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LISA HILTON

SOLO PIANO

DAY & NIGHT



“One is left awestruck by beauty.” -KVNF Radio

1/10/2017 **WEILL RECITAL HALL**
AT **CARNEGIE HALL** / 8pm
NYC, www.CarnegieHall.org

2/9 **JUNIOR BLIND OF AMERICA** / 4pm
Los Angeles, CA, www.JuniorBlind.org

2/3 **THE OLD CHURCH** / 8pm
Portland, OR, www.theoldchurch.org

2/18 **THE EDYE SECOND SPACE**
at **BROAD THEATER** / 7pm
Santa Monica, www.TheBroadStage.com

3/10 **SF JAZZ / Joe Henderson Lab** / 8pm
San Francisco, www.SFJazz.org

4/8 **BERKLEE COLLEGE** / 8pm
Boston, www.berklee.edu/BPC/events

4/11 **THE GREEN MILL** 5:30pm Chicago

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MEHMET ALI SANLIKOL

Grooving Across Cultures

It's Oct. 9, and the stage at Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport, Massachusetts, is set up for a large jazz ensemble, spiced with kettledrums, oud and a cane reed rack. A big band led by Mehmet Ali Sanlikol holds forth, and after swinging pieces echoing “Nardis” and “Man With The Golden Arm,” the group edges Eastward: dotted rhythms stretching sinuously, the leader scatting in high nasal melisma over a microtonal keyboard, a Turkish *kös* drum booming and zurna horns braying amid the brass. Soon, Dave Liebman snakes his soprano saxophone through a concerto written for him, and trumpeter Toru “Tiger” Okoshi launches lip-busting cadenzas over a slinky 12/8 groove.

Occident meets Orient in the music of Sanlikol, a multi-instrumentalist whose career travels a Silk Road of vivid and fascinating styles and themes—jazz, classical, drama, nature, poetry, politics. Globetrotting reedist and educator Liebman had this to say: “Mehmet combines musical aspects of his native Turkish culture with first-rate big band arranging. It’s quite entertaining for the listener and on the highest level, musically speaking.”

Born in Istanbul, Sanlikol is a cheerful apologist for inclusive globalism. “We need to internalize and integrate a new musical language through practice and study, not reduce it to sound-byte stereotype,” he said.

The genial polymath extended a line of Turkish musicians who thrived at Berklee College of Music when he arrived in Boston in 1993 (including Atlantic producer Arif Mardin and pianist Aydin Esen). He lucked into Herb Pomeroy’s final year teaching his famed line-writing course. “It was structured, dogmatic, became ingrained in me,” said Sanlikol.

You can hear its influence in exciting exchanges between clarinet and trumpets on “Turkish Second Line,” the opener on Sanlikol’s

latest release, *Resolution* (Dünya). Further study at New England Conservatory brought depth and experience. “Bob Brookmeyer helped me develop compositional motifs, proportions, varying time signatures,” Sanlikol shared over late-night rakı (an anise-flavored spirit). “And George Russell! Even at 80 he exuded explosive force!” But he was in for a rude awakening. “My shocking re-education started with an innocent game of Risk when a friend put on an old Ottoman Janissary march: I could identify neither the rhythms nor the tonic. My cultural filters were alerted and my tastes sharpened as I gradually ‘got’ this huge, primal energy of double-reeds, trumpets and percussion.”

Sanlikol went hermetic in Turkey for a decade, diving into Ottoman ethnomusicology and unearthing links to many Islamic subcultures. Returning to Boston bearing sheaves of new compositions, he diligently assembled orchestras to play them. He founded Dünya, a Turkish period-instrument classical ensemble that performs opera and integrates thematic concerts around birdsong and Byzantine history.

For his group Whatsnext?, his intriguing charts weave big band vernacular with Turkish makam and usul (modes and meters akin to Indian ragas and talas) into meticulous tapestries, with lovingly researched threads pairing lute with electric guitar. The group’s self-titled 2014 debut was Grammy nominated.

Sanlikol plays keyboards, plectra and rare ancient winds. Most memorable among his historical Turkish treasures are pieces that instantly link East and West. “Whirl Around,” a slinky earworm from *Resolution* sung in duo with Panamanian vocalist Nedelka Prescod, eases Sufi-inspired rhythms into Jamaican reggae. His “Turkish 2nd Line” magically links the familiar street-beat of New Orleans with a beloved dance pattern deep in the DNA of all Mediterranean peoples.

—Fred Bouchard