

PREFACE

From June 6 to June 15, 2002, mathematicians and physicists from Europe, Asia and North America gathered at the resort of Sts Constantine and Elena on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria for the Fourth International Conference on Geometry, Integrability and Quantization. Short courses and contributed talks on subjects as diverse as infinite-dimensional Lie groups, the geometry of the standard model, deformation quantization, enumerative geometry and the mechanical properties of biological membranes provided the framework for intense and productive interaction among not only scientists working on the same problems, but also those scarcely aware of each other's problems the day before. This eclectic nature of the conference has been one of its most valued characteristics over the past four years and has contributed in no small measure to the ever-widening geographical area represented by the participants. Also much valued by the participants are the now traditional excursions to nearby natural and historical attractions such as the Aladja Monastery, the cliffs of Kaliakra and the archaeological museum of Varna with its remarkable collection of artifacts from the Varna Acropolis.

In addition to the conference Proceedings published each year (and available from Coral Press Scientific Publishing at <http://coral.dir.bg>), extended versions of some of the talks delivered at the conference will appear in the Journal of Geometry and Symmetry in Physics which is edited by one of the conference organizers (I.M.) and the inaugural issue of which will feature a survey of "Infinite Dimensional Lie Groups and Applications in Mathematical Physics" by Rudolf Schmid and based on the author's lectures at the conference. It is with some considerable regret that one of the organizers (G.N.), due to the pressure of other responsibilities, has found it necessary to withdraw from active participation in future conferences. However, it is a great pleasure to announce that Professor Allen Hirshfeld of the University of Dortmund has agreed to assume this role in his stead. The editors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all of the participants, and in particular, to those who contributed to this volume. Finally, the Organizers would like to express their very sincere gratitude to A. Nenov and G. Toromanov who took upon themselves many of the daily operational details of running a conference such as this and thereby did much to ensure its success.

Thanks are also due to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the European Mathematical Society for the financial support that made the conference possible. We look forward to yet another, equally satisfying and productive Fifth International Conference on Geometry, Integrability and Quantization, to be held on June 5–12, 2003.

The Editors