

With this recital, violinist Sherban Lupu offers his public a crude, colourful, enchanting peasant music, selected so as to fit both academic and rural aesthetic. Driven by a nostalgia for his origins – Sherban Lupu is Romanian-born – but also by his inquisitiveness as an artist who explores tirelessly in order to avoid falling prey to routine, the violinist set out to appropriate this music and reproduce it as faithfully as possible – with no excessive stylizing and no sentimental overflows – and to introduce it to “scholarly” culture. And appropriate by he did, impeccably at that, and then played it together with a dozen of peasant musicians – of whom only three are present here tonight – in several concerts throughout Europe. It was not effortless, for the music he chose brought him face to face with various regional styles and instrumental techniques and, above all, strange to a classical violinist. Sherban Lupu even had to comply with some bizarre adaptations to his instrument. Thus, for Hora & Sarba with retuned strings (5), the E and A strings go, one on top of the other, through the same groove in the bridge, the A string being lowered with one perfect fourth; pressed and attacked simultaneously, they produce a continuous flow of parallel octaves. For piece number 12, Dance from Oas County, the strings are close together on a very low bridge; when pressed with one finger and rubbed simultaneously, they produce parallel fifths in succession. The violin used for the pieces Polca and Pe picior (11) has simply no body; the sound is amplified through a trumpet funnel (or a pavilion-shaped dry pumpkin) connected to a telephone microphone.

The pieces in this recital are to a large extent the same as on the Sherban Lupu and the Peasant Virtuosos of Romania CD. They

are mostly dance music from various regions of Romania, with different melodic profile, metric-rhythmic structure, tempo and accompaniment. Each demands a different kind of virtuosity from the interpreter.

The recital includes several pieces of special significance. First and foremost, the two lyrical songs (pieces 15 and 20: Grandfather Lupu’s Song and When I Lived at My Mother’s) that come from Transylvania, where the musician was born and brought up. Grandfather Lupu’s Song (piece no. 15 in the repertoire), whose full melody the violinist reconstituted with help from a local musician, is the very same his grandfather used to play on his violin for his family or friends. Also significant, but from a different perspective, is piece no. 12, Dance from Oas County. It was taken from a collection that Béla Bartók put together in 1912 in Turt village (Oas County, northern Transylvania) and later included in his Rhapsody no. 2 for violin and piano.

Sherban Lupu’s accompanists are peasant musicians nimbly wielding one or various instruments: violin, viola, double-bass, cymbalom, drum and shepherd flute. They are all virtuosos, intelligent, imaginative and above all flexible, capable to adapt to all regional Romanian style. We should mention, however, that for the recordings on the CD Sherban Lupu worked intensely with another ten musicians from various cultural areas in Romania, by no means less skilled than the three present here today. Like with the disk Sherban Lupu and the Peasant Virtuosos of Romania, with today’s recital the artist renders homage to the rural music of his native country, but also to his family, who urged him to treasure it and keep its memory alive.

Speranța Rădulescu

INSTITUTUL CULTURAL ROMÂN
 ROMANIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE New York
 REECC
 School of Music
Sherban Lupu
and the Peasant Virtuosos of Romania
 Classical violin joins world music
 Monday 16 oct 19.30 New York, Symphony Space
 Friday 20 oct 19.30 Chicago
 Sunday 22 oct 19.00 University of Illinois, Smith Recital Hall
 Photo: Mihai Cucu

Ioan Pop, from the village of Hoteni, Maramures County (northern Transylvania): guitar (zongora), flute without holes (tilinca), violin (cetera), trumpet violin (higheghe), drum (doba), voice.

Ioan Pop, the leader of the group of peasant virtuosos, is an agriculturer, cattle farmer, owner of a number of splendid rural guest-houses and the director of peasant music classes for foreigners. He enjoys the reputation of being the best peasant musician in the region and one of the most valuable in Romania.

Gheorghe Stan, from the village of Draganesti Vlasca, Wallachia (southern Romania): small cymbalom (tambal mic), drum (doba), double bass (bas or gordon). A native

from Draganesti Vlasca, Gheorghe Stan is one of the last remaining players of small cymbalom – a very popular instrument at one time, which is now slowly going out of fashion. More conservative villagers hire him for different rural celebrations (mostly weddings), while producers of folkloric shows deem him priceless.

Grigore Chira, from the village of Sindresti, Maramures County: double bass (bas or gordon), guitar (zongora), drum (doba). He is the only one in the group with classical training. Nonetheless, he is frequently present at celebrations in and around his village, where he plays any of the instruments the ensemble might possibly need him to (including keyboard).

1. **Dance melody:** De tare (Vrancea county)
2. **Dance melody:** Sarba de la Havarna (Botosani county)
3. **Dance melody:** Hora pe hang (Botosani county)
4. **Dance melody:** Taraneasca de pe Babiceni (Botosani county)
5. **Two dance melodies played on violin with retuned strings:** Hora and Sarba with retuned strings (Botosani county)
6. **Lyric songs and dance melodies** sung and played on flute without holes by Ioan Pop (Maramures county)
7. **Dance melody:** Hora boiereasca (Botosani county)
8. **Dance melody:** Hora lui Toader Tinta (Botosani county)
9. **Epic song:** Corbea and dance melody: Tiganeasca, played on cymbalom by Gheorghe Stan (Wallachia, southern Romania)
10. **Dance melody:** Invarțita din Poieni (Maramures county)
11. **Dance melodies:** Polca and Pe picior, played on two trumpet violins
12. **Dance melody** from Oas county
13. **Lyric song:** Dupa pui de morosan, sung by Ioan Pop (Maramures county)
14. **Dance melody:** Invarțita de pe Iza (Maramures county)
15. **Lyric song:** Grandfather Lupu's Song (Transylvania)
16. **Dance melody:** Fecioreste (Transylvania)
17. **Suite of three dance melodies:** Hartagul (I, II, III) (Transylvania)
18. **Suite of two dance melodies:** Sarba in caruta and Chindia, played on small cymbalom by Gheorghe Stan (Wallachia)
19. **Two dance melodies** played on violin with retuned strings: Sarba and Hora from the village of Stirbei (Olt county)
20. **Lyric song:** When I Lived at My Mother's (Transylvania)
21. **Dance melody:** Macelareasa (Wallachia)
22. **Ritual dance melody:** Calusul (Wallachia)



Sherban Lupu

One of the world's leading performers of George Enescu's music, Romanian-born Sherban Lupu studied at the Bucharest Conservatory. Mr. Lupu left Romania to study in London at the Guildhall School of Music with Yfrah Neaman and he took lessons and master classes with legendary violinists Yehudi Menuhin, Henry Szering and Nathan Milstein.

Lupu has won prizes in numerous competitions such as: Vienna International, Romanian National String Quartet, Jacques Thibaud in Paris, Carl Flesch in London. Subsequently Lupu came to the United States to study with Dorothy De Lay and, at Indiana University, with Josef Gingold and receive chamber music coaching from Menahem Pressler. Mr. Lupu is currently professor of violin at the University of Illinois.

Appearing frequently as soloist in Europe and the United States, Lupu has also performed the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas with Menahem Pressler. Mr. Lupu specializes in the music of his native Romania and Eastern Europe as well as the virtuoso romantic repertoire.

Solo appearances include The Kennedy Center, Gstaad Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elisabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, St. John's Smith Square and Carnegie Hall. He has also performed the Brahms and Tchaikovsky violin concertos in live broadcasts with the BBC Orchestra and has appeared as soloist with the Northern Israeli Symphony Orchestra. Sherban Lupu recorded works by Ysa'e, Bartók, Enescu, Wieniawski, Ernst, Stravinsky, Bloch and Ginastera for the ASV, Arabesque, Continuum, Electrecord, Capstone, Zephyr labels, the BBC and he has recently released the

recording of the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin by J.S. Bach. In the year 2000, Mr. Lupu received a lifetime achievement award from the Romanian Cultural Foundation for his efforts to promote Romanian culture and music.

In May 2002 Sherban Lupu has been given the prestigious "Arnold Beckman" Award from the Research Board of the University of Illinois towards the recording of the complete works for violin and piano by Bela Bartók. In November 2002 Mr. Lupu was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the Academy of Music "G. Dima" from Cluj (Romania) and in January 2004 the President of Romania has conferred upon Sherban Lupu the title of Commander of the National Order of Merit and Service for his worldwide musical and cultural activities. In September 2005 Sherban Lupu organized the American premiere of the Opera "Oedipus" by George Enescu at the University of Illinois and the Symposium "Oedipus Myth and Its Interpretation" For the academic year 2005-2006 Sherban Lupu has been appointed as Associate of the Center for Advanced Studies at University of Illinois and since December 2005 Mr. Lupu is the Artistic Director of the George Enescu Society of the United States.