

≈ **DIMITRI K.** (orch. Petrova) *An Immigrant in New York* • Unnamed Ens • DIMITRI K. (Streaming audio: 18:07) Available on streaming services worldwide

This piece by “Dimitri K.” tells the story of Val Ivanov, a person from a small Bulgarian village, who at the age of 14 crossed the border to freedom from a homeland occupied by the Red Army. After a sequence of perilous adventures, he was recruited into the U.S. army, serving in the Korean War. Discharged honorably, he became a citizen of the United States. After a sequence of small-earning jobs, he entered the employ of a Fortune 500 company, eventually becoming a managing partner—a story of the American Dream perhaps.

In 2001, a musical was created celebrating Ivanov’s life, and performed at Queens Museum of Art. The ensemble used here includes violin/viola (one performer), cello, flute, clarinet, oboe, piano, sax, percussion, acoustic guitar, and kaval (a chromatic end-blown oblique flute played in the Balkans and Anatolia).

The subtitle of this work is “musical crossover between continents and cultures in the heart of Manhattan.” Dimitri K. is a music publisher, producer, and composer, and his eclectic music embraces a wide variety of styles. The two-minute Overture is clever in that it exudes lightness, but with a tinge of regret—the feelings at leaving one’s homeland, perhaps? Melodically felicitous and very well performed in a close, involving recording (and one that is very well mixed), this is charming music.

“Confidential,” the second movement, describes the crossing (under fire from border guards) of Ivanov and his family through Yugoslavia and then to Western Europe. The music is full of hope; the melodies tend to circle around one particular pitch. This is a superbly sprung performance from all concerned, with flute doubling violin. The drama comes in with “Shadows of the Past”; as the booklet notes put it, “the intimate sentiment of belonging is shattered, only reason would lead the way.” Two musics are juxtaposed, both related to the music of the immigrants’ homeland: one is aggressive, the other is more lyrical yet still characterized by its onward momentum.

When it comes to “Alternatives,” the sound world changes again, becoming harsher, with more prominent percussion. “Life is what you make of it. Betting on more choices doesn’t mean you will find the best. Val Ivanov is looking for alternatives.” There is an underlying sense of unease here reflected in the syncopations and the driving rhythms. The recording emphasizes the dry sound of the strings, which adds to the astringency of this movement.

The music for “Struggle” could be on a video game, at least until the sax enters: It describes Ivanov in Frankfurt, stationed there with the U.S. Army. “Staying true to yourself always pays off in the end!” say the notes, and there is a feeling of restrained elation in this brief movement, although its final cadence is more of a question mark.

A summation of Ivanov’s journey in life, “Evolution” suggests how being unique can help others and enrich their lives. The light touch that Dimitri K. is so good at returns here. The finale, “New World,” is a mere 23 seconds long—a quote from Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony scored for the present performers.

With slick performances from all concerned, imaginative orchestration of Dimitri K.’s ideas by Roumi Petrova, and a fine recording, this is most enjoyable. The story is touching and nice; the music is well crafted and eminently nice too. What’s not to like? **Colin Clarke**

Five stars: The story is touching; the music is well crafted and eminently nice too. What’s not to

like?