

VIKTORIA MULLOVA

THE PEASANT GIRL





CD 1 52.46

DuOud *arr. Matthew Barley*

- 1 For Nedim (For Nadia) 5.32

John Lewis/Bratsch *arr. Barley*

- 2 Django 6.43

Florian Hermann *arr. Barley*

- 3 Dark Eyes 6.51

Bratsch *arr. Barley*

- 4 Er Nemo Klantz *with* Bartók duos:
No.7 – Walachian Song; No.11 – Pillow Dance
and No.44 – Transylvanian Dance 8.19

Weather Report (Joe Zawinul) *arr. Barley*

- 5 The Peasant 9.34

Béla Bartók

- 6 **Duos with improvisations** 10.47

7 Duos for violin and cello (from 44 Duos for two violins):
No.10 – Ruthenian Song; No.22 – Mosquito Dance; No.33 –
Harvest Song; No.28 – Sorrow; No.26 – Teasing Song;
No.11 – Cradle Song; No.35 – Ruthenian Kolomeika

Matthew Barley (on a Russian folk theme – Lyuba)

- 7 Yura 4.44

CD 2

37.45

Bratsch *arr. Barley*

- 1 Bi Lovengo 3.04

Weather Report (Joe Zawinul) *arr. Barley*

- 2 The Pursuit of the Woman with the Feathered Hat 5.56

Youssou N'Dour

- 3 Life 4.34

Zoltán Kodály

Duo for violin and cello op.7 (1914)

- 4 Allegro serioso 7.39
5 Adagio 8.11
6 Maestoso e largamente, ma non troppo 8.07

Viktoria Mullova violin

The Matthew Barley Ensemble

Matthew Barley cello

Julian Joseph piano

Paul Clarvis drums and percussion

Sam Walton marimba, vibraphone and percussion

Watch Viktoria Mullova and friends recording **The Peasant Girl** by visiting
www.viktoriamullova.com or www.matthewbarley.com



The Peasant Girl

The initial criterion for music to be included in this programme was simply that we loved it. However, we found as the programme took shape that certain themes were emerging – obviously Hungary was there with Kodály and Bartók, as was the world of the gypsy, and several of the jazz pieces seemed to point in that direction too. It soon became clear that almost all the music in some way reflected the phenomenal influence that the gypsies have had on swathes of music in the 20th century – so much so that when you delve deep into a work like Kodály's monumental Duo for violin and cello, you realize that instead of listening to this as a classical work with gypsy influence, you can hear it as gypsy music that has been given a rather smart set of clothes, yet one that doesn't change the heart inside them.

The world of jazz is represented in John Lewis's *Django* as well as the Weather Report tracks, and of course the presence of the magnificent Julian Joseph in the lineup. And yet besides, there seemed to be something more in there, something that lay in Viktoria's basic aesthetic of how she relates to the world, and more importantly to the music she loves and plays. She loves simplicity, emotional directness and power, as well as virtuosity that comes from the heart and aims for the heart (as opposed to showing off). While I was musing on all this, we listened to 'The Peasant' by Weather Report, and it occurred to me that this was another thread connecting this ragtag collection of pieces that seemed to fit together so well.

Just two generations ago, Viktoria's ancestors were living off the land in a tiny hamlet in the Ukraine, and this peasant quality is very much inside her, in the sense of a calm honesty and simplicity – the kind of 'peasantness' that John Berger portrays so brilliantly in his trilogy *Into Their Labours*. Add those qualities to those that have enabled Viktoria to conquer one of the most sophisticated of European art forms in its core repertoire of Bach and Beethoven, and that's an interesting combination. While this latter area of her life has been represented onstage around the world for 30 years, this programme shares something of her other side.

The word 'peasant' has its roots in the French *pays*, meaning country or land. We have looked for music that has the simplicity and beauty of the land, or that has come from the land in some way, like Bartók's magical series of 44 duos, the themes for which he collected on ethnomusical expeditions in the fields of Eastern Europe. It is music that is blissfully free from the misleading shackles of genre – music is music.





CD 1

1. **For Nedim** (for Nadia) was originally written by DuOud, a pair of oud players from North Africa who combine traditional sounds from the oud (Arabic lute) with programmed electronic beats. While the oud itself is not a typically gypsy sound (historically it was more of an instrument for Middle Eastern classical music), the scales that shape this piece have a gypsy character. The opening has the yearning, uprooted quality that characterises so much music of the Roma, and the following whirl of music in seven time has all the fiery energy of the gypsies. Originally called *For Nedim*, we added the parentheses for Nadia Mullova-Barley, one of the arrangement's greatest fans.
2. John Lewis (The Modern Jazz Quartet) wrote **Django** as a tribute to Django Reinhardt, the legendary jazz guitarist who grew up in the gypsy encampments around Paris and played in the Hot Club Quintet with Stéphane Grappelli. This arrangement is based on the version by Bratsch, a French band who play gypsy music incredibly well even though none of them are actually gypsies.
3. **Dark Eyes** – *Ochy Chorny* in Russian – is the most famous gypsy song in Russia, appearing in practically every film where there is a gypsy, and every restaurant that has an itinerant violinist patrolling the tables. Ironically, the song was written by a German composer. This version opens with Julian and Paul jamming a sparkling intro, before the familiar melody leads to violin pyrotechnics with equally impressive responses from Sam's marimba.
4. In another Bratsch favourite of mine, **Er Nemo Klantz**, I decided to insert some Bartók duos for violin and cello. They seemed to fit so well, the material being so similar, that it was irresistible.
5. The title track, **The Peasant**, was one that Viktoria found having bought a Weather Report CD in New York. This brilliant jazz fusion band from the 70s was driven in part by their Austrian keyboard player, Joe Zawinul, who had learnt music playing the accordion with gypsies as a youth. Viktoria had been mesmerized by the melody that wound around the same few notes for so long with its wonderfully blue major and minor thirds – simple, beautiful, Zawinul.
6. Originally for two violins, the **Bartók Duos** are a delight – their titles tell their story. Paul had suggested in one concert that he, Julian and Sam try some tiny improvisations in between the duos, and we loved the result so have included some here – little echoes of a Bartók from a different world.
7. **Yura** was written when we were on holiday on Lake Baikal in Siberia – the cleanest, most untouched nature I've ever seen. The opening reflected the serenity of the lake, but also the sadness we felt for Viktoria's father, who grew up on the lake – he could not be with us through illness and died the day after we first played the piece, knowing that it had been dedicated to him. Our hearts were with him as we recorded this track.

CD 2

1. **Bi Lovengo** was written and recorded by Bratsch in a few hours. The band gave me the CD in the early 90s when I had invited them to play in London – it has an infectious energy that I love, a great punch of sound that celebrates life.
2. **The Pursuit of the Woman with the Feathered Hat** is another Zawinul epic, with a hypnotizing riff that never stops until the very last few bars. I'd love to know what the title means.
3. **Life**, by Senegalese superstar Youssou N'Dour, is, like the previous track, one that we have done before, but now in a different version. While Senegal has nothing specifically to do with gypsies, like *For Nedim*, the scale that it uses links it in musical terms.
- 4–6. Kodály wrote his **Duo** in 1914, and it's easy to imagine you can hear the dark presages of war, especially in some stormy moments of the second movement. But most of all, it is full of spectacular melodic invention, much of it material that he found while researching the music of the countryside and gypsies in his native Hungary.

The Peasant Girl is also an expression of the relationship between Viktoria and myself. As a married couple we are constantly in touch with each other's musical worlds (Viktoria's is more classical and baroque, whereas mine moves on to include non-classical and improvised), and looking to expand our own horizons and skills. The process is rewarding – in many ways an end in itself – and the programme is the result of the positive collision of our two musical spheres.

The love of all good music, and the passion for lifelong learning, is what connects all the players in this project: Julian, Paul and Sam have brought a huge amount to the rehearsal process, helping to shape the arrangements and infusing the music with their skill and sounds – we work as five equal musicians, all contributing different threads from our different backgrounds, both musical and cultural, to make a whole that feels greater than the sum of our parts.

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