

How to Jazz Up March Before the Snow Melts

By [Diana Kondrashin](#)

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Ralph Bowen will give a master class in Moscow followed by a concert. **Joel W Henderson**

The Moscow Times looks through the monthly jazz schedule to recommend a list of the best performances to see and hear in March.

Opus 5 at Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh, March 10

A set of famous New York-based musicians, who united by playing in the Mingus Dynasty big band, come to Russia to plunge local listeners into the authentic jazz sounds of the Big Apple.

Opus 5 is made up of trumpeter Alex Sipiagin, saxophonist Seamus Blake, pianist David Kikoski, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Donald Edwards. Both Sipiagin and Kozlov are respected American musicians of Russian origin, and curiously, were fellow students in the Moscow College of Improvised Music back in the 1980s.

"I still consider myself a Russian musician," said Alex Sipiagin, who was born in Yaroslavl. "You can live anywhere and still feel Russian and whatever nationality you are. I think my style is very different from American players. I'm trying to be myself, but using the knowledge and grammar and other things I've picked up from being in New York."

"I was blessed in my youth," he added when explaining to The Moscow Times the reasons of moving to the U.S. "I was very lucky to be part of the Thelonius Monk competition in 1990 where I placed fourth, and it really opened my eyes to reality. I was really hungry for jazz and realized that the only way to learn this music was to come to New York."

The world-famous Russian trumpeter is not the only reason to look for Opus 5. The other of the set's members are also notable composers and players, which will become evident March 10.

Leonid Chizhik at Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh, March 14 and 15

One of the veterans of Soviet jazz music, Chisinau-born pianist Leonid Chizhik has been living in Munich the past 22 years. He received classical music training in Moscow and debuted in jazz as a member of a well-known trio headed by flugelhornist German Lukianov in the mid 1960s. Later he played in the renowned orchestra of the Soviet variety star Leonid Utyosov. In 1972, Chizhik was the first jazz musician to get a rate from Gosconcert, the government-owned corporation which regulated all relationships in entertainment.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Chizhik successfully toured throughout the post-Soviet countries until he moved to Germany in 1991 and became a professor of jazz in Munich and Weimar conservatories. In Moscow, the jazz veteran will give a recital at the Butman Orchestra Rehearsal Studio on March 13 and perform solo and in duo at the Butman Club over the next two days. On March 15, Chizhik will perform a program called "Chopin and Jazz" in duo with the German saxophonist Florian Trjabsbach, professor in the Munich conservatory.

Kurt Elling at the Moscow International House of Music, March 16

One of the best living male jazz vocalists, Kurt Elling is an owner of a distinctive timbre, which might remind some of the great Frank Sinatra, though this is a stretch made merely due to seeing a white man singing jazz so profoundly.

Elling is a multiple Grammy nominee and the winner of the "Best Vocal Jazz Album" for his 2009 "Dedicated to You." With a background in philosophy of religion, Kurt Elling emerged as a vivid performer and composer in the early 1990s and was shortly signed to Blue Note, the number one jazz label in the U.S.

Elling appears on stage both with original songs, which always have sophisticated and intellectual lyrics, and with arrangements of jazz standards, pop music and sometimes even rock songs. As a vocalist with a stainless comprehension of rhythm, Elling usually tours with a band of skilled musicians. This makes his shows truly spectacular, in music and vocals

pari passu.

Ralph Bowen at the Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh, March 21

A renowned jazz pedagogue, a productive composer and an acclaimed saxophonist will appear with a gig at the Butman Club on March 21 after he conducts a master class at the Russian Academy of Music earlier that day.

The Canadian-born saxophonist was a member of the youth band of Blue Note Records, then the quintet of the legendary hard bop pianist Horace Silver, and finally of pianist Michel Camilo's band during the 1980s and early 1990s. Bowen is now an associate professor at Rutgers University and the visiting professor at Princeton University. His discography consists of nine albums and during his Moscow concert only a humble part of this work is expected to be presented.

"Over the years, I've learned to trust compositional decisions based on intuition developed through experience, study and practice, and yielding to the gravity, tension and resolution of the order of music," Bowen said about the process of creating music. "Once an initial platform is chosen, with a little patience, pieces begin to fall into place."

Ralph Bowen will be accompanied by the Ivan Farmakovsky Trio.

Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh, 16 Ulansky Pereulok, Bldg. 1A. Metro Chistiye Prudy. Tel: +7 495-632-92-64; www.butmanclub.ru. Moscow International House of Music, 52 Kosmodamianskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 8, Tel: +7 495-730-10-11.

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