



Nashaz is an expression of Brian Prunka's lifelong devotion to both Arabic music and jazz. Through his oud playing, improvisations and compositions, Brian finds common threads and natural sympathies between the disparate traditions of jazz and the maqam music of the middle east and North Africa, resulting in an organic new sound: melodic and spirited, ranging from wistful contemplation to kinetic intensity.

Prior to moving to Brooklyn in 2003, **Brian Prunka** was living and performing in New Orleans, where he spent his musically formative years honing his musical skills immersed in the jazz community. Always drawn to a wide range of music without regard to boundaries, national or otherwise, when fate introduced him to the oud he had an instant and profound connection with this storied instrument. A chance conversation led him to study with his mentor, the renowned virtuoso Simon Shaheen, who was impressed enough by his sincere passion for Arabic music to invite Prunka to perform with him on tour. He founded Nashaz to bring together his love of jazz and Arabic music.

He has performed throughout the U.S. and internationally with Simon Shaheen, Michael Bates, Ravish Momin, the New York Arabic Orchestra, the Vancouver International Orchestra, Zikrayat, the Near East River Ensemble, and others.

Trumpet player **Kenny Warren** is rooted in jazz, but for the better part of a decade he has been following his ears all around the globe with groups like Slavic Soul Party, The Sway Machinery, and Tony Malaby, as well as recording for television and films such as "Beasts of the Southern Wild."

Multi-instrumentalist **Nathan Herrera** has intensively studied Indian music and Macedonian music in addition to jazz and modern classical music; he brings all of these elements together into a seamless personal style whether he is playing saxophone, flute or bass clarinet. Recently taking his place on woodwinds is saxophonist, clarinetist, ethnic-woodwind specialist and composer **Matt Darriau**, who has made several innovative and influential contributions to the New York music scene through his work with Paradox Trio, the Klezomatics, Elliott Sharp, Marc Ribot, Gunther Schuller, and many others. In addition to alto saxophone and clarinet, Matt also plays several ethnic flutes from all over the world.

A noted protégé of famed Lebanese percussionist Michel Merhej, **Vin Scialla** is best known for his innovative fusion of Eastern and American percussion traditions, recording and touring with a wide range of jazz and world artists, including Indian mandolin virtuoso Snehasish Mozumder.

Originally from Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia, **George Mel** is the stage name of George Melikishvili. Drawing on his decades of jazz drumming as well as frame drum studies with masters Jamey Haddad & Glen Velez, George has forged a unique hybrid percussion approach merging many percussion techniques and traditions with a personal jazz sensibility.

Nashaz's debut CD, *Nashaz*, reached #14 on the CMJ World top 40 charts and #25 on the CMJ Jazz top 40, and garnered rave reviews:

"One of the best new Arabic Jazz CD's I have heard in 10 years"—Ray Rashid, Rashid Music

"A vibrant fusion of Arabic music and jazz, Nashaz is at times mysterious, at times racing, always fresh and adventurous. Highly recommended." —Midwest Book Review

"Sounds unlike anything else. Strong melodies that are both memorable and easy to hum along to . . . will leave the listener wanting more. Highly Recommended."—Dave Sumner, Bird Is the Worm

"Wild, engaging stuff that simply clicks . . . a must" —Midwest Record

"Lyrical and poetic . . . there is an authenticity of this music that can only come with an intimate experience of tradition and culture. An impressive accomplishment." —Dawoud Kringle,

DooBeeDooBeeDoo

"Hypnotically Rhythmic . . . music John Coltrane would have understood."—David Lührssen, Milwaukee Shepherd-Express

"An impressive debut"—Chris Heim, Global Village KMUW