

# TWO DECADES OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE “OPEN THEATRE” OF A BULGARIAN VILLAGE<sup>1</sup>

Boika Sokolova

The University of Notre Dame (U.S.A.) in England

Kirilka Stavreva

Cornell College (U.S.A.)

**Abstract:** *The article discusses the tradition, now twenty-years strong, of yearly Shakespeare performances in the Bulgarian village of Patalenitsa. What started as an extracurricular project to support school children at risk has evolved into a grassroots festival with international participation. The unique and malleable “open theatre” approach to producing Shakespeare by the “Petrovden” Theatre School offers young people unparalleled opportunities for growth and creativity; it fosters collaboration across divides of class, age, educational experience, language, and cultural background; it invigorates and enriches the community, connecting it to a global creative culture. Fuelled by the altruistic efforts of an alliance of educators and theatre professionals, Patalenitsa Shakespeare has emerged as a summer centre for cross-cultural actor training. It provides an antidote to the rampant consumerism and chalga mentality of Bulgarian post-communism.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors are grateful to Inna Tserovska, Nikola Kolev, Pavlina-Kalina Tserovska, Todor Dimitrov, Gyorgi Georgiev-Antiqua, and Anatolii Stavrev for valuable insights into the history of the Patalenitsa Shakespeare, and for their warm hospitality. This article builds on the authors’ “Time out of Time in the ‘Open Theater’ of the Bulgarian Village of Patalenitsa” in *Toronto Slavic Quarterly* 60 (Spring 2017), part of an essay cluster on “Bulgarian Shakespeares,” available at [http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/60/index\\_60.shtml](http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsq/60/index_60.shtml).