popular modes in *Shopska oblast* are Dorian, Phrygian, Ionian and Chromatic.

²² H. Pashunkova, *Narodnoinstrumentalni Istoki Skripachnogo Iskustva Bulgarskih Kompozitorov 20 Veka i Problemai Interpretazii ih Proizvedenii*. Ph. D diss., (Moscow: Moscow Conservatory, 1981), 25-27.

²³ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. :“Bulgaria, II, 2 (iii): Pre-socialist musical culture, 1800-1944: Instruments,” 573.

Because of the narrow tone range, most of the vocal and instrumental melodies from the *Shopska* region contain only a tetrachord. The most popular chromatic tetrachord, used extensively in Peter Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin, is *Makam hidjas*. *Makam hidjas*, a chromatic mode with Middle Eastern flavor, contains a minor second between the fundamental and the second degree of the mode, an augmented second interval between second and third degrees, and minor second between the third and fourth degrees of the mode. *Makam hidjas* is the most common chromatic mode in the Bulgarian folk music.²⁴

²⁴ L. Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarska Narodna Musica* (Sofia: Sviat. Nauka, 2000), 54.

CHAPTER 3. PETAR CHRISTOSKOV'S SUITES FOR SOLO VIOLIN

3.1 Suite No.1, Opus 7

Suite op.7, No. 1, constructed of four movements with the unprogramatic titles: *Comodo*, *Vivace*, *Lento*, *Presto*, was composed in 1954 and dedicated to Igor Bezrodny. The first movement, *Comodo*, is based on the free improvisational principle drawn from the Bulgarian folk tradition. The theme of the first movement is identical to the first theme of the first movement of Christoskov's Sonata No. 1 for solo violin, and to the first theme of the second movement of D. Shostakovich's Sonata for violin and piano. The melody, influenced by *Shopska* dissonant diaphony, is based on short motives that develop through variations. Christoskov describes the structure of the movement as resembling a mythological ballad expressed by the *con sordino* sound and the texture of the first section as:

...a special fantastic world-the world of a frosty forest. This charming view of the forest made me sit for hours in front of the frosty window in Knyajevo, which was painted with fantastic icy flowers and birds. I tried to describe the picture with sounds from the folk thematic. In the middle section, the descending glissando trills represent defrosting little drops of water, gradually rolling and winding down to the ground.¹

The Allegro Assai of the first movement is influenced by the unmeasured slow vocal and instrumental folk melodies from the *Shopska* region. The rich, trill-like ornamented phrases of the melody end with *zadarjane*, *tresene*, *atsane*, and *izvikvane*. The short *Meno* sections in 4/4 rhythm resemble a slow instrumental melody typically performed by the *gadulka* in triplet rhythmic figures.

¹ H. Pashunkova, "Solo Violin Sonata and Suite in the Works of Bulgarian Composers," Interview with Peter Christoskov, *Bulgarian Musicology*, No. 1, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1986), 56.

The second movement *Vivace*, is a light and fast *Shope horo* in the rhythm of 2/4. The improvisatory dance is structured with three *kolena*, each marked with a different tempo and time signature: *Vivace* in 2/4, *Andante* in 9/8, and *Vivace* in 2/4.

The first *Vivace* section is an instrumental improvisation of one motif that develops through variation. The texture of this section resembles a *kaval* performance in the characteristic light stepwise passages and the soft dynamics.

The *Andante* section is a bright improvisation in 9/8. The *Andante*'s sudden dynamic contrasts, *sul ponticello*, double stops in fifths, portamentos, and harmonics are influenced by the *gadulka* performance practice. The *Andante* is the middle section of the *Shope horo* where the dancers slow down to take a short break. Then, tempo I returns to the *Vivace* in the rhythm of 2/4. The second movement ends with a portamento as a representation of the final *horo* shout.

The third movement, *Lento alla fantasia*, is the lyric and emotional center of Suite op.7. Its improvisatory structure is inspired by the *Shopska* region's historical ballads, mythological ballads and epic recitatives. These are expressed in dissonant intervals, leaps of seventh and octave intervals from the fundamental, and fermatas on dissonant notes. The structure of *Lento* is based on the accompanied epic recitative containing the three typical parts divided by small interludes between the verses. The melody lacks a bar line, which makes it sound free, improvisatory, and unmetred. The *gadulka* imitation is represented by the use of triplets, fast note passages, double stops, rhythmic bourdons, trill-like ornaments, *sul ponticello*, and harmonics. The triplets with semi-tone, stepwise motion represent the *gadulka*'s wide vibrato which is performed in the slow folk instrumental melodies. The *Allegro animato* section is influenced by the Bulgarian compound rhythmic variety as expressed in the exchange of the 5/8, 7/8 and 6/8 meters. The rhythm change is supplemented by a difference in texture between each

section. This represents a dialog that contrasts the *tambura* (the pizzicato chords) with the *gadulka* (the *sul ponticelo* passages). *Lento* is influenced by the *Shopska* diaphonic dissonances and ornamentations, and also by the chromatic mode *Makam Hidjas*.

The *Allegro assai* movement represents a vivid *horó* and *nasvirvane* (competition for best instrumentalist). Peter Christoskov describes the fourth movement as “*Shopski subor ot instrumentalisti.*”² (*Shopska* convention of instrumentalists). The perpetual, improvisational, and furious *horó* is expressed in *Shopski* style by the dissonant intervals embedded in the texture. The melody in the fourth movement is identical to the first movement, *Comodo*. The melody is based on the improvised *horó* and the use of *kolena*. Each *koliano* lasts for about eight measures and is a variation of the previous one. The different *kolianos* contrast in motifs and in texture. This represents *nasvirvane*, the competition between different folk instrumentalists performing the *horó*. These textures are expressed in the contrast between the *sul ponticello*, rhythmic bourdons, and the scale-like passages.

Recitativo is an emotional, instrumental improvisation of a slow harvest song. The melody is richly embellished by improvisation and ornamentation. The influence from the *Shopska* diaphony and the vocal ornamentations *tresene*, *atsane*, *izvikvane* and *zadarjane* predominate in this section. The *recitativo* texture represents a vocal melody improvised, decorated, and performed by varied folk instruments. The *gadulka* performance is expressed in the virtuoso double stops, triplet and sextuplet passages, trills, glissandos, vibrato, sudden

² H. Pashunkova, “Solo Violin Sonata and Suite in the Works of Bulgarian Composers,” Interview with Peter Christoskov, *Bulgarian Musicology*, No. 1, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1986), 56.

dynamic contrasts, and *sul ponticello*. The flexible scale-like passages from the first *Meno* resemble the sound of the *kaval*. The sound of *tambura* is in the four voice pizzicato chords. *Recitativo* represents the middle, slower section of *horos* where the dancers slow down to rest while the instrumentalists show their talent, virtuosity and imagination.

Presto is the last section and is an ever-changing, quick improvisation of the first section of *Allegro assai*. Its structure is similar to the *kolena* in the first section. The fourth movement ends with a short section similar to the end of an epic recitative with *zadarjane* and *izvikvane*. The construction of the movements of Suite op.7 resembles the structure of an epic recitative.

3.2 Suite No.2, Opus 13

Suite op.13, No.2 in five movements, dedicated to professor Vladimir Avramov, was commissioned in 1965 for the National Bulgarian Competition to be performed as a required piece. The first movement, *Vivace*, is a fast yet gracious *horos Rachenitsa* in 7/16 (2+2+3). It can be danced by couples or solo. The first movement is influenced by the improvisatory structure of *Rachenitsa*. The structure of this melody is based on *kolena* and contains a middle section in slower tempo where the dancers relax. The section changes are expressed by rhythmic changes: 7/16, 3/4, 2/4, and 7/16. The texture of this movement resembles the sounds of the *gadulka* and the *kaval*. Tempo I is a representation of the relaxed dancers that suddenly jump to continue *Rachenitsa* dance with even greater speed. The movement ends with final shout.

The second movement *Comodo* is based on the *Shopska* diaphony, dissonances, and antiphonal vocal performance. The movement opens with the loud, open, and sharp dissonant intervals in minor and major seconds and sevenths. Every other measure ends with the embellishments *izvikvane* and *atsane*. The echo sections represent antiphonal singing typical for the *Shopska* vocal music. The second movement divides into two major sections, each

representing a different vocal category. The first section expresses the *chist* (clean) and *piskliv* (reedy) class of Bulgarian voices. The second section in lower register is juxtaposing the *mazen* (buttery) and *debel* (thick) voices, expressed in the lower violin register. The structure of the second movement is based on a harvest song in the rhythm of 5/4.

The third movement is a mix of fast *Paydushko horo* in 5/8 (2+3), *Daychovo horo* in 9/8 (2+2+2+3), and *horo* in 8/8 (2+3+3). The dance is structured with four *kolena*, each containing nearly 16 bars. The opening sixteenth note passages and double stops are imitation of a *gadulka* also influenced by the *Shopska* dissonant diaphony. The play of asymmetrical folk rhythms represents a vivid Bulgarian community celebration. The third movement ends with *izvikvane* and the characteristic *horo* final shout.

The melody of the fourth movement, *Adagio*, is based on a song from the *Rhodopska* folkloric region in southern Bulgaria. Christoskov describes the melody as “a small detour from my love of the *Shopski* folklore. Here is a stylized *Rhodopska* song that I had heard in the *Rhodopi* mountains.”³ The *Adagio* is an emotional, historical ballad. The expressive G-string melody is influenced by the distinctively “*Rhodopska*” male vocal style of singing epic recitatives and historical ballads. The pentatonic, the mode of the melody, is a feature unique to the folkloric traditions of the *Rhodopska* region. *Larghetto*, the second section of the fourth movement is based on the narrative epic recitative.

The Fifth movement, *Prestissimo*, represents *Shopsko horo*. The fast, impulsive dance is based on the free improvisation drawn from the Bulgarian folk traditions. The *horo* consists of

³ H. Pashunkova, “Solo Violin Sonata and Suite in the Works of Bulgarian Composers,” Interview with Peter Christoskov, *Bulgarian Musicology*, No. 1, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1986), 56.

several *kolena*, each marked with a texture change. The predominant staccato and spiccato passages, sudden dynamic changes, and double stops represent the performance of the *gadulka*. The double stops with one moving and one bourdon voice imitate the sound of the *gayda*. The *Shopski* dissonances are embedded in the motifs and the melody of the fifth movement.

CHAPTER 4 PETER CHRISTOSKOV'S RHAPSODIES FOR SOLO VIOLIN

4.1 Rhapsody *Shopska*

The three Rhapsodies of op.21, *Shopska*, *Pastoralna*, and *Selska*, were composed in 1964 as one movement piece, each containing four contrasting sections. The structure of each Rhapsody resembles the epic recitative. The *Shopska* Rhapsody is influenced by the vocal diaphonic antiphonal performance of the *Shopska* region, expressed in the dissonant two and three voice chords with echoes. Often, the echo notes are prolonged (*zadarjane*) and ornamented with *tresene*. This vocal effect is marked in the violin part with both trills and vibrato. The triplets of the following eight measures reflect the unique vocal clusters, distinctive to the *Shopska* region. This passage is also influenced by the *gadulka* practice. The final phrases of the *Andantino* imitate human emotions as expressed in the passages with short pauses and in the dissonant seconds and sevenths. The second *Andantino* section is based on the epic recitative vocal performance. The melodies are divided by several short instrumental interludes. Each interlude ends with *izvicvane* or *zadarjane*. The following 6/8 section sounds non-metered. Resembling human speech, this section is based on the epic recitative. The melody is embellished with wide vibration, *zadarjane* and *izvikvane*.

Allegro giusto, the last section of the *Shopska* Rhapsody, is a fast, impulsive *horos* and instrumental *nasvirvane*. The structure of the *Allegro giusto* is influenced by the improvised, furious, performance of the *gadulka*, expressed in the sixteenth note passages, double stops, accents, sudden dynamic changes, and the *tambura* (expressed by the four voice pizzicato chords). The tunes are influenced by the temperamental folk music and the sharp dissonances from the *Shopska* region. In spite of the symmetrical rhythm of 4/4, *Allegro giusto* contains compound meters. They are the product of a particular accentuation within the measure. The

various compound rhythms are expressed by different combinations such as: 16/16 as combination of 9/16 and 7/16 (3+3+3)+(3+2+2), and 8/8 as combination of (3+3+2) or (2+3+3).

4.2 Rhapsody *Pastoralna*

The Rhapsody *Pastoralna* is based on the epic recitative. The opening *Comodo con fantasia* is influenced by the improvisatory, non-metered, and instrumental *Shopski* melodies. This section is characterized by free improvisation involving the violinist-performer. The Rhapsody *Pastorale* contains a free melody in *Shopski* style, big dynamic contrasts, trill-like ornaments, *tresene*, *atsane*, and *zadarjane*. Despite the lack of bar line, some passages sound like they are in the meter of 5/16. The folk instruments that influenced this section are the *gadulka*, expressed in the sound of *sul poticello*, and the mandolin, expressed in the pizzicato chords marked *al mandolin*.

The *Allegretto* section of the *Pastoralna* Rhapsody is influenced by the *Shopska* region's dissonances and it is an instrumental dialog between the *gadulka*, *tambura*, and mandolin. The 6/8 rhythm is restructured as the asymmetrical 5/8 and 7/8 meters. The final measures of the *Pastoralna* Rhapsody end with a slow melody that is influenced by the epic recitative.

4.3 Rhapsody *Selska*

The Rhapsody *Selska* is based on the structure of the epic recitative and harvest songs. The opening of the Rhapsody is influenced by the epic recitative introductory phrases, separated by *fermatas*. Each phrase represents the sound of the word *hei*, expressed with a sudden crescendo in the violin part and fermata on the last note. The descending passages in fourths, typical for epic recitatives, are used through the first section. The *rubato* sections with repetitions of the same phrase represent antiphonal singing. The melodies in the Rhapsody are separated by short instrumental interludes such as the *Meno* section. The melody is based on the

Shopska dissonant diaphony and the principle of antiphonal singing. The three voice chords constructed of seconds represent voice clusters. The simple melody is richly embellished with *zadrjane, atsane, tresene, and izvikvane*. The following *Meno* section is a short instrumental interlude in the chromatic *Makam hidjas* mode that also influenced the tune in the *Scherzo* section. The *Scherzo* in 6/8 is influenced by the narrative of the epic recitative and the instrumental *horo*. The *gadulka* performance is expressed in the fast sixteenth passages, double stops, and trill-like ornaments. The *Fantasia* section is influenced by the mythological ballads. The last section, *Presto*, is a fast *Shopski* dance that resembles the *gadulka* virtuoso playing with improvisation on *Shopski* seconds, sevenths, fourths and fifths. The furious *Shopsko horo* ends with a characteristic final shout.

Petar Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies enriched the modern violin repertoire with unique sounds and expressions while also creating a new violin virtuoso technique. The loud, forceful, and open sound distinctive of the *Shopska* region provides Western violin literature with a new character from which to draw. The intervallic successions of perfect fourths, perfect fifths, and both minor and major seconds and sevenths make Petar Christoskov's music very unique and enrich the violin repertoire with a new technique. The temperamental changes in the character of the music make it highly dramatic and exciting to perform. In addition, the imitation and dialogue between different folk instruments embedded in the violin part are written in a very natural and comfortable way for the violin player. Petar Christoskov's music contains passages with improvisations which allow the violinist-performer to shape the music with his or her own imagination, talent, and instinct. These qualities make Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin among the most interesting and exciting Bulgarian violin pieces to date.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Petar Christoskov's Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin represent both an internal evolution of Bulgarian music and an incorporation of the Bulgarian musical tradition into the larger world music scene. Bulgaria's folk musical tradition was routinely infused and enriched over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Christoskov's efforts were presaged and made possible by a host of earlier composers and performers. But the evolution of the Bulgarian style was also shaped by larger historical trends and regional dynamics. During the period between 1396 and 1878, the Ottoman Empire allowed the Bulgarian folk tradition to be preserved and even continue to develop without external influence. Following the liberation of Bulgaria in the late 19th century, Bulgaria's classical musicians were exposed to Russian and Western European stylistic methodologies.

With the onset of the Cold War and Soviet ascendancy in the Balkans, the forces influencing Bulgarian music shifted yet again. The Communist ideology of the Bulgarian government discouraged Western influences and promoted the use of Bulgarian folk "Primitivism" as means to make music more accessible to "the People." Christoskov began composing under this musical paradigm. The folk structures, melodies, ornamentations, rhythms, and performance practice of the Bulgarian countryside were employed by Petar Christoskov to bring a new level of originality and expressiveness to Bulgarian professional violin literature and performance. By incorporating Bulgarian folk technique with the Western and Russian professional music traditions, Petar Christoskov created an original, distinctive violin style. His efforts enriched the Bulgarian violin professional music with a new virtuosity, sound, and timbre. His Suites and Rhapsodies for solo violin are among the most important compositions in the Bulgarian violin repertoire because they embody the distinct historical

evolution of contemporary Bulgarian professional music.

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VITA

Blagomira Lipari, was born in Shumen, Bulgaria, on March 25, 1973. Mrs. Lipari is currently on the faculty of the First Conservatory, Hinsdale Center for the Arts and Merit School of Music in Chicago. She is also a member of the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, the Northwest Indiana Symphony and the Mir trio. Mrs. Lipari has performed with Sofia Chamber Orchestra, European Youth Orchestra, and New World Symphony. She is the winner of the International Competition for chamber ensembles in Neerpelt, Belgium, in 1989.

Blagomira Lipari has both a bachelor's and master's degrees in violin performance from the State Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a master's degree from Louisiana State University. Mrs. Lipari is currently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts for violin performance with a minor in orchestral conducting. Mrs. Lipari lives in Chicago with her husband Joey and their dog Sofia.