

SUMMER PIANO FESTIVAL: STEPPE WIND A-BLOWIN'

MONDAY 15 JUNE, 5PM
DUKE'S HALL



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Academy pianists **Andra Băcilă** and **Lily Petrova** introduce and perform three major piano works: extraordinary, urgent piano music reframing folk culture from Ukraine, Bulgaria and Armenia.

Leonid Desyatinov was born in Kharkiv in Ukraine and is known for his four operas including the scandal ridden, post-modern *The Children of Rosenthal*; his ballet score *Lost Illusions*; his monumental symphony *The Rite of Winter 1949* for choir and soloists; and many cantatas and song cycles. Since 1996 he has worked in close collaboration with Gidon Kremer, arranging Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* for violin and orchestra as well as the opera *Maria de Buenos Aires*. His *24 Preludes: Songs of Bukovina* (2017) recasts traditional Ukrainian folk songs with biting jazzy harmony and contemporary grit. Desyatnikov left St Petersburg in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and now lives in Haifa, Israel.

Alexander Vladigerov was the son of Pancho Vladigerov, arguably the most influential Bulgarian classical musician of all time. Pancho taught practically all the Bulgarian composers of the next generation, and as a young man he was Max Reinhardt's Music Director at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, returning to Sofia in 1932 to found what was to become the Bulgarian Union of Composers. His son Alexander was a successful conductor as well as a composer, touring to Europe, Japan and Cuba; the dynasty continues with *his* two sons, both jazz musicians. Alexander Valdigerov's immensely popular *Variations Op 2* (1954) transforms one of Bulgaria's most famous folk tunes,

Dilmano Dilbero, into a dazzling, Piazzolla-like rhapsody.

The Armenian priest **Komitas Vardapet** - represented here by six delicate dances - was a musicologist, singer, arranger and composer. Recognised as the soul-keeper of Armenian music, he was one of the pioneers of ethnomusicology, collecting and transcribing over 3000 pieces from 1904 to 1915. Besides Armenian music, he published the first-ever collection of Kurdish folksongs. His choir travelled Europe widely, earning the praise of, amongst others, Claude Debussy. It's thought he cracked the 'neume' notation of medieval Armenian liturgical chants - a key that has since been lost.

During the Armenian Genocide of 1915 Komitas was deported - along with hundreds of artists and intellectuals - by the Ottoman government. After his release he experienced a catastrophic mental breakdown and lived in an asylum in Paris until his death twenty years later. Seen by many as a symbol of Armenian mourning, Komitas has been the subject of many films but only one biography to date, by the psychiatrist Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian at McGill University.

Komitas Vardapet (1869-1935)

Six Dances

Yerangi

Unabi

Marali

Shushiki

Et-arach

Shoror

Chkov

Andra Băcilă piano

Leonid Desyatnikov (b 1995)

From Songs of Bukovina

Chapter 1: The landscape of Bukovina

I Steppe wind a-blowin

II The wind is blowing, the sun is warm

III A rocky mountain

Chapter 2: Journeys and Distance

IV Ian, Where d'You come From? – Beyond the Danube

V Oh, my sweet vast Canada

Chapter 3: Trees, Memory and Identity

VI Green willow, green willow

VII Poplars grew from one field to another

VIII Red arrowwood, green leaves

IX Red arrowwood, has blossomed white

Chapter 4: Human Drama

X A Lady Had a Husband, She Loved Some Peter
Though

Lily Petrova piano

Alexander Vladigerov (1933-93)

Variations on 'Dilmano, Dilbero', Op 2

Andra Băcilă piano

BIOGRAPHIES

Andra Băcilă

Andra Băcilă is a pianist from Romania, completing her undergraduate degree this summer with Professor Joanna MacGregor. She made her solo debut at the Liszt Institute (Balassi Institute) in Paris in 2023; she has won numerous competitions including the Hungarian Music Festival and Future Stars International Piano Competition. She has performed as concerto soloist at the Athenaeum in Bucharest, and given recitals at the Goethe Institut in London, the multi-arts venue ARCUB, the Hungarian Liszt Institut and Romanian National Philharmonic in Brasov. Andra is an avid chamber music partner, recently invited by the Czech Philharmonic to perform at the Czech Embassy in the presence of Semyon Bychkov, and organised a fundraising chamber concert for earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria in London. In addition to her performing career, Andra has developed a passion for silent films. Following the Improvisation to Film class in the Academy Piano Department, she has performed at the prestigious 'La Giornate del Cinema Muto' Festival in Pordenone, the Netherlands Silent Film Festival in Eindhoven, and the Kennington Bioscope in London.

Lily Petrova

Prize-winning pianist Lily Petrova is a first-year post graduate pianist studying with Professor Joanna MacGregor. She has performed at leading venues including a debut recital at Wigmore Hall earlier this year, the Southbank Centre, Cadogan Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields,

Steinway Hall and Bulgaria Hall. A frequent performer at the Bulgarian Cultural Institute, she was invited to perform at the welcoming ceremony for the Bulgarian Cultural Minister.

Upcoming highlights of the 2026/27 season include performances at the Farley Festival and Petworth Festival, musician in residence with the 'precept.concept.perception' programme in Slovenia, and a recording project at Abbey Road Studios.

Internationally, she has performed across Europe and Canada, most recently completing the Fuse residency at the Banff Centre in Canada, where she collaborated with artists including actor John de Lancie, conductor Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser and members of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Lily's artistic practice extends beyond the traditional recital format, integrating music with film and visual media, with a particular focus on contemporary repertoire. Alongside her performing career, Lily is Director of the Maria Vraka Music Academy in London, where she has led significant growth; she is co-founder and trustee of the Maria Vraka Foundation, established in 2025 to support accessible music education and emerging artists.

DON'T MISS OUR OTHER SUMMER PIANO FESTIVAL EVENTS

Tuesday 16 June 10.30am

Titanic Piano: Sorabji and Alkan
David Josefowitz Recital Hall

Tuesday 16 June 11.30am

Chamber Rolls II: Debussy and Dvořák
David Josefowitz Recital Hall

Tuesday 16 June 1pm

Tomos Boyles
Chopin, Debussy, Ligeti, Prokofiev
Duke's Hall

Tuesday 16 June 2.30pm

Chamber Rolls III: Sviridov and Shostakovich
Duke's Hall

Tuesday 16 June 3.30pm

Piano, Multimedia, Film
Angela Burgess Recital Hall

Tuesday 16 June 5.30pm

Piano Lab Premieres
Duke's Hall

Wednesday 17 June 10am

Schumann: The Complete Piano Works IV
Duke's Hall

Wednesday 17 June 1pm

Royal Academy Wigmore Hall Piano Series
Khrystyna Mykhailichenko
Bach/Busoni, Brahms

Wednesday 17 June 2.30pm

Schumann: The Complete Piano Works IV
Duke's Hall (final edition)

Wednesday 17 June, 6pm

Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time
Duke's Hall