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First Impressions

During my first trip to Bulgaria, in the summer of 1969, I visited Yambol, a southeastern provincial town in an area known to this day by its ancient name, Thrace (fig. 1; pl. 1). On Sunday, the day for weddings, my wife, Ann, and I drove out to one of the surrounding villages in hope of hearing some traditional wedding music. Just before noon we headed south along a road that, according to the map, had a good density of villages along it. We passed well-tended fields in one of the broadest plains in southern Bulgaria and finally stopped on the outskirts of one of the neatly kept villages.

As we walked toward the village square, I heard music coming from a small, nondescript, unmarked building. I peered into the dimly lit room through the open door and could just make out a restaurant's long banquet table. To my surprise and delight, at the back of the room a small band consisting only of 'traditional' [*bitov*] instruments—*gaida* (bagpipe), *kaval* (end-blown, bevel-edged flute), *gŭdulka* (bowed, pear-shaped fiddle), and *tŭpan* (cylindrical, double-headed bass drum, played with a large stick and thin wand)—performed for the assembled guests. I was thrilled to experience live the music I had, until then, only heard on recordings, and to realize that it existed not just in studio recordings, but in the lives of villagers as well.

We didn't have much time to listen, however, for just at that moment the band and the wedding guests began to leave the restaurant and cross the square, not to the church, but to the village *sŭvet,* or council, where the marriage would be consecrated in a civil ceremony, an example of the almost complete secularization of Bulgarian society since the Communist revolution of 1944. After a few moments, the bride



Figure 1. Map of Bulgarian Towns and Folklore Regions

and groom and their relatives and friends emerged from the sŭvet and processed around the square to the band's accompaniment. Members of the wedding party offered bystanders, including us, sips of *rakiya,* a strong grape brandywine, from a *bŭklitsa,* a small, decorated wooden cask used especially for weddings. When they learned we were Americans interested in music, they enthusiastically invited us to join the wedding party, and we spent the next 24 hours happily processing, eating, drinking, and dancing to the accompaniment of prodigious amounts of music-making. The musicians, their fingers flying with astonishing rapidity, played nonstop for as much as an hour as the wedding procession wound around the village. I could hardly imagine moving my fingers so fast for so long, let alone that any music should come out (CD #1).

Although we had planned to return to our hotel in Yambol by evening, everyone enjoined us to stay. The best was yet to come, they said. After the feasting, the evening dancing was particularly energetic. The leader of the line dance *(horo)* held a torch to light the yard, while others swung torches at our feet, forcing us to jump over them. Alcoholic visions of Greek and Roman bacchanalia danced in my head, but whatever the ancient and mysterious, pagan and Christian roots of the tradition, the experience on that night was mainly fun. Everyone was having a great time.

The culmination of the evening and the moment we had been waiting for came near midnight, when a group of young men, and a male "bride" in drag, arrived to reenact a bawdy version of the main events of the wedding in a very funny skit. Dressed in traditional costumes rather than the modern dress worn by the rest of us, the mock wedding party processed around the yard. The "groom" defended his "bride" from the lewd attention of the other boys, who grabbed at her breasts and reached under her skirt. Everyone laughed, but the grannies, dressed in black, were the best audience, cackling with delight at every word and action, and nearly falling off their chairs during the most obscene and uproarious bits.

At one point, as the groom swung his gun around to protect his bride, it accidentally went off. To his horror, and the delight of the crowd, the bride flopped to the ground, supposedly hit by the errant bullet. A "doctor" was called, and arrived complete with white coat, stethoscope, and black bag—a costuming contrast of ancient and modern that also touched off gales of laughter. After deliberating for quite a while and trying out various remedies that didn't work, the doctor suddenly had a brilliant idea. He reached into his bag, pulled out a giant cucumber, and performed some sort of operation under the bride's skirt. As the grannies doubled over with glee, the bride leapt to her feet, miraculously cured, and the mock wedding continued happily with the exchange of small gifts and jokes.

Back in Yambol the next day, our memories of the wonderful music and this ancient fertility ritual were interrupted by a knock at the door. Our presence was requested by the head of the Yambol district Committee for Culture. We had gone to see him the previous week to announce our visit and ask for his help in learning more about folk music in his district. He told us that not much was happening during the summertime, since all the professional musicians were playing at resorts on the Black Sea coast. He seemed at a loss when we tried to explain that we were also interested in more traditional aspects of musical life, and we finally thanked him for his time and left. At this second meeting we encountered a very stern, glum face as he ordered us to leave Yambol by noon the next day, saying in the dark, resonant voice some Bulgarian men have, "I thought I told you there was no folklore in the Yambol district."

This anecdote illustrates the contradictory joys and tensions, satisfactions and absurdities, of fieldwork in Bulgaria during the Communist period (1944 to 1989), and it introduces one of the important themes of this book: the conflict between tradition and modernity.[1] The latter took the form of the awesome power of Communist ideology and practice, personified in this case by the chief of culture for the district, a job with direct links to the Party's central committee. Tradition, in the form of rituals, instruments, songs, and virtuosic performance practices with deep roots in the past, was revivified weekly in weddings, one of the few traditional contexts to survive the communist transformation of society. Weddings continued to provide one of the main venues for the development of instrumental skills, patronage of musicians, and negotiation of musical aesthetic values. On the other hand, the Communists were deeply committed to changing, defining, and controlling all aspects of society and culture, including folklore and music. To achieve these goals, they assumed command of the presentation of culture to Bulgarians and the outside world, and, in the process, created professional cadres of organizers, arrangers, choreographers, and musicians to execute a centralized vision of Bulgarian culture, recast in a socialist mold. Caught between forces of tradition and modernity, individuals negotiated meanings and practices for themselves, simultaneously acknowledging the authority of the Party while maintaining, adjusting, and questioning their relationship to their heritage.

Individual appropriation of tradition was at issue as the culture boss and I clashed over differing expectations of how Bulgarian culture should be experienced. I found myself trapped between a love of the tradition, together with the naive assumption that I could experience it on my own terms, and the Communists' desire to control my, and indeed everyone's, access to it. I learned in a direct and unpleasant way of the limited powers of the individual in a Communist society, and confronted for the first time the official suspicion that in those days accompanied any American working in a Communist country. We were obviously being kept track of, the objects of more than idle curiosity. The studiers were clearly being studied, and that recognition was deeply troubling. Even as late as 1988, during the glasnost thaw, my videotapes of music performances were checked at an office in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences called "national secrets" before I could take them out of the country.[2]

Other individuals at the wedding were caught in the same bind between freedom and control and between tradition and modernity. Some made the decision to welcome Americans into their midst, following a deeply ingrained tradition of hospitality, when prudence might have suggested that contact with vilified "American capitalists" should be avoided for fear of harassment or even worse reprisals. The bride and groom chose to marry in the sŭvet, not the church, because the religious aspect of tradition had become nearly untenable in an officially atheist state.[3] Some acted out a traditional, blatantly sexual skit, flouting the Communists' attempts to wipe out all that was 'dirty'

in Bulgarian village culture and replace it with a prettified image of a clean and perfect communist society. The groom's family decided to hire the local village players of traditional instruments rather than town musicians, from Yambol or even farther away, who play modern, manufactured instruments, particularly clarinets and accordions. How individuals experience, manipulate and weave their way between the opposing forces of tradition and modernity, freedom and control, cultural heritage and imported ideology is the subject of the second half of this book.

My first encounters with Bulgarian tradition in the country itself were largely haphazard and serendipitous. The metaphor of being "thrown" into a world, with its suggestion of an awkward landing, therefore seems appropriate. I begin by reflecting on these encounters with Bulgaria, its people, its traditions, and its musical life during the Communist period. Distancing myself from the immediate jumble of those initial events, I organize them into three kinds of experiences: encounters with history; with social, cultural, and economic support systems; and with individuals.

Bulgaria's History in Music

History as Experience

How is history experienced? For those growing up in a tradition, history is the continuous appropriation of lived experience: the lifelong involvement in and observation and interpretation of events as they occur.[4] History, as an inheritance from the past, is encountered when some constituents of everyday life—texts, monuments, art, performance styles, and everyday practices—are bracketed, fixed, or "textualized" in a way that makes them seem simultaneously near and distant, of our time and of another time.

When I arrived in Bulgaria, I found that one of the most obvious reflections of its history was its architecture, where the past is jumbled up, juxtaposed, and observable in the present. In the capital city, Sofia, home to more than a million people, the headquarters of the Communist party and the huge central department store, both in an imposing Stalinist-era style, flanked the sunken archaeological excavation of the ancient Roman city, Serdica, built during Emperor Trajan's reign (98–117 B.C.). In view up the street stood a Turkish mosque built during the nearly five centuries of Ottoman domination. A few blocks down Ruski Boulevard, the Austrian-style palace of the former Tsar of Bulgaria had been turned into the national art gallery and ethnographic museum, and in a nearby park sat the fifth-century Byzantine Church

of Saint Sofia.[5] By the late 1980s, bright new signs for American- and Japanese-owned hotels illuminated dark city streets, suggesting the dawn of integration into the world capitalist system.

I wanted to experience the village as a symbol of an ancient, unchanged way of life, but it, too, contained many layers of historical reference. Ancient Thracian burial mounds in the midst of a wheat field, donkey-carts and horse-drawn plows, and Turkish-style houses with wooden balconies shared the landscape with the tractors, combines, and huge barns of the collective farms, and here and there a Russian-built Lada or occasionally a Mercedes sat parked beside a newly constructed and still unfinished brick house.

The history that can be seen in Bulgaria's architecture and material culture, can also be heard in its music. I went to Bulgaria interested in its 'folk music' [*narodna muzika*], the product of what I presumed to be an illiterate or semiliterate rural population. In the city I experienced transplanted versions of the village tradition when I watched Gypsy clarinetists and accordionists at hotel weddings and danced to home-made village instruments in restaurants with traditional decors. But I also bought records of Turkish music played by Bulgarian Turks, attended the opera and the symphony, heard English rock bands at stadium concerts, and saw Bulgarian popular singers and jazz musicians on television. The villages, it turned out, were no haven from this modern musical Babylon: all these styles could be heard there on the radio.

During my first trip in 1969, I made a pilgrimage of sorts to Dragalevtsi, a village close to Sofia and the subject of an early anthropological account of Bulgaria, *Bulgarian Village* by Irwin Sanders (1949). As I stepped off the bus into the village of my romantic dreams, a loudspeaker in the square, installed to broadcast the Party's propaganda, shattered my enchantment with a static-filled recording of a Shostakovich symphony. Walking around the dirt streets; looking at ox-drawn hay carts and square, two-story brick houses with yards filled with vegetables, out-buildings, and animals; and listening to Russian art music, I experienced vividly the complex intermingling of music and life in a society whose densely textured, condensed history continues to inform the present.[6] The coexistence of the ancient and the modern, the old and the new, somehow defined life and music in Bulgaria—perhaps as it does everywhere—in a way unique and vivid.

My encounters with contemporary Bulgarian music and architecture suggest that untangling their complexities must include identifying the historical conditions that spawned the varieties of expression one can observe in the present. This historically constructed jumble of

sounds and cultural forms can be partially explained by a conventional chronological ordering of history, and of the texts, monuments, and styles ostensibly sedimented out of it and appropriated and used in the present. Bulgaria's political, cultural, and musical history, in outline, includes the following major events.

History as Chronology

Before the fifth century A.D., the Bulgarian lands contained indigenous populations in areas called Thrace, Macedonia, and Moesia by the Greeks and Romans who dominated the region. Some historians believe that the village mummers [*kukeri*] of today are relics of Thracian civilization (Crampton 1987). In the late fifth century, Slavic peoples from northeastern Europe settled the rural areas, obliterating for the most part these ancient cultures and probably bringing with them the striking leap of a 7th or octave at the end of drone-based polyphonic songs from the area around Sofia, which have their analogues in similar singing styles from the Briansk region of Russia (Svitova 1966).[7] In the seventh century, warriors of Turkic origin from Central Asia, called Bulgars, invaded the Balkans and competed with the Byzantine Empire for dominion over the land and its people. The ninth-century conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity affected musical and ritual practice tied to important moments in the Christian calendar such as Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

In the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Turks fought their way through the Balkans, capturing Sofia in 1385 and the rest of the country by the end of the century. For nearly five hundred years, until 1878, Bulgarians languished under what they call the 'Turkish yoke,'[8] and Bulgarian historians assert that their culture was preserved primarily in villages. There the influence of the church, headed by Greeks and served by an uneducated, corrupt clergy, and of town culture, with its heterogeneous ethnic mix of Turks, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks, was minimal. As a consequence of this overly idealized view of urban-rural separation, some Bulgarian scholars have claimed that their folk tradition remained free of Turkish influence. Yet it is likely that the instrumental tradition, in particular, evidences that influence. Many of the instruments, such as tŭpan, *zurna* (oboe-type aerophone), *tambura* (long-necked, plucked lute), and kaval, are distributed primarily in West Asia and probably entered the Balkans with the Ottoman advance. Some aspects of the playing style—such as particular ornaments, the upward glissando, the augmented second, and certain microtonal inflections—may also have been brought into Bulgaria during the Ottoman period. Gypsies, who entered the Balkans in large numbers with the Turks, were probably responsible for bringing in these instruments and styles, some of which were then adopted by Bulgarian villagers.

After 1878, with a German aristocratic family providing the newly independent state's tsars, central European cultural influence predominated. Czech and Russian music teachers, instrument makers, and band and choral directors introduced instruments like clarinet, violin, trumpet, trombone, and accordion, as well as choral singing and ensemble playing in Western harmony (Krustev 1978). From their beginnings in military and town bands, Western instruments eventually moved into some villages and became part of the rural tradition.

After 1944, a Russian-backed Communist revolution introduced dramatic changes in village economy and national ideology, the musical effects of which included a decline in village musical life, a corresponding urbanization and professionalization of the tradition, the introduction of Soviet techniques for the choreography, arrangement, and presentation of the tradition, and centralized control of musical and cultural production. Finally, in the late 1970s or early '80s, the prestige of American and Japanese culture influenced the introduction of instruments like the electric guitar, electric bass guitar, synthesizer, and drum set, musical styles like jazz and rock, and the widespread use of private cassette recordings as a means of transmission.

This thumbnail sketch of the history of Bulgaria's folk music linked to social, cultural, and political change shows the extent to which any contemporary musical culture, or musical practice as culture, is an accretion of "capacities and habits" that must be part of the story of how and why people make the music they make.[9] I would argue, however, that these historically derived cultural and musical forms don't determine contemporary practice so much as provide its symbolic forms and possibilities, which individuals then select, assign meanings to, and manipulate. Rather than view historically constructed forms and practices as influencing the present, I prefer to observe individuals appropriating, understanding, and interpreting them in culture.

Similarly, while some ethnomusicologists regard culture as the ultimate determinant of music (see Nettl 1983:131–43, 234–44 for a useful review of these arguments), this mechanistic, causal metaphor would need to be extended to argue that culture, and therefore music, is "predetermined" by history. However, I suggest abandoning a deterministic, cause-and-effect metaphor in favor of sets of dialectical relationships between history, culture, the individual, and music. I view culture not so much as generating or "determining" musical practices, which then "reflect" cultural ones, but rather I interpret musical per-

formances and styles as helping individuals construct notions of what social and cultural practices mean—and how those practices feel.

Maintaining Music in Society

While this brief history may partially describe how and when certain musical forms, instruments, contexts, and practices were introduced into Bulgarian culture, it doesn't explain how and why they were reproduced in particular historical periods. To understand this, I examine the maintenance of tradition in two distinct periods of Bulgarian history: the years from 1920 to 1944, when some 80 percent of the population lived in villages; and the postwar, Communist era from 1944 to 1989, when about 65 percent of the population lived in cities and towns.[10] I suggest that, in order to understand social maintenance of music in these periods, four social units need to be examined: the village, the state, the ethnic subgroup, and the family. Each of these social groups operated in different ways and with variable degrees of efficacy in each period. Furthermore, within and between these social units, ideologies and economic conditions operated to discourage some inherited cultural practices while maintaining and fostering others. I examine each of these units of social structure for how they provided a locus of support for music, the ways they were affected by ideology and economics, their relevance and limitations for a study of Bulgarian folk music, and the nature of my encounter with them.

The Village

If "folk music" is to be the subject of study, then the village, almost by definition, is the social unit that supports it and, by implication, generates one of its important textualized forms: commercial recordings of what purports to be traditional village music, including many songs linked to calendric and life-cycle rituals.[11] When I arrived in Bulgaria, however, I discovered that most traditional contexts had disappeared, partly as a result of the secularization of society and ideological attacks on Christianity. Even though many rituals were pre-Christian in origin and tied to animal and agricultural fertility, they had been linked for centuries to the Christian ritual cycle, as, for example, in the union of *koleda*, an animal fertility ritual involving the return or birth of the sun, with Christmas, the birth of Christ. Similarly, *Kukerovden* [Mummer's Day or Carnival], an agricultural fertility ritual around planting time, coincided with the beginning of Lent. Easter, an important occasion for dancing, fused the rebirth of the animal and plant world in spring with Jesus' resurrection. These elaborate ritual observances disappeared from most Bulgarian villages during the Communist era, partly because of their religious connotations, but also because they seemed superstitious in the face of modern agronomy. In addition, people lacked time for them due to Communist demands for more productivity. Some of the joy of life slipped away as villagers lost most of their lands and animals to collectivization in the 1950s. Even such simple, nonritual practices as a shepherd playing to amuse himself in the fields waned. As one told me, when I questioned why I never saw a shepherd playing a shepherd's flute [*ovcharska svirka*], "There is no life, little cousin."

In 1972, Bulgarian musicologists, with vast collecting experience in particular villages, listed on one hand for me a few villages "where they still perform the *koleda* ritual." With their help I was able to find, attend rehearsals of, and accompany a group of eight young 'carolers' [*koledari*]—plus a bagpiper and assorted ritual noisemakers (a 'cat' and a 'donkey')—from a village near Sofia as they went from house to house to awaken and wish each family good fortune in the coming year. After singing a song blessing the household or one of the family members celebrating a special event such as a marriage or birth, the carolers asked which was the eastern wall, and faced it as one of them recited a lengthy blessing, echoed periodically by the *koledari*'s response, "*Amin, Amin, Amin*" (CD #2). Since the Orthodox Christian icon that traditionally adorned the eastern wall of the house was always missing, it was an empty gesture—except in one case where the wall had a calendar with a photo of a scantily clad woman on it, occasioning much hooting and giggling among the men in the room. Unfortunately, such delightful encounters of tradition and modernity were difficult to observe during the middle years of the Communist period.

If many prewar musical practices had died in the villages, important features of the tradition remained alive in the memories of the generations born before the Second World War, and much of what I and other scholars know of them was elicited as songs, music, and stories performed for a tape recorder. It was difficult, though not impossible, to observe them in practice—a matter of no little detective work at one extreme, or, conversely, of chance encounters. In 1988 a woman in one village suggested I come back for *kukerovden*, a ritual they had revived in her village after years of avoidance due to fear of sanctions from authorities ("they have stopped the fun," she said). Martha Forsyth, an avid collector of Bulgarian folk songs, told me she had heard from a Bulgarian folklorist about women who still performed harvest songs while haying in the Samokov district.[12] She made a special trip there to observe this singing in context only to find that, in fact, the

women no longer sang as they harvested.[13] Thus, while songs, music, and dance linked to specific occasions were still alive in the memory of middle-aged and older people, were the historical source for contemporary *narodna muzika*, and were recorded and put on record, they nearly disappeared in everyday practice during the Communist period.

Because some sort of remembered or constructed notion of what village music was like in the pre-Communist period was crucial to its experience, presentation, and understanding in the Communist era, I describe in parts 2 and 3 the yearly cycle of music as it once existed: which families made music, the role of music in the economic life of the village, how it was valued, and how it was passed on from generation to generation—in other words, how it was socially maintained. But my encounter with Bulgarian music in the Communist period suggested to me that a musical ethnography of a village might not be a particularly rich study, and that a village with a rich musical life, if found, might have been an exception rather than the rule, and hardly representative of the situation in Bulgarian villages during the Communist period.[14]

Studying the village became less viable during this period because so many of them were destroyed by the policies of the state and the exigencies of modern economic life. Many small villages, such as the one Todora and Kostadin Varimezov grew up in, ceased to exist, except as repositories of memories and a place for holiday picnics. For me and many Bulgarian musicologists, placing music in a village cultural context was essentially a process of collection and reconstruction of traditional materials. Large villages, drained by rapid urbanization and industrialization, were hardly more interesting as sites for the study of the social maintenance of music. Except those that had become towns, suburbs of major cities, or were near factories, villages were practically empty of young people and families of working age. A few old people remained to do the work, and the results were disastrous, not only for music but for the success of the agricultural sector of the economy as well. In the late 1980s, there were no longer enough people to work the fields and bring in the crops, and so shortages for some foodstuffs existed where before there had been plenty.

The State

Although the state may have been largely irrelevant as a unit of social maintenance for village music before World War II, it emerged as perhaps the most potent force supporting it—and indeed all kinds of music—in the postwar period. While the Party's state-saturated economic,

social, and cultural policies contributed to the death of older village traditions and practices, a complementary set of programs, including politically inspired state holidays and state-sponsored patronage of 'folk ensembles,' revived them in a new form suitable for a new society. State holidays, which required folkloric display as a symbolic statement of national identity and pride, and hence loyalty to the ruling Party, included May Day and the 9th of September, celebrating the establishment of Communist rule in 1944. On these holidays huge parades, *manifestatsia*s, were held in Sofia and smaller versions in towns and villages. Displays of nationhood, particularly folk traditions, were part of these processions, as brightly costumed dancers joined the parade along with political banners and masses of workers (see pl. 2). The national holidays also took on special significance as moments for private celebration in place of traditional, but religiously implicated, Sunday fairs.

In addition to holidays where traditional costume, music and dance were used, along with many other artifacts, to symbolize national pride and political celebration, the state created contexts that had never existed before for the display of the folk arts as valuable symbolic cultural property. At the amateur level, state organs of culture formed village 'collectives' to perform and keep alive rituals, songs, and dances that otherwise might have disappeared completely from view. This movement, known as 'artistic amateurism' [*hudozhestvena samodeinost*, lit., 'artistic self-activity'], eventually organized regional, district, and national competitions of village ensembles and individual performers. The national festival, held every five years in the museum town of Koprivshtitsa, achieved an international reputation with folk dance mavens.

The purpose of festivals and competitions was to motivate participation, to give the performers an external goal and reason to participate, and to provide the participants with an extra few days off work. The collectives' concerts symbolically presented their own village traditions to themselves and fellow villagers, not as remnants of pagan or Christian superstitions, but as "artistic," beautiful, well-organized statements of local, regional and national identity and pride.

At the professional level, the state established in the early 1950s a National Ensemble of Folk Song and Dance, led by the composer, Filip Kutev, and an Ensemble for Folk Songs of the Bulgarian Radio (Radio Sofia).[15] These organizations presented the entire nation, urban and rural, (and indeed the world) its village traditions in a "progressive" manner consonant with its modernizing goals. By the mid-1980s nearly every large town in the country had its own professional ensemble, consisting of a core of paid, professional musicians, a choir direc-

tor, and perhaps a few soloists, a choreographer and composer, an artistic director and some administrators, and a number of amateur singers and dancers.[16] This growth in professionalism led in turn to the need to train those who would direct and play in these ensembles, and by the 1970s two high schools of folk music and a High Musical-Pedagogical Institute, a post-secondary conservatory, educated musicians and singers in village music traditions.

This new "tradition" produced another kind of recording encountered by American and European audiences: not memories of village music but what Bulgarians call 'arranged folklore' [*obraboten folklor*]. The recently popular records of Bulgarian arrangements, *Le Mystère des voix bulgares,* emerged from these institutions of state support for folk music. Thus, although many traditional village contexts died after World War II, its traditions lived during the Communist period as an instrument of the state, resurrected from their death after collectivization of the land and secularization of the belief structure. Organized, prettified, and cleaned up, village forms and practices were given back to the people as a symbol of national pride, of the state's ability to organize itself and its people, and of progress made by the Communist party in creating an industrialized, educated society in which new values replaced old ones.

Changing the unit of analysis from the village to the state and studying how music lives in a large-scale contemporary society provides a necessary adjunct to the village as a social unit supporting music. In many socialist states, as well as in Western democracies, the support of music was and is taken as seriously as in any self-indulgent monarchy of the past. If the patronage of music was once a frivolous expression of the selfish interests of a protected monarch distanced from and exploiting the masses, in the modern world governments of all kinds take the task of supporting music seriously and deliberately. In particular, the ideology and practice of East European socialist societies required a concern for precisely those segments of society overlooked in aristocratic and bourgeois societies.[17] The betterment of the masses in every aspect of life—economic conditions, health, education, and culture—became the primary raison d'être of the state. The desire to engineer the progress of man—Stalin called himself "the engineer of human souls"—from his degradation under capitalism to his full flowering under communism led socialist governments to scrutinize and control nearly aspect of life, including the arts. Activity that might have been a mere pastime and enthusiasm of an elite and its professionally retained minions became the serious business of a state dedicated, at least in theory, to the improvement of man. Such contexts where music and art take on new and vital meaning are important units of analysis for ethnomusicologists interested in how music works in society.

While, from a historical point of view, "the tradition" was created in villages in a previous era, in the new era the tradition was substantially recreated. Through the agency of particular individuals, the state preserved, supported, used, consumed, and changed it—and from some points of view ruined it. But a musical tradition cannot be accounted for completely by reference to its contemporary supporting mechanisms. Music making has a history and is located in individuals and performance contexts not entirely under the control of the state. The interaction of music and folklore with the state and its mechanisms was not the only thing happening in a socialist society, even one as tightly controlled as Bulgaria's was during the forty-five years of Communist rule.

The Ethnic Group

The tradition central to this book is principally (and most Bulgarians would argue exclusively) a Bulgarian one that originated and was socially maintained in the Bulgarian village of the 1920s. In addition to ethnic Bulgarians, however, Gypsies (of whom some were nominal Christians, residing in the village, and others Muslims from outside the village) were important performers of instrumental music, particularly as paid professionals.[18] The unequal social and economic relations between these two ethnic groups were woven into the fabric of social maintenance and are crucial to an understanding of how music was made in the 1930s and 1940s (cf. Popov 1993).

In the postwar period, when the local interactions of village tradition become national in scope, the relationship of ethnic groups to the social maintenance of music became more vexed. In Europe in general, the governments of many nation-states tend to regard national boundaries and ethnic boundaries as coterminous, which leads to at least two predictable, and often tragic, consequences: neglect or mistreatment of ethnic minorities within national boundaries and tensions with neighbors over the issue of expanding current borders to include ethnic "brothers" presently outside the nation. Communist ideology added to the problem, which exploded in Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union after 1989, by suppressing ethnic and even national aspirations when they came into conflict with the solidarity of the working classes necessary for world peace and an international socialist order.

Bulgaria's problems with the concept of ethnicity in the postwar period were both internal and external. Bulgarian historians and policy makers claimed periodically that the Slavic-speaking inhabitants of

northern Greece and the southern Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were ethnic Bulgarians, creating the fear in those countries that Bulgaria aspired to expand its border south to include northern Greece and the city of Thessaloniki (which Bulgarians call Solun) and west to include Macedonia. Internally, Bulgaria's cultural policy aimed at obliterating ethnic differences by emphasizing national, rather than ethnic, consciousness and, particularly in the 1980s, forcefully suppressing ethnic expression of any kind. Singled out for particularly poor treatment were the Muslim minorities: Muslim Gypsies, Pomaks (Bulgarians who converted to Islam during the Ottoman period), and Turks, especially from 1984 to 1989.[19] Other groups, less stigmatized by association with the hated Turkish Yoke, flourished in the professional and intellectual classes, including Jews, Armenians, Russians, and Greeks.

While each group has its own traditions, the Gypsies played a particularly important role in the Bulgarian tradition, acting as professional musicians to the dominant Bulgarian culture and participating in many domains of musical life, including state-sponsored ensembles of traditional instrumentalists, where their expressive, virtuosic playing often set the standard for others to follow. But nowhere was their prestige and influence greater than at weddings, which, as a spontaneously negotiated communal practice not strictly dictated by Party ideology and aesthetics, flourished during the latter part of the socialist period as an alternative to the state for social maintenance of music. The enormous amount of instrumental music and singing provided by professional musicians, many of whom were Gypsies, is a third source for recordings of Bulgarian musicians that have reached the rest of Europe and America.[20]

Like the state, Gypsies and their relationship to Bulgarian tradition formed an important social nexus in support of musical life in the postwar period. In a complexly textured way, their lively performances are both central and peripheral to the Bulgarian tradition, and, while any study of Bulgarian music has to take their enormous influence into account, an exclusive focus on them would miss key elements at the core of the village tradition. On the other hand, although it is rarely discussed in the literature, a focus on one, ethnic Bulgarian, tradition ignores the vibrant expressions of ethnic minorities within the national boundaries.

The Family

The fourth social unit supporting Bulgarian music is the family. In villages before the war, music, song, and dance were first learned in the family circle. Children watched their mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and older siblings visit, dance, sing, and play instruments during long autumn and winter evenings. Bulgarians call this natural learning process the 'mother's school,' and music proficiency tended to be passed on in families, although certainly not rigidly ascribed to them.

After the war, especially within families of musicians participating in state-sponsored professional, amateur, or wedding-music institutions, a lively musical life continued, centered around holiday meals and get-togethers. In these contexts, young people experienced music as an intimate, family practice, and in some cases were inspired to take up playing, singing, and dancing because they were activities that, as Bulgarians say, 'bring people together' and 'create fun.' In this way, the family continued, in the Communist era, to spawn some of Bulgaria's best young musicians.[21] If music was missing from family life, then it was difficult, although not impossible, for children to develop a feeling for the tradition. In some ways, the family remained the last village institution where traditional values and practices were preserved; it certainly was the last of these four social units that I encountered and began to try to understand (see Katsarova 1952 for the classic study of a Bulgarian musical family). For many Bulgarians outside the circle of musicians supported by the state and the wedding scene, folk music was encountered primarily as a product of the state in highly stylized performances on stage, radio, and television, and, as one young urbanite said after witnessing a Varimezov family gathering full of music, song, and dance, "I had no idea this still existed in Bulgaria."

As a social structure, the marriage exchange of a bride between two families prompted, in both the pre- and postwar periods, the most intense celebration, carried along by the most brilliant music-making the groom's family could afford. Thus the family was also a patron of professional music making, the most important one in the prewar period, but was surpassed by the state for much of the postwar period. By the late 1980s, increased family wealth brought the state and the family into an equilibrium that caught musicians in a battle between competing patrons, economic incentives, and aesthetic demands.

From the foregoing discussion, it should be clear that a balanced discussion of the social maintenance of Bulgarian tradition cannot focus on only one of the social units that supports music, but has to understand music in relation to the family, the ethnic group, the village, and the state. To review the changing status of these social structures in the pre- and postwar periods, the village declined in importance as the

state's role increased dramatically; the co-existence and economically structured relationships between ethnic groups became ideologically and politically charged; and the family retained its importance as a locus of learning and celebration and as an economic patron of musicians and musical life.

Individual Musical Experience

From some points of view, the historically constructed forms and socially maintained practices reviewed in this chapter can be seen as formative processes determining musical practice and culture in the ethnographic present. But a number of questions remain. Does history, society, or culture determine musical practice? Are historically constructed musical forms doomed to repeat themselves? By what mechanism do social units select or shape music? One way to answer these questions, and an alternative point of view, is to examine the human agent acting upon history in society to create cultural forms such as music. The individual inherits and appropriates musical practice, along with economic, ideological, and social practices, and then recreates, reconstructs, and reinterprets them in each moment of the present. The choices that he or she makes, the forms that tradition takes, and the interpretations of their meanings are self-interested, socially informed strategies at the intersection of the past with the present.

Can the individual, however, be a locus of study in a "social science"? How unique is the individual? To what extent does he or she occupy a social and historical position shared by others in the society? Like the old television detective series about New York, *The Naked City,* whose opening announced that there were eight million stories in the city, there are just about as many stories in Bulgaria. While Americans, influenced by an ideology of personal freedom and rights, tend to overestimate the autonomy of the individual, anthropologists, typically working with more homogeneous societies than our own, often emphasize the shared features of culture at the expense of intracultural variation.[22] Most contemporary societies, particularly where society is understood as the nation-state, occupy a middle ground between the extremes of American individualism and anthropological homogeneity, and are structured into groups according to class, occupation, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and age.

From this sociological point of view, the individual shares culture rather fluidly with members of the various groups to which he or she belongs. Pierre Bourdieu (1977:86) writes, "Since the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class, each *individual system of dispositions* may be seen as a *structural variant* of all the other group or class habitus." (Disposition and habitus are neotheoreticisms he develops to account for the dynamics of practice, as opposed to the reified, static, givenness of the culture concept.) He continues, "In a class society, all the products of a given agent, by an essential *overdetermination,* speak inseparably and simultaneously of his class—or, more precisely, his position in the social structure." In this way, the individual can properly enter the domain of social science, not as a self or ego independent of history, society, and class, but as an agent living in a world of actions and symbols whose meanings can be interpreted from a variety of different social and historical positions.

From the previous review of the historical and social forces affecting Bulgarian music, individual musicians could be defined in terms of such group-identifying dichotomies as rural/urban, Bulgarian/Gypsy, professional/amateur, musical family/nonmusical family, man/woman, and old (raised before Communism)/young (raised during Communism). If they were truly independent, these six sociomusical factors would define 64 classes of socially positioned individuals whose culture (or world, or habitus) hypothetically differed, one from another. If even this oversimplified, hardly exhaustive, classification by dichotomy yields so many socially situated types of individuals, how should the individual be handled in a study that purports to be about Bulgarian music or the music of any complex society? Could there possibly be a "representative" individual? What would the individual represent?[23]

Given the complexity of Bulgaria's social structure, an individual could hardly represent the entire country. Since, however, individuals appropriate, activate, and manipulate the social and historical world of symbols—that is, traditions—and in the process give to culture and history whatever expressive force they have, some way must be found to introduce them into a study of music.

While innumerable strategies could be adopted,[24] the one I adopt here is to focus on two individuals, writing about them in relation to the particular, socially defined tradition they acquired, the social, ideological, and economic forces they encountered during their lives, and other individuals who challenged their experience from the perspective of the different histories and social positions within the larger society called Bulgaria. This particular choice suppresses certain issues and emphasizes others, but it should allow the many factors contributing to how and why Bulgarians make music to be identified, explained, and understood.

To claim that I selected the individuals who form the center of this

study already suggests a kind of freedom that never exists in fieldwork. I was thrown into the world of Bulgarian music, and, through a series of distinctly social relations, came to know certain individuals better than others and to believe that I could tell an interesting story about Bulgarian music from their perspectives. How they entered this study was determined by the same model used to form it: a somewhat serendipitous combination of personal histories and values, both theirs and mine, with the social conditions of music making in Bulgaria at the time we met (cf. Rabinow 1977).

In the early 1970s, when I spent over a year in Bulgaria, it was possible to work only on ethnically Bulgarian traditions. Minorities, particularly Muslims like the Turks, Gypsies, and Pomaks, were problematic for Bulgarian cultural policy, and I was specifically forbidden to enter their villages or their sections of town, although local friends often took me there.[25] Since I already played clarinet, I wanted to learn to play a traditional wind instrument, the gaida or kaval,[26] and my 'academic leader' at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences introduced me to the professional musicians at Radio Sofia's Ensemble for Folk Songs. It was here that I met the principal subject of this study.

The Radio orchestra rehearsed at that time in one of the innumerable, undistinguished, one-story, dirty-yellow buildings lining the streets of Sofia. I was thrilled to meet two of the best-known performers, the *gaidar* (bagpiper), Kostadin Varimezov, and the kaval player, Stoyan Velichkov. Arriving for work wearing suits and ties, carrying their instruments in briefcases, and yet somehow looking not quite like bureaucrats, they played in an orchestra of folk instruments, patterned after a Western orchestra, and consisting of one gaida, three kavals, six gŭdulkas, two tamburas, tŭpan, cello, and bass. After our introduction, they, along with Kosta Kolev, their director and a well-known accordionist and arranger, continued rehearsing a complicated arrangement of a folk song by one of Bulgaria's leading composers in the genre of 'arranged folklore.' When they finished playing through it, the orchestra turned toward me en masse, soliciting my opinion. At the time, involved as I was collecting remnants of village music, I didn't like the sound of such orchestras, and this arrangement used far too complex harmonies and counterpoints for my taste, destroying the integrity of the song and instrumental tunes it was based on. I shrugged my disapproval, and, to my surprise, the musicians all laughed and smiled in agreement. They didn't like it either. Much later I understood their response as another manifestation of the tension between tradition and modernity, but at the time our shared abhorrence of their music established an instant rapport.

While some in the orchestra were less than enthusiastic at the prospect of trying to teach a foreigner to play (and they had other fish to fry), Kostadin Varimezov (pl. 3), born in 1918 and raised in the village of Rosenovo in the foothills of the Strandzha Mountains east of Yambol, was the most receptive to the idea of helping me learn to play his instrument, the gaida. He was a short, stout, kindly but serious man, in his fifties at the time, and one of the oldest musicians in the ensemble. Like the others, he was extremely busy, but expressed his willingness to take on the extra duty of teaching me, saying, "I will teach you because I feel an obligation to my instrument." I later learned he was one of the few village musicians who took the idea of teaching seriously. Most had taught themselves to play, had no idea how to teach, and therefore had no interest in it. Kostadin agreed to meet me after rehearsals and at the Palace of Pioneers, a scouting-like organization, where I could join his group classes for young people. Occasionally I visited his home, a fifth-floor attic in the downtown area, to learn how he made reeds and goatskin bags for his and his students' instruments. I was impressed both by the quality of his musicianship and the seriousness with which he took his teaching and other obligations. I joked that one day perhaps he could visit me in America, a distant dream for Bulgarians living within the country's sealed borders.

My opportunity came in 1978, soon after I finished my doctoral dissertation. I invited Kostadin and his wife, Todora, to come to Toronto, he as visiting artist at the University of Toronto, where I was teaching. During the nine months of their stay, I continued my study of the gaida, recorded Kostadin's repertoire of instrumental tunes and elicited his life story, including how he learned the tradition and became a professional musician. Todora, whom I had met only briefly in Sofia, turned out to be a treasure trove of songs. Born in Rosenovo in 1923, she grew up with Kostadin, she the best singer and he the best instrumentalist of their generation in the village. I recorded her repertoire of 250 songs, together with extensive commentaries on their meaning in her life, first as a way to help her pass the time while in Toronto and then with increasing fascination as they opened up a new world for me. A tall woman, then 55 years of age, with light reddish hair and fair skin, she possessed a wonderful memory for people and events, a sensitive soul hurt by tensions in and around her, and a quick and ready laugh to deal with adversity. As in many traditional songs, Kostadin and Todora's love of music, song, and dance brought them together; they married and continued ever since to 'create fun' for themselves, their family, and friends. I don't believe it is a romantic exaggeration to say that we became like family during this period, the most intensely rewarding "fieldwork" experience I have had.

In subsequent trips to Bulgaria in 1986, 1988, and 1989, I met their

large family, including a daughter, two sons and their spouses, five granddaughters, his three living brothers, her three sisters, and innumerable in-laws, cousins, nieces, and nephews. To my delight, they adopted me as one of their own, continually insisting that I was now part of their family. I met other professional and amateur musicians with connections to Kostadin and observed many music events to update my impressions in 1972 and '73. Thus a study that began with an individual quickly expanded to include the network of people with whom he interacted musically and socially throughout his life and, in the process, took on a more general significance.

Kostadin's musical career is representative of his social and historical position within Bulgarian tradition in ways that are particularly telling. During his life, he passed from one side to the other of three of the six dichotomies crucial to defining the sociomusical location of individuals in Bulgarian society. He grew up as a young, rural, amateur musician, and, through the agency of the state and the passage of time, was "reborn" as an older, urban, professional one—an excellent example of how the self changes as the symbolic and social world changes. His biography parallels the main transformations in Bulgarian society as a whole, and he in some sense represents both the older village tradition and the modern, state-supported professional one. Together, Kostadin and Todora represent both sides of a fourth dichotomy between male and female. Todora's view of the tradition contributes substantially to the first two parts of this book, and together Kostadin and Todora form the nucleus of an extended musical family that was an important locus for music making in the 1980s.

As for the other two dichotomies, they represent one side only: they are Bulgarian, not Gypsy, and they come from and perpetuate families with rich musical lives. In this book, we will come to know the other sides of these dichotomies mainly through Kostadin's and Todora's contact with them, and so in that sense they are more weakly represented. But by telling Kostadin's and Todora's life story and showing how it intersects with other lives and with competing or complementary interests and histories, I hope to generate an engaging ethnomusicological account of why and how Bulgarians make the music they do.

The story begins as Kostadin and Todora—and I through their stories—are thrown into the world of Bulgarian music in the 1920s.