

Nikolay Kolev & Bulgarika

Bulgarian

Glendale, NY & Pittsburgh, PA

Nikolay Kolev & Bulgarika present the haunting melodies, irregular rhythms and fiery dance tempos of Bulgaria, a diverse country that has been a cultural crossroads for millennia. Kolev hails from the village of Karavelovo in the Thrace region of Bulgaria and is widely regarded as the finest *gadulka* player of his generation. The Bulgarian *gadulka* is a fiddle with three melody strings that are bowed as 10 to 12 sympathetic strings vibrate underneath the bowed strings, producing a rich texture and shimmering quality to the sound. In the hands of a master it is a mesmerizing instrument, and Kolev is an artist of astonishing skill and depth.

Bulgarika is a family band with Nikolay, his wife Donka and their daughter Maria at its core. Donka is one of Bulgaria's premier singers and is well known for her rich, clear and melodious voice. She has been lead vocalist in many of the groups led by Nikolay, and has had a successful career with National Radio and Television in Bulgaria. In 1997 her recording of "Javore" was song of the year. Their daughter Maria was born in 1982 in the Rose Valley of Bulgaria and began singing since an early age. Prior to immigrating to the United States at age 16, she took many prizes for her expressive stunning voice and her mastery of Thracian songs. She now resides in New York City where she can be found performing frequently the Ilan Milev Band.

The depth of Bulgarika extends beyond the Kolev gene pool, mining the quality and talent of the Bulgarian musical community in the Northeast. Vladimir Mallov is a young, powerful accordion player residing in Pittsburgh who was born into a family of self-taught musicians. He is master of traditional music as well as jazz and has been featured at the Django Reinhardt Festival in New York City. Peter Dimitrov performs on the *tambura*, a long-necked, wooden lute with a pear shaped body that is played throughout Eastern Europe. Rounding out the group is Jordan Scannelca on *tapan*. The *tapan* is a large wooden drum covered with tanned skin on both sides. It resembles an oversize marching-snare. It is played on both heads to produce a mixture of deep and short, pitched sounds. Together, Nikolay Kolev and Bulgarika create a powerful and vibrant sound grounded in tradition and performed with great skill.