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A journey with many treasures By MAXIM REIDER

Israeli-born star pianist Alon Goldstein performs at the Classicameri Festival in Eilat.

'I never try to be different for the sake of it, but I try to present a premier performance of a piece,' says one of the most internationally successful Israeli pianists Alon Goldstein, who is participating in Isrotel's Classicameri Festival in Eilat, and adds with a smile: "But somehow it comes out different anyway."

Israeli-born Goldstein studied piano at the Rubin Academy with Victor Derevianko and Arie Vardi, continuing with Leon Fleisher at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, one of the world's best. "Fleisher's most amazing quality is his X-ray eyes," says Goldstein, who combines superior musicality with a powerful analytical mind.



"He looks through the piece and he sees the skeleton. He puts his hands on the piano, and the movement starts. He strips the music of everything that is less important and shows it as a process in time. He explains that music is not about effects but how the tension between the notes makes this miracle happen."

Another important thing Goldstein learned was what he defines as a "multiple schizophrenia. You have to become three persons – one does the homework, the second performs, while the third sits among the audience to tell the first if the second played as he planned it. This ability to detach from oneself and ask questions is essential for selflearning," he says.

After graduating from Peabody Goldstein, who finds "the change of country, food and family a most enriching experience," moved to London, where he spent several years as a performer and teacher at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. There, he created several innovative music programs, then continued to Italy and finally settled in a suburb of Washington, DC. Dividing his time between performing and teaching (also in Israel in the framework of the annual Tel Hai Master Course) Goldstein, who is admired by audiences and critics alike not only for his musical intelligence, warmth of personality but also his gift for communication, creates music programs for various and sometimes not-so-obvious audiences.

For him, his career is "a journey with a lot of treasures one discovers on the way. There are so many unexpected experiences that happen during your career, and it is important to embrace them," says the musician. He recalls how he "played a late Beethoven sonata, a very private, introverted and subdued piece for kids, wondering what they were able to understand in this heavy stuff. Yet the intense silence in the hall told me that listening to the great music helped them to discover emotions in themselves they didn't even know they had. For me, that was most rewarding."

His latest activities include "two fascinating world premieres of concerti that were written for me."

One by Mark Kopytman is called Ornaments with the Jerusalem Camerata and Avner Biron; the other is by Avner Dorman called Lost Souls and the Kansas City Symphony under Michael Stern.”

In Eilat, Goldstein performs Mendelssohn’s Piano Concerto No 1, which he will also play a month later “as my debut with the London Philharmonic orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski.” A couple of other highlights include a recital with his former teacher Leon Fleisher, playing four hands in Paris. He is also invited to teach and perform at the prestigious Ravinia festival. “I was a student there 15 years ago, and this is the first time they invited a student to come back as a teacher...”

Goldstein shares his ideas on life in music in his blog at <http://www.alonggoldstein.com>.

Alon Goldstein plays Brahms Trio No. 3 for Piano, Cello and Violin with the ICO members on February 3 and the Mendelssohn piano concerto under Roberto Paternostro on February 4.

Classicameri, Isrotel Royal Beach Hotel, Eilat. For more Classicameri details and reservations: www.isrotel.co.il/events/classicameri