



POSTCARDS FROM UKRAINE

Volume Three: Folk Dialogues

Virtuoso Violin Arrangements of Folk-Inspired Originals

Markyan Melnychenko, violin
Stewart Kelly, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

POSTCARDS FROM UKRAINE Volume Three: Folk Dialogues

TRADITIONAL

arr. MARKIYAN MELNYCHENKO (b. 1988)

*Ukrainian Dance**

4:35

*Moon upon the Heavens**

3:47

JOHANNES BRAHMS

arr. JOSEPH JOACHIM

Hungarian Dance No. 6

3:27

JENŐ HUBAY

Scènes de la Csárda, Op. 32: No. 4, 'Hejre Kati'

5:50

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

arr. FRITZ KREISLER

Slavonic Fantasie in B minor

5:03

FRYDERYK CHOPIN

arr. LEOPOLD AUER

Nineteen Polish Songs, Op. 74: No. 16, Lithuanian Song

3:20

MORITZ MOSZKOWSKI

arr. PABLO DE SARASATE

Zwei Klavierstücke, Op. 45: No. 2, Guitarre

3:38

TRADITIONAL

arr. FRITZ KREISLER

La Gitana

3:32

MODEST MUSSORGSKY

arr. SAMUEL DUSHKIN

Sorochinsky Fair: Hopak

2:03

TRADITIONAL

arr. JASCHA HEIFETZ

Deep River

2:28

STEPHEN FOSTER arr. HEIFETZ		
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TRADITIONAL		
arr. MARKIYAN MELNYCHENKO		
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* FIRST RECORDINGS

POSTCARDS FROM UKRAINE – VOLUME THREE: FOLK DIALOGUES

Markiyan Melnychenko

The tradition that musicians should appropriate repertoire from other instruments and arrange it for their own has existed for centuries, creating new music by refreshing known (or highlighting unknown) melodies with new colours, textures, narratives and contexts. Violinists have been particularly active in this endeavour, and history is filled with examples of major performers who made important contributions to the repertoire of their instrument through their arrangements and transcriptions. In his introduction to *The Heifetz Collection*, a publication of selected works by Jascha Heifetz, Eric Wen states that 'in the early twentieth century, virtually all the important solo violinists made transcriptions'.¹ Heifetz himself created over 150 'new' works in this way. Intimate familiarity with the workings of their instrument provided these violinists with the ability to arrange their works in a way that harnessed all of its strengths, including its opportunities for musical colour and texture, as well as its technical possibilities for virtuosity.

The virtuoso element of these pieces can be taken as serving a superficial demonstration of a violinist's abilities, particularly in the classical performance industry of the 21st century, where ever-younger prodigies present breathtaking feats of previously unmatched technical prowess. But one of the most important functions of the virtuoso and, by extension, his² works is the 'ability to widen the technical and expressive boundaries of his art'.³ For the violinist-arrangers of the past, the tradition of incorporating fearsome technical challenges into virtuoso showpieces

¹ Carl Fischer Music, New York, 1995, p. 4.

² Curiously, for all that female performers, having long since overcome the prejudices of the nineteenth century, now perform with the same degree of technical flair as men, there has not yet emerged a body of virtuoso showpieces by women.

³ Owen Jander, 'Virtuoso', in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029502>.

not only threw down the gauntlet for their professional peers; it also allowed the full use of everything that the violin has to offer in pursuit of artistic goals and provided developmental material for students. As an example, though the successful execution of double stops or chords in violin-playing is, no doubt, a commendable indicator of the instrumentalist's skill, it also introduces the possibility of polyphony and textural variety, thereby allowing a richer development of the musical narrative.

Folk-music has proved an important source for violinist-arrangers in the creation of new works. On the one hand, that could partially be a result of the exposure of violinists such as Pablo de Sarasate, Henryk Wieniawski or Fritz Kreisler to the musical nationalism that raged in the nineteenth century and turn of the twentieth, more or less at the same time as the tradition of the grand virtuoso became a fixture in classical music. But the enduring quality of folk-music, with its simplicity, tunefulness and sincerity, in itself creates an inviting proposition for arrangement, with the human penchant for sung melodies easily adapted to the ability of the violin to spin long, unbroken musical lines. With their use of folk-music in their arrangements, numerous violinists helped promote the culture of their people. Perhaps the most prominent example is Pablo de Sarasate who, with his prolific Spanish-themed musical works, became a champion of the Spanish style and culture throughout Europe, inspiring both composers such as Éduard Lalo and Max Bruch, as well as his fellow violinists Paweł Kochański and Fritz Kreisler, to create new music inspired by and based on Spanish musical idioms.

In this collection of recordings, arrangements of folk-music by historical violinists are placed side by side with new ones I created as part of a performance Ph.D., where I explored two venerable traditions: the violinist as arranger and the use of folk-music in the creation of Ukrainian classical music. The combination of these two traditions has resulted in six new violin miniatures based on some of the most beautiful and best-known Ukrainian folksongs. These works celebrate the legacy of historical violinist-arrangers while promoting Ukrainian culture at a critical time in its history. It is hoped that they will provide many with an introduction to the beautiful folk-melodies of Ukraine as well as encouraging other contemporary violinists to make their own

contributions to the repertoire of their instrument, following in the footsteps of the violinist-arrangers of the past.

SIX UKRAINIAN FOLKSONG ARRANGEMENTS BY MARKIYAN MELNYCHENKO

***Ukrainian Dance* (2024)**

The central thematic material of this arrangement [1] comes from ‘Verkhovyna’, a folksong about the eponymous geographical area in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine, which expresses the joys of a free existence among surroundings filled with natural beauty and splendour. Starting with a solo-piano introduction using a theme from a rite-of-passage dance, the music continues with contrasting sections, interweaving several other folk-melodies to form a high-spirited medley. At one point the village fiddler makes his appearance, adding to the rustic celebrations, and the piece ends with the fiddler disappearing off into the distance.

***Moon upon the Heavens* (2024)**

This folksong [2] explores the themes of love, parting and loss, and its tender melody is tinged with melancholy and nostalgia. The arrangement begins with a soliloquy from the violin based on the main theme while the piano provides rhetorical commentary. The folksong is repeated three times, with the melody being passed back and forth between the instruments. At first, the violin presents a simple statement of the melody and the piano takes over on the second repeat. By the third repeat the violin once again carries the melodic line but embellishes it with double stops before a haunting passage in harmonics evokes the opening introduction, setting up a final commentary from the piano to bring the music to a close.

***The Duckling Swims along the Tysa* (2024)**

This Ukrainian folksong [12] is a powerful treatment of the subject of death and gained widespread popularity in Ukraine after its use as a requiem for those killed during the 2014 ‘Revolution of Dignity’ protests. During Russia’s war on Ukraine, the song continued to be popular as a dirge for fallen Ukrainian soldiers. This arrangement

attempted to recreate the emotionally charged atmosphere of the lyrics by using a variety of effects such as *ricochet*, harmonics and polytonality. At the centre of the piece is a violin cadenza in which the lone voice of the violin grapples with the tragedy of war and the loss it brings.

***Podolyanochka* (2024)**

The folksong ‘Podolyanochka’ [13] belongs to a genre called Vesnianky, which are young girls’ spring songs or games. In the case of this song a circle is formed around one girl who stands in the middle, acting out the lyrics. The music has a light-hearted innocence, with the main melody travelling through several different keys and textures to create variety in the musical narrative. A contrasting middle section moves inwards for some introverted moments of reflection before the games resume.

***The Steppe Wind Blows* (2024)**

There is a series of ‘resistance’ folksongs in Ukraine that were popular during the bloody and, ultimately, unsuccessful struggles for Ukrainian independence in the first half of the twentieth century. ‘The Steppe Wind Blows’ [18] conjures an image of a fallen cossack along with his grieving loved ones, appealing to the historical Ukrainian struggles of the past and connecting them to contemporary ones. There is a poignancy in the folksong that this arrangement attempted to capture with a simplicity of approach, including a calm stillness in the accompaniment.

***The Shepherd* (2024)**

‘The Shepherd’ [19] is a cheerful and humorous song about love, marriage and flirtation, which was arranged as a theme and variations in the style of historical violinists Pablo de Sarasate and Niccolò Paganini, where the variations explore different extended techniques that are possible on a violin. The violinist faces technically challenging passages involving fast scales, arpeggios, harmonics, double stops, left-hand *pizzicato* and other virtuoso affects that create an exciting fireworks display. At the end of the work the listener may hear the shepherd whistling to his dogs that it’s time to go home.

ARRANGEMENTS BY FRITZ KREISLER

The legendary Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962) had few rivals for the sweet elegance of his tone and the charm he brought to his interpretations. These characteristics of his playing inevitably found their way into his arrangements and original compositions. He created a number of works based on the folk-melodies of his beloved homeland of Austria but also explored a variety of folk materials, ranging from Irish to Spanish and Hawaiian.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK, *Slavonic Fantasie* in B minor (publ. 1914)

There is no original composition by Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) called *Slavonic Fantasie*. This work [5] is a creation of Kreisler, who arranged a number of melodies by Dvořák into a medley, infusing the Czech originals, such as the *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, with Kreisler's famous Austrian charm. Kreisler was prolific in his arranging and transcribing work, using materials from many different cultures around the world to craft masterful miniatures that became staples in the violin repertoire. He seems to have had an especial fondness for Dvořák's music: *Slavonic Fantasie* is one of no fewer than eight Kreisler violin arrangements based on it.

TRADITIONAL, *La Gitana*

This Arabo-Spanish Gypsy folksong ('The Gypsy Woman') is a fascinating example of Spain's multicultural history. Originally from the eighteenth century, the song received a new treatment [8] at the turn of the twentieth century at the hands of Fritz Kreisler. This arrangement starts with an impassioned introduction, using lightning scalar passages to imitate the improvisations of a gypsy violinist, before the warm and heartfelt colours of the folksong make their appearance.

TRADITIONAL, *Londonderry Air* (publ. 1922)

One of the most famous Irish folk-melodies, this touching song was lovingly arranged for violin [16] by Fritz Kreisler. The violin part is kept very simple – just the unembellished song itself, which is repeated three times in different registers on the instrument. The piano part, however, is infused with chromatic harmonies that create a sound world of

searching and nostalgia. Kreisler adds a short coda of new material at the end of the arrangement, adding his own personal commentary, in his trademark charming style, as the music draws to a close.

PERCY GRAINGER, *Molly on the Shore*

Percy Grainger (1882–1961) first arranged two Irish melodies, ‘Temple Hill’ and ‘Molly on the Shore’, in 1907, into a composition for string quartet; versions for orchestra and piano and band were to follow. The popularity of the work has resulted in a number of arrangements, including this one [17] by Fritz Kreisler. Kreisler’s use of off-the-string strokes in the violin, supported by light, *staccato* chords in the piano, creates a light, dance-like feel which, combined with his clever use of different textures, has resulted in a delightful and effervescent version of Grainger’s original.

ARRANGEMENTS BY JASCHA HEIFETZ

Born in Lithuania, Jascha Heifetz (1901–87) shot to prominence at an early age, stunning the world with his spectacular technical prowess and the intensity of his tone, and is now widely regarded as one of the greatest violinists in history. Eventually settling in the United States, Heifetz frequently engaged in arranging/transcribing work, often performing his pieces as encores at the end of his recitals. They make full use of his extraordinary abilities on the instrument and provide a steep technical challenge for violinists. But the music is always tastefully presented, and there is never a feeling that the technical requirements are placed above the expressive narrative, with some works adopting a sincere simplicity of approach, as required by the musical material.

TRADITIONAL, *Deep River*

‘Deep River’ is a moving traditional spiritual that was frequently heard in popular culture as well as in recitals during the twentieth century. Heifetz’s arrangement [10] begins with slow, dignified rolled chords in the piano that accompany the simple first statement of the melody before rolling triplets are introduced, creating a sense of hopeful movement. The work is uncomplicated from a textural and structural point of view, but the searing intensity of the violin line is a heartfelt outpouring of the historical pain and longing of a repressed people.

STEPHEN FOSTER, *Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair*

Heifetz considered American popular songs such as Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* or Stephen Foster's *I Dream of Jeannie* (both of which he arranged for violin) to be an important part of American folk-culture and fully deserving of being played in concert halls alongside the arrangements of folk-music from his native Europe. *Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair* [11] became another of his most famous arrangements and a regular recital encore, with Heifetz's exquisite silvery tone being a perfect match for the dreamy and nostalgic sound world of the song.

MANUEL M. PONCE, *Estrellita*

Manuel M. Ponce (1882–1948) was one of the most important figures to be involved in research into the folk-music of his native Mexico and its transformation into classical music for the concert hall. His most famous composition is the love-song *Estrellita* ('Little Star'), which Heifetz heard in a cafe when he was in Mexico City for a concert. He made some notes on a paper napkin, went back to his hotel room and completed the arrangement [14] that same night. The melody and harmonies are sumptuous, and yet not without a delicate sensitivity, and this arrangement has become one of Heifetz's most popular pieces.

ARAM KHACHATURIAN, *Gayane*: Sabre Dance

The famous 'Sabre Dance' from the ballet *Gayane* (c. 1939, rev. 1941–42) by the Soviet Armenian Aram Khachaturian (1903–78) is a furious and highly charged piece featuring dancers displaying their skills with the sabre; it has a contrasting middle section that beguiles with an alluring lyrical Armenian folk-tune. Heifetz spares neither the violinist nor the pianist in this challenging arrangement, which flies ahead at breakneck speed. At the end of the whirlwind the listener can picture the theatrical version from the ballet as the dancers run off stage.

OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

JOHANNES BRAHMS, ARR. JOSEPH JOACHIM

Hungarian Dance No. 6

Though Brahms (1833–97) was a Hamburger by birth, he had an enduring fascination for Hungarian music, most prominently in his 21 *Hungarian Dances*, originally written (in 1858–68 and 1880) for piano four-hands. Their enduring popularity has led to a number of arrangements, one of the best known [3] being the work of Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), himself Hungarian and one of the most important violinists of the nineteenth century. He and Brahms were close friends from adolescence, with Joachim proving a vital element in Brahms' music over the ensuing decades: he was the natural choice to premiere the Violin Concerto in 1879, with Brahms conducting. Evoking the spirit of the Hungarian gypsies, the dance is filled with sparkling characters and a definite sense of fun.

JENŐ HUBAY

Scènes de la Csárda No. 4, 'Hejre Kati', Op. 32

Another Hungarian, Jenő Hubay (1858–1937) studied the violin with his compatriot Joseph Joachim in Germany before returning to Hungary. He contributed to the violin repertoire with numerous original compositions as well as arrangements. 'Hejre Kati' ('Hey, Kathy' or 'Pretty Katie') [4], No. 4 in a series of *Scènes de la Csárda*, consists of three Hungarian folk-melodies – the csárdás being a folk-dance with a name derived from an old Hungarian term for a roadside tavern. The suave and alluring first tune introduces the work, after which a mischievous gleam enters the eye with the second melody, before the fireworks begin in earnest with the third.

FRYDERYK CHOPIN, ARR. LEOPOLD AUER

Nineteen Polish Songs, Op. 74: No. 16, Lithuanian Song

Though primarily known for his piano compositions, between 1827 and 1847, two years before his death, Fryderyk Chopin (1810–49) wrote at least nineteen songs (others are known to have existed but are now lost), which bring his trademark romanticism to the vocal world. In 1857 Julian Fontana (1810–69), his friend and music executor, gathered

the seventeen known songs together as Chopin's Op. 74; two more were subsequently discovered and added to the total. No. 16 is a charming arrangement of a Lithuanian folksong, labelled simply 'Piosnka Litewska' ('Lithuanian Song'). This arrangement [6] was itself arranged for the violin by Leopold Auer (1845–1930), another Hungarian violinist who left a lasting legacy as a teacher, his students including Jascha Heifetz and Nathan Milstein. The melody of the folksong is frequently passed from the violin to the piano and back again, providing a sense of interplay between the instruments, and Auer inserts two violin cadenzas into the arrangement – short monologues which create a reflective pause in the flow of the music.

MORITZ MOSZKOWSKI, ARR. PABLO DE SARASATE

Zwei Klavierstücke, Op. 45: No. 2, Gitarre

Originally written for solo piano by the Polish-German composer Moritz Moszkowski (1854–1925) as the second of his *Zwei Klavierstücke*, Op. 45, of 1888, this characterful piece [7] explores the musical idioms of Spanish folk-music, including imitations of the Spanish guitar and hints of moments of languor under a hot Mediterranean sun. Moszkowski himself transcribed the piece for the cello but entrusted the violin transcription to his friend and virtuoso violinist Pablo de Sarasate (1844–1908), who was known for popularising Spanish music in Europe through his compositions, arrangements and performing work. With his deep connection and knowledge of the music of his homeland, Sarasate had no difficulty transcribing this evocative picture of the Iberian Peninsula, making good use of the registers and extended techniques of his instrument.

MODEST MUSSORGSKY, ARR. SAMUEL DUSHKIN

Sorochinsky Fair: Hopak

A hopak is a traditional Ukrainian dance which remains the central item in the repertoire of Ukrainian folk-dance ensembles all over the world. Bursting with energy, it includes breathtaking acrobatic feats and a wide array of bright colours in the traditional folk-costumes worn by the dancers. This 'Hopak' [9], from the comic opera *Sorochinsky Fair* (1874–80) by Modest Mussorgsky (1839–81), paints a picture of a bustling village

wedding. As well as this version by Samuel Dushkin (1891–1976), it has been arranged several times, including another version for violin and piano by Sergei Rachmaninov.

The Ukrainian-Australian violinist **Markiyan Melnychenko** has been described as 'a master violinist' (*Stringendo*) and hailed for his 'freakishly good' playing (*Limelight*). He has served as Principal First Violin with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra and Lecturer in Violin at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, where he is currently completing a Ph.D.

He has so far performed in seventeen countries, with solo performances in New York (Alice Tully Hall) and Washington, D.C. (Kennedy Center), and has made a number of solo appearances with orchestras, including performances with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Corpus Medicorum, Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Zelman Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria in Australia, the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra and Ukrainian Festival Orchestra in Ukraine and the Kobe City Chamber Orchestra in Japan. He has been broadcast on ABC Classic FM, 3MBS FM and Radio NZ, and has released recordings on the Tall Poppies (2019) and Naxos (2020) labels. The first two volumes of his *Postcards from Ukraine* appeared from Toccata Next in 2025, to warm reviews.

In 2013 he was selected to perform in a quartet at the US Capitol for the Inaugural Luncheon at Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration. He is a multiple first-prize winner in national and international competitions, including the Melbourne Recital Centre National 'Great Romantics' competition and the Oleh Krysa International Violin Competition in Ukraine. He was also awarded the 'Australian Development Prize' from the Michael Hill International Violin Competition in 2013. In 2019 he was awarded the Dr Iain C. Medgett Churchill Fellowship.

He obtained his Bachelor and Master of Music at the Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Oleh Krysa. He was additionally awarded Eastman's Performer's certificate and the highly prestigious Artist Certificate, being the first violinist to receive this award in over 50 years. Additional studies have been at the Australian National Academy of Music with Alice Waten and William Hennessy, and also with Cyrus Forough.

markiyanmelnychenko.com



Stewart Kelly is a pianist, artistic director and advisor, teacher and entrepreneur. He is founder and artistic director of Music by the Springs, a chamber-music festival held in country Victoria each February and the owner of House of Pianos, Melbourne's premier piano salon.

As a pianist he works principally in chamber music and art-song and collaborates with many of Australia's finest musicians and singers, performing across Australia at festivals and leading concert-series. Recent recital partners include the violinists Francesca Hiew, Elizabeth Layton, Markiyan Melnychenko and Sophie Rowell, the violists Caroline Henbest and Christopher Moore, the cellists Blair Harris and Josephine Vains and the bassist Emma Sullivan and singers including Douglas Kelly, Michael Petruccelli, Sam Sakker and Sofia Troncoso.

For seven years he presented 'Stewart Kelly and Friends' at the Melbourne Recital Centre, and his career has taken him across Australia and to performances in China, Italy, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. He also works as collaborative pianist for students of leading string- and voice-teachers and remains a casual staff member of the Melbourne Conservatorium at Melbourne University. He is regularly engaged to give guest classes, master-classes and as an adjudicator for prizes and competitions.

Stewart Kelly was Artistic Director for the Renaissance Tours Festival of Chamber Music in 2022 and directed the Con Brio concert series at Home of the Arts, on the Australian Gold Coast, for seven years. He also enjoys leading music itineraries for Renaissance Tours, Australia's leading cultural-tour company, combining his love of travel and the arts and presenting lectures on the programming.

He is a graduate of the Queensland University of Technology, the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University and the Australian National Academy of Music. He holds a Bachelor of Music with distinction and a Master of Music Studies, obtained while studying under the principal guidance of Stephen Emmerson, Diane Selmon, Gillian Wills and Timothy Young. In recent years he has been mentored by the legendary song pianist Graham Johnson OBE.





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