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Music festival whisks patrons to evening in Eastern Europe

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By Marc Shulgold, Rocky Mountain News

July 27, 2007

BOULDER - The summer has flown by at the Colorado Music Festival. Hard to believe that this first-rate event calls it quits next week. But the music is in full bloom for now, with two evenings of Eastern European offerings following a pair of klezmer-flavored programs earlier in the week.

We've come to expect that sort of varied and exciting repertory from Michael Christie and company - and there was little to disappoint a large, appreciative crowd Thursday night in Chautauqua Auditorium, as the CMF's music director presented a program featuring plenty of slam-bang orchestral explosions.

The novelty of the evening was the opening work, the premiere of a 10-minute *Overture* by Macedonian composer Dimitrije Buzarovski. Never heard of him? Me, neither.

This very busy, very prolific composer/author/teacher/scientist came recommended by the concert's guest soloist, his fellow countryman Simon Trpceski. It turns out that Buzarovski has penned operas, oratorios, ballets, concertos, symphonies, electronic works and solo piano pieces - along with 14 books. Nice of him to take some time to write a work for the festival.

The piece is really more of a mini-dance suite, consisting of four linked Macedonian folk-dance settings that feature all manner of colorful

orchestration and a heavy emphasis on asymmetrical rhythms (common in the folk music of that lower corner of Europe). Peppered with machine-gun percussion, this lively work showcased the considerable talents of Christie's orchestra. It makes one wonder when, if ever, we might hear more of Buzarovski's music.

Trpceski has become a welcome presence on the concert stage - particularly in Colorado, where he's performed in recital and with orchestra at several venues. Each performance by this brilliant pianist serves to reinforce his status as a lovably warm, thoroughly musical artist. The hands are soft on the keyboard, even when the music - in this case, Prokofiev's Third Concerto - calls for some serious virtuosity.

Not once did Trpceski descend into percussive pounding. .

The pianist rewarded his cheering listeners with a single encore, Mendelssohn's *Venetian Gondola Song*.

The evening ended with a stirring performance of Tchaikovsky's tuneful Third Orchestral Suite, highlighted by a sweetly mournful slow movement and a concluding set of variations that reminded listeners just how consistently fine this summertime band is.

Fine, soulful playing from the strings and winds, and a terrific solo from concertmaster Calin Lupanu.

Colorado Music Festival

- **Grade:** A-

- **When, where:** Repeated at 7:30 tonight in Chautauqua Auditorium, Ninth and Baseline streets, Boulder.

- **Information:** 303-440-7666