

## **About Brian Prunka**

Prior to moving to Brooklyn in 2003, Brian was living and performing in New Orleans, where he spent his musically formative years honing his musical skills immersed in the jazz community. While his background was in traditional and modern jazz, as well as the rock and blues music of his teenage years, Brian has always found himself drawn to a wide range of music without regard to boundaries, national or otherwise. In the late 90s, fate introduced him to the oud, and he had an instant and profound connection with this storied instrument. A chance conversation led him to begin studying with the renowned virtuoso Simon Shaheen and ultimately to becoming involved in the Arabic music community as well. He has sought over the years to find ways to bring together the essential characteristics of all the music he loves through both his improvisational style and his many diverse compositions.

These days equally proficient on both guitar and oud, Brian composes and performs jazz and middle-eastern influenced music with his own projects (such as the Near East River Ensemble) and with musicians such as Michael Bates and Simon Shaheen. He currently performs with Nashaz, The New York Arabic Orchestra, Simon Shaheen and others.

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. In addition to national and international events, he has performed in New York at The Stone, Tonic, the Knitting Factory, the River to River Festival, Symphony Space, Alwan for the Arts, Trinity Church, and CBGBs, among others.

He has taught jazz guitar at Loyola University and Delgado Community College in New Orleans, and oud at the Arab American Arts Institute's annual Arabic Music Retreat. He holds degrees in jazz studies from the University of New Orleans (M.M. 2001) and Loyola University (B.M. 1997).