



In the Bulgarian language *Lyuti Chushki* means “Hot Peppers,” and that is the kind of spicy traditional Bulgarian music that this band plays. *Lyuti Chushki* is a combination of professional musicians from Bulgaria and American musicians from the Baltimore/Washington area who have been playing for festivals, weddings, concerts, and other special events since 1997. Their toe-tapping music, played on traditional instruments from Bulgaria, takes you back to the old country - it is joyful, evocative, compelling and lyrical, in modes and rhythms generally not found in western music. Their unusual instrumentation includes kaval (end-blown flute), gaida (bagpipe), gudulka (bowed stringed instrument with resonating strings), tambura (fretted instrument similar to a guitar) and tupan (large drum), all of which serve to accompany the unique Bulgarian vocal style, which has a beauty all its own.

LYUTI CHUSHKI

TZVETY WEINER - Vocalist

Tzvety Weiner, from Plovdiv, Bulgaria, was raised in a family steeped in Bulgarian folk music, but ironically, she didn't start singing this music until coming to the States in 1998. Tzvety, whose parents are both well-known and highly respected musicians in Bulgaria, began singing here with *Lyuti Chushki*. She also sings with the traditional Macedonian band *Luk Na Glavata*, and with a local women's group, *Sedenka*. In 2005, Tzvety and her husband founded *The Balkanics*, a Balkan wedding music band that has also developed a loyal following in this area, and beyond.

VALERI GEORGIEV - Kaval

Valeri Georgiev was born in the village of Nikopol in northern Bulgaria and has been playing kaval since his youth. He attended the prestigious Philip Kutev Folk High School of Music in Kotel, Bulgaria, studying kaval and Bulgarian folklore. After completing his studies in Kotel he attended, and graduated from, the Academy of Music and Dance Arts in Plovdiv, where he was also a member of *Zvezdi na Trakia*, one of the most well-known folk orchestras in Plovdiv. For most of the past 10 years before coming to the States, Valeri organized and worked with various ensembles in Russe, North Bulgaria, including *Orchestra Horo*.

LEN NEWMAN - Tambura

Len Newman, from Silver Spring, Maryland, has been involved in traditional music and dance since his student days. He has developed a special interest in the Balkans and its music and plays many of the stringed instruments found in Bulgaria (tambura), Greece (laouto and bouzouki), Macedonia (tambura) and Serbia and Croatia (tamburica). Len currently plays in three different Washington, DC area folk bands specializing in music from Greece, Bulgaria, and Macedonia.

VAROL SAATCIOGLU - Gaida

Varol Saatcioglu was born in Edirne, Turkey, in 1982. Music has always been a part of Varol's life, as his mother is a piano, music, and folkdance teacher. At the age of 5, he was accepted into the prestigious Municipal Conservatory of Istanbul, where he studied music theory and piano. After emigrating to the United States, Varol began studying gaida (Bulgarian bagpipe) under the guidance of Georgi Doichev, former principal soloist with the Filip Kutev National Ensemble, and Thracian and Rhodopi styles with Vassil Bebelev. Varol also plays with local bands *Grup Nazar* and *The Balkanics*.

BRUCE SAGAN - Gūdulka

Bruce Sagan has been playing music from the Balkans since the late '70s. He is sought after as a teacher at music camps and workshops, and has been the leader of a number of performing groups in the US and Europe. He has studied the gūdulka, the Bulgarian rebec, with some of its top players and even lived in Bulgaria to absorb more about the instrument. In addition to playing with *Lyuti Chushki*, he performs with the Michigan-based trio *Veselba* (meaning “merriment” or “high-jinks”) along with Nan Nelson and Chris Rietz.

LARRY WEINER - Tupan

Larry Weiner has been involved with Balkan traditional music and dance since the early 1960s. Principally a dance researcher, he has made numerous trips to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Hungary to study traditional dance in its native setting. Larry has taught Balkan dance workshops throughout North America and has directed various Balkan music and dance camps for over 30 years. In addition to his strong background in traditional dance, Larry plays tupan (big drum) and tarabuka (small hand drum) and currently serves as the manager of *Lyuti Chushki*.