

16 ARTS & CULTURE

REVIEW

Lebanese pianist takes audience to a lost world

By **Chirine Lahoud**
Special to The Daily Star

BEIRUT: "When I think of playing piano, I think of traveling," said the Lebanese pianist and composer Walid Nahas after his performance at Theater Monnot Thursday night.

Nahas' one night only show presented the release of his new album "Immersion." He told The Daily Star that it took him quite some time to compose this

album because he had some "emotional and personal baggage." However, "I wouldn't have done it without all these experiences I've been through," he said.

The first time Nahas touched a piano he was 8 years old. Since then, he has rarely taken his hands off of a keyboard. Before welcoming the musician on stage, the Lebanese opera singer Lama Tyan told the story of the relationship between the pianist and his instrument. Nahas's piano has been in his family for generations. First, it was "a wedding gift from Nahas's great-grandfather to his

wife," Tyan said. Then, it belonged to the pianist's grandmother, who offered it to the young Nahas.

The audience could see that the Steinway & Sons piano has had many musical experiences with different pianists – the wood is well worn and the piano still has its original ivory keys. The emotional baggage that ties Nahas to his piano could be felt all through his performance.

"Nahas is today's romantic figure" said Tyan. The listeners witnessed an affectionate bond between Nahas and the piano as he performed his musical compositions, which submerged the audience into the pianist's world.

As Nahas played, we could enter his romantic sphere, imagining scenes from romantic films and dreamy ballads. He offered listeners a palette of emotions: Light and subtle musical notes represented love and affection, but as Nahas switched to sharp and heavy sounds the audience could imagine a quarrel between two characters, or even anger.

Listeners were almost hypnotized by this genius who plays as though in a trance, with eyes closed. Nahas played, reacted and listened to his piano rumbling as his fingers touched the ivory.

He only opened his eyes at the end of each composition as though returning to reality, and leaving his own utopian sphere – abandoning his paradise.

Nahas gave a voice to his piano, and the latter expressed the pianist's feelings. Observing Nahas with his piano was like seeing a loving relationship. At the end of his performance, Nahas bent down and kissed his instrument.

Walid Nahas's album "**Immersion**" is on sale at all Virgin Megastores and on the Librairie Antoine website.



Photo by Joe Kesrouani

Walid Nahas with his Steinway & Sons piano.