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Tel Aviv Native Leads Trio in Adventurous Repertoire at Hartford

Library Jazz Series

By [OWEN MCNALLY](#) • JAN 13, 2016



Alon Nechustan

Alon Nechushtan embraces everything from klezmer to classical.

While the voraciously eclectic and boundlessly energetic jazz pianist/composer Alon Nechushtan boldly bends and blends all genres with his steely-fingered technique, flooding the keyboard with shimmering notes and angular ideas held together with an overarching, complex architecture, his music is accessible, even delightful.

Yes, it's challenging and perpetually quests for new expression. Yet it's as vital as dance, as much fun as folk. Refreshingly, it's also fluent and un-afflicted with pompous, academic rigor mortis posing as profundity. It thrives on invention, not pretension. And it can also crackle with an engaging sense of humor with its witty, Monkish, puckish rhythmic variety, use of dissonance, momentum, and a sense of play that engages listeners in the pianist's musical journeys.

A globe-trotting native of Tel Aviv, the New York-based Nechushtan displays his bright, cosmopolitan style -- one that embraces everything from klezmer to classical, and mainstream to *avant-garde* -- as he leads his trio on Sunday, January 17, at 3:00 pm at the [Hartford Public Library's free Baby Grand Jazz series.](#)

Nechushtan thrives on mercurial interplay with colleagues. He'll be joined by double bassist Lars Ekman and drummer Colin Stranahan.

Since moving to New York about ten years ago after studying at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Nechushtan has made his mark as a sideman with premier progressive musicians, and recorded acclaimed releases on his own, albums that document his all-embracing, yet highly distinctive style. Among these are his 2014 release, *Venture Bound*, on the German label, Enja.

Nechushtan's co-travelers on that adventurous exploration are saxophonists Donny McCaslin and John Ellis, bassist Chris Lightcap, and drummer Adam Cruz. It showcases nine original compositions well-stocked with nourishing substance seasoned with a suite-like flavor.

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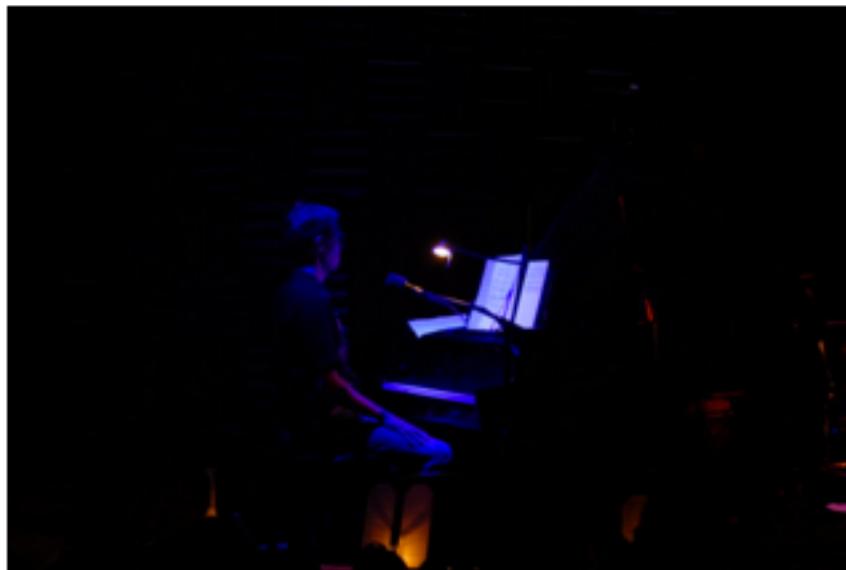
Music and instruments were at the center of Nechushtan's life right from the beginning. His mother was a music teacher. His uncle taught violin. In high school, he got hooked on progressive rock bands like Genesis and Pink Floyd. While stationed in Jerusalem during his military service, he studied classical music, including composition.

In a life-shaping turning point, Nechushtan decided to study jazz in America, enrolling at the New England Conservatory of Music. He studied contemporary improvisation with the great American composer and musician Gunther Schuller. There, he was exposed to a wide variety of influential performers and thinkers, including pianists Ran Blake, Paul Bley, Danilo Perez, and Fred Hersch, as well as Hankus Netsky.

Instead of going back home to Israel after his studies, Nechushtan hung out in Boston, playing there and periodically in New York City before taking yet another giant step and moving to Manhattan, the jazz capital of the world. Since then, he's

performed with an array of jazz shakers-and-doers, including William Parker, Dave Liebman, Bob Moses, and Andrew Cyrille.

Nechushtan has played around the world, from the Far East to Brazil, and of course Israel, and at many prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Blue Note. His bulging resume gives a hint of his versatility with credits ranging from the Yokohama Rejoicing Sounds festival in Japan, where his contemporary orchestral compositions were presented, to the Tel Aviv New Music Biennale, where his compositions for large ensemble were featured.



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