

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

---

## NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Braithwaite  
(781) 259-9600  
[Ann@bkmusicpr.com](mailto:Ann@bkmusicpr.com)

### **Guitarist and composer Chris Jentsch explores yesteryear through a jazz lens on his stirring new CD *Topics in American History***

#### **Live recording of Chamber Music America commission hits all the right notes**

**Jentsch's all-star Jentsch Group No Net features flutist Michel Gentile, clarinetist Michael McGinnis, saxophonist Jason Rigby, trumpeter David Smith, trombonist Brian Drye, pianist Jacob Sacks, bassist Jim Whitney, drummer Eric Halvorson, conductor JC Sanford**

*"(Jentsch) writes lavish suites – which he then plays with remarkable terseness and attention to detail. His narratives are vivid and often very funny. His latest, Topics in American History, couldn't be more relevant."* — New York Music Daily

*"Chris Jentsch's Brooklyn Suite was one of last year's most satisfyingly ambitious jazz efforts."*  
—Richard Gehr, Village Voice

*"Chris Jentsch's seven-part homage to his home borough (Brooklyn Suite) is at once grandly orchestral and strikingly personal. The entire band seems to radiate from Jentsch's pensive guitar pulse, blending jazz, classical and rock ideas into a multidimensional reflection of everyday life."*

—Forrest Dylan Bryant, Jazz Times

On his new album, acclaimed guitarist and composer **Chris Jentsch** pairs his extraordinary skill at writing long form musical suites with his expertise in history. Jentsch earned a B.A. in history from Gettysburg College, but his approach to expressing his knowledge through music is anything but academic. ***Topics in American History*** (out November 9, 2018 on Blue Schist Records), featuring jazz interpretations of seven historical events and concepts, takes listeners on an emotionally exhilarating, compellingly thoughtful journey through selected corners of our nation's past. "In learning about music there is always the historical facet," says Jentsch. "Aspects of classical music, world music, jazz, and now even rock music have their backgrounds of decades or even centuries past. With the *Topics* project, for the first time, to express my present I have merged what I have learned from the chronicles of music with my general interest in American history."

The hour-long *Topics*, a result of a **Chamber Music America/Doris Duke New Jazz Works** commission, follows Jentsch's previous highly-acclaimed large ensemble works including *Miami Suite*, *Brooklyn Suite*, and *Cycles Suite*. The new CD is a live recording of the *Topics* premiere, presented on December 2, 2016 at ShapeShifter Lab in Jentsch's hometown of Brooklyn. Combining the immediacy and excitement of in-the-moment performance with Jentsch's masterful musical vision, the recording features Jentsch Group No Net's roster of extraordinary musicians: flutist **Michel Gentile**, clarinetist **Michael McGinnis**, saxophonist **Jason Rigby**, trumpeter **David Smith**, trombonist **Brian Drye**, pianist **Jacob Sacks**, bassist **Jim Whitney**, drummer **Eric Halvorson**, and conductor **JC Sanford**.

Jentsch's large group music generally invokes contemporary improvisation with an eclectic mix of influences ranging from jazz to rock and world to classical, always striving for a careful balance between lyricism and dissonance, and a deliberate combination of complexity and simplicity. "1491," the CD's first track, brings us into Jentsch's vision with the ensemble producing airy, gently percussive bell and bird-like sounds that capture a Caribbean beach at the dawn of European entry. As the piece develops with a

walking bass ostinato, interweaving horn lines, and plaintive, wandering flute, the sense of change to come is unmistakable. “Manifest Destiny” explores ideas about America’s spread across North America with a harmonically rich expansiveness that gives the soloists plenty of room to stretch out and explore. An animated full band statement announces “Lincoln-Douglas Debates,” which features raucous, spirited interplay between trumpet and trombone—the clear winner is the listener. “Tempest-Tost,” which takes its title from an inscription on the Statue of Liberty, captures the weariness, hope, and awe of the huddled, yearning masses making their way through Ellis Island. It also offers poignant connections to the present day, drawing inspiration from Jentsch’s sympathy for the plight of refugees and his gratitude for his own citizenship status. “Suburban Diaspora” delves into the idea that a shared cultural heritage exists among American middle class Baby Boomers who were raised in the burbs then migrated to urban and rural areas. With its tight cluster chords, fascinating harmonies, searching solos, and staggered entrances, the gripping “Dominos” evokes the dread and uncertainty of the Cold War and McCarthyism. The suite closes with “Meeting at Surratt’s,” an homage to Mary Surratt, the first woman executed by the United States government after Abraham Lincoln’s assassins plotted their crime at her boarding house. From the opening march cadence of the snare drum to the powerful anthem-like build that follows, the piece is a fitting conclusion to a superior jazz suite. The band is in top form throughout, with notable solos from the horns, flute, piano, and bass. Jentsch’s exemplary guitar playing presides over it all, with stunning effects, muscular lines, and consummate musicality.

*Topics in American History* by Christopher Jentsch and Jentsch Group No Net has been made possible with support from Chamber Music America’s 2015 New Jazz Works Program funded through the generosity of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

**Chris Jentsch** is a Brooklyn-based composer, bandleader, and guitarist working primarily in jazz and contemporary improvisational forms. Based in NYC since 1999, his main ensemble is Jentsch Group in its trio, quartet, nonet, or large configuration. As a composer he has been the recipient of grants, commissions, or fellowships from the Maelstrom Percussion Ensemble, the Penfield Commission Project, American Composers Forum, the Composers Assistance Program of the American Music Center, New Music USA, Meet the Composer, New York State Council on the Arts, Ucross Foundation, the Commission Project, the New Music Collective, the Donald Knutson Memorial Faculty Development Fund, and Chamber Music America/Doris Duke New Jazz Works. As a bandleader and sideman Jentsch has worked with such diverse musical personalities as George Russell, John Cage, Maria Schneider, and Chris Wood. He appears as a guitarist on the CD *John Cage, Volume 11*. He is also featured in Scott Yanow’s book *The Great Jazz Guitarists*. All About Jazz says, “Jentsch is more than just a seasoned musician; he’s a composer who can convey his ideas on a grand scale.” Of *Brooklyn Suite*, DownBeat said that Jentsch “created a contrasted and kaleidoscopic patchwork with marvelous melodies, splendid voicings, and a skillful use of dynamics.” Jentsch has released five CDs as a leader: *Media Event* (1998); *Miami Suite* (1999); *Brooklyn Suite* (2007); and *Cycles Suite* (2009). *Fractured Pop*, a CD/DVD production featuring Jentsch’s jazz quartet was released in 2017. Jentsch attended the Berklee College of Music and has liberal arts and jazz guitar degrees from Gettysburg College, the New England Conservatory, and the Eastman School of Music. He earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Miami in 1999 and is published by the University of Northern Colorado Press, Advance Music, and Fleur de Son Records.

<http://www.chrisjentsch.com/>

# # #