



NEWS & INFO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PIANIST MILEN KIROV INFUSES AMERICAN JAZZ
WITH EUROPEAN CLASSICAL, BULGARIAN FOLK TRADITIONS ON
“SPATIUM,” SET FOR JUNE 3 RELEASE
BY INDEPENDENT CREATIVE SOUND AND MUSIC RECORDS**

**SOLO PIANO ALBUM FEATURES 13 ORIGINAL PIECES
FUSING THE THREE STYLES,
INCLUDING THREE FULLY NOTATED COMPOSITIONS,
TWO COMPLETE IMPROVISATIONS**

CD RELEASE SHOW AT SAM FIRST BAR, LOS ANGELES, FRI. 6/3

Pianist **Milen Kirov** finds the perfect formula with the June 3 release of *Spatium* on Independent Creative Sound and Music (ICSM) Records. A solo piano performance of 13 originals, the album is precisely the melting pot of styles that has long been the focus of the multi-dimensional Kirov’s creative journey.

“My goal is to find the meeting point of three traditions: Western classical music, American jazz and blues, and Bulgarian traditional music,” the native Bulgarian pianist says. “There is no higher compliment for me than to be told these sounds merge together seamlessly in my playing.”

Let the high compliments commence, then. Kirov not only strikes the delicate balance he seeks, but does so with such ease and aplomb that the three traditions sound as if they have always belonged together. For evidence, look no further than *Spatium*’s opening one-two punch, “**Back to Bulgaria**” and “**Bulgarian Stride**.” The former combines Bulgarian folk melody and classical precision with jazz’s rhythmic nuance and improvised playfulness, while the latter matches the stride piano tradition to the detailed lattice-work of Eastern European musics. “**Thracian Blues**” also sums up Kirov’s aesthetic, playing two pianos (one prepared and sounding like a guitar) to generate down-home blues lines, Bulgaria’s distinctive odd-meter dance rhythms, and bravura classical passages.

In addition, Kirov performs Brahms-inspired four “**Intermezzos**” that are also infused with Bulgarian folk rhythms and jazz harmonies and improvisation. One of these, however, is fully notated—as are two other tracks on the album (“**Pharos**” and “**The Shepherd and the Mountain**”). The pianist offsets these with two thoroughly improvised pieces (“**For Grandma**” and “**Time**”), showing that his fluency in the jazz tradition is equal to those of the conservatory and his homeland.

Not to be overlooked is the album’s gorgeous sound. Now based in Los Angeles, Kirov nevertheless traveled to the city of Radom, in central Poland, to record *Spatium* in the glorious acoustics of the Kryzstof Penderecki Concert Hall. Capturing the tenderness, nuance, and resonance of every note Kirov plays, the album’s pristine sonics reinforce the perfection of the pianist’s delicate musical balance.

Milen Kirov was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria on February 6, 1977, the scion of an esteemed musical family. His mother plays the tambura and sings; his father is a virtuoso of the *gadulka*, a traditional Bulgarian fiddle, as well as an accomplished musical academic. Milen was only four when he entered the family

business, studying the piano and working on ear training until by the age of eight he could accompany his father and his friends and colleagues in the family home.

Thus grounding in Bulgarian traditional music, Milen turned to a formal classical education, graduating from both the High School of Music and Plovdiv's highly regarded Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts. Along the way, however, he discovered American music: blues, jazz, rock, and pop, all of which gained currency in Eastern Europe after the Iron Curtain fell in 1989. These idioms impressed Milen enough that he sought out an American musical education.

Enrolling first in the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (where he received a full scholarship), Kirov later transferred to the more experimentally minded California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where he studied with **David Rosenboom** and **Vicki Ray**, earning a BFA and a Doctor of Musical Arts there as well as a Master's in composition from Cal State Northridge.

Kirov was then able to find a niche for himself in the busy music scene of Los Angeles. Along with his professorship at Los Angeles City College, he performs and records in a variety of contexts, including a number of film scores; classical piano pieces; his Balkan funk ensemble, Orkestar MÉZÉ; and his world-jazz trio Bulgarian Moonshine Co.

The pianist cites a deep connection to **Milcho Leviev**, a jazz great from his hometown of Plovdiv who paved the way from Eastern Europe to Los Angeles. "I feel a strong kinship with Milcho," says Kirov, who knew him from an early age but didn't see him perform until Leviev returned to Bulgaria in the early 1990s. "It was as though he was speaking to me, validating what I was doing. It was through his playing that I recognized that jazz combined with Bulgarian folk and other traditional sounds could be good music and legitimate."

Milen Kirov will be performing a CD release show (solo piano) at Sam First Bar, Los Angeles, on Friday 6/3. •

www.milenkirov.net