

Iva Bittová, voice & violin
with special guest, **Antonin “Tony” Fajt**, piano
4pm, Sunday, September 19th. First United Methodist Church, Saranac Lake
Reception to follow in the John Black Room, Historic Saranac Lake
Co-presented by Seward’s Folly Production, Bluseed Studios, and Historic Saranac Lake.

The Czech singer and violinist Iva Bittová describes her work as “my own personal folk music.” In her singularly original and powerful performances, Bittová sings, plays, and acts simultaneously to create pieces that have been described as “... so intimate and personal you can almost feel her breath on your ears.” (CMJ). Her compositions and improvisations are highly abstract yet deeply rooted in the classical and gypsy music of the tiny Moravian villages where she spent her formative years.

A charismatic performer with an established reputation both in Europe and Japan, Bittová toured North America first as a solo performer in 1992. She returned in 1998 selling out concerts in Boston, New York, and Berkeley. The New York Times wrote, “Ms. Bittová is a true cosmopolitan, but she remains grounded in local expressions, and her own physicality. She takes on the role of the singer as town crier whose voice animates old myths and current news.”

As much at home in classical music as in avant-garde and folk, she has sung the role of Donna Elvira in the Mozart opera “Don Juan in Prague.” In 2005, she began collaborating with the Bang On A Can All-Stars, and performing together at Carnegie Hall, in Philadelphia, Los Angeles as well as in London and Prague. Other recent recordings are “Mater” by Slovakian composer Vladimír Godár, Leos Janáček’s “Moravian Folk Poetry in Songs” with the Skampa String Quartet, and “Moravian Gems” with jazz-bassist George Mraz. Recent collaborations have included artists as diverse as clarinetist Don Byron, guitarist Bill Frisell, vocalist Bobby McFerrin, and the Wendy Osseman Dance Company.

Bittová was born in Bruntal, in northern Moravia. Her father, Koloman Bitto – Bittová is the surname’s *female* form – was a classical double-bass player. After a childhood oriented towards the performing arts, she has since appeared in multiple television and film roles, including “Zelary,” one of the most successful Czech movies in recent years and nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign film in 2003. She received a Czech “Oscar” and the Best Actress Award at the Syracuse International Film Festival for her starring role in the 2007 film “Tajnosti” (Little Girl Blue.)

After moving, with her son Antonin, to the Hudson River Valley town of Rhinebeck, Bittová now performs more frequently in the US and Canada, as well as maintaining an active European schedule. Reflecting on her life-long work as a performer; “I have found the way to myself and thus also to others. I understand there are many hearts in the world, and each beats differently.”

During her visit to the Adirondacks, Bittová plans to practice and meditate in the Bartok Cabin: “Bartok’s music has been kind of a mother’s milk for me.”