

IVA BITTOVÁ



When Iva Bittová takes the stage, she brings the audience into an enthralling musical universe. If she is performing solo, the multifaceted and charismatic Czech composer and improviser extends the range of both the human voice and her violin. Singing, bowing, plucking, and dancing simultaneously, she evokes everything from gypsy dances, grand opera, and avant-garde jazz to birdsong and forest animal cries. “She is a force of nature,” says composer Fred Frith. And if Bittová is collaborating with other musicians—as she has done with the Bang On a Can All-Stars, Slovakian composer Vladimír Godár, pianist Lisa Moore, bassist George Mraz, clarinetist Don Byron, choreographer Wendy Osserman, and others—she shares what Bang On a Can’s Mark Stewart calls “an attractive and thrilling and beautiful and mirthful and serious world.”

For the listener, the sensual and fervent space Bittová creates is, according to *CMJ*, “so intimate and personal you can almost feel her breath on your ears.” As *New York Magazine* put it, “Her sound is invigorating, urgent, and also soothing; it is a fusion of Old World and new-music sensibilities, infused with the spirit and language of Czech, Slovak, and Moravian music.” Born in Bruntal, in northern Moravia, and conservatory-trained in both music and drama, Bittová first established her reputation in Europe and Japan. She has toured North America since 1992. Her more than 20 recordings include *Iva Bittová* (Nonesuch), *Elida* (Cantaloupe Music) with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Godár’s *Mater* (ECM), and *Moravian Gems* with George Mraz. In 2004, Bittová, with the Škampa Quartet, released her interpretations of Leoš Janáček’s *Moravian Folk Poetry in Songs*, which she continues to perform with the Calder Quartet and in her solo concerts. In 2007, she settled with her son in New York state’s Hudson Valley, where she absorbs new sounds into what she calls “my own personal folk music.”