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# Balkanisms

GUITAR MUSIC FROM THE BALKANS



BOGDANOVIĆ  
IVANOVIĆ • OSTOJIĆ  
PAPANDOPULO  
TADIĆ

Mak Grgić, Guitar

**Balkanisms: Guitar music from the Balkans**  
**Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955) • Vojislav Ivanović (b. 1959) • Lazar Ostojić (b.1987)**  
**Boris Papandopulo (1906–1991) • Miroslav Tadić (b. 1959)**

The Balkans constitute a geographical area of south-east Europe, taking its name from the Balkan Mountains that stretch through Bulgaria from the Serbian-Bulgarian border to the Black Sea. Countries usually considered to be part of the Balkans are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia. The entire region has long established traditions of folk music, noted for complex rhythms and plaintive melodies.

Miroslav Tadić, guitarist, composer, improviser and music educator, completed his formal studies of music in the US after studying in Italy and his native Yugoslavia. He has performed and recorded in a wide variety of settings and musical styles. He performs regularly in Europe, North and South America and Japan. In recent years, Tadić has concentrated on developing an approach to improvisation which combines and juxtaposes musical material drawn from many diverse sources. Tadić has written music for numerous experimental film, dance and theatre works. Since 1985 he has been a professor at the prestigious California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles.

The five compositions by Miroslav Tadić are from what the composer has described as 'my constantly expanding and evolving suite for guitar called *Laments, Dances and Lullabies*, inspired by traditional music of the Balkans. *Jovka* and *Chicho* are based respectively on the Macedonian folk songs *Prošeta se Jovka Kumanovka* ('Kumanovo was Walking') and *More čičo reče da me ženi* ('Grandpa Has Decided to Marry Me Off').

*Macedonian Girl*, originally titled *Makedonsko devojče* (its subject being the unmatched beauty of Macedonian women), was written by the noted songwriter Jonče Hristovski and became part of the folk music heritage decades ago. It is written in 7/8 metre, a characteristic of much Macedonian music. *Rustemul*, a dance from south-western Romania, was originally played by a band with violin and cembalom along with pan pipes and contrabass. *Walk*

*Dance*, dedicated to Scott Tennant, is based on the traditional Macedonian dance *Kalajdzisko oro* ('coppersmith's dance'), centred round the movements coppersmith or tinsmen used while making or repairing large metal dishes.

Dušan Bogdanović, born in Belgrade, Serbia, began playing the guitar at the age of twelve. He later studied composition with Alberto Ginastera and Pierre Wissner, and guitar with Maria Livia São Marcos at the Conservatoire de musique de Genève. Having won a number of prestigious guitar competitions he made his US debut at Carnegie Hall, New York, in 1977. During the 1990s and 2000s Bogdanović taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and now teaches at the Conservatoire de musique de Genève. He is a prolific composer with over 50 published compositions, often exploring different idioms and combining classical, jazz, and ethnic influences within his music, as well as being a highly acclaimed recording artist with many albums to his credit.

*Levantine Suite*, dedicated to Eleftheria Kotzia, is a commemoration of the musical culture of the Levant, the eastern part of the Mediterranean. *Prelude*, with no time signature, is an intimate improvisation setting the scene made up of short phrases of a meditative kind. *Dance*, in 7/16 time, has a continual momentum with ingenious contrapuntal weaving of parts. The piece is written on two staves to achieve notational clarity especially for the distinctive bass line. The meaning of *Cantilena*, an Italian term from the 18th century, refers to that part of the music which carries the melody in a composition. This movement, marked *Rubato, quasi un recitativo*, consists of short phrases based on chordal progressions each representing a simple melody made up of few notes. *Passacaglia*, also written on two staves, is a ground bass in 5/8 time, bearing above it a filigree of counterpoint. The final movement, *Postlude*, is created from improvisatory scalic passages.

Boris Papandopulo, Croatian composer and conductor of Russian Jewish descent, was the son of Konstantin

Papandopulo, a Greek aristocrat, and the Croatian opera singer Maja Strozzi-Pečić. As well as his prolific compositional activities he also achieved a reputation as a journalist and pianist. His composing output comprised nearly 500 works of orchestral, concertante, chamber and solo works as well as vocal and instrumental pieces, stage music and film music.

*Three Croatian Dances* is a light-hearted tryptych of varying moods. The first, *Allegretto vivace*, offers a kind of tap dance, syncopated rhythms alternating with scalic passages. *Moderato* suggests slightly inebriated rhythms staggering humorously among ironic dissonances. Finally, the third dance, marked *Allegretto comodo*, offers a merry syncopated tune with lively dissonances in the central section and some jazz-like harmonies as well as a vivid use of harmonics.

Vojislav Ivanović, born in Sarajevo, studied guitar at the Athens Conservatoire with Costas Costiolis and composition with Vojin Komadina at Sarajevo University. He has appeared as a concert artist worldwide. His diverse compositional output includes instrumental music, choral and orchestral works, string quartets, piano and guitar concertos, and songs, as well as film scores. Ivanović is professor of guitar at the Music Academy, Sarajevo, and has served on a number of juries for international guitar competitions.

*Café Pieces*, of which three are performed here, were originally in a suite of six. *Improvisation and Dance* begins

with a slow exploratory section before embarking on a vivacious, slightly sentimental episode. The *Dance* itself is brilliant and virtuosic with rapid scalic passages building towards an exciting climax. *A Funny Waltz* presents a delightful parody of a waltz, at times recalling the light approach of Francisco Tárrega in 19th-century Spain. The profoundly romantic *A Lullaby* invites us to sit back and relax in the café environment.

Lazar Ostojić, the youngest Balkan composer represented here, was born in Belgrade where he later studied at the Faculty of Music. He went on to study in the Netherlands where he designed a new kind of guitar known as the 'Albatross', ideal for performing the music of the Balkans. Ostojić, while still a student, featured in various master-classes with maestros such as Pepe Romero, the Assad brothers and Pavel Steidl and also took lessons in composition with Carlo Domeniconi.

*Stairway to the Balkans* is a tribute to the musical culture of the Balkans, with a tapestry of moods and textures evolving as the work proceeds. Songs and parts of songs alluded to throughout (in order of appearance) are *Stairway to Paradise, Parni valjak – Sve još miriše na nju, Ekatarina Velika – Stvaran svet, Bajaga – Tišina, Smak – Šumadijski bluz, Bijelo dugme – Ne spavaj mala moja*. The intricate rhythms and colourful characteristics of Balkan music are beautifully celebrated here in a complex synthesis of styles.

**Graham Wade**



## **Mak Grgić**

Lauded by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Mak Grgić is emerging as a highly esteemed performer on the international stage. An expansive and adventurous repertoire attests to his versatility and wide-ranging interests, ranging from the Baroque and Renaissance to music of the cinema and from ethnic music of his native Balkans to extreme avant-garde and microtonal music. Grgić's extraordinary talents and tastes as soloist, collaborator, and recording artist are fuelled by his curiosity, imagination, and boundless energy. He is a founding member and active performer in two duos – the Flamenco-style Duo Deloro and the new music-focused FretX Duo. As Young Artist in Residence with the Da Camera Society of Los Angeles, he founded DC8, an octet that received praise from the *Los Angeles Times*. Grgić proudly plays and endorses an array of fabulous concert guitars made by diverse craftsmen, including Antonius Müller, Hanson Yao, Slavko Mrdalj, Samo Sali, as well as a historic 1966 Jose Ramirez, in addition to other quirky re-fretted and remodelled guitars. [www.makgrgic.com](http://www.makgrgic.com)



Photo © Melani Topalović

The area in south-east Europe known as the Balkans has long established folk traditions rich in complex rhythms and evocative melodies. Innovative guitarist Mak Grgić has selected the music of five composers to explore the variety and piquant colours embedded in their compositions. Drawn from his evolving suite called *Laments, Dances and Lullabies*, Miroslav Tadić traces Macedonian folk songs, while each of the other composers brings very personal qualities. Vivid harmonies, vivacious interludes, syncopated rhythms, and a lively, jazz-like feel all combine to create a tapestry of moods and textures.

## BALKANISMS

### Guitar music from the Balkans

<b>Miroslav TADIĆ (b. 1959)</b>		<b>11 Allegretto comodo</b>	<b>3:38</b>
<b>1 Jovka* (2017)</b>	<b>2:35</b>	<b>Vojislav IVANOVIĆ (b. 1959)</b>	
<b>2 Chicho* (2016)</b>	<b>5:38</b>	<b>Café Pieces (1993) (excerpts) 18:29</b>	
<b>Dušan BOGDANOVIĆ (b. 1955)</b>		<b>12 Improvisation and Dance</b>	<b>6:03</b>
<b>Levantine Suite (1995)</b>		<b>13 A Funny Valse</b>	<b>5:07</b>
<b>3 Prelude</b>	<b>1:24</b>	<b>14 A Lullaby</b>	<b>7:14</b>
<b>4 Dance</b>	<b>1:42</b>	<b>Lazar OSTOJIĆ (b. 1987)</b>	
<b>5 Cantilena</b>	<b>3:33</b>	<b>15 Stairway to the Balkans*</b>	
<b>6 Passacaglia</b>	<b>2:58</b>	<b>(2017) 12:52</b>	
<b>7 Postlude</b>	<b>1:36</b>	<b>Traditional / Miroslav TADIĆ</b>	
<b>Jonče HRISTOVSKI (1931–2000) /</b>		<b>16 Rustemul (1991)</b>	<b>4:27</b>
<b>Miroslav TADIĆ</b>		<b>17 Walk Dance (1991)</b>	<b>3:51</b>
<b>8 Macedonian Girl (1991)</b>	<b>3:28</b>	<b>Mak Grgić, Guitar</b>	
<b>Boris PAPANDOPULO (1906–1991)</b>		<b>*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING</b>	
<b>Three Croatian Dances (1975) 12:46</b>		<b>Composition dedicated to Mak Grgić</b>	
<b>9 Allegretto vivace</b>	<b>3:59</b>		
<b>10 Moderato</b>	<b>5:04</b>		

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