

Variations on Béla Bartók – 44 Duets

AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

Two contrasting Czech violinists – one known for her avant-garde spirit and the other for her sensitivity and precision, realise masterpieces by Bartók



Photo: Hana Kotková and Iva Bittová

“Iva Bittová is an extraordinary artist. Raw and refined, passionate and contained, she has the soul of a gypsy, the voice of a troubadour, and the mind of a genius.” NPR

“The sound of her violin was so instantly sonically mesmerizing that it made me think I had never heard a violin before... it also made me feel that I understood the entire history of the instrument through her playing.”

Facsimile Magazine (on Hana Kotková)

Czech violinists **Iva Bittová** and **Hana Kotková** are revered around the world for different reasons – Bittová for her avant-garde spirit and spontaneous theatrics, Kotková for her sensitivity and precision. This exceptional pair will go bow-to-bow in Sydney’s City Recital Hall to realise a rendering of **Béla Bartók’s** magnificent *Folk Duos*.

Drawing on traditional rural performance styles, the pieces explore poetic sounds of Bartók’s native Hungary. Bittová and Kotková’s duets are raw, boisterous, guttural and lyrical – some screamed, others performed with sublime beauty. In a celebration of European peasant music, these fearless players present an exhilarating evening of Bartók’s most celebrated folksongs and masterpieces as you’ve never heard them before.

A Hungarian composer and pianist, Bartók is considered one of the most important composers of the 20th century. Together with **Liszt**, they are regarded as Hungary’s greatest composers. Through his collection and analytical study of folk music, Bartók became one of the early founders of ethnomusicology.

With a sound that traverses Moravian folk, classical music and avant-garde improvisation, Iva Bittová is a renowned composer and performer. She has collaborated with the likes of **Marc Ribot** and **John Zorn**, and her virtuosity has drawn comparisons with **Björk**, **Laurie Anderson** and **Meredith Monk**. But it is her ability to master violin, vocals and theatrics that highlights her genius. Her intoxicating virtuosity has made her one of the leading figures of the contemporary Czech avant-garde and the highest profile on the world stage.

Hana Kotková is one of the Czech Republic’s most revered violinists. Critics have labelled her a worthy proponent of the great Czech violin tradition. She has performed at Europe’s most prestigious music festivals and represented the Czech Republic at the World Exposition in Japan. Kotková has also completed numerous radio and television recordings. In recent years, she performed **Ligeti’s** Violin Concerto at Lincoln Center, New York and she made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2011.

For Sydney Festival, Iva Bittová will also performing a solo Sydney show, playing songs from her latest album *Entwine*. *Entwine* was recorded in the acoustically beautiful surrounds of a 16th-century church in the

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Czech Republic. It blends soaring violin flights, with hypnotic vocals based on texts by **Gertrude Stein**, with the artist's hallmark display of uninhibited skill and passion.

"The violin accompanies me all the time. Everything around me is under its influence. There are difficult pieces to practice from which I gain discipline, confidence, and self-control – and a healthy measure of doubt. The violin is a mirror reflecting my dreams and imagination. I believe there are fundamentals to my performance, such as the music's vibration and resonance between violin and my voice. Their 'symphony' leads me on to perfection, even though I know it never can be attained," says Iva Bittová.

Where	City Recital Hall, Angel Place
When	20 January at 8pm
Duration	75minutes no interval
Price	Premium \$65 A Reserve \$55/\$50 B Reserve \$39/\$35
Bookings	Sydney Festival 1300 856 876 City Recital Hall 02 8256 2222 sydneyfestival.org.au/bartok

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