

## SERGIU POPA, ACCORDIONIST – COMPLETE BIO

### Education:

- 1985- Began informal study of music in 1985 at the age of 4 with his father and uncle (professional wedding musicians), in Moldova.
- 1989-1996 Valerii Poleakov school of music
- 1996-2000 Stefan Neaga College of Music, Kishinev, Moldova (1996-2000), diploma in musical performance (classical and traditional folk), orchestral conducting and music teaching.
- 2000-2002 Conservatory of Music in Kishinev

### Performance projects and collaborations:

From a young age, Sergiu performed traditional folk music and Roma (Gypsy) music with his father **Ion Popa**, a renowned accordionist in Moldova, at weddings.

After immigrating to Canada, Sergiu started performing with his partner, Jessica Gal, in 2003 as **Shatra Duo**, often accompanied by other musicians, including the famous Romanian violinist **Carmen Piculeata**. The duo became the core of the **Sergiu Popa Ensemble**, a multicultural 5-piece group performing Balkan fusion. First discovered at the Musique Multi-Montreal Festival in 2004, the Ensemble began touring the Quebec festival circuit. They performed extensively at festivals and concert venues throughout Canada. The Sergiu Popa Ensemble opened for **Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking Orchestra** at the Metropolis in 2012 as part of the Montreal Jazz Festival, and Sergiu performed with **Fanfare Ciocarlia** at the Rialto in Montreal, as a special guest in 2012. He is also playing quite often with Romanian star Dan Armeanca. Also collaborates quite often with Oliver Rajamani (multi-instrumentalist from Texas).

On international scene he has performed with great artists like: Kalman Balogh (cymbalom Hungary), Muamer Ketenceoglu (Turkey), Theodossi Spassov (Bulgaria), Adam Stinga (Moldova) Miron Rafajlovic (Bosnia-Spain) etc,

He got invited to audition for Cirque du Soleil and also for Dubai Expo 2020. Sergiu is invited often to play in San Francisco (California for Kolo Festival, Martishor Festival, Cotati Accordion festival, Balkan Night Northwest Seattle, New York-Drom.

Sergiu also collaborated extensively with the re-known Russian 7-string guitar legend **Vadim Kolpakov**, as part of the **Via Romen** ensemble. For example, they performed with Svetlana Portnyansky at the Dolly Parton's **Dollywood Festival of Nations** throughout March 19 – April 18, 2016.

As a soloist, Sergiu has been invited to join various other projects such as *OktoEcho* and the Grammy Award-nominated project **Yiddish Glory** (with which he has toured in Toronto, Vienna and Czechoslovakia).

He also is a part of San Francisco project Trio Dulce & Amar, led by Balder ten Cate.

Sergiu has performed as a musician and cast member in several community and professional musical theatre productions at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts: **Tales From**

**Odessa** (2014), **The Angel and The Sparrow** (2018) and **Indecent** (2019). For the latter production, Sergiu's role has been nominated for a META award (see below). At the moment he represents Roland Canada electric accordions. He also performed for George Soros's wedding in USA.

### Recordings:

- 2006 Album 'Sergiu Popa: Obsession Accordéon'
- 2011 Instructional DVD, 'Sergiu Popa: Gypsy and East European Accordion'.
- 2014 Album 'Sergiu Popa: Tous en Accord'
- He has recorded on 3 soundtracks for the National Film Board of Canada: 'la Peau Blanche', 'Zéro Tolérance' and 'Orlando'. Also featured in the film 'Elle Veut le Chaos' by Denis Côté (2007).
- Recorded on the albums of Juno Award-nominated Canadian artists Lubo Alexandrov and Kaba Horo (Black Sea Cowboy), Briga (Femme), SoCalled (Sleepover and Tales From Odessa), Wesli (Papadou Creyol), Suzi Silva (Fadazz), Ben Caplan (Birds With Broken Wings) and others.  
2022 he released the album of his band Taraf Syriana in Montreal-Toronto.

### Awards:

- 2007: Creation grant from *Conseil des Arts et de lettres du Québec*, used to compose an original work, Bijando, performed at the 2007 Festival MMM - Des Musiques et du Monde. Sergiu was awarded the Radio-Canada Étoiles Galaxie Prize for his performance as musical director of the production.
- 2008: *Circuit 514* prize (artist-in-residence, partnership between CBC Radio 2, the Place des Arts, the Conseil des Arts de Montréal, Montréal Arts Interculturels, Musique Multi-Montréal and Vision Diversité).
- 2011: Grant from *Conseil des Arts et de lettres du Québec* for an educational musical tour of 40 elementary schools in the Hautes-Laurentides region of Quebec
- 2012: Grant from *Conseil des Arts et de lettres du Québec* for research and creation for an intercultural accordion duo project with Yves Lambert (co-founder of La Bottine Souriante)
- 2013: 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the *national Roland V-Accordion competition*
- 2019: *META* ("Montreal English Theatre Awards") nomination for Outstanding Contribution to Theatre. The winner hasn't been announced as of yet (the award ceremony takes place on 11/3/2019).
- 2019: Explore-and-Create Professional Development grant from *Canada Council for the Arts* for a 3-week mentorship in Bulgaria with Petar Ralchev
- 2020 He formed a Montreal-based ensemble Taraf Syriana, which he tours around Canada, he got invited by the Great north woods center for the arts in New Hampshire
- Also, in 2020 he formed a Canadian Music Ensemble "ROMada" which he got grants to tour in Montreal-Toronto-Vancouver and playing for important festivals like: Ashkenaz Festival Toronto, Shadbolt Center for the Arts-Vancouver, Festival du Monde Arabe-Montreal, etc.
- 2021 he formed a duo group with his wife, accordion and cello touring through Canada and Europe.
- 2022 he tours quite often within Canada (Montreal-Toronto-Vancouver) with one of his music ensemble Taraf Syriana.

### Teaching:

- Part-time faculty member at the Cégep de Drummondville and Concordia University.
- Taught masterclasses in accordion and East European music at music camps such as CAMMAC and KlezKanada (Quebec), Django in June (Massachusetts) and the EEFC's Balkan Camps (California and New York).