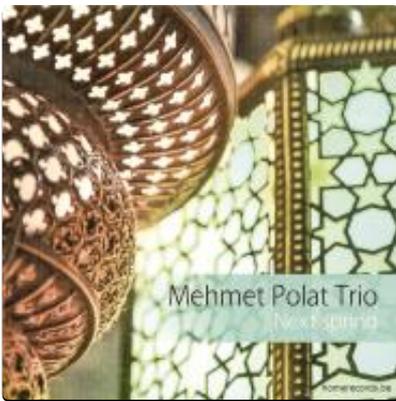


## CD Review: Mehmet Polat Trio (Turkey/Mali)...a spiritual yet adventurous meeting of three masters of their magical instruments (ney, kora and oud)



**Artist:** Mehmet Polat Trio

**Title:** Next Spring

**Label:** Homerecords

**Genre:** world/maqam/kora music

### CD review by Dawoud Kringle

Collaborations between musicians of different traditions are a peculiarly modern phenomenon. Sometimes this produces nothing more than a contradictory hybrid. Yet, many times, the masterful and insightful blending of different cultures produces a balanced and complete aggregate greater than the sum of its parts that enriches all culture and the traditions and spiritual vision that emerges from it. The later is exemplified by the work in the **Mehmet Polat Trio's** CD *Next Spring*.

[Mehmet Polat](#) is a master of the oud. He'd studied Ottoman music in Istanbul, and after having mastered [Turkish Maqam](#), he moved to Amsterdam in 2007, and soon after, met Malian kora master **Zoumana Diarra** (who also plays the guitar, balafon, and ngoni). In 2012, Polat and Diarra attended an Alevi ceremony (a ritual from the mystical traditions of the Turkish branch of Shi'i Islam) where they met Turkish ney master and spiritual visionary **Sinan Arat**. This was the beginning of the Mehmet Polat Trio. Polat and Diarra made modifications of their instruments (Polat added two bass strings to his oud. Diarra added special clips to his kora to facilitate the half-tones found in maqam).

The CD opens with "*One Drop in the Ocean*," an absolutely captivating unison melody between the oud and kora, with the ney supporting the structure in the background. Then the ney steps forward ever so slightly to bring out an unexpected dimension of beauty within the melody. The melody is never abandoned, and they never go "out." But they never repeat themselves; the melody is explored again and again, like religious scholars and seers examining an ancient text and finding new truths within its words with each reading.



*Photo courtesy of Mehmet Polat*

“**There Life Begins Again**” starts with the oud taking the song into an exploration of the maqam its based on over an insistent bass note pulse. The kora and ney come in and the trio explores all manner of peregrinations within the song. The oud takes a solo with sparse rhythmic accompaniment by the kora; an evocation of longing and a sweet sadness are brought to a climax, before they move into a new realm of the song, led by the ney, which introduces a very different mood; one of happiness, refreshed optimism, and playfulness. The piece ends with three simple notes that seem to acknowledge a submission to the inevitable forces of change in life itself.

The mood of the collection is led into another dimension by Diarra’s kora at the beginning of “**Summer Dream**.” After this, the oud and ney answer with maqam elements. They come together in mutual agreement, and hold a musical evocation of a very summer-like mood. The kora and ney have a beautiful and poetic conversation.

The title track, “**Next Spring**,” opens with an uptempo oud solo. The music is propelled into a statement of strength and determination, which the ney answers in agreement. With the oud providing a bass ostinato under it, the kora takes over and makes a statement of its own. The ney takes over. The solo Arat plays here is sparse, but possesses a vocal quality that often has one wondering who they brought in as a vocalist. It becomes impassioned, as the oud assumes an almost jazz-like bass role, and the kora shimmering in the background like sunlight reflecting off a river.

The remaining tracks of the CD are all as masterful as they are beautiful. “**Mehtab**” begins with a melancholic oud solo, and suddenly becomes cheerful and optimistic with the entrance of the others. “**You are not Alone**” comes across as support and a gift of strength through a loving

admonishment. The trio displays impressive chops in the joyous "**Whirling in the Jungle.**" The foreboding mood of "**The Day Will Come**" gives way to impassioned entreaties before returning to its former somberness. This seems to extend into "**Missing You.**" "**Amarula**" employs the only percussion on the CD in a lively display of passion and life.

The music the trio presents on this recording does not overwhelm the senses with power or an ostentatious display of virtuosity (although they have plenty of that); it doses so with beauty and sincerity. This music is much more than a meeting of Turkish and West African musical styles. There is a poetic eloquence here that compels the listener to respond in a visceral and emotional manner. It is music that gently demands deep listening, and inspires introspection and the unveiling of new insights.

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