

2004

The significance of selected piano compositions by Pancho Vladigerov

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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELECTED PIANO COMPOSITIONS
BY PANCHO VLADIGEROV**

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

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August, 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph is dedicated to my mother, who passed away during my course of studies, October 8, 2001. Although it was a difficult time, I took comfort in knowing that she was very proud of her daughter.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my major professor, Professor Constance Carroll, for her guidance, expertise, and encouragement throughout my studies at Louisiana State University. I am also grateful to my exceptional advisory committee: Professors Michael Gurt, Jennifer Hayghe, and Alison McFarland for their insight and assistance in the preparation of this monograph. Special mention goes to my monograph director, Dr. Jennifer Hayghe, who in spite of a heavy performance schedule always had the time to talk with me regarding the monograph.

I am thankful for the members of my family and one special friend that assisted me in meaningful, as well as practical ways. Dr. Christina Vella took time out of her busy schedule of research and writing to edit this monograph. Her assistance and friendship will always be remembered. My father in Bulgaria retrieved the necessary publications when needed, even if it meant traveling several hours to the capital city, Sofia, from our hometown of Russe. This topic would have been more difficult without his assistance. I will be forever grateful for my husband, Michael, who has been exceedingly supportive of this process. He assisted me in every conceivable way, repeatedly and gladly. I might have given up long ago if it were not for his help, enthusiasm and constant support.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines selected compositions for piano by Pancho Vladigerov: *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15; *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16; *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29; and “Improvisation” and “Toccata,” from *Episodes*, Opus 36. These pieces strongly represent the various periods and stylistic trends of the composer. They are also among Vladigerov’s most popular and frequently performed piano compositions. The first chapter provides a brief biography of Pancho Vladigerov and an overview of his most important compositions. Chapter Two contains an overview of the solo piano works of Vladigerov. Chapter Three examines the selected piano compositions from a formal and stylistic perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Pancho Vladigerov (1899-1978) was one of the most significant Bulgarian composers of the twentieth century. As a leader of the Bulgarian style of composition, Vladigerov was the first Bulgarian to compose works in the following genres: the piano concerto, the violin concerto, the violin sonata, and the piano trio. His compositions contain elements of Bulgarian folk song, rhythm, modes, and ornamentation. He was also the first Bulgarian composer to gain an international reputation, yet his name is little known in America. The purpose of this research is to introduce compositions by Vladigerov, specifically focusing on selected piano works. Vladigerov's compositions for piano are crucial in understanding his compositional style and they comprise one third of his output.

Vladigerov assumed such stature in part because there were few trained musicians in Bulgaria before him. Unlike other European nations, Bulgaria and other Eastern European nations struggled for centuries to preserve a sense of national identity. In Bulgaria, artistic freedom was suppressed under Turkish rule from 1396 to 1878. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that artists began to formulate a national voice. In the realm of music, this emerging tradition has been labeled by musicologists as the First Bulgarian Compositional School.¹

Most of the music produced by the First School was vocal and rooted in folk music and traditions. Typical genres included small forms: the song, *a capella* choral works, children's songs, school and patriotic songs, and marches. Larger forms were not excluded, but were rarely composed. Nevertheless, the first Bulgarian opera (by Emanuil

¹ Venelin Krustev, *The History of Bulgarian Music* (Sofia: Musika, 1977), 111.

Manolov [1860 - 1902])² and the first Bulgarian symphony (by Nicola Atanasov [1886 – 1969])³ were written during this period, in 1910 and 1912 respectively.

Vladigerov's rise to prominence marked the end of the First Bulgarian Compositional School and the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Compositional School. What these two schools held in common was the use of folk elements. What separated them were the genres that predominated. In the First School, small vocal forms dominated. In the Second School, there was an interest in and cultivation of larger instrumental genres: the symphonic poem, the suite, rhapsody, concerto, sonata, trio, and quartet.

Vladigerov received most of his musical education outside of Bulgaria, having left Bulgaria at thirteen to study composition and piano performance at the Berlin *Akademie der Kunste*. As a pianist, he studied with Karl-Heinrich Barth (1847-1922) and Leonid Kreutzer (1884-1953). Vladigerov's main composition teacher was Paul Juon (1872-1940). Juon studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory and is credited with introducing Russian music and German Romantic music to Vladigerov.⁴ During his studies at the Berlin *Akademie der Kunste*, Vladigerov began to incorporate native folk elements into his compositions. *Four Pieces for Piano*, Opus 2 (1915) and *Variations on a Bulgarian Folk Song*, Opus 3 (1915-1916) were his earliest works that display the folk influence.

Vladigerov's stature as a composer continued to grow in Germany after he left the Berlin *Akademie der Kunste*. The 1920s were a period of personal creative growth,

² Ibid., 117.

³ Ibid., 197.

⁴ Evgeni Pavlov, *Pancho Vladigerov* (Sofia: Musika, 2000), 38.

confirming Vladigerov's international fame. Of great significance to his professional and artistic development was his long association (1920-1932) as a pianist and a composer of incidental music for the *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin, under the direction of Max Reinhardt (1873-1943). Vladigerov also maintained an active concert career throughout Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria. His compositions were highly acclaimed by critics and often performed.⁵ Moreover, between 1922 and 1939, Universal Editions in Vienna held exclusive rights to publish his music. This association with Universal Editions contributed to the popularization of his works throughout Europe, the United States, and South America.

With the rise of the Nazi party in Germany in the 1930s, living conditions became increasingly uncomfortable and Vladigerov decided to return to Bulgaria. After 1932, Vladigerov's professional activities were concentrated in Sofia, Bulgaria. He worked as a professor of piano and composition at the Academy of Music in Sofia, which was renamed in his honor in 1995. His music was performed not only in Europe, but also in the United States, South America, Asia, Australia, and Africa.⁶ As a highly respected composer, Vladigerov was invited to serve as a jury member at many international piano competitions, such as the International Smetana Piano Competition (1948), the International Ferenc Liszt Piano Competition (1956), and the International Tchaikovsky Competition (1958).⁷ In his native country, Vladigerov was celebrated as one of the greatest Bulgarian composers and was awarded the highest state distinctions.

⁵ Ibid., 64, 68, 71.

⁶ Ivan Minchev, *120 Celebrated Composers* (Sofia: Musika, 1976), 144.

⁷ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 141, 172, 208.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine selected piano compositions by Pancho Vladigerov and explore them from a historical and stylistic perspective. *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15; *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16; *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29; and “Improvisation” and “Toccata,” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, are representational of the various periods and stylistic trends of Vladigerov’s music. It is said that the foundation of Vladigerov’s overall compositional ideas can be found in his piano compositions; thus a detailed study of these works will offer insights into Vladigerov’s entire compositional output while presenting a discussion of works that are important to the Bulgarian national musical culture.

CHAPTER ONE

PANCHO VLADIGEROV (1899-1978)

The historian Ivan Minchev has called Pancho Vladigerov one of the most significant Bulgarian composers,¹ and the composer Ivan Marinov described Vladigerov's music as one of the highest pinnacles of Bulgarian art music.²

Pancho Vladigerov and his twin brother, Luben, were born in Zurich, Switzerland to a family that combined the characteristics of different cultures and traditions. The composer talked about his family in an interview in 1938 with the composer Dimitar Sagaev:

My father, Haralan Vladigerov, was born in Shumen in 1866. He graduated from the University of Brussels with a degree in law and upon his return to Shumen was appointed as a district attorney. My mother, Eliza, was born in Odessa in 1869. Her father was the famous mathematician Leon Pasternak, a passionate amateur musician who played the violin and composed some easy pieces. He was also a great chess player. He was invited to be a professor of mathematics in Zurich, where he took his three daughters and two sons. My mother was his eldest child. She went to medical school in Paris. There she met a Bulgarian student who spoke with such enthusiasm for his native land that she decided to begin a career in Bulgaria. After a few years in Varna and other cities, she was appointed as a physician in Shumen, where she met and married Haralan Vladigerov in 1898.

The following year Eliza went to Switzerland, where she gave birth to her twin sons Luben (March 12, 1899) and Pancho (March 13, 1899). A few months later the family returned to Shumen. It has been suggested that this family, made up of two cultures and various talents, best represents Bulgarian musical culture, which is described as a mixture of Western European training and nationalistic tendencies.

¹ Minchev, *120 Celebrated Composers*, 138.

² Ivan Marinov, "80 Years Pancho Vladigerov," [sic] *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1979): 4.

Early Musical Studies in Shumen, 1905-1910

Both Luben and Pancho were exposed to music from early childhood and both expressed a vivid interest in music. At age six, Pancho began piano lessons and Luben began studying violin. Pancho's first teacher was his mother. Later he continued his studies with the local pianist Paula Weisman (1887-1973), who had studied in Vienna and was an important and influential figure in the musical life of Shumen. Pancho early on demonstrated a musical gift. He played well by ear and frequently improvised at the piano. His first official performance was in 1906 when the two brothers played together at a concert in Shumen. Following the unexpected death of Haralan Vladigerov on May 13, 1908, Eliza Vladigerova decided to focus entirely on her children. She believed that her sons were musically gifted and was determined to give them the best musical education. In a conversation with Dimitar Sagaev in 1951, Pancho emphasized the role of his mother who, he explains, had devoted all her energy to ensure their success.³ Pancho exhibited a gift for composing and Eliza took him to Sofia to audition for Dobri Hristov (1875-1941), a Bulgarian composer, choral conductor, and pedagogue considered the most important figure from the First Bulgarian Compositional School. Hristov asked the boy to improvise and was astonished by the gifted child. He promised to take Pancho as a student and suggested to Eliza Vladigerova that she move to Sofia with her two sons. The family moved in the summer of 1910 and Pancho began taking regular lessons in ear training and harmony from Hristov. Both Pancho and Luben continued taking private piano and violin lessons.

³ Dimitar Sagaev, *A Gallery of Images---Musical Creators of Our Time* (Sofia: Narodna Prosveta, 1981), 107.

Studies in Sofia, 1910-1912

It is from this time that Pancho's first works appeared in his own collection titled the *First Album of Works by Pancho Vladigerov*, dated February 27, 1911. It included Three Mazurkas, a Barcarolle, and the three movement Piano Sonata, Opus 4. Other early compositions included the Mazurka Opus 9, and Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Organ or Harmonium in one movement. The Elegy for Violin and Piano, completed in December 1911, was published in the journal *Artist* on May 5, 1912. Pancho's biographer, Evgeni Pavlov, writes that these collections clearly display Pancho's gift for composition, contain fresh approaches to melody and harmony, and display the use of folk-like idioms.⁴

While in Sofia, the twins appeared in performance at private homes and participated in public concerts. Their first recital was on June 9, 1911, and included works by Sarasate, Beethoven, and Haydn. After witnessing one of their concerts, the prominent Bulgarian pianist Andrej Stoyanov advised Eliza Vladigerova to take her sons abroad to receive classical training in music. Vienna, Kiev, and Paris were considered as possible cities in which the twins might further their studies. However, as a result of the concert tour in Bulgaria of a famous French violinist, Henri Marteau (1874-1934), the decision was made to take her sons to Berlin. Marteau, a professor at the Berlin *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik* heard the twins in performance and was fascinated by their talent. He strongly recommended the school to them.

The boys' mother, through a friend, received money from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education for the children to study abroad. Eliza Vladigerov was able to secure one government scholarship. Although it was not specified who was to receive the

⁴ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 28.

scholarship, the Vladigerov family made the decision that both children would benefit from study abroad, and thus both brothers and their mother left for Berlin at the end of June 1912.

Studies in Germany, 1912-1918

Following their arrival in Berlin, the family enjoyed the hospitality of Marteau and they spent the summer in his vacation house. Because the brothers were not allowed to enter the *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik* until they were fifteen years old, the brothers studied privately that fall of 1912. Marteau taught Luben; Pancho studied theory and composition with Paul Juon (1872-1940) and took piano lessons with Karl-Heinrich Barth (1847-1922). As a composition assignment, Pancho wrote Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano,⁵ which can be described as Romantic in style. It was performed by the brothers at their first recital in Berlin on April 18, 1914, along with Beethoven's Violin Concerto and one of Beethoven's Rondos, Opus 51, for piano. Pancho's next composition was the Sonata for Violin and Piano in D Major, Opus 1 (1914). Luben and Pancho premiered the sonata at Marteau's home. Later, Marteau performed it in recitals in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and Bulgaria.

In October 1914, at the age of fifteen, Pancho took the entrance exam at the *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik*. He was accepted and awarded a full scholarship. He continued his studies with Juon and Barth. Barth was a German pianist and teacher, who had studied with Carl Tausig and Hans von Bülow and had also taught Artur Rubinstein. Studies with Barth during these formative years were important, although his musical tastes began to conflict with Pancho's; Pancho found his teacher to

⁵ Without an opus.

be too conservative. Barth was a friend of Brahms and disliked the music of Wagner. Pancho, to the dismay of his teacher, loved Wagner's music.

The conflict was resolved in 1917, when Barth retired and Pancho became a private student of the popular pianist and conductor Leonid Kreutzer (1884-1953). Kreutzer was Russian, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and pupil of the famous Annette Essipova.⁶ Pancho and Kreutzer became very close and Kreutzer's influence on the young man was important. Pancho improved as a pianist and performed often at concerts at the *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik*, the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin, and at benefit concerts and celebrations at the Bulgarian Embassy.

Pancho's composition teacher, Paul Juon, was a German composer of Russian birth. Born in Moscow, he originally studied at the Moscow Conservatory. Juon later graduated from the Berlin *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik* and was a professor of composition at the *Hochschule* from 1906 until 1934. His style was influenced by Romantic traditions, combined with some elements of Russian folk music. Juon is credited with introducing Pancho to German Romanticism and Russian music.⁷ Although there is no direct evidence, it is possible that Juon might have been the first to suggest the use of folk motifs to Pancho, since the use of folk elements was present in one of his *Four Pieces for Piano*, Opus 2 (1915). Seeing that his talented student could benefit from further training and additional influences, Juon also advised Pancho to study at the *Akademie der Künste*. Pancho was again accepted under a full scholarship.

⁶ Annette Essipova was a former pupil of Franz Liszt as well as the wife of the noted piano pedagogue, Theodor Leschetizky.

⁷ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 38.

From 1915-1916, he studied with Friedrich Gernsheim (1839-1916), a German composer, pianist, conductor, and the vice president of the *Akademie der Kunste*. At this time Pancho wrote *Variations on a Bulgarian Folk Song*, Opus 3, which is described as virtuosic and Lisztian.⁸ After the first year of Pancho's studies, Gersheim unexpectedly passed away in September 1916. Pancho then entered the class of the German composer and conductor, Georg Schumann (1866-1952). Under the guidance of Schumann, Pancho composed the first Bulgarian trio, his Trio for Piano, Violin and Violoncello in B-Flat Minor, Opus 4, in the spirit of the Romantic tradition. Pancho's first vocal works were written in 1917: *Six Lyric Songs for Voice and Piano* and *Ballade for Voice and Piano*, Opus 5. The songs are particularly significant because they were his first published work.

It is during his studies with Schumann that Pancho developed an interest in orchestral music. In addition to his regular lessons, he was independently reading the textbooks of Rimsky-Korsakov. He also spent a considerable amount of time reading through orchestral scores. According to Pavlov, Pancho was constantly studying and playing on the piano a diverse array of scores, which included orchestral and opera scores.⁹ His strongest influences during this early period were the music of Debussy, Scriabin, Stravinsky, and Richard Strauss, yet his favorites were many of the great Romantic composers: Schumann, Liszt, Chopin, Grieg, and Wagner.¹⁰ Wagner scores could be always found on Pancho's piano,¹¹ and his admiration of Wagner would last a

⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

lifetime. Pancho also admired the music of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, and especially Rachmaninoff. According to his mother, he planned to study in Russia with either Glazunov or Rachmaninoff.¹² Unfortunately, the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 frustrated his plans.

Life in Germany became difficult with the advent of World War I; however, Pancho never interrupted his piano and composition lessons. He and Luben often performed at hospitals, schools, and churches in Berlin. Enduring hardships, in particular a lack of food due to the war, the family decided to visit their grandfather Leon Pasternak in Zurich. It was there that Pancho began his Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6, which would later become the first Bulgarian instrumental concerto. The work was completed on August 3, 1918, and was dedicated to his teacher, Leonid Kreutzer.

Military Service, 1918-1920

In 1918, the brothers were conscripted, and in September were sent back to Bulgaria to do their service. Because their father passed away while they were still young, they were classified as orphans, and as such, were only required to serve in the military for eighteen months. Luben was appointed as a violinist in the military orchestra, while Pancho served as an orchestra librarian and on December 19, they gave the first full recital of Pancho's compositions in Bulgaria. The program included the Sonata for Violin and Piano, Opus 1, the *Four Pieces for Piano*, Opus 2, *Variations on a Bulgarian Folk Song*, Opus 3, and *Six Lyric Songs for Voice and Piano*, Opus 5. The concert was a success and was highly acclaimed in the press. In 1918, Pancho received

¹² Ibid.

the Mendelssohn Prize¹³ for his Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra and the *Six Lyric Songs*. Incidentally, he would receive the award again in 1922 for his orchestral transcription of three of his *Ten Impressions for Piano*, Opus 9.

During 1919 and 1920, the brothers became very popular as they constantly toured the country. They not only performed together, but Pancho also played some of his own solo compositions.¹⁴ As a result of these tours, Pancho became better known in his country as both a pianist and composer. The peak of these performances was a concert with the military orchestra on January 3, 1920, that included orchestral pieces, chamber works, and Pancho's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6. The performance of this concerto was significant because it was the first performance of a piano concerto written by a Bulgarian composer.¹⁵ The concert, which received wonderful reviews in the press, was a huge success and had to be repeated.

The months Pancho served in the military were important, both on a personal and a professional level, because it was during this time that he began to establish relationships with prominent Bulgarian artists, musicians and writers. Evgeni Pavlov writes that during this period, Pancho became better acquainted with all aspects of his native land, including the people and the culture.¹⁶ According to the music historian

¹³ Prize awarded by the *Akademie der Kunste* in Berlin for best student composition. The committee's chair that year was Richard Strauss.

¹⁴ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

Stoyan Stoyanov, Pancho's confidence as a composer grew stronger, and professionally, he was being officially recognized for his accomplishments.¹⁷

Return to Germany, 1920-1932

The 1920s were a highly productive period for Vladigerov. He spent the next twelve years (1920-1932) in Germany. The family spent the summer of 1920 in Zurich, where Vladigerov composed *Ten Impressions*, Opus 9, a series of short pieces for piano, and began work on his Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor, Opus 11. In the fall, he returned to school, studying composition with Schumann and piano with Kreutzer. In March 1921, he graduated from the *Akademie der Kunste*; his final project was his Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor, Opus 11. Violinist Gustav Havemann (1882-1960), a professor at the *Akademie der Kunste*, was very impressed by the composition and arranged for a premiere with the Berlin Philharmonic. On March 5, 1921, at Beethoven Hall in Berlin, Havemann performed the Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor, Opus 11 with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Fritz Reiner (1888-1963)¹⁸. Havemann also performed the concerto in Darmstadt, Germany.

The 1920s also saw important collaborations with conductors. Vladigerov's first important contact was with the prominent Austrian conductor Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), the primary director of the *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin. Reinhardt invited Vladigerov to write incidental music for the play *Caesar and Cleopatra* by Bernard Shaw. A successful premiere on December 18, 1920, led to the next contract, the music to *Dream Play* by Strindberg. There followed a long tenure with the theater, lasting until

¹⁷ Stoyan Stoyanov, "The Classics of Bulgarian Music," *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1979): 4.

¹⁸ Minchev, *120 Celebrated Composers*, 140.

1932. Dr. Heinz Pringsheim wrote in the pages of *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* on April 7, 1922: “The very talented young composer Pancho Vladigerov, who is already known to Berlin audiences, introduced himself musically to two productions of the *Deutsches Theater*. *Dream Play* gives the composer many opportunities to create through music the sense of the unreal, the fantastic, and the magical, which he explores with mastery.”¹⁹ In 1924, Vladigerov completed an orchestral suite *Dream Play* in six movements, based on the music for the play. The work was dedicated to Max Reinhardt and became Vladigerov’s first instrumental suite, a genre he later favored. Throughout the following years, Vladigerov composed music for eleven productions at the *Deutsches Theater*, a collaboration that made him a popular and well-known composer. Musicologist Lachezar Karanlakov noted:

Of great significance for his professional and artistic development was his long cooperation (1920-1932) as a composer of incidental music with the great German producer Max Reinhardt. He also established professional and personal contacts with Stefan Zweig, Hans von Hoffmannstahl (Austrian poet and playwright, author of the librettos of *Electra* and *Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss), H. Werfel, Richard Strauss, Feruccio Busoni, Paul Hindemith, S. Rachmaninoff, J. Marx, K. Szymanowski, etc.²⁰

Nineteen-twenty-one was a significant year for Pancho Vladigerov. On March 17, he gave the European premiere of his Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6 with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Arthur Loewenstein. In addition to this honor, Vladigerov’s works were performed for the first time outside of Bulgaria or Germany.²¹ On April 23, 1921, in Vienna, a concert of all Bulgarian music

¹⁹ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 70.

²⁰ Pancho Vladigerov, *Compositions*, Bulgarian National Radio Symphony with Alexander Vladigerov, conductor, program notes by Lachezar Karanlakov, GEGA New, Limited GD 203, 1999.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

included Vladigerov's *Symphonic Legend*, Opus 8, for Tenor and Orchestra, and his *Three Orchestral Pieces* from Opus 9.

At the beginning of 1922, Vladigerov composed a Burlesque for Violin and Orchestra, dedicated to Gustav Havemann. In this composition, Vladigerov ventured into a rare genre, perhaps because he was influenced by the work of the same title by Richard Strauss.²² The composition marks the beginning of Vladigerov's most creative period.²³ Immediately following the Burlesque, he composed *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, which became one of his most performed piano compositions. At the end of 1922, he wrote the *Bulgarian Rhapsody for Violin and Piano*, Opus 16, his most popular work. "...this composition marked the beginning of a new 'classical' period of his creative life, during which the Bulgarian folk-style became a central and important element of Vladigerov's music." According to Pavlov, his biographer, "it also became the most performed and one of the most popular of Bulgarian compositions."²⁴ The work was premiered in Sofia on September 1923 by Pancho Vladigerov and his brother. Also in 1922, Vladigerov signed a ten-year agreement with Universal Editions in Vienna to publish his works. Musicologist Lachezar Karanlakov said:

In 1925, Universal-Edition Publishers issued the book *25 Jahre neue Musik. Jahrbuch 1926*. In a special supplement entitled *50 composers with works in U.-E.*, alongside the names of Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Leos Janacek, Karol Szymanowski, Arnold Schoenberg, Bela Bartok, Alban Berg, Darius Milhaud, etc. the name of Pancho Vladigerov, the remarkable Bulgarian composer, conductor and pedagogue, was also present.²⁵

²² Richard Strauss, *Burleske in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra*.

²³ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁵ Vladigerov, *Compositions*, program notes by Lachezar Karanlakov.

Between 1922 and 1939, Universal Editions published nineteen opera of Vladigerov's compositions.²⁶ His works were sold in Austria and twenty other European countries, as well as in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Brazil.

During 1924 and 1925, Vladigerov continued composing while he maintained an active performance schedule. He toured in Bulgaria and many cities in Germany, performing his piano compositions and works for violin in collaboration with his brother, Luben. Critic Heinz Pringsheim gave special attention to the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*:

The prodigious musical talent of Pancho Vladigerov and his expressive piano playing has been noted. His Piano Trio, Opus 4, written in 1916, makes an impression with the noble theme of the first movement and its natural sense of contrapuntal development, even though the rest of the piece does not maintain the same level. In his later works – *Exotic Preludes for Piano*, Opus 17 and *Pieces for Violin*, Opus 12 and Opus 16 – there is strong emotion, bright color, an instinct for texture and virtuosity of writing. I think one of the best successes of the composer is the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*.²⁷

Vladigerov's works continued to gain popularity in the twenties. The Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor, Opus 11, was performed on August 10, 1925, at the Salzburg Festival. Luben Vladigerov was the soloist with the Mozarteum Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Bernhard Baumgartner. Vladigerov's biographer Pavlov commented on the event: "This was the first and perhaps the only performance of a Bulgarian work at the Salzburg festival and the first performance by a Bulgarian soloist."²⁸ The performance was a success, both for the work and the performer.

Vladigerov's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6 was also well received throughout Europe. In 1926, the conductor Herbert von Karajan performed it at

²⁶ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 64-65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

his graduate recital at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he was studying piano and conducting. Several decades later, in 1976, Karajan sent an autographed picture of himself to Vladigerov, inscribed with his fond memory of learning and performing the Concerto as a student at the Academy.²⁹

At the end of 1926, Vladigerov completed another work which his biographer judges “remarkable,”³⁰ the *Bulgarian Suite*, Opus 21 for piano, which he later orchestrated in 1927. In March of that year, Vladigerov was invited to give a concert in Paris. He performed his Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6, at Olympia Hall in the French capitol. This was the first performance of Bulgarian symphonic music in France. The French critics recognized the talent of the young Bulgarian, although they did not approve of his expansive performance style. The critic Albert Doaien noted:

The composer (Pancho Vladigerov) performed his own Concerto for Piano and Orchestra – an extreme, fiery work, in which everything is in motion, full of energy and bursts of vitality. The work sometimes lacked tasteful restraint; however, we heard evidence of youth, health, individuality, and a composer confident of his own talent. These are traits we observe too rarely to let them pass unnoticed.³¹

The premiere of the Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor, Opus 11 in the United States took place in 1927. On November 9, *Musical America* noted: “One new work for the violin was played in Chicago – A Concerto by Pancho Vladigerov. The young Bulgarian composer knows all the modern techniques and applies them with taste in the orchestra as well as the solo part.”³²

²⁹ Ibid., 73.

³⁰ Ibid., 72.

³¹ Ibid., 74.

³² Ibid., 75.

In March 1928, Vladigerov was asked to compose a short symphonic work for the Festival of Bulgarian Music in Prague. He was convinced that the *Bulgarian Rhapsody for Violin and Piano* had orchestral potential, and so he decided to present it at the festival. Vladigerov completed the orchestration of his most popular composition in ten days. The premiere of the orchestral version was on March 25, 1928, at a concert by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Pavlov writes: “The Festival of Bulgarian Music in Prague was an historic event for Bulgarian music. It opened on March 23, 1928, and lasted three days. Symphonic and chamber works by fifteen Bulgarian composers were presented. This festival became the first and most important event outside Bulgaria for the new generation of composers.”³³

In 1929, the German recording company *Deutsche Grammophon* released several compositions by Pancho Vladigerov. First in the series were the piano and violin works; later in the series were his orchestral works, totaling sixteen long playing records. His first recorded symphonic work was the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, which was also recorded by another German company, *Lindstrom-Parlophon* in March 1929. The latter performance was recorded by the orchestra of the *Staatsoper* in Berlin, the *Berliner Staatskapelle*, conducted by Dr. Max Schillings (1868-1933). According to Pavlov “this is perhaps one of the most magnificent recordings of *Bulgarian Rhapsody*!”³⁴ As a result of these recordings, many of Vladigerov’s works were performed throughout Europe.

That same year, a return to Bulgaria would prove memorable. After attending the Bulgarian premieres of his orchestral version of the *Bulgarian Rhapsody* and his *Bulgarian Suite*, Opus 21 at the Fourth Music Festival in Varna, Vladigerov spent several

³³ Ibid., 76.

³⁴ Ibid., 82.

days in Shumen before returning to Berlin. While in Shumen, he visited his first piano teacher, Paula Zhekova. There he fell in love with her daughter Ekaterina, and in August 1929, Pancho Vladigerov and Ekaterina (Katia) Zhekova announced their engagement. They were married on April 22, 1930, and moved together to Berlin several days later.

Vladigerov returned to his active schedule of performing and composing. His Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra in C Minor, Opus 22, was completed in 1930. The *Seven Symphonic Bulgarian Dances*, Opus 23, and the piano cycle *Classic and Romantic*, Opus 24, followed in 1931. However, Vladigerov's success in Germany did not diminish his ties with his country. He remained connected with his native land through friends and concert engagements. During the German period of his career, Vladigerov and his brother Luben visited Bulgaria frequently.

Nineteen-thirty-two was a pivotal point in Vladigerov's life and career. His international reputation as a composer and performer increased greatly as his works were performed in Poland, Holland, Czechoslovakia, England, and the United States. However, his professional success coincided with the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. The Party's campaign against Jews eventually forced Vladigerov to leave Germany.³⁵ Max Reinhardt suggested that Vladigerov accompany him to Switzerland and later to the United States to continue their collaboration. Vladigerov declined the invitation, reportedly because he "could not live without Bulgaria."³⁶ According to Evgeni Pavlov

³⁵ Vladigerov, *Compositions*, program notes by Lachezar Karanlakov.

³⁶ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 111.

and others, if Vladigerov immigrated to the United States, his international reputation would have risen significantly, yet Bulgarian music would have suffered.³⁷

Final Return to Bulgaria, 1932

Vladigerov's return to his native land in September 1932 was celebrated with a concert in his honor. On October 23, 1932, he was offered a contract as a part-time professor of piano and chamber music at the Music Academy in Sofia. Although he did not have any significant pedagogical experience, Vladigerov soon became a popular professor. He developed a unique teaching method, based on his studies in Germany combined with his own experiences. First he played for the student; then he and the student examined various technical and interpretational problems in detail.

When he assigned a new work to a student, Vladigerov always played the etude, sonata, or concert piece perfectly for the student. And everything was in his hands. In fact, at that time he was at the peak of his solo career. He constantly toured and performed his brilliant compositions.³⁸

Among his many students, one was extraordinarily talented. Vladigerov established a special relationship with his young student Alexis Weissenberg and predicted his glorious future. Zigi, as Vladigerov called him, improved rapidly and was introduced to audiences in Sofia in a series of concerts. The young pianist performed the works of Classical and Romantic composers, as well as pieces by his teacher. The successful collaboration came to an end in 1944, when Weissenberg left Bulgaria for good. Many years later, Weissenberg and his first piano teacher reunited and maintained a cordial relationship.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Sagaev, *A Gallery of Images*, 94.

On August 4, 1933, Pancho and Katia Vladigerov's only son, Alexander, was born. Pancho composed a piano cycle in celebration of the birth,³⁹ the *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29. The cycle is one of the few Vladigerov compositions intended for young musicians. Next, he started working on a large project, the opera *Tzar Kalojan*, which was premiered on April 20, 1936. Already a prolific composer of instrumental works, he also worked with great dedication and enthusiasm on his opera. Due to flaws in the libretto by Nikolai Liliev and Fanny Popova-Mutafova,⁴⁰ Vladigerov revised the opera several times. The last version of *Tzar Kalojan* was presented almost forty years later, on January 12, 1975, during the March Music Festival in Russe.⁴¹

Between 1935 and 1936, Vladigerov had numerous performances of his works throughout Europe, including concerts in Zagreb and a tour in France. According to Sagaev, one of the highlights of this French tour was a concert that was broadcast on French National Radio and included his piano compositions, *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29, and *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28.⁴² He visited Stockholm, Berlin, Brno, Zagreb, and Bratislava, as well as Vienna and Warsaw, where he gave performances of his Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, Opus 6. More concert engagements followed in Bucharest, Belgrade, and in Dresden, at the International Music Festival.

On June 9, 1937, Vladigerov completed another concerto. He wrote the concerto for one of the biggest events in twentieth century Bulgarian culture: the opening in Sofia

³⁹ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 123.

⁴¹ Russe is a town in Northeastern Bulgaria.

⁴² Ibid., 134.

of the largest concert hall in the country, an auditorium of 1,100 seats and a large Sauer concert organ. Bulgaria Hall was inaugurated on October 3, 1937. The second half of the concert included Vladigerov's new Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in B-flat Minor, Opus 31, with the composer as soloist. Vladigerov was invited to perform the concerto the following year at the International Music Festival in Stuttgart. This program also included works by Richard Strauss, Jan Sibelius, Arthur Honneger, Jacques Ibert, Isaac Albéniz, Enrique Granados, Leos Janacek, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Since his reputation was growing as a composer for the piano, it is not surprising that Vladigerov was invited to serve as a member of the jury of the 1938 Vienna International Piano Competition.

During World War II

The beginning of World War II disrupted Vladigerov's European concert tour. As a result, he concentrated his activities in Bulgaria and neighboring Yugoslavia. His popularity was growing, and his orchestral works were the most frequently performed Bulgarian compositions. In 1939 Vladigerov had written a monumental work, the Symphony in D Minor, his first work in this genre. The Belgrade Symphony Orchestra premiered the Symphony in D Minor on April 12, 1940. All the critics pronounced Vladigerov to be the greatest Bulgarian composer and one of the most significant names in the Balkans. However, he was not to write his Symphony No. 2 in B-flat Major, Opus 44, for String Orchestra, for another ten years.

On July 1, 1940, Vladigerov became a full-time professor of piano, chamber music, and composition at the Music Academy in Sofia. He explored a new genre in Bulgarian music with his String Quartet in G Major, Opus 34 (1940). The work was

premiered on March 18, 1941, in Sofia by a Bulgarian quartet that was formed by Luben Vladigerov. His next work composed was the Concert Fantasy for Violoncello and Piano, Opus 35 (1941, orchestrated in 1948). Like his many other “first,” the Concert Fantasy was the only Bulgarian work in this genre at the time. After composing a number of large symphonic works, Vladigerov turned back to piano miniatures. In a short period of time he composed two piano cycles that were similar in construction and style: *Episodes*, Opus 36, and *Aquarelles*, Opus 37.

Naturally, the virulent anti-Semitism in Europe during World War II had darkened Vladigerov’s life and career. As the descendent of a Jewish mother, he was attacked in the Bulgarian press and accused of plagiarism for incorporating Bulgarian folk elements in his music. In a publication called *The Yellow Book*, published in Berlin, the names of all Jewish musicians were listed from the past up to 1941. Among the names were Mendelssohn, Offenbach, Gershwin, Reinhardt, and Vladigerov. Also included were lists of their compositions, and if a composition appeared in *The Yellow Book*, it could not be performed or printed in Germany. Vladigerov was listed as composer No. 295. There were no works listed; therefore, his music was not forbidden. One day the book appeared in the window of a German bookstore in Sofia, opened to the page with Vladigerov’s name. This act deeply hurt the composer. “He (Vladigerov) was depressed, although he was not fired from the Music Academy, nor were performances of his works forbidden.”⁴³ Vladigerov was proud to call himself a Bulgarian. According to Pavlov, Vladigerov deeply loved his native country: “Bulgarian is every note he ever wrote.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Sagaev, *A Gallery of Images*, 99.

⁴⁴ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 154.

Because of the bookstore incident, Vladigerov was not very productive during most of 1943, although he began an interesting project in September. He was offered a libretto that inspired him to write his only ballet, *The Legend of the Lake*, Opus 40 (1946). Later, in 1947 and 1953, he created two symphonic suites based on music from the ballet.

After World War II

In spite of concerns of anti-Semitism during World War II, Vladigerov would flourish after the war and gain ever-increasing respect as a teacher, performer, and composer. On November 1, 1945, Vladigerov received tenure as a professor of piano, chamber music, and composition at the Music Academy in Sofia.⁴⁵ As well as maintaining a successful teaching career, he continued to be active as a performer and as a member of many international festivals and competitions. In 1948, he participated in a forty-day tour of the U.S.S.R. The biggest event of the tour was a concert of his works on January 4, 1948, in Moscow. The critic V. Gorodinsky said in the journal *Soviet Art*: “It would not be wrong to say that the big success accompanying every event with Vladigerov in Moscow can be explained not only by his unquestionable compositional mastery, but also by the fact that his music is deeply national – it reflects the soul of the Bulgarian people.”⁴⁶ The newspaper *Evening Moscow* wrote:

Pancho Vladigerov is the most significant composer in contemporary Bulgaria. The originality of his works comes from its ties to Bulgarian folk music. This relation contributes to his unique compositional style and his ability to avoid modern tendencies.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, Dmitri Kabalevsky, violinist David Oistrach, and pianist Lev Oborin all attended the concert at Tchaikovsky Hall.

Vladigerov later became friends with Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and Oistrach.

The 1950s were a period of intense compositional activity for Vladigerov. In 1951, he completed one of his finest symphonic works, the *Jewish Poem*, Opus 47. Vladigerov incorporated a Jewish tune he had heard from his grandfather into this, one of his best compositions, which was dedicated to the struggle of the Jewish people during the war. For the *Jewish Poem*, Vladigerov in 1952 received the highest honor given by the Bulgarian government to an artist, the *Dimitrov Prize*. Shostakovich exclaimed: “A work like this is written only once in a hundred years.”⁴⁸

Vladigerov served as a member of the jury of many international competitions such as the International Smetana Piano Competition in Prague in 1948, the International Ferenc Liszt Piano Competition in Budapest in 1956, the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958, and the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Italy in 1959. In 1958, Vladigerov had become a member of the Vienna Union of authors, composers, and music editors, which advocated the rights of composers. During the 1950s he also composed his Concerto No. 4 for Piano and Orchestra in G Major, Opus 48.

In 1968, Vladigerov received the *Gotfried von Herder Prize* of the Vienna University for his significant accomplishments. Among the recipients of this high honor in previous years were Zoltan Kodaly (1965) and Witold Lutoslawski (1967). Vladigerov’s Concerto No. 5 for Piano and Orchestra in D Major, Opus 58, completed on January 23, 1963, was premiered during the March Music Festival in Russe, Bulgaria in

⁴⁸ Ibid., 183.

1969. Vladigerov was widely acclaimed by the critics in Russe and loved by the audience. Many of his works were premiered during the festival, including the Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra in G Minor, Opus 61 (1968).

Vladigerov retired from the Bulgarian State Academy of Music in 1969. He suspended his teaching and performing duties and devoted his time entirely to composing. His last live performance was as conductor of the Bulgarian Chamber Orchestra in 1973 in Sofia. The concert presented Vladigerov's transcription of the *Two Bulgarian Dances*, from Opus 23, for two violins, string orchestra and piano. This work was a part of a series of transcriptions of Vladigerov's piano compositions for chamber orchestra. The growing number of such ensembles in the 1970s in Bulgaria had resulted in a high demand for chamber orchestra programs.⁴⁹

Two important events took place in his last decade of life: a visit to France in 1971 as part of a French national TV program about the pianist Alexis Weissenberg, and the triumphant premiere in 1975 of his revised opera *Tzar Kalojan*.⁵⁰ Vladigerov continued transcribing his earlier works and composing new music. Among his transcriptions were several works for piano duo, inspired by the new Duo Ganev.⁵¹ By 1977, he had created thirteen transcriptions for duo piano, including his most popular work, the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*. Duo Ganev premiered all of Vladigerov's music for two pianos, much of which was written for the ensemble.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 255.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 263.

⁵¹ Konstantin and Julia Ganev.

Towards the end of his life, Vladigerov turned back to his most successful genre, the piano miniature. Among his last compositions were *Five Silhouettes for Piano*, Opus 66 (1974); *Five Poetic Miniatures*, Opus 68 (1976); *Four Frescoes*, Opus 69 (1977); and *Three Bagatelles*, Opus 70 (1978). Though these late compositions did not match the expressive depth and charm of his earlier works and never gained popularity, they reflect the importance of the piano in Vladigerov creative imagination.

Dmitri Shostakovich considered Pancho Vladigerov among the greatest composers of the twentieth century: “I watch with attention the work of contemporary composers such as Bela Bartok, Zoltan Kodaly, Benjamin Britten, George Gershwin, Arthur Bliss, Igor Stravinsky, Arthur Honegger, Pancho Vladigerov, and Paul Hindemith.”⁵² In response to Shostakovich, the music historian Ivan Minchev wrote that classifying Vladigerov along with the other great composers of the twentieth century is an honor for Bulgarian music.⁵³ Another prominent critic, Dimitar Sagaev wrote:

The work of Pancho Vladigerov – the composer, brilliant pianist, pedagogue, and conductor – will always shine on our musical horizon. He was one of the major founders of the contemporary Bulgarian musical tradition. A large number of his compositions have become favorites of the Bulgarian people. *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, “Improvisation” and “Toccata” from *Episodes*, and “Song” from *Bulgarian Suite* are an inseparable part of the Bulgarian soul – bright, energetic, and optimistic. Vladigerov’s love for his native land, nature, and people was boundless. His music is a reflection of his love for Bulgaria. His endless admiration flows into us!⁵⁴

⁵² Minchev, *120 Celebrated Composers*, 144.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Sagaev, *A Gallery of Images*, 123.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOLO PIANO WORKS OF PANCHO VLADIGEROV

Pancho Vladigerov's compositions form the core of contemporary Bulgarian art music. His style, which combines European traditions and elements of Bulgarian folk song and dance, is considered unique. During his long creative life, Vladigerov composed music in almost every genre; however, he was predominantly a composer of instrumental music. As a pianist who maintained an active performance schedule throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, it is not surprising that a third of his work was composed for the piano. After 1932, when he was appointed a professor at the Music Academy in Sofia, he began performing less and composing more, especially for the piano.

The solo piano works of Vladigerov are compositions that share similar characteristics, and are organized into groups of several pieces.¹ Most of the solo piano compositions are programmatic. Using titles such as "Autumn Elegy," "North Song," and "Album Leaf,"² Vladigerov conveys an expression of mood or character rather than an actual story.³ Some pieces have titles directly related to their character, such as the "Minuet," "Courante," and "Sarabande" from *Classic and Romantic*, Opus 24; the Bulgarian folk dances "Ratchenitza" and "Rustic Dance" from the *Shumen Miniatures*,

¹ Groupsof three pieces: Op. 15 and Op. 46; five pieces: Op. 25, Op. 36, Op. 51, Op. 59; six: Op. 29 and Op. 37; and seven: Op. 24.

² "Autumn Elegy" from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15; "North Song" from *Classic and Romantic*, Opus 24; and "Album Leaf" from *Classic and Romantic*, Opus 24.

³ Krustev, *The History of Bulgarian Music*, 384.

Opus 29; and “Little Dance” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25. The “Toccata” from *Episodes*, Opus 36 is in the spirit of the toccatas of Schumann and Prokofiev.

Although Vladigerov preferred these small forms, his larger forms for the piano are significant as well. He wrote five concertos for piano and orchestra. The Concerto No. 1 won the Mendelssohn Prize at the *Akademie der Kunste* when he was nineteen years old. Other larger works are the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16 (originally for violin and piano, 1928, transcribed for solo piano in 1934), and the *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28 (1934). Important from a theoretical point of view, the *Sonatina Concertante*, in three movements, shows that Vladigerov could construct complex, coherent, and sizeable musical structures.⁴ A technically difficult work, which was considered for some time almost impossible to play, it never gained the popularity of the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16.⁵ However, the *Sonatina Concertante* contains an important element of Vladigerov’s style, his orchestral treatment of the piano. The musicologist Yankova notes that Vladigerov’s piano compositions use orchestral sonorities and display multileveled textures similar to an orchestral work.⁶ In fact, Vladigerov told Dimitar Sagaev that to his ears, the piano sounded like an orchestra.⁷ As a composer in the traditions of Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Scriabin, Vladigerov wanted to explore the huge orchestral potential of the piano. He created enormous sound through the use of a thick texture; massive chords exploiting the full sonority and dynamic

⁴ Pancho Vladigerov, *Piano Compositions*, Rada Chomakova and Dessislava Shtereva, piano, program notes by Boyanka Arnaudova, GEGA New, Limited GD 239, 2001.

⁵ Sagaev, *Gallery of Images*, 104.

⁶ Tamara Yankova, “Vladigerov and Piano Music in Bulgaria,” *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1969): 15.

⁷ Sagaev, *Gallery of Images*, 103.

possibilities of the piano; a large dynamic range; and finally the use of the full range of the piano as seen in Examples 2.1 and 2.2.

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, specifically Example 2.1, Vladigerov, *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, I, measures 47-54. The score is written for piano and features a variety of musical techniques and dynamics. The tempo is marked "Agitato" at the beginning. The dynamics range from *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). The score includes complex passages with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are several measures with "6" (sixteenth notes) and "8" (octaves) markings. The piece concludes with a "cresc." (crescendo) marking and an "accel. molto" (accelerando molto) instruction. The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number (47, 49, 51, 53) at the beginning. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Example 2.1. Vladigerov, *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, I, mm. 47-54.



Example 2.2. Vladigerov, *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, III, mm. 175-183.

Pedaling

The rich, full sonority of many of Vladigerov's piano works naturally raises the question of pedaling. Ganev writes: "Vladigerov, who treated the piano's orchestral possibilities with no limitation, rarely indicated pedal in his scores, even at places where the use of it was expected."⁸ Ganev observes that in the cycle *Classic and Romantic*, Opus 24, there is only one pedal marking in the last piece of the cycle; in *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29, only one piece, "Lullaby," has a pedal indication; in the cycle

⁸ Konstantin Ganev, "Pedaling in the Piano Compositions of Pancho Vladigerov," *Annual Journal of the Bulgarian State Academy of Music* (1974): 121.

Episodes, Opus 36, only the “Toccata” contains pedal markings by Vladigerov.⁹ Even the large-scale *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, has only one pedal marking which is found toward the end of the second movement. Yet, pedaling was one of Vladigerov’s best qualities as a performer. “He was a master of the fluttering pedal,” remembered his pupil Alexis Weissenberg. In an interview with Konstantin Stankovich, Weissenberg admitted that he learned the art of expressive pedaling from Vladigerov.¹⁰

Influences

The assimilation of Western art music into his own works comes from Vladigerov’s studies in Berlin. In particular, his teachers Karl-Heinrich Barth and Paul Juon strengthened and deepened his interest in German Romantic music. The Bulgarian musicologist Stoyan Stoyanov says the German Romantic influence is fundamental to his music.¹¹ Vladigerov was affected as well by the great Russian masters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He developed a love for Russian music and its composers through his mother, Eliza, who was born in Odessa, and through his piano teacher, Leonid Kreutzer, who was trained in St. Petersburg. Among his favorite composers were Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninov and Scriabin. The Russian influence on Vladigerov’s work has been repeatedly noted. Erich Urban in the early 1920s wrote that Vladigerov’s compositions revealed the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky.¹² The critic Vladimir Goncharov in 1924 wrote that

⁹ Ibid.

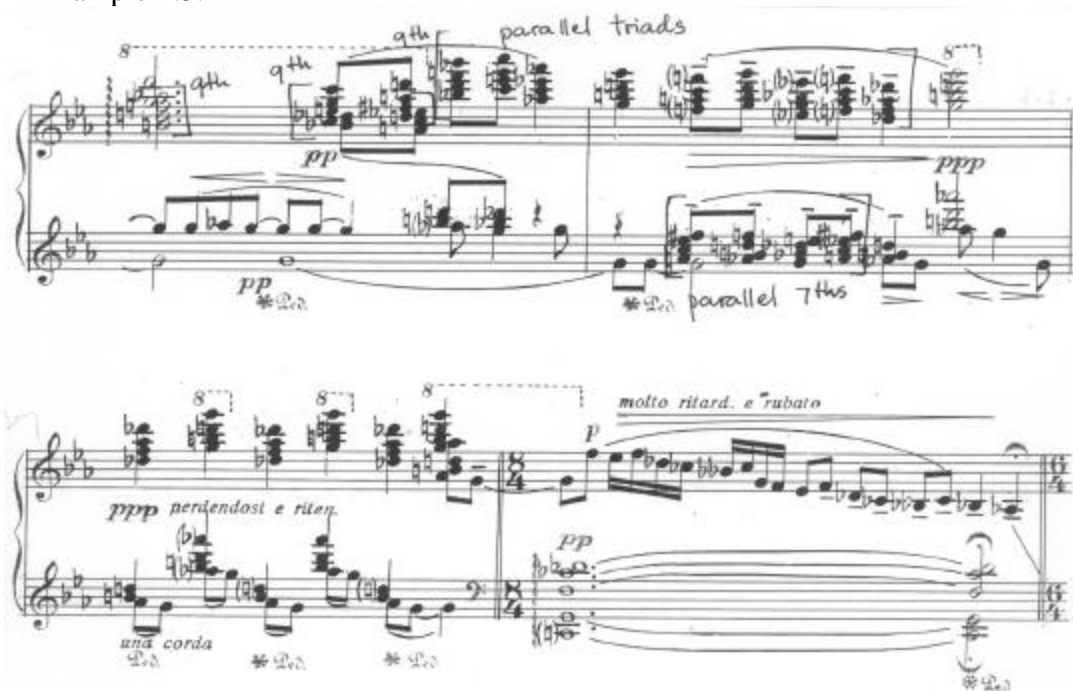
¹⁰ Konstantin Stankovich, “Pancho Vladigerov - Piano Pedagogue,” *Bulgarska Musika* 4 (1974): 43.

¹¹ Stoyan Stoyanov, “The Classics of Bulgarian Music,” *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1979): 4.

¹² Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 60.

Vladigerov's music included the influence of Scriabin,¹³ and the piano pedagogue Konstantin Stankovich noted that Vladigerov was fond of Russian composers.¹⁴

Vladigerov's harmonic language reflects the traditions of the late German masters Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949). While Vladigerov's harmony remains tonal, his music is also highly chromatic, with an abundance of non-harmonic tones and unconventional chord progressions. The music of Claude Debussy (1862-1918) also affected his works, in particular, Debussy's frequent use of harmonies derived from various modes, the use of harmonies derived from the whole-tone scale, the use of ninth chords and the use of parallel movement of triads or seventh chords, as seen in Example 2.3.¹⁵



Example 2.3. Vladigerov, "Autumn Elegy" from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 45-48.

¹³ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 95.

¹⁴ Stankovich, "Pancho Vladigerov - Piano Pedagogue," 43.

¹⁵ Evgeni Avramov, *The Harmony of Pancho Vladigerov* (Sofia: Musika, 1976), 191.

The national element of Vladigerov's compositions is undeniable. Although Vladigerov left Bulgaria at a young age, he maintained a strong connection with his native people and country. While there is no direct evidence of encouragement by his composition teachers, his most successful works were those with strong folk elements, most of them composed in Germany. A significant event during his formative years as a composer was his first return to Bulgaria for military duty (1918-1920). During that time, he became confident of his skills as a composer and established a sense of his national identity. Upon his return to Germany to complete his studies, he began to write works that contained folk-like elements. It is from this point, the two-year period between 1918-1920, that the listener begins to discern a recognizable style or voice. Vladigerov's compositional style is best described as a mixture of Western European, Russian, and Bulgarian traditions, and it can be recognized within the first few measures.¹⁶

Folk Traits

Perhaps the most important element of Vladigerov's music is the incorporation of Bulgarian folk song and dance, which he accomplishes with melody, rhythm, and improvisation. Rarely did Vladigerov use direct quotations from folk song. More often, he assimilated the language or style of folk song in his compositions. Stoyanov describes Vladigerov's overall melodic language as containing the folk style of Bulgarian music within the modern major-minor system,¹⁷ as in the example of "Improvisation" from *Episodes*, Opus 36 (Example 2.4). The main theme of the piece has a limited melodic range of a fourth, which is characteristic of Bulgarian folk songs.

¹⁶ Stefan Ikonov, "Pancho Vladigerov," *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1979): 35.

¹⁷ Stoyanov, "The Classics of Bulgarian Music," 4.



Example 2.4. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36.

Another aspect of the folk influence is Vladigerov’s use of rhythms that are contrary to the regular or steady pulse found in Western art music. Typical are the uneven meters and syncopations. These are best illustrated in the *Sonatina Concertante*, movement III, which is in 9/8 meter (Example 2.5); the “Ratchenitza” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25 which is in 7/16 meter (Example 2.6); and “Rhythmic Movement” from *Aquarelles*, Opus 37, which is in 9/8 meter (Example 2.7).



Example 2.5. Vladigerov, *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, III, mm. 1-3.



Example 2.6. Vladigerov, “Ratchenitza” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, mm. 1-5.



Example 2.7. Vladigerov, “Rhythmic Movement” from *Aquarelles*, Opus 37, mm. 1-3.

Vladigerov further exhibits folk influence by his use of improvisation.¹⁸

According to the musicologist Lidia Litova-Nikolova, some Bulgarian folk music can be described as unmeasured and containing a rhythmic freedom when sung.¹⁹ This rhythmic freedom is demonstrated in “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36 (Example 2.8), the “Song” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, No. 1 (Example 2.9), and the “Song” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, No. 4 (Example 2.10).



Example 2.8. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 1-6.

¹⁸ Avramov, *The Harmony of Pancho Vladigerov*, 15.

¹⁹ Lidia Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music* (Sofia: Musika, 1982), 122.



Example 2.9. Vladigerov, “Song” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, No. 1, mm. 1-3.



Example 2.10. Vladigerov, “Song” from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25, No. 4, mm. 1-4.

Since the beginning of his career in the 1920s, Vladigerov’s work was an inspiration for many young Bulgarian composers. His international reputation was not only gratifying to the composer; it publicized a new Bulgarian culture and was a source of pride to the Bulgarian people. His success came as the result of a positive combination of circumstances: his talent, the dedication of his mother, and his opportunities to study in Berlin. After Vladigerov’s final return to Bulgaria in 1932, his influence was three-fold: as a composer, pianist, and pedagogue. Since he taught generations of young

Bulgarian pianists and composers, his influence extends well into the twenty-first century. Although he is not considered an innovator like Prokofiev, Shostakovich, or Bartok,²⁰ his importance to Bulgarian culture is enormous. Unlike the largely amateur composers of the First Bulgarian Compositional School, who date approximately from 1878 to 1920, Vladigerov introduced the notion of a truly professional composer: one who studies his craft and the craft of other masters.²¹ Sagaev writes that before the 1920s, Bulgaria experienced a cultural delay.²² Between 1920 and through the 1930s, Vladigerov began writing music that displayed a definite departure from his previous compositions²³ and bridged the cultural gap.²⁴

²⁰ Konstantin Ganev, "Some Characteristics of the Piano Style of Pancho Vladigerov," *Bulgarska Musika* 2 (1974): 16-22.

²¹ Stankovich, "Pancho Vladigerov - Piano Pedagogue," 43.

²² Sagaev, *Gallery of Images*, 84.

²³ Krustev, *History of Bulgarian Music*, 318.

²⁴ Sagaev, *Gallery of Images*, 84.

CHAPTER THREE

A FORMAL AND STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

The selected works to be discussed in this chapter are: *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, (1922); *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, (1922, transcribed for piano in 1934); *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29, (1934); and “Improvisation” and “Toccata”, from *Episodes*, Opus 36 (1941). These pieces were chosen because they are representational of the various periods and stylistic trends of Vladigerov’s music. Vladigerov’s life can be classified into three periods: his early period in Bulgaria (1899-1912), the German period (1912-1932), and his final return to Bulgaria (1932-1978). Vladigerov’s compositions from his early period have not been published and therefore have been excluded from this research. The works discussed here are, moreover, among his most popular and frequently performed piano compositions. The *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, come from his second, or German period, and reflect the influence of other composers, in particular, Rachmaninoff and Debussy. The *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, also from his German period, was the first piece to incorporate the bright colors of Bulgarian folk rhythm and song in a traditional form. The *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29, a work from his third period, his final return to Bulgaria, is a collection of charming pieces accessible to young pianists. The last two works, “Improvisation” and “Toccata” from the cycle *Episodes*, Opus 36, also from his third period, represent the essence of Vladigerov’s mature compositional style. These compositions represent a wide variety of styles, influences, and levels of technical difficulty. However, they have qualities that unite them: beautiful, song-like themes; clear form; rhythmic drive; dance-like episodes;

and a lack of any atonal techniques or experiments characteristic of early twentieth century music. Vladigerov's style in these works shows his virtuosity, his orchestral treatment of the piano, his rich power of harmony, and his tendency to reflect Bulgarian folk motifs in his music. Vladigerov incorporates in his work some of the most distinctive elements of Bulgarian folk music: he uses ancient modes extensively, along with pentatonic and chromatic scales; he favors peculiar rhythmic models of uneven meters; and he refers to a tradition of free, non-measured songs.¹ The melodic range of most Bulgarian folk songs is limited to an interval of a fourth or a fifth, which is typical of many of Vladigerov's themes. Another characteristic of Bulgarian folk music, which Vladigerov also incorporates in his music, is a variety of embellishments and ornamentation. In fact, Ganev writes that the most characteristic ornaments in Vladigerov's music have their roots in Bulgarian folklore.² Obviously, Vladigerov, like other composers of the Second Bulgarian Compositional School, used Bulgarian folk songs and dances as a great source of inspiration.

Three Pieces for Piano, Opus 15

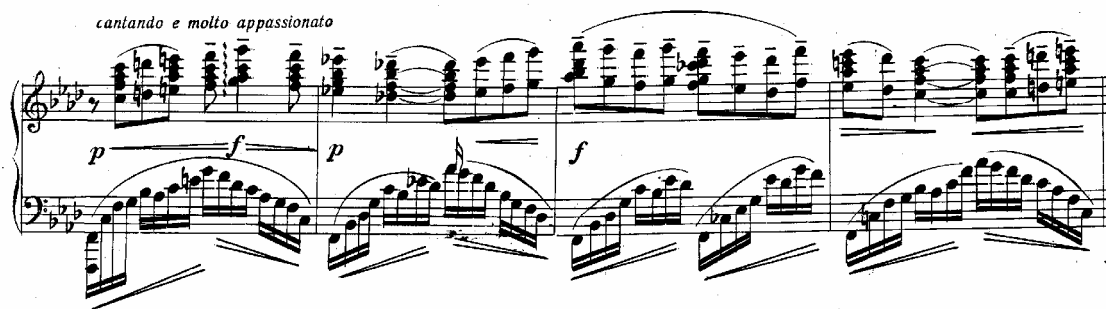
The *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, was written during 1922, in Berlin. Each piece, dedicated to a different Bulgarian friend, displays the romantic influence of nineteenth century keyboard music. Vladigerov first composed what is now the second piece in the cycle, "Autumn Elegy," during the month of September. It has been described by Pavlov as a "beautiful and elegant miniature."³ In October 1922,

¹ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 11.

² Konstantin Ganev, "Ornamentation in the Piano Works of Pancho Vladigerov," *Bulgarska Musika* 3 (1969): 29.

³ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 65.

Vladigerov completed the “Humoresque,” and a month later the third piece of the cycle, “Prelude.” Vladigerov premiered the *Three Pieces for Piano* in Berlin in December, 1922, in the order now customary in the cycle: I. “Prelude,” II. “Autumn Elegy,” and III. “Humoresque.”⁴ The pieces have become some of the composer’s most performed piano works. *Three Pieces for Piano* clearly indicates the strong influence of Romantic music and contains some impressionistic sonorities as well. The agitated lyricism of the “Prelude,” with its directive of *Agitato*, is reminiscent of Rachmaninoff. The beginning of the “Prelude” bears some similarities to the Prelude in E-flat Major, Opus 23, No. 6 by Rachmaninoff in its continuous sixteenth-note figurations in the left hand. The main theme also resembles Rachmaninoff’s, as we can see in Examples 3.1a and 3.1b.



Example 3.1a. Vladigerov, “Prelude” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 6-9.



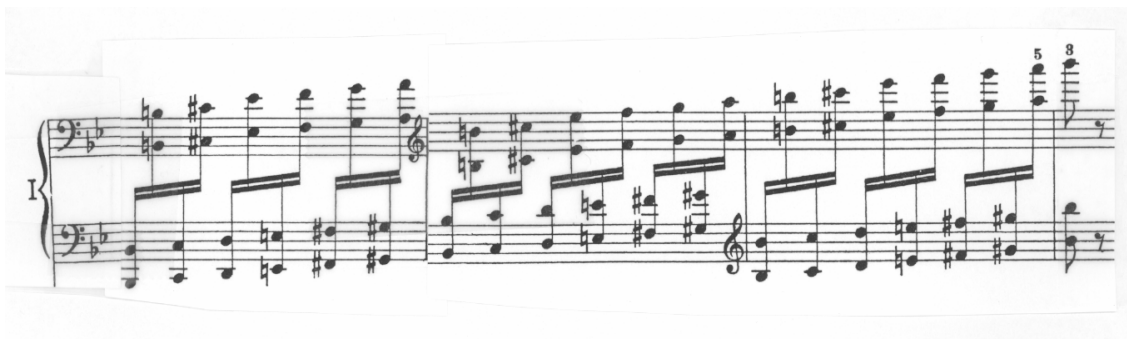
Example 3.1b. Rachmaninoff, Prelude in E-Flat Major, Opus 23, No. 6, mm. 5-8.

⁴ Ibid., 65.

The main theme, marked by Vladigerov *cantando e molto appassionato*, is first introduced in chords in the right hand; its character is both emotional and lyrical. The theme is later presented in the left hand, accompanied by sixteenth note arpeggios in the treble. Vladigerov developed the main theme in a series of modulating episodes. A new section, *Un poco più mosso*, marks the beginning of the dramatic climax of the “Prelude,” which is characterized by its virtuosity. Following alternating octaves in both hands and a dramatic rest with a fermata, the main theme returns, now in *fortississimo* and marked *Grandioso*. Vladigerov exploits many technical devices in the manner of Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff. He sometimes writes arpeggios in both hands or quick finger passages that are labeled *quasi cadenza* and contain chromatic passages in both hands. Like the Romantic composers, he writes passages for alternating hands, using, for example, alternating chords and octaves over the full range of the piano (Example 3.2a). The same gestures are frequently found in late Romantic piano music, such as Peter Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto in B-flat Minor (third movement, measures 297-299) and Franz Liszt’s, *Mephisto Waltz No. 1* (measures 893-900); (see Examples 3.2b and 3.2c). Like these composers, Vladigerov uses the full range of the instrument and all dynamic possibilities between *pianississimo* and *fortississimo*.



Example 3.2a. Vladigerov, “Prelude” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 87-88.



Example 3.2b. Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto in B-flat Minor, III, mm. 297-300.

Example 3.2c. Liszt, *Mephisto Waltz No. 1*, mm. 893-904.

Like Scriabin, Vladigerov did not leave many interpretive decisions for the pianist. In the “Prelude,” he indicates his intentions regarding tempo, articulation, dynamics, and mood. He also gives directions regarding interpretation, such as *cantando e molto appassionato*, *armonioso*, *impetuoso*, *furioso*, *con gran bravura*, *grandioso*, *ben espressivo*, and *pesante*.

The second piece, “Autumn Elegy,” in C minor, is in full contrast to the “Prelude.” Described by Boyanka Arnaudova as sounding like an “outspoken confession,”⁵ the “Autumn Elegy” takes on a dream-like and tender quality. The piece begins with an introduction: the almost motionless melodic line is in Phrygian mode, one

⁵ Vladigerov, *Piano Compositions*, program notes by Boyanka Arnaudova.

of the ancient modes found extensively in Bulgarian folk music.⁶ The opening interval of an ascending minor second is followed by the gradual expansion of the intervals between the two voices, as illustrated in Example 3.3. The second voice serves as a syncopated pedal tone. The main theme of the piece is introduced in measure 16 in the long chords accompanied by the faster alto voice (Example 3.4).

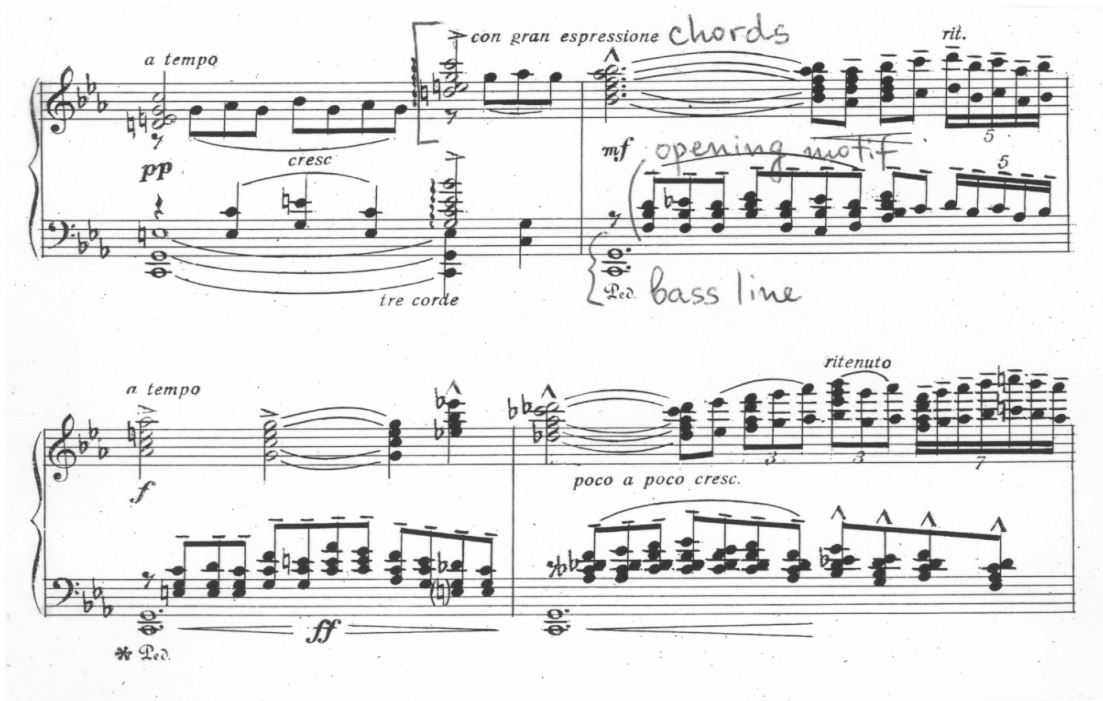


Example 3.3. Vladigerov, “Autumn Elegy” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 1-2.

Example 3.4. Vladigerov, “Autumn Elegy” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 14-18.

⁶ Avramov, *The Harmony of Pancho Vladigerov*, 34.

Ganev suggests that the influence of Impressionism on Vladigerov in this piece is evidenced by the use of the whole tone scale, parallel chords, and rich sonorities.⁷ A resemblance to the music of Debussy is unmistakable as the piece unfolds. Three layers of sound develop and stay within the Phrygian mode: the main theme in parallel chords, the opening motif, and the bass line in the pedal tone C-G (Example 3.5).



Example 3.5. Vladigerov, “Autumn Elegy” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 23-26.

Like the “Prelude,” “Autumn Elegy” reaches a dramatic climax with a dynamic level of *fortissimo*. Vladigerov uses similar technical and sound devices in both pieces: arpeggios, full chords, a wide dynamic range, and a full use of the keyboard. Again, he indicated his intentions regarding tempo, dynamics, and mood as explicitly as possible: *languido, doloroso con rassegnazione* (sorrowful with resignation), *lasciar spiccare l’alta voce* (allow the alto voice to emerge), *con gran espressione, appassionato, sempre piu augmentando, molto rubato, melodia del basso molto espressiva, lasciando*

⁷ Ganev, “Some Characteristics of the Piano Style of Pancho Vladigerov,” 18.

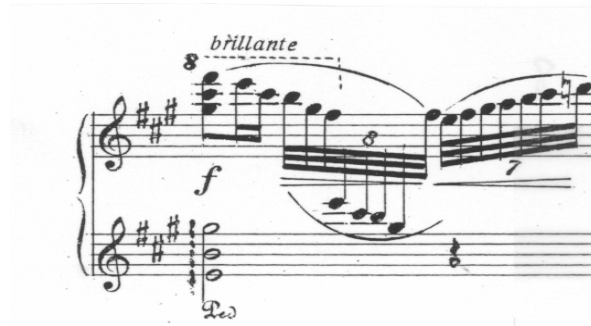
perdendosi e riten (to let disappear and slow down), *molto ritard e rubato*, *diventando molto lento* (becoming very slow), and *morendo spegnersi* (to die out, to vanish).

“Humoresque” is lively and bright in character, an expression perhaps of Vladigerov’s keen sense of humor. The “Humoresque,” in A major, is constructed in ternary form with a coda. The first section begins with the main theme, characterized by staccato articulation, and ornamentation such as grace notes (Example 3.6).



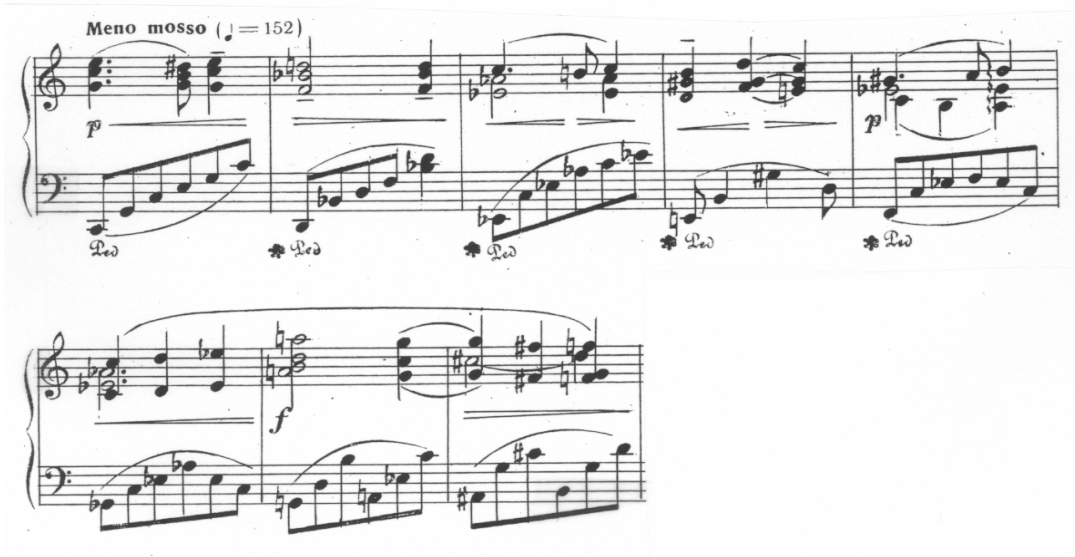
Example 3.6. Vladigerov, “Humoresque” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 1-7.

A quick and brilliant arpeggio in measure 8, divided between the two hands, creates an effect similar to a burst of laughter (Example 3.7).



Example 3.7. Vladigerov, “Humoresque” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, m. 8.

The slightly slower tempo, and more lyrical, somewhat sentimental character of the middle section has the feeling of a slow waltz (Example 3.8).



Example 3.8. Vladigerov, “Humoresque” from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15, mm. 92-99.

The tempo soon accelerates, and after a string of brilliant passage work, followed by a *glissando* over the entire keyboard, the music returns to the opening theme. A lively and cheerful coda concludes the piece.

Bulgarian Rhapsody, Opus 16

The *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, has become emblematic of Bulgarian music.⁸ It is Vladigerov’s most famous work, at home and abroad. The work was originally composed for violin and piano in 1922, and published by Universal Editions in Vienna in 1924. Its premiere took place in September 1923, in Sofia, with the composer at the piano and his brother Luben on the violin. In 1928, the violinist Max Rosen performed the *Bulgarian Rhapsody* at Carnegie Hall in New York City.⁹ Also in 1928, Vladigerov orchestrated the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, and the orchestral version was premiered in Prague

⁸ Vladigerov, *Compositions*, program notes by Latchezar Karanlakov.

⁹ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 71.

on March 25, 1928, by the Czech Philharmonic under the baton of Frantisek Stupka. In 1929, the orchestral version was recorded by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Max Roth for *Deutsche Grammophon*. In 1934, Vladigerov transcribed the *Bulgarian Rhapsody* for piano. Later versions would include piano, four hands; two pianos; and violin and orchestra.

According to the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, “rhapsody” is a title for an instrumental piece from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is no set structure or compositional plan. The *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1846-1886) by Franz Liszt represent one style of rhapsody, with loose, episodic forms, using themes that are folk-like in character. These *Hungarian Rhapsodies* established a tradition of writing rhapsodies with a nationalistic flavor. A contrasting approach is in the *Rhapsodies*, Opus 79, by Johannes Brahms. In these *Rhapsodies*, Brahms used clear structured forms, such as the sonata form.¹⁰ The *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, Vladigerov’s only rhapsody, demonstrates the traditions of both Liszt and Brahms. In Vladigerov’s use of folk material and contrasting episodes, he displays the influence of Liszt. However, regarding form, his work is similar to the second rhapsody of Brahms, with its clear ternary form and coda. The main theme is borrowed from a popular patriotic song of 1917, *A Lonely Cry is Heard*, composed by the prominent Bulgarian composer Dobri Hristov (1875-1941). Vladigerov originally heard *A Lonely Cry is Heard* sung by a Bulgarian friend in Berlin. One can see the similarities between Vladigerov’s work and Hristov’s song in Examples 3.9a and 3.9b.

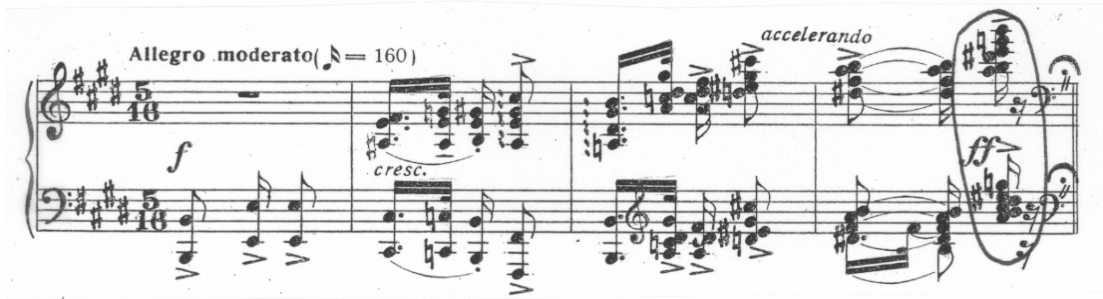
¹⁰ Don Michael Randel, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, “Rhapsody” (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press,) 1996, 697.

There are no structural differences between the original version for violin and piano and the solo piano version. However, there are some differences of tempo and

Example 3 9a Hristov *A Lonely Cry is Heard*

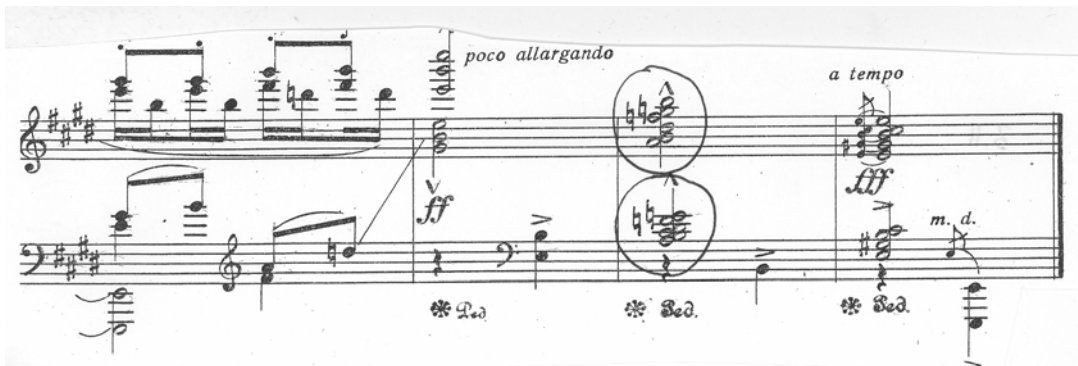
Example 3.9b. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 5-19.

timbre of specific episodes. Vladigerov marked various sections of the violin part of the original version to sound like a celesta, bagpipe, or mandolin. Some of these markings, such as *quasi Mandolina*, were omitted by Vladigerov in the solo piano version. Both compositions begin with a four measure introduction. At the end of the opening phrase, Vladigerov uses a chord built on the whole tone scale, with a lowered and raised fifth scale degree of the dominant chord, which sounds like a tone cluster (Example 3.10).



Example 3.10. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 1-4.

Vladigerov uses a similar chord at the final cadence of the piece in measures 409-410, and is illustrated in Example 3.11.



Example 3.11. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 407-410.

The main theme of the *Bulgarian Rhapsody* is in 5/16 meter. The use of an uneven meter such as this is typically found in Bulgarian folk music.¹¹ The theme has a majestic, solemn, and hymn-like character. The contrasting middle section consists of six

¹¹ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 58.

episodes. The use of such episodes is similar to Bulgarian folk dance music;¹² consequently, the middle section is a succession of brilliant dances. The first episode, *Allegro vivace*, is in E minor. The theme, which appears in measure 67, has been described by Krustev as “a traditional Bulgarian dance *Horo* in 2/4.”¹³ (Example 3.12)



Example 3.12. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 65-74.

This episode is in E natural minor, characterized by the lack of a leading tone, identical to the Aeolian mode which is frequently used in Bulgarian folk music. Through the use of the dominant chord in natural minor, Vladigerov brings a folk flavor to this section.¹⁴

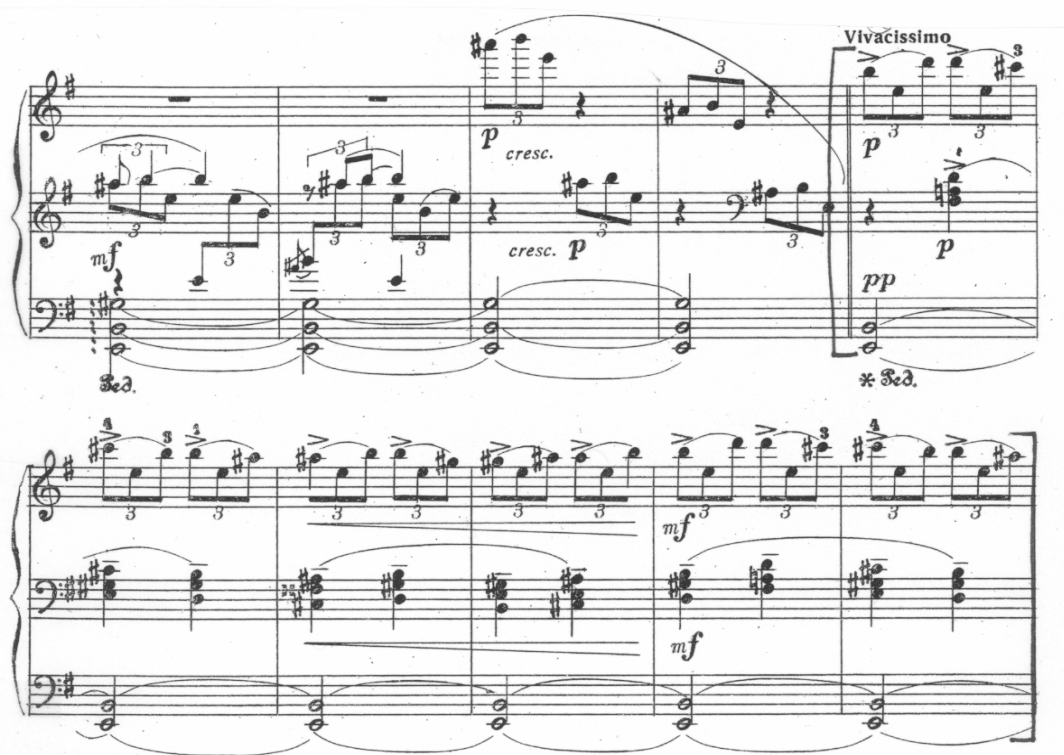
The second episode, *Vivacissimo*, is similar in character to the first episode and is in the same key. It is written on three staves; the lowest part serves as a pedal point, creating a sound similar to the sustained fifth on the Bulgarian bagpipe.¹⁵ The imitation of this sonority is reinforced by the sustained pedal throughout the episode (Example 3.13).

¹² Vladigerov, *Piano Compositions*, program notes by Boyanka Arnaudova.

¹³ Krustev, *History of Bulgarian Music*, 324.

¹⁴ Avramov, *Harmony of Pancho Vladigerov*, 29.

¹⁵ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 208.



Example 3.13. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 115-124.

The dance theme is followed by a more lyrical section in measures 176-183, marked *quasi musette* and is illustrated in Example 3.14. The musette was a small French bagpipe, very popular in aristocratic circles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The musette was also a dance piece of the eighteenth century, characterized by its drone in the bass, imitating the instrument of the same name.¹⁶ Krustev believes that Vladigerov had in mind a Bulgarian bagpipe folk melody, also characterized by the drone fifths in the bass. He also calls the melody in the right hand a “bagpipe tune”,¹⁷ due to its character of running sixteenth notes.¹⁸

¹⁶ Randel, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, “Musette,” 515-516.

¹⁷ Krustev, *History of Bulgarian Music*, 325.

¹⁸ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 208.

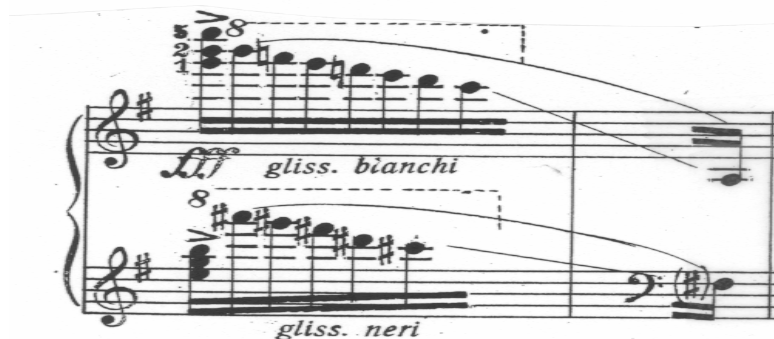


Example 3.14. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 176-183.

The fourth dance episode has a more masculine character, according to Krustev.¹⁹

This episode contains the direction *quasi Mandolina* in the violin and piano version.

Vladigerov created the effect of a mandolin sound in the violin through pizzicato chords, which imitates the plucking of the mandolin. This effect is difficult to reproduce on the piano, and the marking has been omitted in the solo piano version. This episode also contains a *tremolo glissando* in the violin part, which is transcribed in the solo piano version as a simultaneous *glissando* on white and black keys (Example 3.15).



Example 3.15. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 232-233.

¹⁹ Krustev, *History of Bulgarian Music*, 325.

The fifth episode is perhaps the most intriguing in terms of sound effects. In the original violin and piano version, Vladigerov included *scordatura*, which is the purposeful tuning of the instrument to different pitches to facilitate difficult or impossible pitch combinations.²⁰ *Scordatura* can also be used to imitate other instruments. In the *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, it is believed that Vladigerov included *scordatura* in order to imitate the timbre of an instrument called the *gadulka*, a Bulgarian fiddle with three or four playing strings and seven to eleven sympathetic strings. Vladigerov successfully recreated its specific nasal timbre through *scordatura* in the violin part; however, in the solo piano version Vladigerov just transcribed the melody and therefore this episode is less convincing. The fifth episode contains a melodic motif constructed on the maqām, a tetrachord with an augmented second between the second and third scale degree.²¹ This tetrachord is present in the music of the Middle East and Bulgarian folk music.²² (Example 3.16).



Example 3.16. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 262-266.

²⁰ Randel, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, “Scordatura,” 735.

²¹ Randel, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, “Maqām,” 468.

²² Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 178-180.

The last and most splendid episode is marked *Con grande bravura*. The theme of this episode is a variation of the theme of the second episode.²³ The powerful *fortississimo* climax in measures 326-333 is followed by the triumphant return of the main theme in measure 334 (Example 3.17). The coda, beginning in measure 369, has a restless and driving quality that is a wonderful conclusion to this brilliant composition.



Example 3.17. Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 331-339.

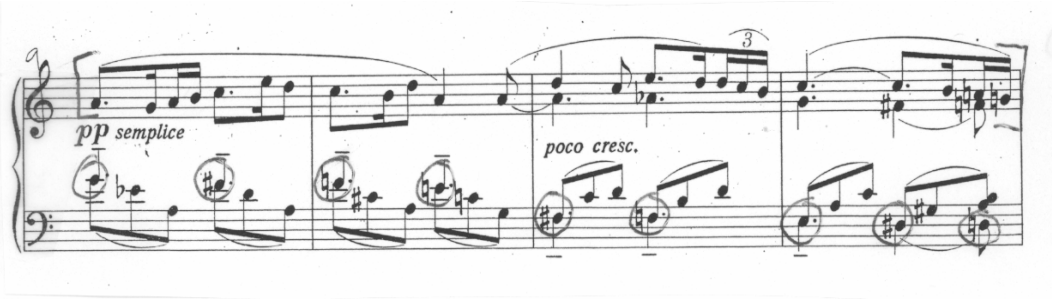
The main characteristics of the violin and piano and the piano solo versions are virtuosity and folk influence. In the original violin and piano version, Vladigerov creates a virtuoso violin part through the use of *bariolage*, an effect produced by playing in rapid alternation a stopped string and an open string. This rapid alternation creates a *tremolo* effect with contrasting timbres. Other virtuosic effects are *tremolo glissandi*, double stops, octaves, and high positions. In the later version for piano, many of the virtuosic effects were kept, such as *tremolos*, *glissandi*, the use of alternating octaves, and arpeggios. In both versions, the folk influence is expressed through the use of uneven

²³ Krustev, *History of Bulgarian Music*, 325.

meter in the main theme, a folk-dance character for the contrasting middle section, ornamentation that reflects folk song practices, and scales with an augmented second, a feature that is typical in Bulgarian folk song.

Shumen Miniatures, Opus 29

The cycle *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29 (1934), was inspired by the birth of Vladigerov's son, Alexander. Shumen is the name of the town in which Vladigerov and his brother Luben spent their childhood. The dedication in French, *A mon chere enfant Sachi*, and the choice of six pieces suggests some influence of Debussy's *Children's Corner*. The resemblance is only superficial, though, since Vladigerov's miniatures possess a unique national Bulgarian flavor. Written in only two weeks, the six pieces form a beautiful collection of children's miniatures. Each piece has its own charm and character, united by simplicity of form and similar musical devices. The pieces are relatively short, between two and four pages in length. Vladigerov's opening piece, "Lullaby," in A minor captures the steady rocking of a cradle through the ostinato accompaniment in 6/8. It begins with eight measures of introduction, followed by the main theme in measure 9. (Example 3.18).



Example 3.18. Vladigerov, "Lullaby" from *Shumen Miniatures*, Opus 29, mm. 9-12.

The theme is simple and caressing, accompanied by a bass line with a descending chromatic contour. The *Più mosso* section remains in the same character, while the

melody becomes slightly more agitated and chromatic. The theme from the introduction returns before the end. An unexpected F-sharp dominant seventh major chord in measure 50 (Example 3.19) brings a new color, before the quiet and peaceful ending.



Example 3.19. Vladigerov, “Lullaby” from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29, mm. 49-59.

The second piece, “Music Box,” is a charming piece with national flavor, in which Vladigerov incorporated a tune from his childhood, a folk song that was repeatedly sung by his father.²⁴ Pavlov writes that in using this folk song in “Music Box,” Vladigerov stated that he was honoring the memory of his father.²⁵ Vladigerov composed the piece entirely in treble clef, using the high register of the piano to imitate the mechanical sound of a music box. (Example 3.20). The dynamic range of the piece, *pianissisimo* through *mezzo forte*, contributes further to the similarity of a wind-up music box.

²⁴ Pavlov, *Vladigerov*, 121.

²⁵ *Ibid.*



Example 3.20. Vladigerov, “Music Box” from *Shumen Minatures*,
Opus 29, mm. 1-6.

“Rustic Dance,” is a picture of a peasant celebration. The two-page piece is written in C major, dominated by the descending four-note motif F-E-D-C. The abundance of uneven meters and meter changes creates a pulsation unique to Bulgarian folk dance (Example 3.21). Because of the meter changes and the lack of rests within the piece, Vladigerov creates a sense of almost breathless movement. The frequent meter changes can create challenges for the young pianist in this otherwise technically manageable composition. In order to articulate different degrees of emphasis, Vladigerov uses two types of accents: > and ^; the second accent is greater in volume and requires a sharper attack. Vladigerov marks the suggested duration of one-half minute at the end of “Rustic Dance.” This feature is interesting in that it is the only instance in his compositions that he marks the performance duration.



Example 3.21. Vladigerov, “Rustic Dance” from *Shumen Minatures*
Opus 29, mm. 1-15.

The fourth piece, “Song,” is influenced by non-measured Bulgarian folk songs and bears some characteristics of improvisation. In contrast, the form of the piece is rather strict, with an introduction, a section in F major, marked *Andante e molto espressivo* (Example 3.22), a faster second section, *più allegretto*, and a return of the first section, *Andante*, now in A minor. The moderate tempo and abundant ornamentation reflect the typical turns of this type of folk song.²⁶

“Humoresque” in G minor is elegant and more lyrical in comparison with the piece of the same title from *Three Pieces for Piano*, Opus 15. Vladigerov masterfully uses articulation and ornaments. The frequent use of grace notes, turns and trills, as well as tempo changes, contributes to the capricious character of the piece (Example 3.23). The interesting accents on weak beats of the measure as seen in Example 3.24, and the

²⁶ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 125.

unexpected pauses are another characteristic of “Humoresque.” The form of the piece is a simple AA’ with an introduction.

The image shows the first six measures of Vladigerov's "Song" from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29. The score is in B-flat major, 2/4 time. It begins with an introduction marked "Allegretto" with a tempo of quarter note = 92. The introduction features a piano melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand, with dynamics ranging from *mp* to *p cresc.*. The first section, labeled "section 1", begins at measure 5 and is marked "Andante e molto espressivo" with a tempo of quarter note = 52. It features a more lyrical melody in the right hand and a steady bass line, with dynamics including *p dolce* and *mf*. The piece concludes with a triplet figure in the right hand.

Example 3.22. Vladigerov, “Song” from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29, mm. 1-6.

The image shows the first six measures of Vladigerov's "Humoresque" from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29. The score is in B-flat major, 2/4 time. It begins with an introduction marked "Allegro giocoso" with a tempo of quarter note = 88. The introduction features a lively melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line, with dynamics ranging from *mf* to *f*. The first section, labeled "Moderato, poco a poco accel...", begins at measure 5 and features a more rhythmic melody in the right hand and a steady bass line, with dynamics including *mp* and *mf*. The piece concludes with a triplet figure in the right hand. The second section, labeled "Tempo I", begins at measure 11 and features a more rhythmic melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line, with dynamics including *p* and *cresc.*. The piece concludes with a triplet figure in the right hand.

Example 3.23. Vladigerov, “Humoresque” from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29, mm. 1-6.



Example 3.24. Vladigerov, “Humoresque” from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29, mm. 16-17.

Example 3.25. Vladigerov, “Ratchenitza” from *Shumen Minatures*, Opus 29, mm. 1-16.

The final piece, “Ratchenitza,” is in the typical Bulgarian folk dance meter of 7/16.²⁷ The internal division of the beat is irregular and can best be described as 2/16 + 2/16 + 3/16. “Ratchenitza,” with its fast tempo and full texture, is the most technically demanding piece of the cycle. Vladigerov’s use of non-harmonic tones and tone clusters is another characteristic attribute of the final miniature. The form of the piece is binary, with an introduction and a coda. The first section begins in treble clef for both hands

²⁷ Ibid., 70.

with a sixteen-measure introduction. The main theme in measure 9 (Example 3.25) is in F-sharp minor. The second section has the same character, this time in F-sharp major and with a continuous sixteenth-note pulsation. The movement of the dance becomes more agitated until the coda, in which Vladigerov continues the forward motion through an *accelerando* and a brilliant *glissando* at the end.

“Improvisation” and “Toccata” from *Episodes*, Opus 36

“Improvisation” and “Toccata” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, were written in 1941. Following the completion of a series of large-scale compositions such as the opera *Tzar Kalojan* (1936), the Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra (1937), Symphony No. 1 (1939), the String Quartet (1940), and Concert Fantasy for Violoncello and Orchestra (1941), Vladigerov composed in his favorite genre, the piano miniature. The five pieces, “Prelude,” “Nostalgia,” “Ratchenitza,” “Improvisation,” and “Toccata,” were written in two parts: “Prelude” and “Nostalgia” in June, followed by “Ratchenitza,” “Improvisation” and “Toccata” in the fall of 1941. In 1942, Vladigerov orchestrated the last two pieces which enjoy popularity in their orchestral version as well as in the original solo piano version. “Improvisation” and “Toccata” are original compositions, developed with the mastery typical of the mature composer. The free progress of the “Improvisation” is in contrast to the rigidly organized and rhythmical movement of the “Toccata.”

The “Improvisation” is influenced by the tradition of Bulgarian vocal and instrumental non-measured tunes. The rhythmic freedom and the abundant ornamentation contribute to the improvisatory character of the piece (Example 3.26). The often syncopated rhythm almost negates the bar lines. Vladigerov created layers of

sound and notated the piece on three staves. The exploitation of the different registers of the piano is a significant element of the orchestral treatment of the instrument. The frequent alteration of the sixth and seventh scale degrees, as well as the use of the augmented second, suggests modal tonalities. The “Improvisation” begins with a fourteen-measure introduction. It suggests a gradual *crescendo* a folk singer displays during an introduction and bears the main characteristics of the free song style: the liberty of rhythm. Another typical element of the improvisatory song tradition is the slow tempo and the rich ornamentation, especially turns. An important distinction has to be made, however, between the typical free, improvisational folk tunes and Vladigerov’s “Improvisation.” The former are traditionally rhythmically free and therefore notated without bar lines.²⁸ In “Improvisation,” Vladigerov uses a slow triple meter, as illustrated in Example 3.26.

Example 3.26. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 1-6.

²⁸ Litova-Nikolova, *Bulgarian Folk Music*, 125.

The main theme is lyrical and expressive, accompanied by an ostinato figuration in the middle voice (Example 3.27).

Example 3.27. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 14-22.

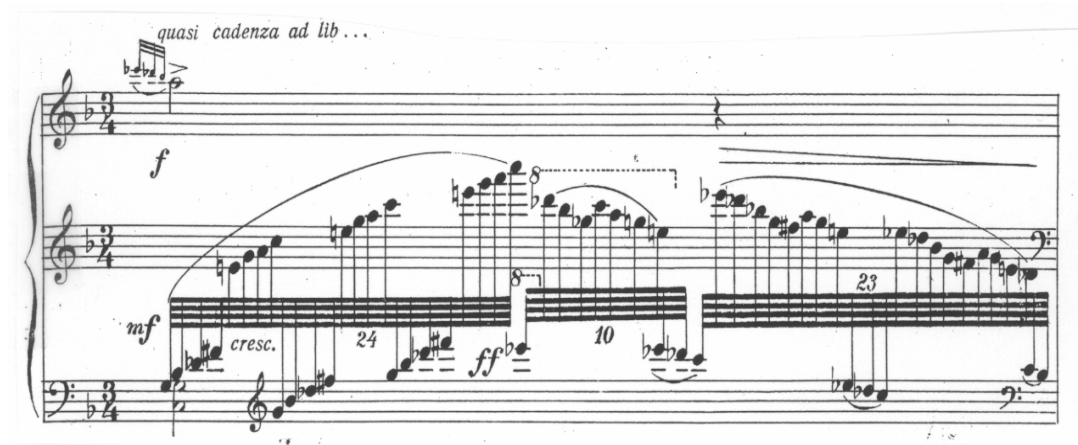
The second section, *Più mosso*, does not bring much contrast in character and maintains the multi-layered texture. The next section, *Più allegretto*, has an unexpected

lively character (Example 3.28), and although very brief, it soon leads to the return of the main theme.



Example 3.28. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 44-48.

Before the coda, the thematic material from the introduction returns. The coda has an improvisatory character, marked *quasi cadenza ad lib* in measure 73 (Example 3.29). The piece gradually fades away to a *pianissisimo*.



Example 3.29. Vladigerov, “Improvisation” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, m. 73.

Vladigerov's "Toccata" is in the style of Schumann and Prokofiev in technique and form. The virtuosity, perpetual motion, intensity, and rhythmic drive resemble these earlier examples. The dense piano texture, created through full chords and a continuous sixteenth-note pulse, is characteristic of Vladigerov's orchestral approach. However, Vladigerov's "Toccata" contains qualities that are characteristic to him alone, such as the folk intonations in the two main themes. The piece begins with a striking juxtaposition in both hands of nonfunctional seventh chords and chords built in fourths, as seen in Example 3.30.



Example 3.30. Vladigerov, "Toccata" from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 1-8.

The main theme of the "Toccata" has a folk-like character. The contrast between the dance-like first theme in Example 3.31, and the broad, lyrical second theme in Example 3.32, does not interrupt the perpetual movement. The presence of two contrasting themes, a development section and return of the first theme, suggests a sonata form. However, Vladigerov's "Toccata" does not bear all elements of sonata form: the

first theme dominates the development section, characterized by sudden dynamic contrasts and the second theme never returns. Therefore, the form can best be described as ABA' Coda.



Example 3.31. Vladigerov, "Toccata" from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 53-62.

This musical score excerpt shows the second theme of Vladigerov's 'Toccata' from Episodes, Opus 36, measures 113-124. The music is written for piano in 2/4 time. The second theme is marked '2nd theme' and 'melodia ben espressivo'. The score consists of three systems of staves, with the first system having a measure number '113' at the beginning. The melody is characterized by sudden dynamic contrasts and is dominated by the second theme. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p', 'mp', and 'cresc.'.

Example 3.32. Vladigerov, "Toccata" from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 113-124.

The dance-like first theme dominates the coda in A major. Vladigerov creates a climactic moment through rapid arpeggios in the left hand and chords in the right hand in the opposite registers of the piano, measures 269-276 (Example 3.33).



Example 3.33. Vladigerov, “Toccata” from *Episodes*, Opus 36, mm. 269-276.

The series of non-functional chords at the end of the coda resemble the opening and lead to the finale of this vital, energetic composition.

The piano compositions of Vladigerov, selected for discussion in this chapter, comprise the principal characteristics of his style: beautiful song-like melodies, often rooted in Bulgarian folk song; skillful exploration of the sonorities of the piano in a very distinctive way; full texture; versatile ornamentation; rhythmic vitality, influenced by Bulgarian folklore and virtuoso writing, which is often combined with a simple formal structure.

CONCLUSION

Pancho Vladigerov's music is one of the most successful examples of Bulgarian nationalism in the arts. Considered the father of the Second Bulgarian Compositional School, he set the style for Bulgarian national music. Vladigerov is credited with beginning the synthesis between European professionalism and Bulgarian national traditions.¹ Since the late nineteenth century, the use in art music of materials that are identifiably national or regional in character has become one of the most important trends in Western music. Following the path of Glinka and The Five (Russia), Smetana and Dvorak (Czechoslovakia), Grieg (Norway), Albeniz and Granados (Spain), and Bartok and Kodaly (Hungary), Vladigerov incorporated Bulgarian folk elements in his music, creating unforgettable masterpieces, for the cultural treasury of Bulgaria and the world.

The many recordings, performances, journal articles, dissertations, and books about his life and music evidence the popularity of Vladigerov in Bulgaria. However, there is no significant publication on his life or his music in the English language. This brief biography of the composer and the overview of selected piano works from a historical and stylistic perspective is an attempt to introduce Vladigerov to American circles. It is said that Vladigerov's overall compositional ideas can be found in his piano compositions; thus, the detailed study of some of these works may offer insights into his entire compositional output. Further research could focus on Vladigerov's five concerti for piano and orchestra, on his orchestral works, or on a specific stylistic trend of his music.

¹ Krustev, *The History of Bulgarian Music*, 379.

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*Translations from Bulgarian by the author.

APPENDIX

LETTER OF PERMISSION

March 30, 2004

Muzika Publishing House
Neli Kulaksazova, President
Fax: 359 2/987 7963

Dear Ms. Kulaksazova,

I am sending this fax after we spoke on the telephone yesterday. My name is Boriana K. Buckles and I am a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Louisiana State University. Having completed work on my dissertation, "The Significance of Selected Piano Compositions by Pancho Vladigerov", I am requesting your permission to reproduce the following measures from your edition of *Pieces for Piano by Pancho Vladigerov in Two Volumes*.

Vladigerov, *Sonatina Concertante*, Opus 28, I, mm. 47-54; III, mm. 1-3 and mm. 175-183.

Vladigerov, *Autumn Elegy*, Opus 15, mm. 1-2, 7-9, 14-18, 23-26.

Vladigerov, *Ratchenitza*, Opus 25, No. 3, mm. 1-5.

Vladigerov, *Rhythmic Movement*, Opus 37, mm. 1-3.

Vladigerov, Song, from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25/1, mm. 1-3

Vladigerov, Song, from *Bulgarian Songs and Dances*, Opus 25/4, mm. 1-5.

Vladigerov, Prelude, Opus 15, mm. 1-4, 6-9, 87-88

Vladigerov, *Humoresque*, Opus 15, mm. 1-7, 8, 92-99.

Vladigerov, *Bulgarian Rhapsody*, Opus 16, mm. 1-4, 5-20, 67-74, 119-126, 176-183, 232-234, 262-265, 334-341, 409-410.

Vladigerov, *Lullaby*, Opus 29, mm. 9-12, 50-59.

Vladigerov, *Music Box*, Opus 29, mm. 1-6.

Vladigerov, *Rustic Dance*, Opus 29, mm. 1-15.

Vladigerov, Song, Opus 29, mm. 1-6.

Vladigerov, *Humoresque*, Opus 29, mm. 1-6, 16-17.

Vladigerov, *Ratchenitza*, Opus 29, mm. 1-16.

Vladigerov, *Improvisation*, Opus 36, mm. 1-6, 14-20, 44-48, 73.

Vladigerov, *Toccata*, Opus 36, mm. 1-8, 55-62, 114-120, 269-276.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Boriana Kojouharova Buckles

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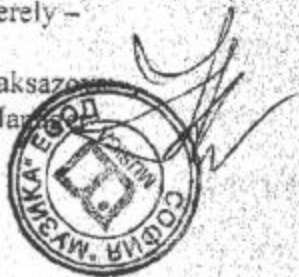
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VITA

A native of Bulgaria, Borianna Ivanova Kojouharova Buckles graduated with honors from the State Academy of Music in the capital of Sofia, Bulgaria. After working as a pianist in Bulgaria for several years, she returned to school at the University of New Orleans, where she received the Master of Music degree and the music department's highest honor, the Chair's Award. Currently, she is an instructor of piano and staff accompanist at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana.