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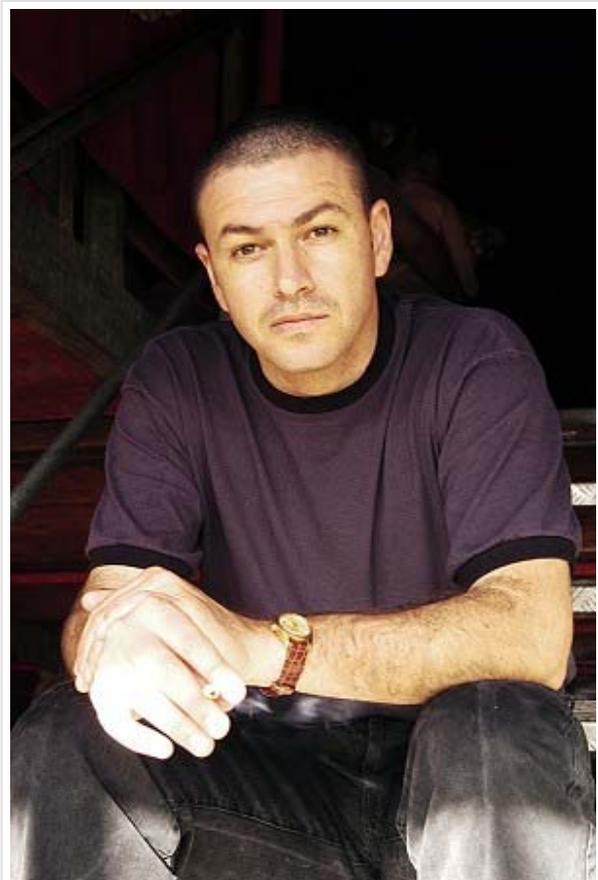
Concert Pianist Plays to the Younger Set

[Israeli master brings poetry and romance to classical works](#)

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Concert pianist Elisha Abas was mentored by Artur Rubinstein and always wears a wristwatch given by the maestro. (Courtesy of Ariane Awes)

NEW YORK—With a great-great-grandfather who said, "In love's godlike breathing, there's the innermost aspect of the universe," how could he not reach for greatness? Greatness is indeed being laid on emerging concert pianist Elisha Abas.

Great-great-grandfather on his mother's side, renowned Russian composer Alexander Scriabin set a high bar for Abas, who according to poet and arts patron Simona DeFeo is setting his own standards for poetic piano interpretations. "His favorite compositions are probably the Beethoven Symphony No. 3 (Eroica) or the Khachaturian Piano Concerto," says DeFeo.

The Israeli-born pianist's style "resembles the style of the pianists of the golden age—Alfred Cortot, Ferruccio

Busoni, and Josef Hoffman. He has an electrifying rhythm and a tone that sings and has the capacity to touch the hearts of the people," according to DeFeo.

Elisha Abas says musicians today have lost that intimate connection with their audience. "In Scriabin's day and age," Abas explains, "the great performers were often personally known to their audiences and typically commissioned and paid to perform by friends and princes alike."

DeFeo says, "In many cities he has developed ambassadors that help him by sponsoring concerts and after-parties to attract younger audiences." Duke Amyo, lead singer of afro-beat band Antibalas, works with Abas to showcase the pianist's concerts to the 25-45 age group.

After every performance, Abas invites all audience members to a private venue for a celebration while listening and dancing to funk, soul, 80s, and world music that also inspire Abas. These post-concert celebrations give Abas a means of interacting with his patrons and celebrating the soul of music, he says.

Abas treasures a special relationship with past concert great Artur Schnabel. Good friends despite the difference in age, the older maestro once said that Abas reminded him of himself in his own youth. At one point, Schnabel honored Abas with a wristwatch, personally engraved with words of admiration and encouragement. Abas constantly wears the watch and explains that it reminds him of their friendship.

Although he has played with Leonard Bernstein, Isaac Stern, and Zubin Mehta and in venues including Royal Albert Hall, Abas keeps himself firmly grounded. His personal life into the late 1980s was typical of a talented young man in Israel, with family, friends, and a profession outside of music. After ten years of a heavy performing schedule, he took a break to play professional soccer in Israel and earn a law degree while continuing to perform in intimate settings.

He returned to public performance in 2004. Abas is presently touring the U.S. backed by fans that appreciate his classically focused repertoire. DeFeo says the pianist has developed a large support system that includes artists, Wall Street executives, attorneys, and fans. Piano maker Steinway and Sons and other companies "provide a special service and support."

Abas also offers his talent to international aid organizations. Dr. Larry Gell, Executive Director of the International Agency for Economic Development, has appointed him Director of Cultural Affairs and Projects, according to DeFeo. Also a director, DeFeo says of Abas, "Under the agency we can work with Dr. Gell and his constituency to use the culture of classical music as a catalyst for innovation and growth in developing nations. Projects are being planned."

Abas will continue to perform around the world, developing a non-traditional classical music audience. DeFeo says, "Elisha believes that music is from the heart of the artist to the hearts of all people."

Other projects include collaborating with Dr. Ronn Yedidia on a publication about the rebirth of classical music. Future concerts are being planned in Philadelphia, Boston, Washington DC, Europe, Israel, and India.

Master pianist Elisha Abas returns to New York performing the works of Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Schumann, Scriabin, and Brahms. Performances are scheduled on Feb. 13, Mar 15, Apr 17, and May 28 at the Baruch Center for Performing Arts, 55 Lexington Avenue. Visit his Web site www.elishaabas.com.