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### Artist Spotlight: Kinoslav Studio Orchestra

 [March 27, 2015](#)    [Valerie Polichar](#)



*Kinoslava!* The **Kinoslav Studio Orchestra** — a trio based in Illinois and Iowa — released their second album, *Kenosis*, in January 2015, close on the heels of their first, *ICON*, just out in October 2014. In between, they bent our ears with a number of individual cuts, an EP, and an EP-length single, astonishing productivity for music of such consistently high quality. KSO's dark ambient music,

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### The Unappreciated MiniCast

featuring Sergei Czerewko on violin, Tom Wakeland on bass, and Tom Janikowski on guitar and keyboards, blends orchestral instruments with electronic sounds, classical riffs with spoken word and industrial noises.

Engineered by Janikowski, **Kinoslav Studio Orchestra**'s complex pieces reveal themselves in layers to repeated listening. "Kurt Schwitters," off *ICON*, offers a poignant and complex exploration of the German artist whose innovative work had a history of destruction. The piece references *Haus am Bakken (Merzbau #2)*, an installation piece in a small outbuilding in the garden of his home, which was accidentally burned to the ground years after he fled the residence. "Trucker Dream," off the same album, starts with an indistinct CB radio clip that gradually, over the course of the piece, becomes more and more audible, but never quite reaches full clarity. "NOAA," a particularly beautiful 30-minute stand-alone piece, is based over a long weather report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and is, appropriately, atmospheric and changeable, taking the listener on a varied journey punctuated by exquisite strings, retro synth sounds and vibrant bass. On "Dmento," off the EP *Kathedral*, a shatter of pizzicato at 9:45 slams into dark, *Blade Runner* sonics like rain in the desert.

Standout tracks on the new album, *Kenosis*, include among others "Where Were You," featuring spoken-word accents and guitar and bass sprawling over relentless percussion, and "Two Heartstrings," aptly named for its pull on the emotions of the listener, which spotlights Czerewko's range and skill on violin.

We sat down (virtually) with **Kinoslav Studio Orchestra** for an interview.

*You've released a great deal of complex work in a short period of time. When did you start playing together? How did you meet?*

Sergei: "I met Tom Wakeland over 10 years ago, and living only three doors away we were bound to meet eventually!



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I met the “other” Tom three years ago at work — we are colleagues. With private funding by Wakeland and the availability of the lower level of my home, we designed and built a humble recording studio. Wakeland and I go back (musically) most of the decade. The three of us started playing together in October of 2013. We first came together to do some music for the trailer for Tom J’s forthcoming novel, **The Crawford County Sketchbook**. “A Switchback Melody” — that is still one of my favorite pieces that we’ve done.”

*Tell us about your name. The words “kino” and “slava” translates to “cinema glory” in Russian — does the name reflect the cinematic nature of your music, or is there more to the story?*

Tom J: “Sergei and I worked together on producing a short video for a non-profit a couple of years ago, and at the end of our working copy we jokingly attributed it to “Kinoslav Productions” or something like that — Sergei is Ukrainian and I am Polish, so our first thought was “two Slavs doing cinema — Kinoslav!” When we ended up playing music together, it was a natural progression, especially as we work for a very cinematic feel to our music. Kinoslava! Cinema glory!”

*Sergei uses classical riffs alongside with very modern styles of playing, including an almost textural pizzicato. We’d love to know more about his musical background.*

Sergei: “I started playing violin in 1965 — in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, then junior and senior high school, and then spent 2 years playing in symphony and chamber orchestras in college. I always wanted to mix old school “classical” with new “experimental” sounds. Should I say — “the best of both worlds”? With trial and much error I had to wait almost 30 years for technology to match my needs and desires!”

*Some of Tom J’s poetry is featured on “Where Were You,” off of Kenosis. What can you tell us about this particular work and Tom’s writing in general?*

Tom J: “Where Were You is a ‘generational piece’ —

Generation X – from my book of poetry **worse than it looks**. I am primarily a fiction writer, and my first published novel will be out this August from Red Hen Press of Pasadena. I have a hard time talking about my writing sometimes – I have always written, and I guess I would just ask people to read my stuff and find out for themselves: [martinipen.com](http://martinipen.com) and [tomjanikowski.com](http://tomjanikowski.com)”

*Tom W.'s bass playing anchors the sound and often provides a sensory bridge between the listener and the music. What brought him to this style of music and what has he played before?*

Tom W: “My bass playing is what it is. I just play. I go for the feel and the mood of whatever we are doing. I started way back, long ago as a kid, playing metal, and even now all of my playing is still just what the immediate need calls for. I don't think about the genre or style of the music – I just play what needs to be played at the moment.”

Tom J: “Tom is too modest. His bass playing really is the glue that holds us together. When we are composing a piece, sometimes he calls for more keyboard or something beneath what we are doing, and Sergei and I shake our heads and smile at each other, because we *don't* need it – Tom's bass often fills every niche that needs to be filled! You hit the nail on the head by saying his bass is the bridge between the music and the listener, because his playing is what one most feels when they listen to our music. It is an honor and a complete trip playing with him.”

*Are your pieces written as a group or individually? If as a group, are they formed through mutual experimentation/improvisation or does one person bring in an idea that others add to?*

Sergei: “We write our music together, and a lot of it comes out of improvisation, but usually one of us begins with a melody we are working through, and then we all contribute and expand.”

Tom J: “Yeah, and once again, Sergei or I often play a melody for the other two to hear, and then we let Tom W.

lay down a foundation on the bass. He sets a mood, and the melody is developed on top of it.”

*What influenced the decision to write about Kurt Schwitters? What is your relationship with/feeling about his work?*

Tom J: “I love Dadaism, and associated artists. The story of Kurt Schwitters and *Merzbau #1* and *Merzbau #2* both being destroyed and then *Merzbau #3* never being finished is too tragic not to intrigue a person. The engineering of this piece was influenced by his collage pieces.”

*Do you perform your music live?*

All: “We have performed live and may do so again, but we are primarily a studio project, as our name suggests.”

*What do you hope that listeners will take from your music?*

Tom J: “Our music is what we often refer to as ‘bio-soundtrack’ – the soundtrack for living. We try to think of it much like a river, as well, and we hope that people take that away. Good ambient music often is like an audial river – when you watch a river flowing past you, there is a lot of repetition, and that is what makes it so calming or maybe even a little edgy when the weather is bad. Every now and again a fish jumps, a branch floats by, a boat passes, lightning strikes, or an eagle swoops down for lunch. That makes it unpredictable and interesting. The three of us live in a small metropolis of about a half of a million people at the confluence of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers – a dynamic, beautiful, and interesting place to be with urban and wild coming face to face on a regular basis, and we hope our music reflects our geography. We hope it can be calming or edgy, but also unpredictable and interesting.”

*Have you had any unexpected reactions to your music that offer you, as the creators, insights into your own work?*

All: “The unexpected reaction to our music has been that people have liked it. We began doing what we do just because we enjoy it, and to please ourselves. That anyone else finds it edifying is very rewarding!”

All



**Kinoslav Studio Orchestra** music was available at no cost to the listener at press time. *ICON* is available on [Silent Flow](#). *Kenosis*, their latest album, is also available on [Silent Flow](#). Many individual pieces and the EP, including those mentioned above, can be found on [Soundcloud](#). Follow Kinoslav Studio Orchestra on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KinoslavOrkestr>. Visit the official website at <http://kinoslava.blogspot.com/>.

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