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The violin concerto and its development in Bulgaria

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THE VIOLIN CONCERTO AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA

A Monograph
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in

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by
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ABSTRACT

My interest in the history and problems of the Bulgarian composers' school and specifically in the establishment and development of the Bulgarian violin concerto goes far back in my musical career. The Bulgarian composers and their concertos have essential contribution to my development as a violin player and have greatly influenced me over the period of my formal education. It is important to notice the very specific and original nature of the Bulgarian music culture. Bulgaria did not exist on the political map of Eastern Europe because of the fact that it had suffered the turmoil of the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries. Without its political and economical freedoms Bulgaria was greatly influenced by the Orient, as some thought that this specific cultural impact had very little to offer comparing to the level of European classical music at the time. Nevertheless, the theme of the establishment and development of the Bulgarian violin concerto is relatively new, as complete studies on it are missing or unreleased. There are not enough monographs that investigate and give us satisfactory information in this particular area. For the reasons especially, I think that such absence of research on the topic of the Bulgarian violin concerto would be a valuable prerequisite for the contribution of my dissertation.

CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE VIOLIN CONCERTO GENRE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULGARIAN VIOLIN CONCERTO

The term *concerto* comes from the Latin word *concertare*, which means both “to contend, dispute, debate, and to work together with someone.” During the Renaissance, the word had two opposite meanings. The Italian meaning was “to agree or to play together” but the German meaning was “to compete.” The first known use of the word dates as far back as 1519¹, carrying the title *Un Concerto Di Voci In Musica*, which means “*getting together*” of voices. The word concerto was originally used to refer to vocal, mixed vocal and instrumental forms. It would be incorrect to think that the first musical application of the word was connected to a concerto for a solo instrument or instruments and an accompanying ensemble or orchestra. Throughout the first half of the 17th century, a concerto was primarily known as a vocal music, most often sacred in content, accompanied by instruments. Such sacred concertos were performed in Germany and Italy and often incorporated large vocal performance forces with minimal instrumental accompaniment. Therefore, the word concerto was used long before the first concertos for violin and orchestra were composed. The function of the genre was different from what a concerto for violin and orchestra means today. Because of the evolving nature of the concerto and the relatively new formation of the Bulgarian state in 1878, it is important to review the general evolution of the violin concerto in order to understand the violin concerto development in Bulgaria. Such a preview will answer questions about the ways in which the Bulgarian composers wrote their violin concertos and the significance of their works. This short overview will show also many similarities between the European and Bulgarian violin concertos. Since there are not enough monographs and books which investigate the development of the

¹ Stanley Sadie, New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, “Concerto,” 240-257.

Bulgarian violin concerto genre, this dissertation will make a significant contribution to the research in this particular area.

1.1 The Rise of the Violin Concerto

According to Frederic Emery², “the rise of the violin concerto was the logical outcome of certain musical and social conditions of the Seventeenth Century.” During the 17th century, the upper class nobles and royalty who could afford to hire musicians had in their service a different number of performers of varying capabilities. Some of these musicians were held in high esteem, others were only amateurs. Gradually, the level of the performers began to rise as more and more experienced and capable violin players emerged. The higher standard of performing evolved simultaneously with innovation of the actual instruments. The violin itself achieved such a high level of refinement that it became regarded as superior to most of the instruments used during that time. The piano and many of the wind instruments that we know today did not yet exist. Some of the greatest³ violins were created during this period. The superiority of the instrument brought the necessity for pieces which eventually presented the best qualities of the violin as a solo instrument and put the violin “in a competition with larger ensemble.” The idea of a violinist being the *leader* of an ensemble also facilitated the rise of the violin. During the Baroque era, the *leader* was the first-chair violinist in the orchestra. In general, various instrumental ensembles were conducted (the profession of the conductor did not exist yet) either by the violinist at the first stand or by the harpsichord player. The *leader* was supposed to be the most advanced and skillful player. All of the aforementioned facts not only contributed to the rise of the violin concerto as a much different genre from that of the Renaissance and early Baroque sacred concertos but also helped to change the meaning of the term.

² Frederic Emery, *The Violin Concerto* (Chicago: The Violin Literature Publishing Co., 1928), 11.

³ Toby Faber, *Stadivari's Genius* (New York: Random house, 2004) 15.

Today's meaning of the term "concerto" is "a musical genre which illustrates and brings out the major characteristic of the solo instrument, and gives the soloist the opportunity to show the best of his or her talent and ability, relieved by the orchestra as a background." This statement given by Frederic Emery is partly true in that the soloist needs not only to demonstrate brilliance and virtuosity but also musicianship and intellect. Due to the increased scope of the orchestra part, some of the concertos are much more like symphonies⁴ for a violin and orchestra, than just concerto for solo violin. One thing that can be said for certain is that "the concerto is a much broader and massive form than the sonata and more difficult to understand."⁵

The *Concerto a Solo* is a concerto without accompaniment but there are not too many of them. The *Concerto Doppio* is for two or more solo instruments. The latter was very popular during the Baroque area. There were also two types of concertos (primarily written and performed during the Renaissance and Baroque era); the *Concerto di Chiesa*, or Church Concerto, and the *Concerto da Camera*, or Chamber Concerto. Generally, the term *Concerto Grosso*, mostly used during the Baroque era, is a type of concerto in which a large group of performers, also called the *ripieno alternate*, compete in a certain way with a smaller group of performers called the *concertino*. The music form *concertino* is also a very popular expression as it will have a very important impact on the Bulgarian violin concerto and its development. Generally, this term has two meanings; the first one indicates a work for a solo instrument or instruments, less ambitious in scale than a concerto and typically created by the composer to help young students to achieve better musical and technical results. This meaning was largely used by the Bulgarian violin composers. The second connotation, which has almost never been used by

⁴ John Burk, *The Life and Works of Beethoven* (New York: Random House, 1943) 310.

⁵ S. Babitz, *The Violin: Views and Reviews* (Urbana: University Press, 1955) 55.

Bulgarian composers, implies the presence of a group of soloists playing in the style of the Baroque *concerto grosso*, also called a *concertino*.

The first known composer of a concerto for violin and orchestra was the little known Italian composer Don Marco Uccellini.⁶ Born in Italy in 1610, he published his concertos between 1639 and 1667. However, the father of the violin concerto is considered to be Guiseppe Torelli. He was born in 1650 in Verona and died in 1708 in Anspach, Germany. His concertos established the most common form of the violin concerto, valid not only in the Baroque era but even today. Most of Torelli's concertos strictly followed the three movement form with the tempo scheme of fast, slow, fast. However, in Torelli's concertos the *sol*i passages are more decorative than structural in function. He was one of the first composers to specify that "where a solo is written only one instrument should play." It is obvious that before him it was very unusual for a solo part for one instrument and accompanying orchestra to appear in the score. Another important composer of the violin concerto is Arcangelo Corelli, born in Italy in 1653. His works were even less predictable than Torelli or even Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Corelli did not follow the three movement form with the standard contrasting tempos. Many of his concertos are in four, five, even six movements with different tempo indications within a single movement. All of these composers were also famous for their use of the *ritornello* form. According to the Oxford dictionary of music and musicians, "a *ritornello* is one or more ideas constituting a refrain played by the whole ensemble and is used to establish the opening tonality and, subsequently, to affirm the various other tonalities reached in the course of the movement." The *ritornello* form presents something which was an integral part of many concerto forms during the centuries and specifically the Bulgarian violin concertos. Basically, the *ritornello* presents the same material in the major and minor mode at different points of the movement. The

⁶ Frederic Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 14.

final instance of the material would be later called a recapitulation. Along with the best examples of Italian violin concertos there were also valuable German and French pieces which should be mentioned, along with their originators.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was one of the greatest composers ever and “an incomparable master of the form.”⁷ His six *Brandenburg* concertos⁸ are a good example of how the accompanying instruments begin to have as much of an important role as the solo instrument. In the concertos there are not any obvious divisions between the solo and the accompanying instruments. In most of the works the solo violin part forms a quartet with other leading instruments. Those concertos are among the first examples of how important the accompanying orchestra had become. Despite the fact that Bach’s concertos carry on the spirit of the Vivaldian tradition, “they outstrip their models in musical content and harmonic complexity.”⁹ This style, like that of the *Brandenburg* concertos, was not used by any of the Bulgarian violin concerto composers.

The French concerto tradition needs further explanation in order to be compared with the Italian and German traditions. Like many other genres in France, the concerto was not easily accepted by the French audience. Prior to its first appearance, the operas, sonatas, and cantata genres were regarded as something foreign and, odd to the French people. It took a while for the concerto to become accepted by the French audience. It was not until the 1730’s that it took firm root in the French classical music scene. Once again, French composers like Jean Marie Leclair (1697-1764), a pupil of Corelli, and Pierre Gavinies (1726-1800), also called “the Tartini of the French,” adopted the Italian model of concerto combining it with typical French elements. The French style of ornamentation is unique, differing from styles in other countries. Generally,

⁷ Frederic Emery, *The Violin Book*, 58.

⁸ Friedrich Smend, *Bach in Kothen*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publ., 1985) 40.

⁹ Stanley Sadie, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Concerto”, 240.

French composers preferred to ornament individual notes instead of whole phrases. Very often, slow movements were *air tenders* as French composers did not use the *ritornello* form as much in fast movements. Although the Italian concerto was exported to Germany and France, those two countries kept their own original traits in their typical Baroque violin concertos.

The Baroque era was an important period in the establishment of the violin concerto as a genre and form. The concerto was the first purely instrumental genre to emerge separately from vocal music, both sacred and secular. During this era, the composers established¹⁰ the three movement form of the violin concerto and the rhythmic contrast of the movements, elements which will become standard in many violin concertos including the Bulgarian ones. The thematic opposition between *tutti* and *solo*, or refrain and episode, influenced the later concertos and their form. The Baroque period fostered a very specific and essential style of performance practice, which affected the compositional styles of violin concertos written during this period. The ability of the players, however, was still far from today's level and this was an important factor for the composers of the violin concertos. Almost all of the concertos lacked the virtuosity and the dynamics colors of the 19th century concertos. Most of the composers did not use registers higher than the 3rd position or faster passages than sixteen notes. The vibrato and different strokes like *spiccato* and *sautille* were not in use at that time. However, the difficulties that many performers experience today in playing those concertos stem from their limited knowledge of Baroque performance practice. This period never existed in the development of the Bulgarian classical music and specifically the Bulgarian violin concerto genre. It is essential to understand that the Bulgarian violin concerto skipped an important and specific period of development.

¹⁰ F. Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 16.

1.2 The Violin Concerto during the Classical Period

By the mid 18th century, the solo concerto for violin and orchestra replaced and superseded the Baroque *concerto grosso*. However, there was a need for a more advanced form than the *ritornello* type of the *concerto grosso*. Such a change was made by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791.) It is believed that his five violin concertos composed in 1775, and the sixth one which he wrote the following year, were created mainly for his own use.¹¹ The forms of Mozart's concertos are still subject to huge debates by musicologists, historians, and music educators. Some believe that the first movements of his concertos are actually based on the old *ritornello* form. Others argue this point of view noting that Mozart's concertos were derived from the operatic serious aria. Still others¹² believe that his concertos are derived from the classical type sonata without a *scherzo* movement. He was one of the first composers to employ in his first movements a form which became standard in the next generation violin concertos including most of the Bulgarian ones. The first movement structure is known as sonata form. Essential parts of this form are the exposition, development, and recapitulation. He opens the concerto with the orchestra presenting the first theme followed by the solo violin, which repeats the theme. The second *tutti* passage, which is usually the second theme in standard sonata form, is based on the *forte* passages in the previous opening *tutti* section. Mozart used a development section which is usually dominated by the solo line. This development includes two sections. The first one constantly leads to a distant key, and the second one acts as a transition back to the *tonic*. The third major section of the form is the recapitulation, which summarizes the material already presented. The last section of the form was a relatively new element in the evolution of the violin concerto, the *cadenza*. The *cadenza* is mainly a virtuoso section inserted most often

¹¹ F. Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 188.

¹² Friedrich Blume, *The Mozart Companion* (New York: Norton Company, 1969), 214.

before the end of a concerto movement. Usually, there is a fermata and a 6/4 chord right before the beginning of the *cadenza*. Generally, the *cadenza* presents the performer's qualities in a more virtuosic, bravura style. The term *cadenza* appeared sometime before 1500 as a synonym of the Latin word *clausula*, which means "conclusion." During the Classical period the *cadenza* began to have a major role in the violin concerto. The second movement of Mozart's violin concertos is usually in the style of a *romance*, and there is sometimes a *cadenza*. The third movement is always a *rondo*. The aforementioned earlier specifics of the sonata form and *cadenza* were to become adopted by most of the Bulgarian violin concerto composers.

Another important violin concerto composer during the Classical period was Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). Beethoven wrote his *Violin Concerto in D Major* in 1806. This is the only surviving violin concerto by Beethoven. His *Violin Concerto in C major* survives only as a fragment. Despite its slow acceptance by audience and performers, Beethoven's violin concerto is considered to be "one of the greatest concertos ever written and a landmark in the history of the form."¹³ Beethoven's concerto is very symphonic,¹⁴ and many people regard it as "the tenth symphony with violin obbligato."¹⁵ It places great weight on the thematic "development and structural coherence." The first movement is similar to a symphony opening¹⁶ with a double exposition, a variation of the form which will be used by many 19th and 20th century composers to follow. The development is full and rich, and the movement as a whole is larger than many other violin concertos. Actually, the first movement is about twenty-three minutes long, a duration which is close to that of most Classical violin concertos in their entirety. There are few

¹³ Dominic Gil, *The Book of the Violin* (London: Oxford, 1984), 166.

¹⁴ John Burk, *The Life and Works of Beethoven* (New York: Random House, 1943), 310.

¹⁵ F. Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 143.

¹⁶ John Burke, *The Life and Works of Beethoven* (New York: Random House, 1943), 310.

Bulgarian examples which follow the form, “the symphonic structure,” and the aesthetic meaning of Beethoven’s work.

The Classical period had a critical impact on the foundation of the violin concerto and its form. The sonata form, the double exposition, the *cadenza*, and the *rondo* type third movement will become important parts of the next generation violin concertos. Many Bulgarian composers of violin concertos, even the most radical ones, strictly followed as a guide the achievements of the Classical Era composers. The first Bulgarian composers can be classified as Classical ones not only because they are the first national composers, but also because of the form, texture, harmony, and aesthetics they used in their first works. Although, there are not any violin concerto composers specifically presenting the Classical period, some of them were influenced by this period.

1.3 The Violin Concerto during the Romantic Period

Louis Spohr (1784-1859) made the transition between the classical violin concerto and form and the new idiom of the Romantic 19th century concerto with his fifteen violin concertos. He preserved many classical elements although he is far more famous for his desire to achieve a new type of Romantic expression. He used folk tunes in the *Sicilianos* in his third concerto, the *Alla polacca* in his twelfth and thirteen concertos, and even Spanish folk tunes in *Concerto Number Six*. His efforts to use more syncopation, broad melodic leaps, sudden changes of minor and major keys, various harmonic effects like modulation to *mediant* and *submediant* tonalities, and enharmonic and chromatic sonorities created a new expressive idiom. H. Riemann¹⁷ stated in his book that “on the violin, chromaticism is at least half *portamento*. About the time of Spohr’s appearance as a composer, the *portamento* was a familiar virtuosic effect of string players; and it is hardly necessary, therefore, to recall Spohr’s inclination to the sentimental and trivial as an

¹⁷ H. Riemann, *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven* (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1901), 193.

explanation of his use of the mannerism.” Spohr’s chromatic use influenced the works of many Romantic composers.

One of the most prominent and celebrated violin players of the day was Nicolo Paganini (1784-1840). His almost supernatural abilities as a performer, his virtuosic compositions, and “his demonic and secret personality ... went over the earth like a fructifying spring storm, inflaming kindred spirits, and opening up new paths in music”¹⁸ These qualities made him the ultimate paradigm of a virtuoso violinist. He was one of the first composers to develop in such mastery and extent the playing on G string (he created a whole virtuosic piece on a G string,) chordal and double stopped playing, glissandi, single and double harmonics, left hand *pizzicato*, the use of the highest possible registers of the violin, and the command of many bowing techniques. Despite the fact that many of Paganini’s compositions, including most of the concertos, present overly simple harmonic structures and form, Paganini is still considered to be one of the first true violin virtuoso and the person responsible for the development of the modern violin technique and the virtuoso concerto.¹⁹ More than a century after his death, Bulgarian violin concerto composers followed his path and wrote some of the most virtuosic works ever composed.

According to Robin Stowell, a professor of music at the University of Wales, and other musicologists, the violin concerto took three main directions during the 19th century. The first group was made up of composers who followed and cultivated traditional form and values in their concertos like Louis Spohr (1784-1859), Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and others. The second group comprised of virtuosi composers like Paganini (1784-1840), Charles de Bériot (1802-1870), Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880), Henry Vieuxtemps (1828-1901), and Karol

¹⁸ F. Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 136.

¹⁹ Benjamin Swalin, *The Violin Concerto* (Richmond: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 34.

Lipinski (1790-1861). The last group of composers showed a new tendency in the development of the violin concerto-the so called “nationalist movement.” The mid and late 19th century was a period in history characterized by many political and social changes. The Austro- Prussian War, the imperialistic ambitions in Germany and Italy, the new scientific and industrial developments of Western and Central Europe, and the new philosophical ideas of Neo-Kantians and Nietzsche were only some of the tumultuous influences. The establishment of new composer’s schools in Central and Eastern Europe had its influence on classical music and, respectively, on the concerto genre.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's violin concerto, written in 1878, is one of the first and most famous Russian violin concertos. The form of the opening movement, the long *cadenza* preceding the recapitulation (the *cadenza* is in a different place than in a standard Classical violin concerto), and the connection between the second and third movements gave another direction to the genre. Tchaikovsky's concerto is specifically national not only because the third movement is actually a Russian dance called *Trepak* but also because most of the theme and melodies are inherently Russian in nature. Tchaikovsky wrote it for and dedicated it to Leopold Auer, one of the most important and influential violin teachers during the 20th century. The practice of dedicating a particular violin concerto to someone important would become even more popular during the 20th century concerto writing. The example of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto is important because of its many similarities with the Bulgarian violin concertos.

Another important composer is Anton Dvorak who wrote the *Violin Concerto in A minor Op. 53*. The Slavonic and Czech origins of the concerto are displayed in the main rhapsodic theme, a rarely used form. The symphonic conception does not leave room for a *cadenza*, and the second movement is linked with the third which is based on folk tunes. An interesting mix

between traditionalism and nationalism is shown by the French composers such as Edouard Lalo (1823-1892) and Camille Saint Saens (1835-1921). Lalo's five movement concerto *Symphony Espagnole*, displays rhythms and melodies which have gypsy, Moorish, and Spanish origins. Out of the three Saint Saens violin concertos, the third is the most popular. It has rich musical content, an original score, and an interesting blend of choral and gypsy-like themes in the third movement.

The violin concertos created during the Romantic period are of great importance to the today's violinists, teachers, and composers. During the middle and late 19th century, many new innovations in composition evolved along with some original Romantic idioms and expressions. Without the contribution of Paganini, Wieniawski, Pablo Sarasate, Vieuxtemps, and Saint Saens, it is rather doubtful that today's level of playing would be so high. This was an essential period because many small countries including Bulgaria began to develop their classical music traditions regarding the composer's schools and violin concertos. During this era, some changes of the form occurred because composers like Lalo, Viextemps, and Tchaikovsky did not follow the three movement form. Other composers like Dvorak did not use the fashionable *cadenza* or conventional forms, but employed a rather rare form, the *rhapsody*. During this century Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky wrote the great D major violin concertos, which are today considered to be among the most important, challenging, and essential pieces for any violin player. This period was very significant for the establishment and development of the Bulgarian's composer school and violin concerto composers. During the end of the century the first generation of Bulgarian composers were born. Today most of them including a large number of violin concerto composers are considered to be Romantic composers.

1.4 The 20th Century Concerto

The 20th century was the period in which many new ideas, philosophies, and styles of writing music arose, not only in symphonic literature but also in instrumental genres. This period is important because the first Bulgarian composers and their concertos were written during the beginning of the 20th century. New terms like the atonality, the twelve tone system, Neo-Classicism, Neo-Romanticism, Expressionism, and Impressionism had an important influence on the 20th century violin literature. Most of the violin concertos written during those years kept and continued the achievements of the 19th century Romantic violin concerto. Such a concerto was written by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), a concerto which has a stern neo-primitive sound and flashy virtuosity. The Nordic atmosphere and motivic development is combined with a rather odd structure because the *cadenza* actually serves as a development section. Other generally late Romantic concertos are Aleksandr Glazunov's concerto (1902), in which all three movements, including the *cadenza*, are combined into one big movement, Carl Nielsen's concerto (1904), and Max Reger's (1911). Max Reger's concerto with "its highly chromatic language, significantly extending the boundaries of the tonalities,"²⁰ influenced composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and the Second Viennese School. The Second Viennese School is famous with its new *Avant-Garde* and modernistic philosophy about classical music. The leading members of that school, Arnold Schoenberg, and his two pupils Anton Webern (1883-1945) and Alban Berg (1885-1935), employed in their music atonality and a twelve tone system, a system which will be used later by some of the Bulgarian violin concerto composers. By and large, this system operates in a way in which the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale are placed in a specific order forming a tone row which becomes a compositional tool. Generally, "strict serial composers" use

²⁰ Dominic Gill, *The Book of the Violin* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1984), 179.

every pitch in the row before repeating a pitch; however some composers, like Stravinsky, treat the technique differently. Although Schoenberg created the twelve tone system, he did not use it in his violin concerto, written in 1936. The work is not a twelve tone composition, but it is rather written in sonata form, and it is one of the most demanding violin concertos ever written.

Schoenberg warned violinists that “in order to play successfully this concerto the violin player needs to have six fingers.” The biggest “radicals” (for their time) sometimes strictly kept the classical forms when writing in the genre. Examples of Bulgarian composers writing violin concertos in styles similar to that of Schoenberg will be discussed later.

Another 20th century *Avant-Garde* style was Neo-Classicism. This style, prevalent between the two World Wars, was characterized by the return of balanced and clearly perceptible thematic structures of earlier times which replaced “the increasing exaggerated gestures and formlessness of late Romanticism.” The composers of this style used in their concertos extended tonality, modality, and even atonality in order to reproduce the hierarchically structured tonal system of the Viennese Classical or Baroque style concerto. Igor Stravinsky’s is such concerto. Written for the violinist Samuel Dushkin in 1931, this piece revived the Baroque concertante style.²¹ Stravinsky himself pointed out similarities with the finale of the concerto and Bach’s *Concerto for two violins*, especially “the duet of the soloist with a violin from the orchestra.” Stravinsky’s concerto is different from 19th century literature because the light orchestration is closer to chamber orchestra type orchestration than to the “symphonic concerto.” This stylistic path before the beginning of the Second World War was frequently employed by several Bulgarian violin concerto composers who were called “traditionalists.”

The last 20th century movement essential to mention is Impressionism. Impressionism is a philosophical, aesthetic, and polemic term associated with the late 19th century French paintings.

²¹ Michael Oliver, Igor Stravinsky (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995) 99.

The leading composers of this trend during the 20th century were Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Unfortunately, neither wrote a violin concerto that possesses such stylistic qualities. Curiously there is not a single whole violin concerto which might be identified as completely impressionistic. However, there are composers whose concertos carry suggestions of this particular style, notably Ottorino Respighi's violin concerto (1903) and Erich Korngold's one (1937). There is not a completely Impressionistic Bulgarian violin concerto. Similar to the absence of the Baroque type *Concerto Grosso* in the Bulgarian violin concerto development, the Impressionistic movement also was not employed by the majority of Bulgarian violin concerto composers.

This brief review of the violin concerto's history gives a context to the first Bulgarian violin concerto,²² which was composed by Pancho Vladigerov in 1921, written centuries after the first actual violin concerto. The Baroque and Classical periods did not exist at the same time in Bulgaria because during those years the country was occupied by the Ottoman Empire, a culture dissimilar to any other concurrent Western European cultures.²³ The biggest contribution to the successful and rapid development of the violin concerto as a genre was made by the violin players themselves. Without violin virtuosos and the contemporary violin schools, it is doubtful that the violin concerto genre would have had such a place in the musical life. In this set of thoughts, it is essential for one to notice that such virtuosi and schools did not exist in Bulgaria during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

During Baroque times, the accompanying ensemble was relatively small and its main purpose was to execute the *concertino-ritornello* dialogue. During this period, the harpsichord and *basso continuo* were as important as the soloist and the roles of the winds and brass were

²² Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Istoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Kultura* (Sofia: Abagar, 2001), 125.

²³ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Istoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Kultura*, 74.

relatively insignificant. The Classical period brought new ideas about the concerto orchestration. The role of the harpsichord and *basso continuo* eventually diminished and the newly invented wind instruments began to have a more important role. However, the orchestra in general, especially the brass instruments still had limited role. The Romantic period was the time of the *symphonic concertos*. These were fully orchestrated (full complement of winds and four horns, trumpets, and optional trombones). This practice continued during the 20th century with an increasingly dominant percussion section. For example, Prokofiev's orchestration of his second concerto for violin and orchestra includes a full percussion section with castanets, triangle, tambour, piatti, and grand cassa. It is pertinent to state these advances in the orchestral size not only because the orchestra was an increasingly important part of the concerto but also because the reality of life in Bulgaria during these periods, was not at all favorable for the establishment of a fully operative orchestra ensemble. In almost every concerto, especially of the 19th and 20th century examples, is hidden a very personal dedication to a person.²⁴ Some examples include Elgar's dedication (1910) to Fritz Kreisler, Joachim's dedication (1899) to Liszt, Bruch's second concerto (1891) and *Scottish Fantasy* (1880) to Pablo Sarasate. Others wrote their concertos because of commissions made by prolific violin players or influential patrons as in Bartok's second concerto for Zoltan Szekely (1939), Stravinsky's concerto for violinist Samuel Dushkin (1931), or Prokofiev's second concerto (1935) commissioned by R. Soetans. Bulgarian violin concertos were also often commissioned by famous people or dedicated to them.

²⁴ F. Emery, *The Violin Concerto*, 499.

CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST BULGARIAN VIOLIN CONCERTO

Bulgaria was established as an independent state in 681 A.D. Throughout a good part of its history, Bulgaria was a country ruled by a tsar, where the main religion was Christianity. The union between Thracians, Slavs, and Bulgarians, the major ethnic groups which created the Bulgarian state, was for a long time one of the most powerful militarily and politically respected unions in Europe. During these centuries the people of Bulgaria had many glorious and successful moments such as the formation of the Cyrillic alphabet (created by the Bulgarians St. Cyril and St. Methodius), the establishment of Christianity as the official religion (one of the first countries in Europe to accept this religion), the Golden Age of the Bulgarian culture during the reign of tsar Simeon I, and the writing of one of the first complete history books in Europe by Paisii Hilendarski. Despite these moments and events in the history of the country, Bulgarian people also lived through very dark and difficult times. The occupation by the Ottoman Empire brought about one of the darkest and most terrible periods in Bulgarian history.

2.1 Bulgarian Music Culture during the Ottoman Occupation

Bulgaria fell under the Ottoman Empire's reign in 1396 and regained its independence in 1878. For five centuries, Bulgarian people suffered extermination, forced islamisation and destruction of many cultural centers and monuments. The cultural elite and institutions were completely suppressed and destroyed. During this period¹, Bulgaria did not give the world a single originator of any art or institution capable to promote such an artist. Moreover, the culture of the new rulers of Bulgaria was significantly less sophisticated than what they found at the time of the occupation. The Bulgarian people did not "borrow"² any significant cultural or musical traditions from the Turkish culture, except for a few words and some tonal and modal aspects of

¹ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Kultura*, 57.

² K. Drumeva, *Bulgarsiat Folklor* (Sofia: Musica, 1969), 46.

Turkish music, mainly used in Bulgarian folk music. The worst influence of all, however, was the significant isolation from European Civilization which the Bulgarian people suffered during the Ottoman Empire's period of cultural and political domination. During the centuries of slavery, the functions of cultural development were executed by Bulgarian folklore and religion, a role mainly executed by the church. Actually, these two forces became the stimuli for the revival and development of music and everything connected to it. In 1762, a process called *Vuzrajdanie* (Revival), gradually gained momentum, ending in 1878 with the physical and intellectual emancipation of the Bulgarian people and the creation of an autonomous state.

The first institution connected to musical culture was the *Rilskia* singing school. Primarily, it was created in the Rila Monastery in 1790 to educate and produce singers for the Orthodox Christian Mass. Soon after that, the first national schools were established with the goal of providing children with basic music education. Since Bulgaria was not as isolated during the beginning of the 19th century as before, many teachers, musicians, and educated people from Central and Western Europe immigrated to Bulgaria. Along with Mihay Schafran they established the first Bulgarian orchestra in Schumen, a city in the northern part of Bulgaria. Schumen became one of the first musical centers, as a traveling merchant once stated "a couple days ago I came by in Schumen and I was surprised not only by their new, big, and modern school but also by the fact that the Schumen's young people were playing European dances like *Pollaca*, *Waltz*, and *Mazurka*." In 1866, the first music notebook *Pravila za Peene i Svechtenie i Pecni c Napevite im* was published. Soon after that, in Plovdiv, the first Bulgarian treatise which gave basic information about the sound, scales, chords, and many musical instruments was published. However, the most important events in the development of classical music in Bulgaria

were the deliverance of Bulgaria from Ottoman occupation and the establishment of the first generation of Bulgarian composers.

2.2 The First Bulgarian Composers

Even before the emancipation, education was the area with the strongest traditions. After 1878, it continued to develop with a speed previously unknown in the Balkans. At the end of the 19th century, the Bulgarian government spent twice as much as any other Balkan country on its educational needs, and soon Bulgaria became the country with most students, teachers, and schools in the Balkan Peninsula. In addition, many Bulgarians decided to get their education at prestigious and well developed music institutions in Europe and after finishing their education, returned to help in the establishment and development of the Bulgarian educational system. The pursuit of higher education and the rapid development of musical education and perception brought about the need for the establishment of a music school and an academy. In 1903, during the first congress of the *Bulgarian Music Union*, the question of the foundation of such a school was broadly discussed. Aleksander Krustev (a composer from the first generation of Bulgarian composers) commented that “among the most prominent members of the music community were discussed the question for an opening of a music school. There were two opinions; most of the people defended the idea that this school must be opened; others argued this and proposed to be hired internationally proclaimed music professors from abroad to come to Bulgaria.”³ Between 1903 and 1907, the Minister of Education Ivan Chichmanov made a significant contribution toward the establishment of such a school. In 1904, the financial support of the Minister of Education and the hard work of many musical figures facilitated the founding of the first Bulgarian music school. This school would later become an essential institution for the development of young students, performers, future music educators, and composers.

³ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarckata Muzikalna Ictoria*, 93.

According to many musicologists and the *Encyclopedia of the Bulgarian Composers*,⁴ the Bulgarian composers can be divided into three major groups, depending upon the different lifetime and musical ideas of the particular composer. The first generation of Bulgarian composers achieved the most difficult and important task creating music genres and forms which existed in the civilized world for centuries but were essentially nonexistent in Bulgaria until the end of the 19th century. The second generation consisted of composers who, especially after the two World Wars, made possible the synthesis between the Bulgarian music traditions and folklore and the contemporary music and aesthetic trends in Europe during the 20th century. The third generation was comprised of the most modern and radical composers, some of whom continue to compose up to today.

Nevertheless, the first generation of Bulgarian composers was forced to work in difficult conditions because the end of the century was marked by the lack of a sufficient number of orchestras, sheet music, instruments, and performers. The most complicated decision though was to decide which genres and styles of writing were especially appropriate for Bulgarian audiences. Emanuil Manolov (1860-1902) is considered to be the first Bulgarian composer and was the founder of the Bulgarian composer's school. He mainly wrote vocal music. Drawing from choral song tradition and the most famous folksongs, he created compact, emotional, and bright choral pieces, popular and liked even today. In 1900, Manolov wrote the first national opera *Ciromahkinya*. Although it's a chamber opera and no longer performed onstage, this opera will remain in Bulgarian music history as the first attempt to approach the European musical traditions. Another first generation Bulgarian composer was Maestro Georgi Atanasov (1882-1931), a pupil of Pietro Mascagni and "considered to be the founder of the Bulgarian opera with

⁴ Elicaveta Chendova, *Encyclopedia of the Bulgarian Composers* (Sofia: UBC, 2003), 7.

his opera *Gergana*.”⁵ This opera (1916), with its dramatic content and closeness to Bulgarian psychology, synthesizes the achievements of a whole generation of composers. Yet another member of this group of composers was Nikola Atanasov (1886-1969), who initiated the symphony genre in Bulgaria with his *Symphony No.1* (1912). The successful presentation of those genres would have been impossible without the help of the composer’s talent, knowledge (almost all of them graduated from prestigious schools and academies abroad), the use of the folklore songs, and deep understanding of the Bulgarian people’s psychology. However, some specific genres like the instrumental concerto and sonata remained unused because Bulgarian composers lacked confidence writing in those genres.

2.3 Pancho Vladigerov and the First Bulgarian Violin Concerto

Pancho Vladigerov (1890-1978), a leading member of the second and new generation of composers, is one of the most important and celebrated Bulgarian composers. He is honored today because he was among the first not only to achieve a synthesis between European classical music traditions and the specific Bulgarian psychology and folklore, but also to establish the instrumental concerto genre in Bulgaria. Born in Zurich, he and his twin brother Luben Vladigerov performed successfully together in Bulgaria and abroad. With the significant help of the Minister of Education Ivan Shishmanov, they began their education at the *Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik in Berlin*. In 1918, Pancho Vladigerov received the *Felix Mendelssohn Award* for his *Piano Concerto No.1*, which was the first Bulgarian instrumental concerto ever written. After his graduation from the *Conservatory of Berlin*, Pancho Vladigerov began working at the *Deutsches Theatre* where he composed music for many of the Max Reinhardt Spectacles. Max Reinhardt was one of the closest friends of Richard Strauss who, in turn, believed that Reinhardt was one of the finest innovators in the German theatre and

⁵ Lidia Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Ictoria*, 313.

dedicated to him his opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Soon after that, Strauss's aesthetics and compositional tools became essential to the young Bulgarian composer and consequently for his violin concerto. In 1932, Pancho Vladigerov settled in Bulgaria and was immediately appointed to teach piano, chamber music, and composition in the *State Academy of Music* in Sofia, which was founded in 1921 and ultimately named after him. Chronologically, Pancho Vladigerov was the first Bulgarian composer who managed to achieve a synthesis between national traditions and European principles of style and form. He used the late Romantic language as the basis of his writing, using its wide emotional diapason, chromatic language and the use of the four, five, six voice chords. Vladigerov is widely known for his use of a large symphony orchestra similar to that of Strauss's symphonic poems. Vladigerov was the first Bulgarian composer to benefit from European mainstream traditions during that time because he did not adhere strictly to follow the ultimate use of conventional Bulgarian music and folk melodies.

Pancho Vladigerov is the first Bulgarian composer recognized by the world's music audience and critics.⁶ He not only managed to incorporate in his works the Bulgarian musical traditions and folk melodies but also the European *Avant-Garde* stylistic characteristics, present in the beginning and the middle of the 20th century. Pancho Vladigerov did not follow the generally accepted perception of Bulgarian classical music as a simple compilation of folklore elements. On the contrary, he was one of the first Bulgarian composers to write in the concerto and symphony genres without using such elements in excess. In a way, he became the *Avant-Garde* leader of a new composer's school. Born and educated in Western Europe, and a close friend to other progressive minded people such as Stefan Zvaig, Arthur Chnicler, Frantz Molnar, Frantz Veerfel, Pancho Vladigerov was a part of Western European classical music and culture during the beginning of the 20th century. Writing mainly in instrumental and symphonic genres,

⁶ Ibid, 41.

he was one of the first Bulgarian composers to be associated with a particular style of writing. His violin concerto, along with his first piano concerto and *Waltz Romantic*, were also the first Bulgarian pieces to be presented in the famous *Carnegie Hall* and other venues in the USA. His violin concerto was played in almost every important city in Europe and the USA, namely in Prague, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Bern, Chicago, Philadelphia, Saint Louis, and many others. His violin concerto is particularly innovative and interesting not only because of the one movement compact structure but also because of its elaborate meaning which takes the violin concerto genre to a new direction.

At the time when Vladigerov composed his concerto, the genre of the *symphonic poem* had already been exploited by the late Romantic composers. Before him, Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner wrote such works, but Vladigerov was the first Bulgarian composer to incorporate two different genres simultaneously. His structure of the sonata allegro form in a violin concerto is a different and new one. There are not many cases in the violin concerto repertory where the beginning of the development and recapitulation can be played without the solo violin. His substitution of the violin solo with a harp and the concertmaster solo displays his enormous creativity, and a control of the music material and form. He did not leave room for a *cadenza* because it would have broken the form and would have shown the virtuosic side of the violin. Although the concerto could be classified as an example of the late European Romantic mainstream, that does not mean that Pancho Vladigerov did not use any Bulgarian elements. An interview given by the composer for a German newspaper in 1929 explains his thoughts about the meaning of the Bulgarian folklore and new classical music: “for me, the use of the folklore was not ever a question. The question was to hide it or most unceremoniously to use it as a showcase and to make it the most important event of the piece. I always thought of the Bulgarian

folklore as a valuable and critical source of ideas and emotions. But I always tried to use it along with other also important thoughts and elements so necessary for writing good music.”

During the summer of 1920, the Vladigerov’s brothers were visiting their close friend Leon Pasternak in Zurich. The same city where Pancho Vladigerov created his first piano concerto would become the place where he would compose his first violin concerto. The rate at which Vladigerov was composing is notable. It took him only a month to complete the sketch of the concerto, another to create the piano part, and three more to write down the orchestra score. In 1921, on the 5th of March, in the big *Beethoven Hall*, Gustav Havemann presented the premiere of Vladigerov’s *1st Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* performed by the *Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra* under the baton of Fritz Reiner (the conductor of the *Dresden Opera Orchestra* during that time). In its section *Concert’s Review* by the music critic Adolph Vaisman, a widely read German newspaper carried the following note: “Fresh air enveloped us during the Saturday’s concert. Fritz Rainer strengthened his success in front of the audience with the performance of a *Serenade* by Leo Vainer. After that, in front of us ringed out one new *Violin Concerto in F minor*, firing with young enthusiasm by the Bulgarian Pancho Vladigerov who is nineteen years old, and already created more than ten pieces. This piece is well constructed and requires a gigantic orchestra which stands against the solo instrument with its *con sordino* brass instruments, piercing high registers, and harp like use of the celesta. Gustav Havemann, who was absolutely controlling the piece, was fighting actively and successfully for more stage presence, while Fritz Rainer was leading the orchestra accompaniment with confidence and passion.”⁷ In another Berlin newspaper, the *Fosiche Zaitung*, the critic Max Marchalk wrote: “Among the younger contemporary composers is Bulgarian Pancho Vladigerov. Together with his brother Luben Vladigerov, who is an excellent violinist, Mr. Vladigerov organized a concert, in which

⁷ Evgeni Klosterman, *Pancho Vladigerov* (Sofia: Muzika, 2000), 60.

were performed couple of shorter violin pieces and his *Violin Concerto in F minor*. Vladigerov is one of those composers who liked to avoid the too strict path of the tonality.” The fast success of the concerto brought Vladigerov many benefits such as his employment as a permanent publisher and many concert engagements. As well in 1922, Vladigerov signed a contract with *Universal Edition* who published his *Violin Concerto in F minor*. Soon after, Pancho Vladigerov presented his concerto in cities like Dresden, Paris, Vienna, and Salzburg. Indeed, the concerto genre brought to this Bulgarian composer the reputation of being a crafty and imaginative young man.

Pancho Vladigerov’s *Violin Concerto in F minor* is dedicated to his brother Luben Vladigerov. “To my beloved brother”⁸ was Pancho Vladigerov’s inscription written on the title page of the concerto. Luben Vladigerov himself made a few corrections in this particular work because his brother wanted a professional violinist to participate in the creation of the piece. Pancho Vladigerov had asked his brother and Gustav Havemann, Luben’s violin teacher, for their professional opinions regarding the solo violin part of the work. The formal structure of the concerto is monolithic and compact because there are three movements of the classical violin concerto. However, in the process of building up the thematic material, the movements flow logically yet naturally while creating the idea of a one movement concerto. This was not the first example of a one movement concerto because some of the best one movement Romantic concertos like Glazunov’s, Mendelssohn’s, and Vieuxtemp’s were already created during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The term *one movement concerto*, however, needs further clarification. There are three recognizable yet different movements in character, which are interconnected and played continuously, without a break.

⁸ Pancho Vladigerov, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in F Minor* (Sofia: Muzika, 1967), 1.



Example 1. The first example shows the connection between the first and second movement.



Example 2. This example shows the connection between the second and the third movement.

As mentioned above, Pancho Vladigerov was well-known for his thorough symphonic writing. His use of the orchestra and the way of presenting the thematic material in his violin concerto only provides further support for this statement. One would go as far as to say that the “big symphonic violin concertos by Brahms and Beethoven echo in his works with a more radical and contemporary voice.” Regarding the use of the orchestra and the development of the thematic material, “Vladigerov’s concerto closely resembles Liszt’s and Strauss’ symphonic poems.”⁹

Although Pancho Vladigerov was 19 years old and had written only two other short violin pieces before his violin concerto, he stood out as an expert on the violin as an instrument. Using all registers of the instrument, the composer did not avoid writing even some of the

⁹ Bojanka Muchanova, *The Bulgarian Concertino*, diss. (Sofia: University Press, 1987), 24.

highest possible pitches on the violin. For example, there are many places in the concerto where the composer wrote C-sharp, D, and F in the forth octave.



Example3. This example shows the high registers used by the composer.

Generally, Vladigerov intended to sophisticate some of the themes presented by the violin through the use of successive sixths, thirds, and multiple voice chords.



Example 4. This example shows the use of successive sixths, thirds, and multiple voice chords.

Among other frequently used violin techniques, is the intense use of arpeggios and broken triads and chords. Both the dynamics range and the register range are enormous. We can see that the solo part shows numerous indications of *triple forte* or *fortissimo* with *crescendo* towards *triple forte* throughout the score as a whole.



Example 5. This example shows the range of the dynamics.

More specifically, Pancho Vladigerov used *fortissimo* or *triple forte* fifty-four times in the solo part, which considering the range of the violin, is quite a lot. This, along with the frequent use of double stops, chords, and extreme registers of the violin, prove yet again the role of the violin as more than a mere virtuoso solo instrument.

The concerto, like all other instrumental concertos¹⁰ by Pancho Vladigerov, begins with a short orchestral introduction. The solo violin begins the first theme with a succession of sixths in triplets. This theme, being rather indistinguishable sometimes, is repeated many times in the different movements of the concerto and becomes recognizable as the *Leitmotiv* theme. Such an important compositional tool was essential for the Late Romantic composers including Pancho Vladigerov. He was highly influenced by such masters of this technique like Wagner and Strauss.



Example 6. This example shows again the diversity of the musical language.

Despite the fact that the concerto is in F minor, the beginning of the first movement does not have an easily recognizable tonal center. The succession of the whole tone scales and following arpeggios creates difficulties in defining the major *tonic* key. The almost constant alterations of any flats or sharps in the key signature make the beginning of the movement tonally unsettled and almost atonal. However, the harmonic sophistication of the introduction and the succession of certain key relationships are the compositional tools of Vladigerov's construction in the first movement. They introduce and make a smooth transition to the main theme of the first

¹⁰ Pancho Vladigerov, First and second Violin Concertos (Sofia: Muzika, 1980), 3.

movement, which is indeed in F minor. However the second theme, indicated with the *Moderato* marking, has a passionate and melancholic character, and it is in C minor.



Example 7 shows the modulation to the new key at the beginning of the second theme.

The second theme begins after a short fifteen bar transition played by the orchestra. This theme is significantly more relaxed as there is an easily recognizable song influence. In addition, faster passages appear and after several broken chords the solo violin finishes the exposition in high register (B-flat in the third octave.) Finally, the orchestra explodes and takes the dominant role. Thusly, it begins the development which is built over the introductory theme and second theme. This makes the development dependent on the previously presented thematic material. During the short development, the orchestra replaces the leading role of the solo instrument. The development ends with a succession of loud dissonances, which mark the culmination of this section. After the dramatic and sharp sonorities during the development, the orchestra continues with a barely audible sound in order to achieve the melodic contrast. The background sound of the harp and the concertmaster's solo present the beginning of the recapitulation, which entirely replaces the normal structure of the recapitulation in the sonata form. With the assistance of certain nuances, they summarize the mood of the exposition rather than its thematic content. More accurately, this contrasting final part of the movement makes a smoother transition into the second movement. There are no recognizable folk songs or melodies in this movement. The fact that there are not any uneven compound time signatures helps also to assert the lack of Bulgarian folk elements in this movement. To a certain extent, Vladigerov was influenced by Strauss and Wagner's late Romantic compositions and style of writing. The role of the solo violin and the

structure of the movement, along the original and inventive treatment of the sonata form allegro, make this movement one of the best examples of late Romantic concerto symphonic poems written during the 20th century.¹¹

The second movement, which is in F-sharp minor, begins with a slow lyrical melody. The solo instrument, however, never ceases to fascinate the listener as the orchestra supports the solo with colorful harmonies and tonal shading. During the middle section of the movement there is faster contrasting material. The recapitulation material again brings back the lyrical mood, presented with new nuances. The binary form (A, B, A,) is observed as Pancho Vladigerov strictly follows the already existing traditions of the genre.



Example 8 shows the beginning of the second movement.



Example 8a presents the B section in the second movement.



Example 8b shows the returning of the main theme in the second movement.

At the end of the second movement, the oboe in the orchestra score unveils the beginning motif that of a popular Bulgarian folk song called *Mari More Momichence*. This motif is passed on to

¹¹ Elicaveta Chendova, *Enciklopedia Bulgarcki Kompozitor*, 60.

the bassoons and trumpets as the tempo speeds up and the modulation in the *tonic* F minor key makes the transition into the third movement.

The third movement is in a sonata *rondo* form. The major theme once again is the happy, playful folk song *Mari More Momichence*.



Example 9 presents the main frame of this folk song.



Example 10 shows the *Coda*.

Originally, the song was in an uneven compound time signature but Pancho decided to change the time signature of the song to fit into the $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature of his concerto. This change gives the thematic material more freedom and a dance-like character. The second theme of the movement has more of a singing quality while being closer to the previously presented themes in the first and second movements with its romantic mood. Succeeding it, the first theme appears again, however it is significantly changed and has a rather virtuosic development in the solo violin. The middle part of the third movement is in another key, D minor. However, the composer decided to put two flats as a key signature instead of just one flat, which is the

standard key signature for D minor. This theme is a slow melody, which resembles nostalgic Bulgarian folk songs. At the end of the middle section of the movement, the music becomes more passionate and dramatic. The recapitulation summarizes the first and second themes. The end of the concerto comes after a turbulent and virtuosic Coda.

The orchestration of the concerto was a challenge for Pancho Vladigerov because he wanted to maximize the use of all brass, wind, and string instruments. He also needed “more room” to develop the orchestration and the themes. Therefore, he decided to use the orchestra as a replacement for the solo instrument for much of the piece. For example, during the transition between the first and second movements, in which the orchestra transforms some of the first movement’s themes and melodies and presents new material, that same orchestra plays more than sixty four bars by itself sounding like one homogenous solo. Another important aspect of the orchestra is that it is never only accompanying the solo part. Pancho Vladigerov used the orchestra in an interesting way. Sometimes he would write for the orchestra in an extremely quiet dynamics, introducing suspense in the composition, only to prepare the audience for the almost unnaturally powerful sound subsequent to this frail musical stillness. Those effects are rare for an accompanying orchestra and especially for violin concertos as most of the time the solo part dominates. It is rather curious that, despite its enormous power of performance and sound, the orchestra never defeats the solo part. This type of concertos contributes something original to twenty century violin performance practice.

CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULGARIAN VIOLIN CONCERTO AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The period between the two World Wars is one of the most debated times in Bulgarian history. These years had a direct impact on Bulgarian musical life. It was during those years that the tendencies and processes--the preparation for which had begun during the *Vuzragdane* period--gained full momentum. Unfortunately, for a period of five years, Bulgaria suffered two national catastrophes. Because the country had lost the Balkan War and fought on the “wrong side” during the First World War, considerable parts of Bulgarian territory were torn apart and annexed by its neighbors. Bulgaria was forced to pay substantial reparations to the rest of Europe and lost thousands of soldiers during the wars. After the end of the First World War, Bulgaria found itself in a much different world than the one before the war. The Balkans, with its specific characteristics, followed common European tendencies. In Serbia and Romania, the monarchies established authoritarian regimes; in Turkey, Kemal Ataturk formed a new type of leadership, and Greece was shaken by military coups. Bulgaria had its own original contribution to the cultivation of authoritarian regimes. Humiliated and politically unsettled, Bulgaria fell under both Nazi and communist influences which changed the political, cultural, and social situation in the country.”¹ Fortunately, during the years between the two World Wars, despite the sudden change of regimes and the numerous political crises, musical culture continued to grow.

After the First World War, amateur musicians in Bulgaria existed mainly as members of “music associations.”² The roots of this tradition were established even before the Liberation in 1878. However, such associations were not influenced by the new tendencies of Bulgarian classical music. Associations like *Rodni Zvuci* in Burgas, *Iskra* in Kazanlak, *Gusla* in Tryvna, among others, promoted and organized classical music concerts. These concerts rarely

¹ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Istoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Kultura*, 140.

² Venelin Kructev, *Ocheri po Istoria na Bulgarskata Musikalna Literatura* (Sofia: Muzika), 1977.

introduced new repertoires, but rather focused on the Viennese classics, light Romantic pieces, and the songs of the first-generation Bulgarian composers like Emanuil Manolov and Dobri Hristov. Music by the second-generation Bulgarian composers was noticeably absent from these performances. The activity of those “music associations” is a good example of how slowly the wide public’s consciousness was changing while channeled by certain people’s mere ambition to prevent the status quo from changing. Nevertheless, such associations, along with the music schools, formed a base which made possible the achievements of the next generation of composers and prepared the future audience for a new wave of operas and symphonies.

If until 1918 Bulgarian classical music culture was united to some extent, after the end of the First World War it began to separate itself in equally historically important but opposite trends. Another type of musical union arose on a very different level. In 1933, the *Contemporary Music Society* was established as its members became the leading composers of the second generation of Bulgarian composers. Members like Pancho Vladigerov (1899-1978), Luibomir Pipkov (1904-1974), Vesselin Stoyanov (1902-1969), Dimitar Nenov (1902-1953), among others, tried to spread musical culture in an accessible way. “This society’s aim was to work for the best interests of Bulgarian music in the country and abroad and to watch for the right course of Bulgarian musical life.”³ The *Contemporary Music Society* organized regular concerts called *One Hour of Bulgarian Music*, where many new pieces, including several new violin concertos, were played for the first time. The society also created a music library and recommended that Bulgarian pieces be studied at the *State Academy of Music* in Sofia. The society organized many concerts of Bulgarian music abroad. In a way, this society promoted the *Avant-Garde* of the Bulgarian music. After a mere forty years on the classical music scene, Bulgaria’s composers and performers gained international recognition for their contributions to fine-arts music.

³ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarckata Muzikalna Ictoria*, 145.

Although Bulgaria was a monarchy, there was no upper class society in the country. For a long time after the liberation from Ottoman occupation, there was hardly anyone to pay for or organize classical concerts. The rapid development of Capitalism at the beginning of the century created a few wealthy people, most of whom were politicians, bankers, and retailers who did not have much interest in classical music. The majority of Bulgarians, living in destitution, were concerned only with survival. Musical life in Bulgaria could flourish only with the help of an organization comprised of capable, educated people dedicated to the advancement of classical music. *The Contemporary Music Society* was created to embrace this important task.

Nonetheless, the country's composers failed to produce even a single concerto during the thirty-year period after the composition of the first Bulgarian violin concerto. This stagnation was bizarre because all other music genres developed quickly. Obviously, the success of Pancho Vladigerov's concerto was not great enough for the majority of the Bulgarian composers and for a long time they avoided writing violin concertos. Another reason for this dormant period was the fact that most of the Bulgarian composers were looking for more symphonic and operatic genres which would be more successfully presented to the audience. Despite the expansive texture of Vladigerov's violin concerto, musical societies and audiences still perceived the violin concertos as chamber pieces that were meant to be played for a small, select group. During the period between the two World Wars, many young, talented Bulgarian violin players continued their education in Europe and the USA but remained unknown in their own country. The first music school and academy were still quite new, and had yet to produce a generation of advanced, mature violin players. Therefore, Bulgarian composers did not have ready access to performers who could ensure the success of a new violin concerto. However, during the tumultuous forty-

five years after World War II, the new generation of Bulgarian composers wrote more than forty violin concertos.

3.1 The Identity Cult

The end of the Second World War was a turning point in Bulgarian and Eastern European history. Unfortunately, before and during the Second World War, the Bulgarian regime and a good deal of the common folk sympathized with and helped the Nazis. As a friend of the Nazi regime, Bulgaria was again on the brink of a national catastrophe after Germany's defeat. The Communist sentiment of many Bulgarian people gave rise to the Bulgarian Communist Party and its dependence on the Soviet Union for protection. The political situation in Europe and the relationships among the countries who won the war also helped in the establishment of the proletariat dictatorship. Europe was separated because of an agreement by the leaders of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States. The Eastern part of Europe became a part of the Communist block and in many ways lost its identity and independence. The beginning of the Communist Era was also marked by another event which impacted directly musical culture in Bulgaria. *Kultut kum Lichnosta* (The Identity Cult) was the name for one of the most primitive acts in the most recent history of Bulgaria.

Based on the "General Line" conducted by the Communist Government, some people who were complement enough and kept the idea that culture must be close to the people, were tolerated and applauded. Many composers, even those known for their communist beliefs, were forced to adapt to this philosophy. Other composers, who did not have any political preferences, were dubbed "formalists" and people who propagated "the bad Western European culture." Many artists had to either change their philosophies or risk being prosecuted and forgotten as artists forever. This had a catastrophic influence on classical music. The music of such masters

and prominent composers such as Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975), Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953), and others were violently criticized as “formalists who don’t show the rich life of socialist society.”⁴

Similar to this approach, many composers and musical figures in Bulgaria were either isolated or criticized for their works. One of these composers was Konstantin Iliev (1924-1988), who wrote this about the era: “After we had listened to the genius of Shostakovich (1906-1975), Prokofiev (1891-1953), and Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) as there was not a concert without their music and after it was mentioned so many times that they are the best product of the Soviet Union’s music style, it suddenly happened that they became ideological enemies. Everything appeared normal except that some of the Bulgarian musicians did not keep their dignity. Some composers, who once accepted the significance of Shostakovich and Prokofiev for the contemporary world music culture, were now attacking those names with unseen fury.”⁵ The young Bulgarian composers were not spared; many of them, including Konstantin Iliev (1924-1988), Lazar Nikolov (1922-2005), and even Luibomir Pipkov (1904-1974), were criticized and banned from the stage. Considering that some of them were also prolific composers of violin concertos, it is extremely important for us to recall the events which marked their life and works. This “general line” directly impacted Bulgarian classical music and the composers of violin concertos. The “line” brought about the belief that each piece of music must show the happiness and success of the Bulgarian people. The works needed to be as simple as possible with easily understood melodies and structures. The use of folk elements was almost mandatory because, according to the “line,” that was the best way to get to the masses. All similarities with Western European contemporary classical music tradition were criticized and expelled. Especially

⁴ Ivan Hlebarov, *Simfonizmut na Bulgarskite Compository ot Vtoroto Pokolenie* (Sofia: Muzika, 1977) 34.

⁵ Lili Kracheva, *Ictoria na Bulgarckata Musikalna Kultura*, 207.

problematic for the “General Line” were those composers, including Lazar Nikolov and Konstantin Iliev, who were writing atonal pieces or using the twelve tone system. Works inspired by the Second Viennese School were simply absent from the stage. Any composer who used such compositional tools and approaches was isolated and almost banned from the stage. Despite this horrific doctrine, which essentially dictated how a violin concerto must be written, the Bulgarian violin concerto composers turned out to be quite productive.

3.2 Luibomir Pipkov’s Violin Concerto (1951)

Luibomir Pipkov was born in 1904 in the small town of Lovech and died in 1974 in the capitol of Bulgaria, Sofia. His father, Panayot Pipkov, was one of the most prominent members of the first generation of Bulgarian composers. Similar to most Bulgarian composers from the first and second generations, Luibomir Pipkov studied abroad and graduated from the *Ecole Normal de Musique*, in Paris. There, he studied composition with Paul Dukas and Nadia Boulanger. After his final visit to Bulgaria, he became one of the founders of the *Union of the Bulgarian Compositors for Contemporary Music* in 1933 and *The Music Publishing House*, which is one of the few Bulgarian publishing houses.

Pipkov composed in every major musical genre, and his works can be divided into three periods. His first period contains works written before the Second World War. The most important pieces in this period are his symphonic suites and operas. Based on the folklore, he modified his original and unique music language and style. Music critics, however, had trouble understanding his “very expressive but not very approachable and sometimes quite sarcastic and demonic music.”⁶ Before the Second World War he did not hide his sympathy for the Communist Party. After the Second World War, similar to many other composers, he had to adjust to the communist regime, making his music more understandable and acceptable to the

⁶ Ivan Hlebarov, *Tvorcheskiat Sviyat na Luibomir Pipkov* (Sofia: Artkoop, 2000), 10.

masses. He began using a song genre (songs for the masses), which was very popular during those years and recommended by the government. In his works during this second period, the musical language is clearer and more heroic, with a lighter structure. Without abandoning the folk style and its richness of rhythm and meter, Pipkov adopted to writing the “songs of the masses.” During this period he wrote his *Violin Concerto in A major*, which has a special dedication.

Although the concerto was one of the most successful pieces written during his second period, the composer drastically altered his style soon after its completion. Only four years separate the concerto from the beginning of his third period. While Pipkov’s first period works were mostly symphonic, his second and third periods were characterized by his writing of chamber music and concertos. The music of Pipkov, including the violin concerto, contains allusions to the music of Shostakovich, Artur Honegger (1892-1955), and Paul Hindemith (1895-1963). Anti-war sentiment and the age-old battle between good and evil have the main emphasis in Pipkov’s works. The oxymoronic phrase “lyrical-evil” plays an important role describing his music, especially the violin concerto. Chamber-like writing, which was widespread during the 20th century, also became essential in Pipkov’s writing.

In August of 1948, Pipkov was invited to participate at the *World Congress of the Intellectuals* in Wroclaw, Poland. The main idea behind the congress was the protection of world peace. Many intellectuals who experienced the horror of the Second World War gathered to find a solution to the post-war crisis. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the Cold War began. From the *World Congress of the Intellectuals*, Picasso’s pigeon flew off as the world symbol of peace and it was here that the Bulgarian composer decided to dedicate a violin concerto to all young people. The full title of the concerto is “A Dedication to the Young People

Who are Building up and Fighting for Peace.”⁷ The work was finished on May 7, 1950. The concerto contains a variety of thematic material. It is similar to his first symphony in terms of thematic diversity, which he achieved by developing thematic variants and the introduction of new themes. This diversity created a fullness of lyricism instead of merely creating an epic multitude of musical images.

The first movement begins directly with the introduction of the first theme in the violin solo.



Example 11 shows the beginning of the concerto and the main theme.

During the continuous stream of the melodic line in the first bars of the theme, one can clearly delineate two important motifs. Motif A has a lyrical character and reappears in the violin *cadenza* at the end of the piece. Motif B, with its triplets, acts as the base for all *scherzo* sections in the development of the first movement and the finale. The appearance of a lyrical second theme complements the main theme, serving as a middle section in the larger structure of the solo part. The theme goes to the *subdominant* sphere and with its constant tonal motion arrives again as a variant of the first theme which keeps the initial key of F-sharp minor. Following that, the closing theme neither brings tonal contrast (as it develops over the *dominant* of the F-sharp minor) nor thematic impact because the motives are from the second theme of the solo part and the variant of the first theme. Because of this configuration of motifs and variants, the whole exposition of the first movement stays in the lyrical sphere of emotions. Contrast comes with the

⁷ Ivan Hlebarov, *Tvorcheskiat Sviyat na Luibomir Pipkov*, 340.

development section, which has an energetic *scherzo* character. However, along with the development, a fourth lyrical theme appears in E-flat major which prepares the audience for the establishment of a lyrical theme in the finale. The themes, which are of similar character and structure, define the amazing and even paradoxical monothematic image of the piece.

The second movement is also lyrical. With three separate movements, Pipkov's concerto stays true to classical form. The slow *Andante* shows the influence of ancient rural folklore.



Example 12 shows the beginning of the *Andante*.

The third movement of the concerto finally brings out a new mood. The third movement *scherzo*, however, is more of a complement to the first two movements. During Pipkov's second period, the *scherzo* character indicates the joyful feeling of the richness of human life. The first theme of the *Finale* has an energetic dance-like character. The second theme is again a lyrical one, similar to the closing theme in the development. Pipkov inserts a *cadenza* at the end of the *Finale* instead of the normal placement in the first movement.



Example 13 shows the *Cadenza* in the third movement.

3.3 Marin Goleminov's Violin Concerto (1968)

There are similarities between Luibomir Pipkov and another significant member of the second generation Bulgarian composers, Marin Goleminov. Born in 1908 in the small town of Kustendil, located in the Western part of the country, he began his studies playing violin at the *Sofia State Academy of Music* in 1927. Four years later, he continued his studies at the *Scola Cantorum* in Paris with the famous composer Vincent d'Indy. After finishing his education with graduation from the French academy, he returned to Bulgaria and became one of the leading figures in Bulgarian classical music. Similar to the Luibomir Pipkov's evolution, Marin Goleminov's is closely connected with the periods of Bulgarian musical culture. During the years before the Second World War, he contributed to the establishment and development of the Bulgarian Classical national style. After the Second World War, similar to many composers of that time, he expressed in his music the notion of the heroic and happy life of the people in Communist Bulgaria. After the sixties, he again changed his style, beginning to use more chamber orchestration, unconventional sounds and ensemble collocations, and fewer references to folk music. He wrote in every genre; however, the instrumental genre concerto had a special place in his creative path.⁸ No other Bulgarian composer's general style was dominated by the precedent set by a single one of his own works. The dance drama *Nestinarka* and the style of writing which Goleminov used became an essential element of his compositional craft.

Goleminov was born and spent his younger years in the South Western part of Bulgaria. There, some of the pagan rituals and customs were still practiced. Along with them many religious songs, which lost their social and ritualistic meanings, were preserved.⁹ The ritual elements of Orthodox Christianity were accepted as anachronisms or simply amusing practices

⁸ Marin Goleminov, *Dnevnik* (Sofia: Soros, 1996), 67

⁹ Vennelin Krustev, *Profili* (Sofia: Musika, 1976), 307.

which replaced the old pagan folklore customs. This attitude was typical, especially for the people who lived in this part of Bulgaria, and the skepticism of the supernatural and the power of God dominated. Many musicologists and theorists compare Goleminov's musical language with Stravinsky's, especially with Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*. The language of *Nestinarka* and the musical idiom of the composer during this time continued later with his violin concerto. The concerto is dedicated to Boyan Lechev, one of Goleminov's closest friends and a violin professor at the *State Academy of Music* in Sofia. The violin concerto has the classical three movement form with a separation between each movement. The first movement is in the classical sonata form without a *cadenza*. Although the movement lies generally within the sphere of D minor, a solid statement that the movement is in D minor cannot be made. This is true not only because of the missing B-flat in the key signature but also the heavy use of accidentals throughout the movement. The alterations are so many that it is impossible to determine a definite tonal center at the beginnings of each major part of the sonata form like the exposition and recapitulation. The tonal alterations result in a combination of different intervals and chords. Namely, those intervals and chords represent the biggest challenge for even the most advanced violin player. The difficulty of the movement is compounded by the excessive use of double stops and chords, and very often the use of intervals which are not the most idiomatic for the violin. Such intervals like minor seconds, major seventh, minor sevenths, and tritones are typical of Goleminov's music language. A favorite bow stroke of Goleminov's and Stravinsky's is the repetition of several accented *marcato* down bows which imply an aggressive pagan kind of sound. The second theme, which is more melodic and has a different character from most of the themes in the movement, is the only place where the specific stroke and the use of combinations

of intervals and chords discussed earlier are not presented. By writing a more diatonic theme with longer, more legato phrases, the composer added diversity and color to the work



Example 14 shows the beginning of the concerto and presents the strong use of these intervals.

The second movement, which is similar to many second movements in a typical violin concerto, is a slow movement, contrasting with the first movement. Although the movement is generally in the B-flat major tonal sphere, a strict key signature or tonal center cannot be named. Because key signatures are not used, accidentals are quite important in each movement. Even in the slow movement, long legato phrases, give way to the shorter strokes and fragmentary rhythmic structures. These qualities, combined with the lack of a tonal center, make the performer's task quite difficult. The third movement is fast and is in sonata *rondo* form. The composer chose to use a small *cadenza* right before the *Coda* which was not very common technique, but did occur in some other violin concertos. A relatively rare compositional tool used by Bulgarian composers of violin concertos is the *glissando* effect. Marin Goleminov used it in his violin concerto and, especially during the third movement, the technique as a new color. Similar to the first movement, one of the episodes in the final movement is different in character, with a longer more legato shape. The *cadenza* is short, but it can create technical problems for the performers especially with intonation when there are double stops and chords.



Example 15 shows the beginning of the *Cadenza*.

3.4 Vesselin Stoyanov's Violin Concerto (1956)

Born in Schumenn in 1902, Vesselin Stoyanov can be considered a traditionalist in Bulgarian classical music and an important figure in the establishment of entirely nationalistic Bulgarian classical music. He began his studies at the Music Academy in Sofia as a piano player and continued his education at the *Vienna Academy of the Performing Arts*. During his lengthy career as a composer, he created pieces in many different genres however; his instrumental concertos have received the most recognition. He wrote a violin concerto in 1956 and a concertino for violin and orchestra in 1963. As a whole, Vesselin Stoyanov is known for his rich, florid harmony and colorful sound, which was not necessarily orchestrated with full ensemble.¹⁰ All those specific elements of his writing are valid in his concerto including the frequent use of *Leitmotif* technique.¹¹ Searching for his approach toward achieving a national music and style, he embedded melodies and rhythms in a folk style without quoting folk melodies.¹² He was one of the first and few Bulgarian composers who were striving to create entirely nationally oriented classical music without actually quoting folk melodies. His works can be considered one of the

¹⁰ Elicaveta Chendova, *Enciklopedia na Bulgarskite Kompozitori*, 266.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 29.

¹² *Ibid*, 201.

most traditionalistic pieces in Bulgarian classical music. The following short interview sheds more light on what he was thinking about the modern trends in European classical music: “By Schoenberg I know *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Guerre Lieder*. These are two bizarre pieces with overly diverse dynamics. About the content of the pieces we can’t speak because it is either hidden from us or just does not exist. In all cases one question emerges and this question is do we need always to react to such pieces as a misunderstanding of the real life. We can’t be so skeptical towards Schoenberg because he has proven himself as a great musician despite the fact that I don’t accept the aesthetic values and scale of his atonal pieces.”¹³

Vesselin Stoyanov’s violin concerto has three movements. There are many *rubatos* not only because of the expressive character of the solo part but also because the composer insisted that a *rubato* should be used frequently.



Example 13 shows a *rubato* moment.

There are many different tempo indications in a single movement which is a sign of more sophisticated rhythmic and musical contrast. Apparently, Vesselin Stoyanov was looking for the most consonant intervals and chords possible because harmonically there are not any significant dissonances.¹⁴ This avoidance of dissonances has a significant place in his compositional technique; often the use of perfect consonances is striking. Also present in his concerto is the constant use of ornaments, specifically *mordents*, which is a very rare compositional tool during

¹³ Vennelin Krustev, *Profili* (Sofia: Muzika, 1976), 161.

¹⁴ Elicaveta Chendova, *Enciklopedia na Bulgarskite Kompository*, 267.

the 20th century compositional practice, excluding Neo-Classical compositions. The use of such ornamentations and *mordents* is typical for the Baroque violin concertos, but Stoyanov's concerto is far from this style not only historically but also in its stylistic orientation. The use of such ornaments is very similar to Bulgarian folk songs called *Haydushki*, which are known for their sometimes excessive ornamentation. Over such an ornamented melody, the composer built up the climax of the entire first movement. Along with this melody, another lyrical virtuosic theme is part of the main thematic material of the first movement. The second movement, marked *Andante*, is of a restrained lyrical character with some poignant moments. However, the lyrical feeling is suddenly made coarsened because of the primitive dance rhythms¹⁵ in the middle section.



Example 17 shows the beginning of this section.

This episode happens again in a way similar to the third movement, which is marked *ritmico*.

The concerto hardly can be classified as any known Western European style. It is an exclusively nationalistic and traditionally oriented piece created as a paradigm of the typical Bulgarian violin concerto. Although Bulgarian folk music is not simply known for its melodic content, but rather its rhythmic diversity and richness, Vesselin Stoyanov, similar to many Bulgarian violin concerto composers, did not use an uneven compound meter. Therefore, even

¹⁵ Ibid, 618.

the third movement, which is similar to the typical fast Bulgarian dance called *horo*¹⁶ with its uneven compound rhythm, is in 4/4 time signature.



Example 18 clearly indicates the four beats in the bar.

This movement has an emphatically bravura character and “the tarantella like rhythm helps the author to develop one virtuoso, typically Bulgarian as an intonation final movement, written to be a showcase exploring all possibilities of the instrument.”¹⁷ The composer resolved this quite originally by writing different strokes and accents over a succession of triplets showing the uneven compound rhythm of the dance without using the actual time signature. The obvious difficulty of the movement comes from the fast *vivo* tempo and alternation of two different strokes which are fast *detache* and *spiccato*. Along with sudden changes of the dynamics, these strokes can cause additional difficulties for performers. Many times a *subito* piano appears when the *spiccato* stroke is implied. Despite the lack of a *cadenza*, the concerto possesses virtuosic elements with its fast tempos, triplet *spiccato* figures, and fast double string crossings.

3.5 Lazar Nikolov’s Violin Concerto (1952)

Lazar Nikolov, who was born in 1922 and died in 2005, was one of the few Bulgarian composers from this generation who studied entirely in Bulgaria. Born in Burgas, a populous city on the Black Sea, he graduated from the high school in his native town, and after that studied composition at the *State Academy of Music* in Sofia with Professor Dimitar Nenov and Pancho

¹⁶ Ibid, 86.

¹⁷ Vennelin Kructev, *Ocherki po Ictoria na Bulgarskata Muzika* (Sofia : Muzika, 1977), 619.

Vladigerov. He received many awards for his compositions from both Bulgarian and international musical organizations, including the *Paris International Academy of the Arts* award. Lazar Nikolov began his creative path as a composer in a very difficult and complicated time. Right after the Second World War, the ideological line of the Soviet Union and Bulgarian governments dominated musical life. Any piece which did not have “the right ideological orientation or did not have accessible music language was criticized or banned for performance.”¹⁸ Even with the first his composition, *Concerto for String Orchestra*, Lazar Nikolov demonstrated his interest in the contemporary tendencies of classical music and obeyed the official normative aesthetics. This was the main reason why many of his works were severely criticized and some of them rarely performed. He worked in every possible musical genre and his compositional style became quite diverse. His main compositional approach was the twelve note technique, which is very close to his linear style of thinking. In his music one can find many atonal episodes, dodecaphony, experimental sonorities, and even an *aleatory*. An *aleatory* is “an etymological distortion and the term is usually restricted to music in which the composer has made a deliberate withdrawal of control.” He is one of the first young Bulgarian composers who proved that the folklore was not the only way to build up the national musical culture. Revealing the soul of the human being during the 20th century using the elements of contemporary musical language, he made Bulgarian music part of the international classical music scene.

Generally, Lazar Nikolov came to disagree with the idea that late Romantic style and folk music should be the base for the national style. The innovative impulse in Lazar Nikolov came from throwing aside folk music and the largely academic interpretation of it caused by a late romantic aesthetic. He also thought that because Bulgarian folk music was not legalized by a prominent international figure, like Bela Bartok (1881-1945), the use of folk music in modern

¹⁸ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarskata Muzikalna Ictoria*, 435.

Bulgarian music was not the only choice. All those ideas helped him to achieve the radical change in his works in 1949. This year will be remembered in Bulgarian music history not only because of the appearance of such a modernistic and radical composer considering Bulgarian conditions, but also because of the “General Line” issued by the Communist government for keeping the right ideology and avoiding Western European decadent influence in Eastern European classical music.”¹⁹ This line was dominant in Communist countries for more than ten years. Another important modernist like Gyorgy Ligeti (1923) in Hungary remembered: “During the winter of 1948-49, it became clear that the Communist cultural politics was identical with the Nazis’ one, because of its rejections of Schoenberg’s, Webern’s, Berg’s, and other modern talented composer compositions.” Krzysztof Penderecki (1933) in Poland publicly protested against forbidding the works of Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), Honegger (1892-1955), and Hindemith (1895-1963), and the government classified him as “Verderber der Jugend.”²⁰

In Bulgaria, Lazar Nikolov did not stay speechless. He said this about the “line:” “I decided to look for new paths and therefore I thought it was a good idea to leave the *tonic* and tonal thinking, and the folklore for while. That was not a direct response to the Communist line but just a coincidence. Any way, I decided to look for other ways of composing and that was not a reaction against the Government.”²¹ It is known that almost every great composer of the 20th century was looking for his or her own path to a new style of music. Despite the rejection of folk music, which was an important act for Lazar Nikolov, it was a rare act during this period of the development of the new music in Eastern Europe. At that time many Eastern European authors not only did not reject it, but even tried to give it new meaning. Lazar Nikolov was unable also to use the Western post-war *Avant-Garde*, because during his entire life he remained bound to

¹⁹ Angelina Petrova, *Kompositorut Lazar Nikolov* (Sofia: BAN, 2003), 42.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 46.

²¹ Angelina Petrova, *Kompozitorut Lazar Nikolov*, 43.

Bulgaria. So his stylistic motto “works with no more folklore” was an original idea that preceded the first appearance of the twelve tone technique in Bulgarian classical music. The main reason for such a decision was the neatness of the style and radical reform of the musical language. An original idea of the composer was the connection of the twelve tone system and polyphony. The meaning of the polyphony for Nikolov was far different from the “classical meaning of it,” and for him it expressed the disintegration of the classical structure. In this case every pitch from the chromatic or twelve tone fields in the frame of a few octaves is treated as an independent digit. Such a principle cannot be put in the context of traditional dodecaphony. This element in his works becomes the beginning and important impulse in Nikolov’s method of composing serial works. “The classical dodecaphony and the other variants of such writing have strict rules. Such rules are dangerous. Therefore, I decided to make the rules more dynamic and provide a new system for the creation of the twelve tone composition using an original solution. I can repeat one pitch only when it is a part of another complex or neighboring octave.”²² All of those thoughts of the composer were manifested in his violin concerto.

The *Concerto for Violin* was written a little bit earlier than one of his most famous pieces the *Sonata for two Grand Pianos*. “At the end of November, 1951, I began to work on my violin concerto. During 1952, I finished and orchestrated the concerto.”²³ According to serial composers, emotional suggestions are a “crutch” for the listener.²⁴ At the same time, serial compositions can be extremely expressive. From the beginning, Lazar Nikolov did not have the prejudices of some of the Western European composers, who for a long time did not use extreme expressiveness, spontaneity, or bright melodies. In spite of these limitations, the delicate irony, imaginary, and the specific sound of his themes become distinctive elements of his concerto. The

²² Lazar Nikolov, *Lazar Nikolov’s Memories* (Sofia: Muzika, 2000), 35.

²³ *Ibid*, 80.

²⁴ Angelina Petrova, 68.

concerto itself is connected with a reinterpretation of the “traditions,” specifically a modernistic view of the Viennese Classics, with a new interpretation of the genre. The composer does not focus on technological innovations, but rather the twelve tone thematic material and some improvisatory solo episodes.



Example 19 shows the idea of such a technique.

“The concerto became one lyrical piece close in its development to Mozart’s conception of the world. In order to be sure that the solo part is playable, I used the performing qualities of my close friend the violinist Georgi Bliznev who will be the first performer of the piece, and therefore my concerto will be dedicated to him. The conversation between the orchestra and solo instrument was successful and live. Both parts have their own color, attractive and varied in the different episodes.”²⁵

Lazar Nikolov mentioned in separate articles “how important the prototype was in his works.” In his concerto the combination of classic form and genre becomes elemental in his twelve-tone musical message. Without having any direct contact with the serial composers like Ollivier Messiaen (1908-1992), Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928), or Pierre Boulez (1925), Lazar Nikolov created a unique musical language in his concerto. In this language, no single note from a tone row could be repeated in the same octave. Using this principle both vertically and

²⁵ Angelina Petrova, 70.

horizontally in each episode, it created the feeling of a new language and technique in this particular concerto.

The premiere of the concerto provoked a huge scandal in Bulgarian musical life. Many music critics, conductors, and musicians wrote venomous newspaper articles condemning the concerto. This is an example of such a review: “The reason for this newspaper critique was the last concert of the *National Symphony Orchestra* where along with the Beethoven’s wonderful *Symphony No. 3*, and Respighi’s *Ancient Arias and Dances*, the decadent violin concerto by the young composer Lazar Nikolov was also performed. During the last three or four years the acquiescence to decadent Western European culture continued to be the driving force for some of our youngest composers. Obviously, Lazar Nikolov did not take any notes from last year’s critiques and recommendations, but continued to create such offensive works. His violin concerto surprised us with even more extreme diversions. Because of such digressions the concerto was a chaos of sound, the meaningless dissonances were obvious, the solo part amazed with its cacophony and led the orchestra with its impotence. The question was who served such music without melody and honesty, clear form, and the alternation and relationship between the tonal keys.



Example 20 shows an episode from the concerto.

Composers like Lazar Nikolov need to stand in front of Bulgarian people and fairly tell us what they are going to do for the future. We think if they continue to stay on this dangerous road they will become an example of art which is rejected by all honest people.”²⁶

3.6 Konstantin Iliev’s Violin Concerto (1971)

Similar to Lazar Nikolov’s life as a composer and an artist, Konstantin Iliev also had many problems with the government and musical critics. Born in 1924 in the capitol of Bulgaria, Sofia, he graduated the *State Academy of Music* in his home city. After that, he continued his education in Prague, studying composition with Professors Vaslav Talich and Yaroslav Rgidki. After his return to Bulgaria he founded one of the biggest orchestra in Bulgaria, the *Ruse Symphony Orchestra*. He was one of the most talented and innovative composers and conductors in the most recent period of Bulgarian music history. After many troubles with the government and threats from some musical circles, he died almost anonymously without honor in 1988. He led a troubled life not only because of his indisputable talent and compositional mastery but also because of his overt dissatisfaction with the official aesthetic norms. His music, including the violin concerto, was criticized many times by the socialistic government and stigmatized as a formalist and a sympathizer with decadent Western European music.²⁷

Konstantin Iliev worked in almost every genre, but primarily in the symphonic and vocal instrumental ones. He had strong feelings about the world in which he lived, and dwelled on the plight of mankind in the turbulent twentieth century. Many of his symphonies and concertos reflect his concept of intransient human values in the face of a sophisticated and mutable world. For Iliev, the main bearer of it is the folklore heritage, and he was one of the first Bulgarian composers who adopted this attitude toward the meaning of folklore. He did not quote or

²⁶ Yocko Yocifof, *Vredno Izkuctvo* (Varna: Ctalingradsko Zname, 1955), 24.

²⁷ Lili Kracheva, *Kratka Ictoria na Bulgarskata Muzikalna Kultura*, 348.

paraphrase folk melodies or borrow motifs and intonations from it but rather, with the help of the new compositional techniques like the twelve tone system, recreated the spirit of the Bulgarian people. Konstantin Iliev was among the composers who helped through his works, including his violin concerto, to introduce a whole new palette of contemporary compositional techniques.²⁸ Because of the open hostility of the socialistic government toward new methods in the arts, the critics severely branded Iliev's music language as "aberrant." These critics condemned dodecaphonic and aleotonic approaches because they did not see the philosophies behind them, but rather thought of them as meaningless techniques. The main idea which always is consistent in Iliev's works, including the violin concerto, is "the regularity which is caused by the alternation of the polyphonic and harmonic style in the classical music and the possibility of creating one new polyphonic style."²⁹ Unfortunately, due to different reasons, mostly political, the score of the concerto was published once only, a reason that the concerto is performed seldom.

This style of the violin concerto is rich in new melodic lines, huge diapasons, and the use of melodic intervals such as sevenths and ninths. He uses the fugue in the same way "as the Baroque composers used it."³⁰ All of these decisions are an "elaboration on the unconventional elements which are a burden for Bulgarian classical music."³¹ "Absolute polyphony" plays an important role in the concerto, when voices are developed independently without consideration of the vertical formations and harmonic implications. Another interesting characteristic of Iliev's musical language is the use of chords formed by the slow motion of some of the voices. Those voices "are not supposed to meet with each other at any moment forming a unison or octave and

²⁸ Angelina Petrova, *Compositorut Lazar Nikolov*, 60.

²⁹ Lazar Nikolov, *Moyat Cvyt* (Sofia: Lice, 1998), 53.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 53.

³¹ *Ibid*, 53.

avoiding the motions of parallel intervals.”³² These rules separate him from the Romantic and especially Impressionistic styles, which according to him are “old and not advanced enough.” Konstantin Iliev’s concerto and style are comprised by the polyphonic thinking, chromatic motions and structures, equal use of dissonance, and constant music and sound development.

3.7 The Significance of the Second Generation Bulgarian Violin Concerto Composers

The second generation Bulgarian violin concerto composers achieved something very important and difficult. They tried to introduce all of the Western European *Avant-Garde* trends to Bulgarian audiences. Their task was not only difficult, but also dangerous, because of Bulgaria’s tumultuous history. Even in Western Europe, people were not sure how to appreciate the works of new composers as Boulez and Stockhausen.³³ In 1951, one year before the premiere of Lazar Nikolov’s violin concerto, one of Stockhausen’s most famous pieces, *Kreuzspiel*, was severely hissed its premiere. “The culmination of the scandal was the premiere of *Kreuzspiel* by the twenty-one year old Stockhausen. He absolutely refused to use melody and rhythm in the existing meaning of these words and turned them into sounding dots which almost nobody was able to understand and accept.”³⁴ This interview really confirms that not only Soviet Union and Eastern European composers had trouble introducing their art, but also many prominent Western European composers. The Bulgarian violin concertos changed the way in which violin players had to approach their instruments. These artists were thankful to the composers for the chance to appreciate this new musical language and technique. “I came to hear the new Lazar Nikolov’s violin concerto at its premiere. At the end of the premiere, I was shocked because this concerto changed my mind about what the violin concerto should be. The new sonic expression and

³² Ibid, 55.

³³ Angelina Petrova, Kompozitorut Lazar Nikolov, 54.

³⁴ Ibid, 56.

phrase language will become the future path of the development of the violin as an instrument.”³⁵

Instrumentally speaking, the Bulgarian violin concertos after the Second World War brought many new musical and technical challenges to young violin students. The concertos of some composers, such as Vesselin Stoyanov and Marin Goleminov, had distinctively national melodies and characters. Others have nothing in common with the Bulgarian folk music or traditions. Despite their differences, all of the violin concertos have one commonality--a new and different treatment and role of the violin. These concertos were written with a new, fresh, and odd music language of the solo violin. Their social impact was great because of these new techniques and original treatment of Bulgarian folk music. The achievements of these composers are particularly impressive considering the harsh reviews from music critics and Bulgaria's isolation from Western Europe due to governmental restrictions and the Cold War.

³⁵ Boris Avramov, *Concerto cerii* (Sofia, Muzika, 1989) 20.

CHAPTER 4: THE THIRD GENERATION OF BULGARIAN COMPOSERS AND THEIR MOST IMPORTANT VIOLIN CONCERTOS

From the end of the 1970's to present is the fertile period of the youngest generation of Bulgarian composers. The dogma of the "general line" from the 1950's gradually disappeared and governmental restrictions ceased. The new compositional techniques in Bulgarian classical music introduced already by Konstantin Iliev and Lazar Nikolov also helped in dissolving the implied limitations. The youngest generation of composers is distinguished by a strong pursuit for individuality and their works cannot exactly be placed in one particular style. Without denying or repeating the achievements of the previous generation, the new Bulgarian composers found their unique place in Bulgarian classical music. After the fall of the totalitarian regime¹, the central agencies which had the authority to decide which piece could be performed disappeared, and new democratic organizations emerged to present these works. Such an organization is the "Musica Nova"² which was created solely with the idea of introducing exclusively new pieces by the third-generation Bulgarian composers. A key member of this organization, and an important composer in the third generation of composers, is Alexander Raychev.

4.1 Alexander Raychev's Violin Concerto (1991)

Alexander Raychev was born in 1922 but, despite this fact, can be considered a part of the new generation of Bulgarian composers. Born in Sofia, he studied composition at the *State Academy of Music* with one of the most important second-generation Bulgarian composers, Pancho Vladigerov. He studied also with Zoltan Kodaly at the *Franz Liszt Academy* in Budapest. After his return to Bulgaria, he became one of the leading figures in contemporary Bulgarian musical culture. He was also an honorary member of the *Music Academy* in Brussels and the

¹ Ibid, 286

² Ibid, 286.

International Association for Contemporary Music in Baden-Baden, Germany. In 1991, while teaching at the *Academy of Music* in Athens, he wrote his only violin concerto.

The concerto is called “Romantic” not only because of its style but also because the author himself labeled the score; “*Romantic Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, Athens 11:45, 13th of October, 1991.”³ Curiously, Raychev notes the exact minute of completion in the score. The structure and sound of the concerto are clearly Romantic, combining the static and in many ways sad, pessimistic lyric qualities with the energetic urgency and power of the heroic character. In unison with this concept is the solo part, in which the qualities of content and musical variety outweigh the effects of the virtuosity or sonic beauty of the violin. As always, the symphonic composer Raychev detailed the orchestra part in such a way that it was not only an accompaniment to the solo part, but an equal partner in the development of the entire musical drama.⁴ The orchestra score is impressive with its colors, instrumental timbres, and frequent use of the percussion section. Moreover, the orchestration of the piece attracts attention because it is unique for the Bulgarian violin concerto genre for the following reasons: the score typically is for fourteen first violins, twelve second violins, ten violas, six cellos, six basses—however written in *divisi*-- double winds, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, and a full percussion section plus piano, celesta, vibraphone, and glockenspiel, a larger percussion complement than normal. There is no other Bulgarian violin concerto which approaches such enormous and contemporary orchestration. Compared to his previous pieces, this concerto is more intense and full of sudden melodic leaps and its harmonic language is richer with soft dissonance and polytonality.⁵ This violin concerto kept the traditional classical form or architecture; however he developed the piece in his individual way.

³ Evgeni Klosterman, Alexander Raychev (Sofia: Musika Viva, 2002), 174.

⁴ Ibid, 175.

⁵ Ibid, 175.

The concerto has the traditional three movements, but the first and second movements are connected, similar to Pancho Vladigerov's concerto. The first movement, *Allegro Maestoso*, opens with orchestra fanfares and steady beats of the timpani. The solo violin introduces the main theme with epic expressiveness and obvious melancholy. The second theme, again introduced by the solo instrument, is lyrical and romantic but does not have the melodic expressiveness and vividness of the first theme. The solo violin has the principal role in this part of the movement and presents an extended *quazi* cadenza-like section. After the main climax the tension diminishes, the tempo gets slower, and without a noticeable break the second movement appears. The second contrasts by its obviously slower tempo *Andante* and a new time signature in 6/8. The solo violin dominates entirely and sings a slow, lyrical theme. The orchestra plays a counter-theme in a different key, thus bitonally. Little by little, the sound disappears and the end of the movement arrives on an unresolved chord held by a *fermata*. The last movement has a *scherzo*-like character; the orchestra part is colorful and the solo violin is virtuosic, jovial and lighthearted. This *Finale* is in *rondo* sonata form and the solo violin begins immediately by introducing the first theme. Its melody is also light, cheerful, and contrasts with the dark two previous movements. The movement brings an optimistic and light feeling that neutralizes the pessimistic and martyred feeling of the first two movements.

The composer hoped that this work could be played in his honor on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. The premiere was thus set for the 24th of May, 1992,⁶ and performed by the famous Bulgarian violinist Mincho Minchev, to whom the piece was dedicated. "Because of Minchev's performance Alexander Raychev named his concerto Romantic and dedicated it to Mincho Minchev. Indeed the concerto is Romantic because of the spirit, expressiveness, and aesthetic of the work. The composer who normally wrote heroic and epic musical gesturers,

⁶ Ibid, 177.

replete with dramatic conflicts and tension, had now written a tender and expressive work. The violin part is poured out with elegant and flexible melodies which resound naturally and sincerely. Those melodies which came from the composer's heart are one answer to the chaos and coldness of our time."⁷ The warm acceptance of the concerto by both audience and critics came because of the pure aesthetic language and relatively simplicity of the piece. Another factor enabling to a better understanding of this work is the composer's own poetic essay written separately in the concerto's program: "Life is bristling... life is snapping and creating robots....It is cold....I feel robbed....Where is my romance?....They are laughing at me....the romance of love and tender tremors. The romance of inexplicable sadness and melancholy. The romance of dreams and hopes. I am stretching my hands and looking for a cure. I am writing about myself....I am writing for you my friends!...."⁸ Behind the philosophy of the concerto stands this interesting confession of the composer, which again shows how programmatic some 20th century compositions are. This concerto does not literally try to create images of the material world, but rather presents the personal philosophies of the composer.

4.2 Petar Christoskov's Violin Concertos

Petar Christoskov was born in 1917, in Sofia. He graduated from the *State Academy of Music* in the same city and continued his education at the *Berlin Music Academy*, where he studied violin with Gustav Havemann and Gustav Malke. During those years he made successful debuts as a violin player in Vienna, Berlin, Salzburg, and Munich. After returning permanently to Bulgaria, he continued performing and soon became a violin professor at the *State Academy of Music* in Sofia. He began composing at an early age, but his most prolific period and mature pieces were written after he took permanent residence in Bulgaria. His work was restricted to violin, piano and smaller chamber ensembles. This differentiates him from all other Bulgarian

⁷ Ibid, 177.

⁸ Ibid, 178.

composers because he spent his efforts and talent entirely on creating works in this genre as opposed to others who focused on larger-scale works like operas and symphonies. At this time he and cellist Constantin Popov founded one of the first famous Bulgarian piano trios to achieve international reputation. Actually, the fact that Christoskov is almost one of the few Bulgarian violinist composers gives his works an added dimension to observe.

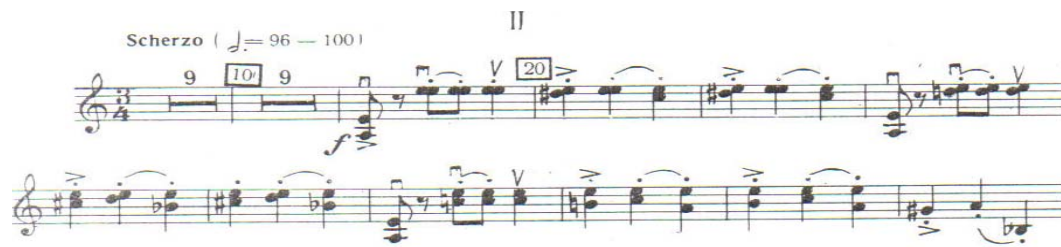
One minor but important factor explaining many elements in his violin concertos is where the composer spent his childhood. He was born in Kniajevo, which is today a part of Sofia, but was a small village outside of the city before the Second World War began. Due to rapid urbanization, the village became integrated into the capital. Before this though, the village thrived and retained the folk traditions of the *shopi*, the name for the people who lived there before Sofia became the capital of Bulgaria. Basically, this ethnic group now constitutes a significant part of the current population of the capital. The *shopi* are famous for their customs, dialects, and folk dances, and song. All of these musical traditions had an immense impact on young Christoskov and he used them regularly as important elements of his violin works.

Christoskov wrote three violin concertos. The first was completed in 1953 and has four movements in which the composer used a rather odd formal structure where the first, second, and fourths movements are fast, and the third is a slow movement. The first movement marked *Moderato* tempo is already different from the majority of the first movements of violin concertos. Usually, first movements are quicker paced and more electrifying.



Example 21 shows the beginning of the first movement.

The second is a *Scherzo* which again is different from the majority of second movements. The third and fourth are marked *Lento* and finally *Allegro con brio*.



Example 22a shows the *Scherzo* second movement.



Example 22b shows the beginning of the fourth movement.

As a whole, the concerto consists of diaphonic and dissonant intervals and harmonic structures. According to Rocitza Batalova, “the diaphonic intonations are the bread and the salt of the *shopskia* folklore.”⁹ *Shopskia* folklore uses dissonant intonations and melodic intervals in the otherwise relatively consonant and diatonic Bulgarian folklore. Almost all of the intonations in the concerto come from the *Shopskia* folk songs. The question of Christoskov’s place as a composer emerges here precisely because this violin concerto was written in 1953, during which time the Second Generation Bulgarian composers were at their peak. Because of his specific approach to the violin and use of such sonorities as found the *Shopskia* folklore, Petar Christoskov, despite his earlier less significant works, can be named as one of the most unique and innovative Bulgarian composers.¹⁰

⁹ Rocitza Batalova, *Kompositorut Petar Christoskov* (Sofia : Bulgarska Muzika, 1968), 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 12.

His *Second Violin Concerto*, written in 1959, again keeps the fourth movement form from the previous concerto and the odd rhythmic structure of the movements. The first and fourth movements are in *Moderato* tempo, the second one is *Scherzo*, and the third movement is *Andante*. The harmony of the concerto is more traditional and the sudden harmonic clashes from the *First Violin Concerto* are missing. The concerto begins after a short orchestral introduction and immediately the tonal diversity of the different sections grabs one's attention. The concerto begins in A-major, and ends in A minor; the second theme is in F minor, the development is in G major, the recapitulation begins again in A-major, but the *Coda* changes the tonal plan with its return to minor mode. Unlike many other Bulgarian composers, Christoskov chose to use the clear relationship between the form and tonality. Despite this, the concerto is neither diatonic nor does it have a constant tonal structure. Like many other contemporary Bulgarian violin concerto composers, Christoskov used many harmonic alterations and a blurred tonality. There are many sections in which each pitch seems indiscriminate and there is no real feeling of a tonal center. Because this concerto was written by a violin virtuoso the fast and brilliant passages are abundant and may present certain challenges to the performers.



Example 23 shows the virtuosity of the concerto.

The composer made clear in his interviews that he was truly trying to write a virtuoso concerto. “The hard work I did as a young man finally paid off. The control and speed of my arms gave me the freedom to repeat every passage and note I am writing until I was satisfied.

There is no note in this concerto which I did not personally check and try. The concerto can be played only by the most advanced and skilled violin players to show their great talent and virtuosity.”¹¹ The use of a cadenza in the first movement, and the fast *toccata* like motions and persistent driving rhythmic repetitions both are typical virtuoso elements.

The next element which is a huge innovation in Bulgarian violin concertos is Christoskov's *Scherzo* second movement. To mark a second movement *Scherzo* is rare not only in Bulgarian violin concerto literature, but also in all violin concerto writing. This approach is borrowed from the symphonic genre; however, usually the *Scherzo* is the third movement. Christoskov's decision to write a second movement *Scherzo* is strange, but only in this genre. The whole concerto, with the exception of the slow third movement, appears like a gigantic violin capriccio. This “fast and demonic *Scherzo*,” is the best example of such a technical approach. Using a second movement *Scherzo* filled with a combination of short strokes and runs, was the choice of the composer to satisfy his virtuosic needs. The last movement of the concerto, with its *Allegro Vivace* and brilliant triplets and sixteen double stops, is also a typical ending of a truly virtuosic concerto.

His *Third Violin Concerto* was dedicated to Nedyalka Simeonova, one of the first and most talented Bulgarian violinists. Simeonova, like many Bulgarian violin players, played and reworked folk melodies and songs. One such song was *Cun mi Krade Cherni Ochi*, which originated in the small town of Kotlen. She called it *Kaval*, the name of a traditional folk instrument, but for the admirers of her art it was simply “Nedyalka's Song.”¹² The premiere of the concerto was presented during the *New Bulgarian Music* festival in 1986. According to the composer, “the monothematic principles almost always guarantee the synthesis between logic and emotion, and between fantasy and the clear mindedness. However, this constructive

¹¹ Rociza Batalova, *Compositorut Petar Christoskov* (Sofia: Bulgarska Muzika, 1968), 10.

¹² *Ibid*, 8.

principle always leads to the danger of making the piece monotonous.”¹³ In the case of his third concerto, Christoskov cleverly avoided writing the main theme and its “twin-brother” exactly the same. He approached this problem in an untraditional way. The particular melody appeared only at the end of the concerto, which is the climax of the concerto. But before reaching this moment, the composer recreated dramatic developments connected with the memories of her life, also using a theme which is derivative of Nedyłka’s song.¹⁴ Christoskov used this song as a main theme, and with its development in the violin solo part, provoked “answers” in the separate orchestra voices, groups, or *tutti* which become more and more saturated with these elements from Nedyłka’s song. However, the concerto is not generally a programmatic piece or succession of variants of a popular folk song.¹⁵ During its composition, the concerto integrated and encompassed many elements of the traditional concerto like the sonata form, the well-developed virtuosic cadenza, *toccata scherzo*-like episodes, melodic contrasts, and often brilliant passages. Unlike his previous two concertos, the orchestra part is well developed, and there is a good synthesis between the different orchestra groups in respect to nuance of timbre and the balance. However, because of the virtuosic character of the pieces, the role of the orchestra has never been dominant in any of Christoskov’s concertos.

4.3 Dimitar Sagaev’s Violin Concerto (1963)

Despite the fact that the composer was born during the first half of the 20th century and wrote his violin concerto in 1963, the composer is considered to be part of the most contemporary third generation of Bulgarian composers. Born in 1915, in Plovdiv, he studied with Pancho Vladigerov and Vesselin Stoyanov. Despite his musical education, he never had a proper

¹³ Lubomir Kavaldjiev, *Tvorbi i Vreme* (Sofia: Muzika, 1987), 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 8.

place in Bulgarian music society and history, mostly because he spent his later professional life outside of professional classical music circles and institutions. He was a conductor of a military band, the police orchestra, and a conductor of a high school choir at different points in time. In 2002 he was awarded *Doctor Honoris Causa*, an award which finally honored him in a way he deserved.

This interview taken by the journalist Stefan Lazarov in 1985 confirms Dimitar Sagaev's philosophy and music aesthetics. "We cannot deny that *Avant-Garde* music brought us something new. Without a doubt, it enlarged our thinking, broke some chains that tightly bound classical music composers. But the *Avant-Garde* also did great damage because it destroyed melody, harmony disappeared, metric pulsation was dissolved, and generally created amorphous musical form. I am deeply convinced of what I believe. I dare even to say something more about this. Is it not the *Avant-Garde* that opened the doors for composers who never thought they might become composers? I think that exactly it increased the potential group of composers who are absolute amateurs, who cannot write a single song, sonata, or a work in a classical or romantic style, but are ready to write a symphony or concerto full of unbelievable noise, or without any logical structure. Recently, we began using the word 'interesting' for this kind of music and many people even exchanged with 'beautiful and quality.' In order to create good music, there is a need for clear ideas, expressiveness, and something to tell the audience and warm their hearts."¹⁶ All of those ideas and thoughts about the development of classical music after the Second World War are confirmed in his first violin concerto. It maintains both Neo-Romantic and traditional traits. It is curious how such a conservative work emerged and was performed regularly in a time when not only the Western European *Avant-Garde* achieved its peak, but also the Bulgarian composers were completely disregarding the old Romantic style.

¹⁶ Stefan Lazarov, *Dialozi* (Sofia: Bulgarska Muzika, 1985), 32.



Example 24 shows the beginning of the concerto.

The concerto has the classical three movements with fast, slow, fast tempo contrasts. Clearly tonal, there are no significant moments where the boundaries of tonality are broken. The first movement is in sonata allegro form and contains the typical elements of that form. The concerto is a Neo-Classical piece that, with the help of bold repetitions shows the revival of this former epoch. The concerto is reminiscent of the works of Classical composers like Haydn and Mozart. The similarities are not only in form, tonality, and sound, but also in simple rhythm and clear structure. There are no innovations, surprises, or major tempo or rhythmic difficulties. This suspicious simplicity and facility for a 20th century work is supplemented by the absence of any obvious virtuoso character. The lack of a cadenza and rarest use of double stops or chordal fast passages again confirm the idea of movement towards the classical style. Despite the slow *dolce* character of the second movement, this part of the concerto at some moments contains more difficulties for the violin performer than the entire first movement. The musical language and harmony are complicated with additional melodic leaps and surprising chromatic alterations. The disjunctive use of major sevenths and minor seconds and the succession of unexpected and bizarre harmonies also can create possible confusion for the performer at first glance. However, the movement keeps the tonal center of C-major as do all the movements in this concerto. This is

highly unusual that all movements are in the same tonality. The third movement is a fast Rondo which is in the classical form ABACA and Coda.



Example 25 shows the beginning of the third movement.

There is no cadenza and, despite the *Vivace* tempo of the movement, the simplicity and closeness to the Classical type violin concertos again demonstrate the conservative, traditional ideas of the composer.

CHAPTER 5: A SUMMARY

Pancho Vladigerov was the composer who established the instrumental genre in Bulgaria. He was the first one to achieve the synthesis between the European classical music and the Bulgarian folk song. Vladigerov was the only Bulgarian composer to write a one movement “symphonic-poem” violin concerto. His late Romantic aesthetics and musical language became essential for the succeeding generation of Bulgarian composers.

Luibomir Pipkov was one of the first Bulgarian composers influenced by the Identity Cult. Writing “an expressive but sometimes unapproachable music,” he changed his style after the Second World War. He was the only Bulgarian composer to use the “songs of the masses” in a violin concerto. Using this approach, he avoided quoting folk motifs or songs. Pipkov was also the first Bulgarian composer to include his own solo cadenza in a violin concerto.

Lazar Nikolov’s concerto completely avoided the use of Bulgarian folklore. Rather, in his concerto, he introduced new prevailing techniques such as the twelve-tone system. His use of the aleatorism was a first not only for his country but also perhaps in European classical music as well. Nikolov was among the few composers to add new elements to this strict twelve-tone system.

Vesselin Stoyanov’s concerto is one of the most traditional and nationally oriented pieces. Instead of quoting folk songs, he chose to use a folk dance in the third movement of his violin concerto. Stoyanov was in the rare group of composers, who used Leitmotifs and melodic ornaments excessively.

Marin Goleminov wrote one of the first concertos without strictly established tonal keys or signatures. He was the very first to use *glissando* and successive *marcato* down bows strokes. Goleminov was the only one to use a compound meter in a violin concerto.

Konstantin Iliev's violin concerto proved that folklore can be treated differently. He made possible the synthesis between the traditional folk motifs and the *Avant-Garde* twelve-tone system. Iliev alone broke with the traditional polyphonic rules in his approach to voice leading.

Alexander Raychev's orchestration of his violin concerto was unique for the Bulgarian instrumental genre. His concerto was one of the few programmatic works as well as the only two-movement concerto. Raychev became the singular Bulgarian violin concerto composer to use the solo violin without the orchestra accompaniment and the composer who did not use the traditional *cadenza* for such purpose.

Petar Christoskov was unique in being both a composer and a violin player and wrote the first truly Bulgarian virtuoso violin concerto. His concertos were the only four-movement concertos with a second movement *Scherzo*. He was also the composer who used a *toccata* and the specific *shopski* folklore in a violin concerto.

Dimitar Sagaev was the sole neo classicist who did not believe that the use of traditional folklore or techniques such as the twelve-tone system were the only successful elements in the creation of nationally oriented music. Instead, through his concerto, he showed that using clear tonality and form were his preferred methods for writing a work for this instrument.

Very little has been published on the subject of the Bulgarian violin concertos in Western Europe, the United States, or even in Bulgaria. Unfortunately, these concertos were underestimated and rarely performed by students due to a lack of encouragement by teachers at conservatories. Financial incentives, along with the availability of superior education in Western Europe and the United States, often motivated the most talented Bulgarian violin players to study abroad at an early age. In today's global society, each musical event, composer, and piece of music represents both the native traditions as well as larger continental ones. This group of

concertos is of optimum value in its ability to build technique, develop musical style and skills of the Bulgarian culture while preparing the young violinists for more standard literature. For these reasons especially, these concertos are valuable and have a significant place in both Bulgarian and European classical music.

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APPENDIX

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VITA

Mr. Dimitrov is a native of Sofia, Bulgaria, where as a student he won several violin competitions including the National Competition for Young Music Talents and the *Concerto Competition* with his performance of the *Mozart Violin Concerto No.5*. In 1993 he was admitted to the Summer Academy of Tibor Varga in Sion, Switzerland, where he received a performance diploma. Mr. Dimitrov holds a Master of Music degree and currently is working on his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Louisiana State University, School of Music and Dramatic Arts. He received several awards including the *String Scholarship*, *Louisiana Music Award*, and the *LSU Dean's Concerto Competition Award* with his performance of *Brahms's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*. He is the assistant concertmaster of the *Midland and Odessa Symphony Orchestra* and a member of the Permian String Quartet, the resident string quartet of the orchestra.