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**Tanglewood**  
Jazz Festival 2001

# ON THE COVER

By David Rattigan

As a young boy in St. Petersburg, Russia, Misha Lenn spent three years studying piano. A friend of the family, who was the curator of St. Petersburg's Leningrad's art schools, found a sketch Misha had done and saw talent in the boy. His parents asked the youngster if he'd prefer to study art instead of music.

The 11-year-old boy answered a question with a question: "If I decide to paint, will I still have to play the piano?"

That was how his destiny was decided.

Misha went on to become a versatile, internationally celebrated artist. Freed from the regimen of mandatory practice, young Misha also took up piano again and became an enthusiastic (though less celebrated) jazz pianist.

"I've played jazz all my life," he says. "It reflects myself, and reflects my art. The same feelings go through life from music to art."



"DUKE IS THE ONE"

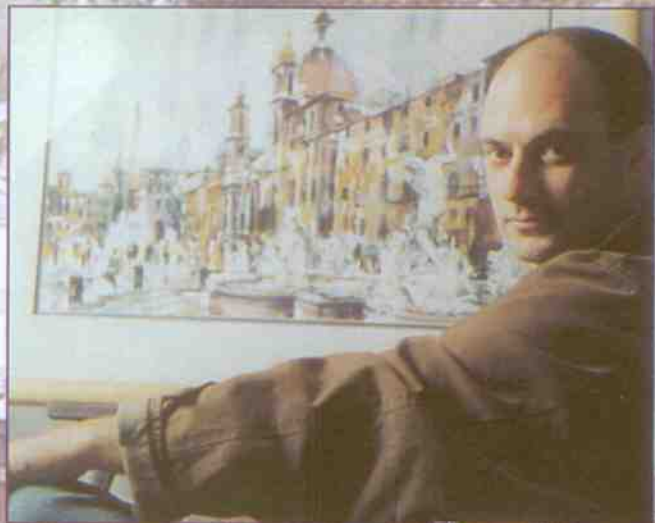


PHOTO: ELLIENNA GUY

Misha, whose artistry adorns the cover of this magazine and the pages here, is a prolific Boston-based artist who has gained international acclaim for his work in a variety of media, particularly by mixing pen and ink with watercolor. He frequently lends his talents to events that mix art with music, and notes with pride that among his accomplishments is illustrating a CD cover for a collection of works by the great Duke Ellington.

"I'm drawn to music, and everything connected with it," he says. "Jazz and dance are two things I like to work with. Dance is life, and jazz is movement of the body. If you see my jazz musicians, they're not playing statically. They move."

There are similarities in the processes of painting and jazz. In both, the artist has a subject and a structure, then improvises according to instinct and mood.

"You go around, but there is still that line in the middle," he says. "With watercolor, after I have the subject and composition, I can play around. Watercolor is a medium where one color might meet another in a certain way, and mix together by accident to create an effect or another color. Nature kind of helps you, but you have to have a quick sense of how to use it for yourself, or the image you project."

When he plays jazz, either by himself or with friends, a similar improvisation might yield a wonderful moment, though it can frequently be difficult to replicate.

"You can't repeat the same thing you did a couple of minutes ago," he says. "It depends on the mood, the spirit. It's not to say next time will be worse or better, but it will be different."

Misha has a distinctive style, which reflects the influences of classic impressionists Toulouse-Lautrec, Renoir, and Degas, along with more decorative artists such as Gustav Klimt. He has a gift for capturing emotion and energy in his subject or scene.

"My work has emotion, which people like," he says. "I believe that as much as the artist gives to the canvas, the viewer gets back

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