

# БУЛГАРИКА



# BULGARIKA

## *Maestros of Traditional Bulgarian Music*

**Nikolay Kolev** (gadulka) is considered one of the foremost gadulka players in the world. After graduating from the prestigious National School for Folk Arts in Shiroka Luka, he performed with the Sliven Ensemble for three years. In 1985 he formed the wedding ensemble Rozova Dolina. In 1992, he founded the prize-winning ensemble Balkanski Glasove, the singing group which took first place at the Varna Festival in 1994 and 1995. Nikolay has accompanied many well-known singers, including Vulkana Stojanova, Roumen Rodopski and Todor Kozhuharov.



He emigrated to the U.S. in 1995 and has played an active role in promoting Bulgarian music across North America. He is a frequent teacher at Eastern European Folklife Center (EEFC) summer camps on both coasts and has an adoring cadre of private students. In 1999, Nikolay Kolev was the first Bulgarian to be recognized by the Slavic Heritage Council of America for his outstanding contributions in music.

**Donka Koleva** (vocals) graduated from the National School for Folk Arts in Shiroka Luka and performed for three years with the Sliven Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances. She was the director of the Folk Song Chorus of Sopot and soloed with the wedding band "Rozova Dolina." She has been a featured soloist on Bulgarian Radio and Television and has participated in numerous singing competitions in Bulgaria and Europe. Her voice has been featured on numerous recordings, and in 1997 her recording of "Javore" was named "Song of the Year" in the Bulgarian national radio competition.



Since moving to the U.S. in 1995, Donka has performed traditional and arranged songs from Thrace across the U.S. with multiple ensembles, including Kabile, Kitka, Planina, and Chubritsa. She has also conducted numerous workshops and taught at Balkan camps on both coasts.

**Vassil Bebelev** (gaida) is one of the world's great Bulgaria gaida (bagpipe) players. He was born in the village of Devin, Bulgaria, and was inspired to a life of folk music by village traditions and his grandfather, who played kaba gaida, a low-pitched majestic-sounding gaida specific to the Rhodope mountain region in southern Bulgaria. In Bulgaria there are two types of bagpipes: the low pitched kaba gaida, played in the Rhodope Mountains. Elsewhere in Bulgaria, the smaller jura gaida is more prevalent. Vassil is one of few masters on both instruments.



Vassil joined the ensemble Sto Kaba Gaida, an ensemble of 100 Rhodope bagpipes, at age 11. He attended the National School for Folk Arts in Shiroka Luka, then graduated with honors from the National Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, the highest level of education obtainable for traditional music in Bulgaria. He played in more than 300 performances in Europe, Asia and the Middle East with the well known Ensemble Trakia. Vassil also performed three seasons with Philipopolis Ensemble Sofia and has recorded extensively for National Radio Sofia and Radio Plovdiv. He taught at the Shiroka Luka Music School for many years and has played and taught extensively throughout the U.S. We was visiting professor in the Ethnomusicology Department at UCLA, where he taught Balkan Ensemble. He currently lives in San Jose, CA.

**Dragni Dragnev** (tapan, gaida, keyboard) was born in 1975 in Varna and joined the the dance ensemble "Bulgarche" at age 7. At age 12, he started to study gaida with the famous gaida teacher Dinio Marinov. A few years later, he attended the National School for Folk Arts in Shiroka Luka, where he was a student of Vasil Bebelev. In 1994 he attended the National Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts in Plovdiv. There he became a member of the Professional Academy Orcestra under the direction of professor Milcho Vasilev, and worked in the ensemble "Hem" under direction of Ivan Dimitrov.



In 1999 he began teaching gaida at the Childrens' Music Center of the Cultural Palace in Sofia. IN 2001, he continued his music career as a gaida teacher and performer in several Cultural Centers in Varna. From 2003 to 2012, he also performed with Bulgarian and international ensembles in several music projects, international festivals and workshops in Bulgaria and abroad.

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