

Jean-Michel Pilc

True Story

(Dreyfuss Jazz ***)

The French-born pianist Jean-Michel Pilc has a crystalline touch. Different influences waft through his playing like herbs in a good sauce. A shimmering romanticism pervades much of it, and occasionally he just explodes in soaring scaffoldings of sound.

His new CD with Russian-born bassist Boris Kozlov and fellow American, drummer Billy Hart, mixes the accessible with some ambitious compositions. Pilc is certainly one of the few musicians who traverses Schubert (on a tune called "Relic") before reimagining "Try to Remember" from *The Fantasticks*. Of course, that musical was based on a work of Edmond Rostand, author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, so maybe Pilc is the perfect interpreter.

A pleasure of Pilc's playing is the energy he can summon. "PBH Factor" has this great danceable vibe, while "B.B.B." is all twisted and partly Monkish. Humorous touches abound, too.

Sometimes, early in the CD, the positive vibe gets a bit much, as on the filmlike "A Brief History of Time" and the sappier "Mornings With Franz." But the five-tune title track goes way the other way, ending in complexity and high seriousness.

- K.S.

Pilc and his trio play 8 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Saturday, April 17, at Chris' Jazz Café, 1421 Sansom St. Tickets: \$20. Phone: 215-568-3131.