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# Archetype, Story, and Myth within Bulgarian Folklore and Black American Music

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Archetype, Story, and Myth within Bulgarian Folklore and Black American Music

by

Wes Georgiev

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Music

in

University Honors

and

Jazz Piano

Thesis Adviser

George Colligan

Portland State University

2022

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## **Abstract**

The confluence of several disciplines is explored through the investigation of archetypes, stories, folklore, and myths within the realm of music composition. This research aims to draw fresh conclusions which contend with some of the meanings of being a human. All research is done in conjunction with the creation of a new body of compositions written and arranged for piano, upright bass, and drum set. The academic objective of these pieces is to combine many of the salient characteristics of Bulgarian Folk music with those of Black American music. The supporting research in this essay examines centuries of migration, conflict, and resilience experienced by the two traditions, respectively, while also examining the significance of a threatened collective identity as an impetus for storytelling, spirituality, and a heightened presence of the Jungian Self.

Throughout the existence of the natural world there have always been types of cross pollination. Be it the literal pollinating between plants, a wayfaring animal leaving its pack, or perhaps an early homoerectus showing another how to clatter two rocks together to make a spark. If we imagine the aforementioned wayfaring animal as a homosapiens, one could make a case for the Jungian idea that this animal was simply engaged with the situational archetype of a Quest, or maybe the character archetype of a Hero.<sup>1</sup> I would argue that this early human was engaging in the collective unconscious, and its psychic energy and authority was coordinated by what Jung would call ‘The Self’, or the ‘archetype of archetypes’.<sup>2</sup> The countless cross pollinations achieved during humankind’s short residency on our planet have been as tumultuous as they have been prosperous, and at times as destructive as they have been creative. Humankind and the consequent world wouldn’t be the same without a species capable of being engaged in their Self, exploring *their* unique thumbprint despite all of their brothers and sisters also having one. Generationally lasting traditions and roles (which are now often viewed as ‘disciplines’) are arguably all in many ways rooted in the archetypal narrative. This thesis will examine derivatives of the archetypal artist in a more overt disciplinarian method: composing music.

For this thesis I have composed six pieces which combine two seemingly disparate musical traditions: Black American music (commonly known as jazz) and Bulgarian Folk music. One might think of this as my attempt at a cross pollination, and to a degree it is, but on a much more superficial level than the types of cross pollination discussed earlier. Simply put, these two musical forms hold personal sentiment for me, which is why I choose to combine them. I can’t

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<sup>1</sup> Bär, Eugen. “Archetypes and Ideas: Jung and Kant - Volume 20, Issue 2, Summer 1976.” *Philosophy Today*, 2 June 2017, [www.pdcnet.org/philtoday/content/philtoday\\_1976\\_0020\\_0002\\_0114\\_0123](http://www.pdcnet.org/philtoday/content/philtoday_1976_0020_0002_0114_0123).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

pretend that this project is anything greater than who I am; a practitioner of understanding my Self, my consciousness, and my unconsciousness through the practice of music.

### **Migrations and Movement**

In order to further discuss the two musical traditions in question, it's important to document and observe the migration of the people groups which over time have grown to embody these traditions.

The Bulgars: Early Bulgar tribes inhabited the European steppe west of the Volga River from as early as 370 CE. In 480, the Byzantines hired the Bulgars to help fight the Ostrogoths, and upon seeing the great wealth of the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgars were driven to continually attack the Byzantines. Despite their efforts being unsuccessful and going through periods of being under attack by the Avars (a tribe originating from Mongolia), the Bulgars developed a powerful government with a single ruler: Kubrat. Upon his death, his five sons divided the land, with only two of them continuing the endeavor of the Bulgar people. One son, Kotrag, led his horde northward, where they settled near the confluence of the Volga and Kama rivers for 600 years. This group was more of a semi-nomadic confederation than a statehood. Their two main cities, Suvar and Bulgar, served as important transshipment points for northern groups such as the Ugrians and Russians, and the Byzantines and muslims of Baghdad to the south. In 922, these Volga Bulgars converted to Islam, and in 1237 they were taken over by the Mongol Golden Horde. Soon after, Volga Bulgars began losing their identity while mixing with Russians. Kubrat's other son, Asparukh, led his horde westward toward the Danube River and the Balkan Mountains. This is considered by historians to be the first emerging settlement of the Bulgarian Empire, which was recognized in 681 by the Byzantine Empire. Bulgaria became an ally of the Byzantines, with the region occasionally being called Greater Bulgaria. At its height,

Bulgaria stretched from modern day southern Russia to the Adriatic Sea. During the ninth century, Christianity became a big regional influence, with the new church's liturgy being written in Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavonic). This language is a composite of Slav and Bulgar, which is the language spoken in modern day Bulgaria. In 1396, the Ottoman Turks conquered the Bulgarians, dominating them until 1878. Nevertheless, the Bulgarians were determined to retain their Orthodox Christianity, which prevented them from being completely merged with the Turks. Additionally, they retained their language, which prevented them from merging with the Greeks, who were also Christians. In 1878, an autonomous Bulgarian principality was established while still under Ottoman rule after countless insurrection attempts during the previous five centuries. This was followed by the Kingdom of Bulgaria declaring itself independent in 1908.<sup>3</sup>

The people of Senegambia, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Benin, Old Calabar, and West Central Africa: In 1505, seventeen Africans were sent to Hispaniola to work in copper mines. This began what is known as the Transatlantic slave trade. Enslaved people brought to the American colonies of North America represent 14% of the total number of Africans brought to the new world.<sup>4</sup> Of those slaves, nearly half came from two regions: Senegambia, and West Central Africa, including the countries now known as Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gabon.<sup>5</sup> There are many tribes that hail from these regions, one of which is the Mandinka, a Mande ethnic group who constitute some ten million people across the aforementioned region. Historians believe that this group, along with the Bambara (another Mande ethnic group) made up a significant amount of the enslaved people captured in this

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<sup>3</sup> "Bulgar | People | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, [www.britannica.com/topic/Bulgar](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Bulgar). Accessed 24 May 2022.

<sup>4</sup> "NPS Ethnography: African American Heritage & Ethnography." *Www.nps.gov*, [www.nps.gov/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/histcontextsd.htm#:~:text=Except%20for%20a%20fifty%2Dyear](http://www.nps.gov/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/histcontextsd.htm#:~:text=Except%20for%20a%20fifty%2Dyear). Accessed 24 May 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Schaffer, Matt. "Bound to Africa: the Mandinka Legacy in the New World." *History in Africa*, vol. 32, 2005, pp. 321–369., doi:10.1353/hia.2005.0021.

region. Once in the North American colonies, most enslaved people were subjected to intra-continental trade throughout the country. Through the ensuing horrific physical and psychological acts brought on by the colonizers, enslaved people were also subjected to the attempted seizure and elimination of their culture. Over the following centuries, there was a great deal of mixture and exposure between the cultures of the enslaved people, French, Dutch, and British colonizers, and Native Americans. Slavery was outlawed in 1865 in the United States, but for over a century racially motivated laws have continued to exist within the constitution. It was common for Black Americans to move northward to urban areas where racial laws and sentiment tended to be less harsh.

### **The Story and Mythology of the Suppressed**

The Bulgarians lived a brutal life under Ottoman rule for around five hundred years. They were stripped of most legal, biological, national, and religious rights. They were forced to pay high taxes to their muslim overseers, had little hope to advance in any craft, had almost no validity in the courts, and were forced to pay a “blood tax” by forfeiting their strongest and best-looking children to the Islamic state to be placed into Turkish families. They weren’t allowed to build churches, and were often forced to change their names to Islamic names. While Christian Europe to the west was entering the Enlightenment, Bulgarians were under the Ottomans. All attempts of insurrection were quelled with violence. Despite these conditions, Bulgarians retained some of the most crucial aspects of any people group: their language and their Christian ideology. Many methods were employed to achieve this. For centuries, resistant Bulgarians called ‘Haidouks’ would gather in mountainous regions to organize small,



guerilla-type attacks on provincial administrators.<sup>6</sup> Although they were always beaten, there would always be a new group of Haidouks to follow. This perseverance helped boost morale. Additionally, their faith became a large motivator. Christian parables, myths, along with ancient art and folklore became pivotal during this period. These stories became a type of art which, in Levi-Strauss' words, occurs when a myth is brought into a more tangible form for the layman to understand, like a fairy tale or a song.<sup>7</sup> One could assert how these types of stories and transmissions of art might deeply awaken archetypal imputeses' amongst a community. Here is an excerpt of an old song called 'The Upsurge of the Land of Vlachs': "Sleep tight, man child! The Balkan is your mother, along with two fir trees – your sisters! A gust of wind will rock you, a stroke of rain will bathe you, a doe will come to nurse you!"<sup>8</sup> Not forty years later, the Bulgarians became prey to the USSR, living under the iron curtain for nearly 50 years. To this day, Bulgarian Folk music is regarded as one of the most unique artistic traditions to ever exist.

Unspeakable physical and psychological abuse took a massive toll on enslaved Black Americans for hundreds of years. Generations of Black Americans were mandated to be enslaved and had essentially no rights whatsoever. With that said, enslaved people created ways to foster culture among themselves. Through exposure to the Christian church via their slave owners, many of the enslaved people took to Christianity in their own way after reading the Bible. Many of the stories in the Bible fundamentally conflicted with what their Christian dominators were subjecting them to. Enslaved people began holding church services; sometimes with a white chaperone, but often in secret. They began melding protestant hymns with the percussive

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<sup>6</sup> *Sinica.edu.tw*, 2022, [www.ibms.sinica.edu.tw/~carmay/Under.html#:~:text=The%20Bulgarian%20people%20were%20living](http://www.ibms.sinica.edu.tw/~carmay/Under.html#:~:text=The%20Bulgarian%20people%20were%20living). Accessed 24 May 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Dundes, Alan. "Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Lévi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect." *Western Folklore*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1997, pp. 39–50. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1500385>. Accessed 23 May 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Levunlieva, M. (2017). Metaphorical undercurrents in Bulgarian ritual songs. *Analele universitatii din Craiova: Seria stiinte filologice, Lingvistika*, 34:1/2, 288 – 298.

elements of African music. Stomping and clapping became prevalent in this music, recalling traditional African ring shouts. These hymnal interpretations became known as ‘Negro Spirituals’, one of the kernels of the Blues. Sometimes secret messages would be spread through these songs. The name ‘Canaan’ became synonymous with the North, with enslaved people trying to communicate with one another between plantations. There were stories passed through oral tradition as soon as some ships arrived on the Atlantic coast. Stories with themes of trickery, comedy, spirits, slavery, and victory came through the legends of High John the Conquerer, Flying Africans, Sukey and the Mermaid, or the Signifying Monkey derived from Yoruba mythology.<sup>9</sup> In modern day, Black American music is arguably the most well-known and listened-to art form world wide.

There are many similarities between the two people groups examined. Both endured long periods of foreign rule, and through their instinctive abilities to resist, congregate in spirit, and tell *their* stories, they were able to overcome domination with an unwavering sense of identity. Perhaps there were archetypal imperatives involved through this process. The similarities bleed into the music, too. Bulgarian music has had the opportunity to be influenced by a plethora of cultures: Turks, Russians, Persians, and Greeks, among others. Similarly, Black American music has been influenced by numerous sources, such as its Senegambian roots, Central Western Africa, France, and other western European traditions. Interestingly, both oppressed Bulgarians and enslaved Africans created incredibly unique music while under rule, and upon their respective liberations, they quickly combined this traditional music with the music they were immediately exposed to. For Bulgarians, this meant taking on influence from Soviet art institutions, and for Black Americans it meant involving western European art (classical) music.

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<sup>9</sup> ““Annotated African American Folktales” Reclaims Stories Passed down from Slavery.” *NPR.org*, [www.npr.org/2017/11/10/563110377/annotated-african-american-folktales-reclaims-stories-passed-down-from-slavery](http://www.npr.org/2017/11/10/563110377/annotated-african-american-folktales-reclaims-stories-passed-down-from-slavery).

## Compositions

The compositions written are somewhat of a short-term culmination for what is a deeper and longer personal endeavor to understand and employ archetypes and myth in my improvised and composed music. My study of the two traditions is for my observation of their longevity and depth on all the aforementioned levels, and my personal influence from each. For me, compositionally combining two disparate traditions on a purely compositional level is an exercise. The characteristics of these compositions coming from Bulgarian folk music will be harmony, idiosyncrasies such as trills and ornamentations, forms, and meters. Elements of these compositions influenced by Black American music will be their instrumentation (piano, upright bass, drum set), harmony, syncopation, forms, and general conception of improvised solos. The following selection of compositions will be analyzed for the strategy and use of the previously stated influential characteristics.

### 1) **Kato Dobruja** (Like Dobruja)

The musical score for 'Kato Dobruja (Like Dobruja)' is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo of 96. The score consists of six staves of music. The first staff is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second staff has a second ending bracket. The third staff has a third ending bracket. The fourth staff is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The fifth staff has a second ending bracket. The sixth staff has a third ending bracket. The chords are indicated below the notes: G, C, G, D, G, G, D, D, Em, Am, Am, Em, D, A, D, A, D, A, G, Em, A, G, D, G, D, A, D, G, D, G, G, C, D, G, D, D, G, D, Em, A, A, E, F#m, Bm, E, Bm, Bm, F#m.

The harmonies in this piece are triadic and move in fourths or by whole step. This is not necessarily overtly Bulgarian or derived or Black American, but in this context it

serves more as a nod to Bulgarian music. This is largely due to the harmonic rhythm implied by both the chords and melody. One indicator of rhythmic emphasis in Bulgarian music is to analyze where the trills fall. Looking at section A, the phrasing of the trills is in two parts (two measures each). Mm. one beat two and and of two, mm. two beat one and two is one phrase. The consequent phrase is mm. three beat two, and mm. four and of one and two. If one claps on these beats, one might hear a sort of dancing lilt in the rhythm alone. These particular rhythms are not typical in Black American music. Another aspect of the tune which is influenced by Bulgarian music is the form. This song is essentially through-composed, with sections eight measures apiece before moving to new material. There is never a full recapitulation in the form. Additionally, another element of Bulgarian music adopted into this composition is the movement by whole step instead of using secondary dominant chords as one might in Black American music. In the second ending of section A, we see movement from D major to A minor, then A minor to E minor. This breaks the conventional rules of western harmony. In this composition I try to acknowledge the influence of the goatskin bagpipe and its drone sound (moving by whole step and fourth) which is hugely important in traditional forms of Bulgarian folk music.

- 2) **Solsaltsal** (the word “salt” in Bulgarian, English, and Spanish, referring to humans as salt of the earth). Composition six pages, only pages two and three included for reference.

**A**  
 Vox/Tbn alternate measures/call and response  
 4x//Gradually speed up every 2 bars

21  
 Emaj7(#11) B-7/C# Cmaj7(#11) Bmaj7  
 Bass/Drums 7+8

23  
 Emaj7(#11) Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Adim7(add7)

**A2**  
 4x, next sect. cued  
 Emaj7(#11) B-7/C# Cmaj7(#11) Bmaj7  
 Bass/Drums 8+7 more backbeat

25  
 Emaj7(#11) Cmaj7#11 Bmaj7 Adim7(add7)

27  
 Emaj7(#11) B-7/C# Cmaj7(#11) Bmaj7  
 ff

31 Open solo piano interlude....

33 **B** All enter/Slow backbeat  
 Eb-9 F7/A Bb-7 Bb7sus Bb7 Eb-9 F7/A Bb-9 Bb7susBb7

38 Eb-9 F7/A Bb-9 B-9 Dmaj7(#11) Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7

42 Dmaj7 Amaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7

46 Emaj7 Cmaj7 B9sus

Collective soloing underneath like lizards  
 Voice shout singing/throat singing intensely  
 Adim7(add7) B/G Adim7(add7) B/G

mf Backbeat, slightly faster

f p

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Solsalsal includes a variety of Bulgarian and Black American music elements. The first portion of the composition is in the meter 15/8, a common Bulgarian meter. I aimed to have the drums play a hip-hop influenced back beat while in 15/8 underneath a complex melody full of Bulgarian ornaments and angular shapes. Once at letter B, the back beat births itself into a true 4/4 meter with a melody influenced by rhythm and blues. I performed this composition with a fuller instrumentation which included trombone, voice, and guitar. Elements of collective improvisation occurred, a concept which exists in both art forms. The harmony of the song is all coming out of the Black American music tradition, influenced largely by contemporary jazz and non-functional movement involving extended and altered chords.

### 3) Eastern Internment

**Eastern Internment**

Straight 8ths/Horo  
♩ = 135 (2+2+3)  
A-(♭2)      E7(♭5)      D-7(♭5)      E7(♭5)

Form ABA      Wes Georgiev

Eastern Internment was written in honor of my relatives who suffered under Soviet occupation. The composition is in seven/eight, perhaps the most common Bulgarian meter. The form of the composition is ABA, which isn't necessarily common in Black American music or Bulgarian music, but with the return to A, I was thinking more in a Black American music vein. The harmony is my own amalgamation of both Bulgarian and Black American music. The system at mm. 18 is completely non-functional in its root movement. Also, most Bulgarian music is written without alterations if it's written out at all- my choice to include (♭2), (♯5) or (♭5) in the chord symbols is a writing technique used to reflect the accidentals from the melody into the chords. The melody

itself is not completely Bulgarian, although it brings one's ear in that direction due to the trills and ornaments, chromaticism, and harmonic implications.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Under strenuous circumstances, human beings are compelled to do things. We feel grief when we experience loss, and happiness when we experience laughter. We all feel these things- an archetypal understanding- but in our own personal ways. The early human who left its pack probably experienced certain circumstances which caused it to want to leave. In that moment of decision, just like when we feel provoked or enamored by something, this human probably felt a very present sense of Self. Reflecting on this research, it's clear that both the Bulgarians and Black Americans were in situations of duress for generations. The collective was on the line. Stories had to be told, or they'd be lost. I urge the populous to consider the gravity of our stories, and to practice listening to the Self so that the vessel may remain open.



## Appendix (Compositions)

### Eastern Internment:

**Eastern Internment**

Straight Rhythm Form ABA Wes Georgiev  
 $\text{♩} = 135 (2+2+3)$   
 A-(2)

Intro open

1 A-(2) 3 3 3 E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

9 A-(2) 3 3 3 E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

13 A7(♭9) E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

18 A7(♭9) D♭6(♭5)

42 A7(♭9) E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) 3

46 E7(♭5) A7(♭9) D♭6(♭5)

B D♭6(♭5) D7(♯11) D♭6(♭5) E7(alt) D♭6(♭5) D7(♯11) D♭6(♭5)

26 D♭6(♭5) D7(♯11) D♭6(♭5) E7(alt) D♭6(♭5) D7(♯11) D♭6(♭5)

30 A-(2) E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

A A-(2) 3 3 3 E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

38 A-(2) 3 3 3 E7(♭5) D-7(♭5) E7(♭5)

Solsaltsal:

Solsaltsal

Wes Georgiev

Intro solo piano  
Emaj7(♯11)

B-7/C♯

5 Cmaj7(♯11) B+D enter 2ndX  
Emaj7(♯11)

9 B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11)

13 E-9 D♯9sus

17 Cmaj7(♯11) B-9

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31 Open solo piano interlude...

B  
All enter/Slow backbeat  
E♭-9 F7/A B♭-7 B♭7sus B♭7 E♭-9 F7/A B♭-9 B♭7susB♭7  
pp

38 E♭-9 F7/A B♭-9 B-9 Dmaj7(♯11) Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7  
mp mf

42 Dmaj7 Amaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Emaj7 Cmaj7 Bmaj7  
pp mp

C  
46 Emaj7 Cmaj7 B♭9sus  
mf Backbeat, slightly faster  
p

WG 2022

A  
Vox/Th alternate measures/call and response  
-4s/Gradually speed up every 2 bars  
Emaj7(♯11) B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11) Bmaj7

21 Bass/Drums 7+8

25 Emaj7(♯11) Cmaj7 Bmaj7 Adim7(add7)

A2  
4x, next sect. cued  
Emaj7(♯11) B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11) Bmaj7  
Bass/Drums 8+7 more backbeat

27 Emaj7(♯11) Cmaj7♯11 Bmaj7 Adim7(add7)

29 Emaj7(♯11) B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11) Bmaj7  
ff

2

WG 2022

51 Adim7(add7) B/G Adim7(add7) B/G

Voice/Guitar melody  
F7(♯5) E-maj7 Gmaj7 E-7

59 F7(♯5) E-maj7 Gmaj7 E-7

63 4X  
Emaj7 Cmaj7 Amaj7 Gmaj7 Emaj7

D  
66 Solo (open)  
Emaj7(♯11) B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11) soloist cues on

4

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60 Cont. solo  
Emaj7(♯11) B-7/C♯ Cmaj7(♯11) B-7

73 Adim7(add7) B/G Adim7(add7) B/G

77 Adim7(add7) B/G Adim7(add7) B/G

81 Voice/Guitar melody  
F7(♯5) E-maj7 Gmaj7 E-7

85 F7(♯5) E-maj7 Gmaj7 E-7

89 4x  
Emaj7 Cmaj7 Amaj7 Gmaj7 Emaj7

91  
Emaj7 Eb7sus Emaj7 Eb7sus Emaj7 Eb7sus Cmaj7

WQ 2022

5

6

WQ 2022

## Kato Dobruja:

♩ = 96

A

G C G D G G D

D Em D Am Am Em

D A D A D A G Em A

B

G D G D A D G D

C

G G C D G D D G D Em

D

A A E F♯m

Bm E Bm Bm F♯m

## Bulgarsko Edno:

Intro  $\text{♩} = 100$

Am D7 G C Am G Am

[A] Am Dm Am D Dm Am

Am D7 G C Am G Am

[B] A Dm A Gm A

Gm A A Gm A

[C] Am D G G D G

C D G G D G

A Gm A A Gm A

Coda

A Gm A A Gm A

A Gm A

## Vitoshno Horo:

① [A] A E A A E A

A E A A E A A E A

[B] A E A A E A

A E A A E A

A

[C] A E A A E A

A E A A E A

② [A] Am B Am B

Am B Am B

[B] Am B Am B

Am B Am B

[C] Am B Am B

Am B Am B

③ A

[A] A E A E

A E A E

[B] A E A A E A

A E A A E A

## Db Major No. 4:

### Db Major No. 4 Bulgarian Etude

Wes Georgiev

$\text{♩} = 60$  Rubato

$\text{♩} = 185$

Rit...

$\text{mp}$

36 Dbmaj7(#9)

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