

Patricia Kopatchinskaja *violinist*

My parents are both folk musicians. My mother did study classical violin but then fell in love with my father, who plays the cimbalom, the instrument at the centre of Moldovan folk music ensembles. They played together in concerts and went on tours, both around the Soviet Union and to countries such as Cuba. They took me to rehearsals as a small child, and I was fascinated by things like vibrato – which I found so beautiful – and how they worked together with other musicians.

When I moved to Vienna at 13, I decided that I wanted to study composing. I happened to play the violin as well, but to develop as a musician I wanted to create things myself. Above all, the pieces that have always caught my attention are those that have come from original ideas, with no imitation – created by artists with the courage to find and enter unknown, and maybe dangerous, territory.

As a student in Bern, I attended a festival dedicated to **GALINA USTVOLSKAYA**, in which the Schoenberg Ensemble and conductor Reinbert de Leeuw performed all her music. Every piece was like an explosion in my head, unlike anything I had ever heard before. It changed my world, in a way that can't be analysed or understood in any rational way. Ustvolskaya was isolated in the Soviet Union, but found her musical language and that sense of focus I admire so much.

I was so into modern music that older repertoire is something that I didn't come to until much later. But when I first started playing **ENESCU's** Third Violin Sonata with the pianist Mihaela Ursuleasa, it was an incredible moment of binding us together in our memories of the sound of our homeland. Enescu found an unmistakable and personal language – it is in the style of Romanian and Moldovan folk music, but all the melodies were his own. It also involves that old-style *parlando-rubato* playing of Menuhin, Kreisler and Huberman that I love so much. Mihaela and I played together from when we were students and were like one organism – we always thought and moved the same way, and no discussions were needed.



EARLY INTEREST:
'As a child I was fascinated by things like vibrato'

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA was born in 1977 in Moldova. Moving to Vienna at 13, she went on to study violin and composition at the city's University of Music and Performing Arts, and in Bern, Switzerland. She has enjoyed acclaim for her live performances and on disc – her recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto won a BBC Music Magazine Award in 2010. On 25 June at St John's Smith Square, she performs works from Bach to the present day as part of the Southbank's Deep Minimalism festival.

For me, **GYÖRGY KURTÁG** is the master of our times. It is a privilege to play his music, and in particular his *Kafka fragments* for violin and soprano. In this instance, it is the relationship between the instrument and the voice that I find so interesting. We perform within the same range and, as the violinist, I can learn so much from the text – sometimes I accompany the soprano, sometimes I commentate on it, sometimes I colour her voice. This way of transmitting the text into the music is fantastic, and so unique.

And I really believe that the US composer **MICHAEL HERSCH**, whose Violin Concerto I recently premiered with the Saint

Paul Chamber Orchestra, follows after the likes of Kurtág and Ligeti in having a crystal clear, unconditional voice. There is no superficial beauty or decoration, and no compromises – everything is in the right place, crafted as if with a scalpel. I don't know of any other music of my generation that touches me so much and leaves me speechless, and is also without any contradiction.

Finally, I'd choose **SCARLATTI's** Piano Sonatas, not because of the music but because of the interpreter: Mikhail Pletnev. This recording is like a drug – I've listened to it hundreds of times. There is nothing you can compare to what he does – it becomes so inventive, playful and joyful, and every sound is like a diamond. I simply cannot imagine this music being played differently.

Interview by Jeremy Pound

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA MUSIC CHOICE



Ustvolskaya
Compositions Nos 1-3
Schoenberg Ensemble/
Reinbert de Leeuw
Philips 442 5322



Enescu Violin Sonata
No. 3 'Dans le caractère
populaire Roumain'
Patricia Kopatchinskaja
(violin), Mihaela Ursuleasa
(piano) Naïve V5193



György Kurtág
Kafka fragments
Anu Komsí (soprano),
Sakari Oramo (violin)
Ondine ODE 868 (download/
streaming only)



Michael Hersch
Violin Concerto
Patricia Kopatchinskaja,
Saint Paul Chamber
Orchestra
(Not yet recorded)



Scarlatti
Piano Sonatas
Mikhail Pletnev
Erato 561 9612