

# NDR BIGBAND & KINAN AZMEH

## FLOW

**CONDUCTOR/ARRANGER** Wolf Kerschek

**CLARINET SOLOIST** Kinan Azmeh

**TRUMPETS** Thorsten Benkenstein, Ingolf Burkhardt, Claus Stötter, Percy Pursglove

**ALTO SAXOPHONES** Fiete Felsch, Gabriel Coburger

**TENOR SAXOPHONES** Julius Gawlik, Frank Delle

**BARITONE SAXOPHONE** Luigi Grasso

**TROMBONES** Dan Gottshall, Klaus Heidenreich, Stefan Lottermann

**BASS TROMBONE/TUBA** Ingo Lahme

**GUITAR** Sandra Hempel

**DOUBLE BASS** Petros Klampanis

**PIANO** Florian Weber

**DRUMS** Bodek Janke

Zellerbach Theatre

Friday, May 10 @ 8 PM

There will be an intermission.

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### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**The NDR Bigband** has existed as a jazz orchestra for more than 40 years. Created from the roots of an ensemble purely for radio, it has developed since the 1970s into a band which not only has an extensive jazz repertoire, but also sets its own trends, extends genre boundaries, performs with world stars and performs in concerts in all corners of North Germany.

The NDR Bigband thrives on its strong personalities, all with distinctive biographies, strengths, likes and dislikes. Each individual musician is a master of their respective field, and no two are the same. But there is one thing on which they all agree: what counts is the sound, the groove, the melody – the music. For them, the band burns with body and soul, and that can be felt whenever it is on stage.

As a public radio ensemble, the work of the NDR Bigband moves between various priorities: it is important, on the one hand, to nurture the musical legacy from 100 years of jazz history and, on the other hand, to keep its finger on the pulse as far as musical developments are concerned. Regardless of whether concentrated wind power or gentle sounds are in demand, complex Latin-American rhythms or stamping beats, there is hardly a style or crossover interface, which the band has not already explored and made its own – quite apart from the programs that are composed specifically for the band time and time again.

Since the autumn of 2016, Norwegian saxophonist, composer and band leader Geir Lysne has been the band's principal conductor. He stands for an unequivocal drive for further musical development, the energy to promote this with the highest standards and the ability to give the musicians, with his friendly and composed manner, the necessary space to shape this path as a joint process. Geir Lysne follows Jörg Achim Keller, who continues to support the NDR Bigband as principal guest conductor.

Numerous invitations to festivals abroad and more than 60 record releases in recent years are a testament to the band's hard work. With an average of around 20 projects every year, its schedule is precise: on one day a rehearsal, on the next, recordings for a CD production, then a concert tour and on to the next program for fresh ears.

Anyone who makes music at this level knows how important it is to get the next generation enthusiastic about jazz at an early age and support them in their development. This is why, in addition to including family concerts as a fixed part of the repertoire, the NDR Bigband also develops its own programs for children. Direct interaction with young musicians is also important to the band, so it visits school big bands throughout North Germany every year to perform a joint concert as a guest. Furthermore, the NDR Bigband organizes youth competitions and works with the jazz department of the Hamburg School of Music and Theatre.

### **Kinan Azmeh**

Hailed by critics and audiences alike and winner of Opus Klassik award in 2019, clarinetist and composer Azmeh has gained international recognition for his distinctive voice across diverse musical genres.

Originally from Damascus, Syria, Azmeh brings his music to all corners of the world as a soloist, composer and improviser. Notable appearances include the Opera Bastille, Paris; Tchaikovsky Grand Hall, Moscow; Carnegie Hall and the UN General Assembly, New York; the Royal Albert Hall, London; Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires; Philharmonie, Berlin; the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C.; the Mozarteum, Salzburg, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie; and in his native Syria at the opening concert of the Damascus Opera House.

He has appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Dusseldorf Symphony, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, The Azerbaijan State Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia, Toronto Symphony, A Far Cry, The Knights Orchestra, Calgary philharmonic, Qatar Philharmonic and the Syrian Symphony Orchestra among others, and has shared the stage with such musical luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Daniel Barenboim, Marcel Khalife, John McLaughlin, Francois Rabbath, Aynur and Jivan Gasparian.

Azmeh's compositions include several works for solo, chamber and orchestral music, as well as music for film, live illustration and electronics. His recent works were commissioned by The New York Philharmonic, The Seattle Symphony, The Knights Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Elbphilharmonie, Apple Hill string quartet, Quatuor Voce, Brooklyn Rider, Cello Octet Amsterdam, Aizuri Quartet and Bob Wilson.

An advocate for new music, several concertos and chamber music works were dedicated to him by composers such as Kareem Roustom, Dia Succari, Dinuk Wijeratne, Zaid Jabri, Saad Haddad and Guss Janssen.

In addition to his own Arab-Jazz Quartet CityBand and his Hewart trio, he has also been playing with the Silkroad Ensemble since 2012, whose 2017 Grammy® Award-winning album, *Sing Me Home*, features Azmeh as a clarinetist and composer.

Azmeh is a graduate of New York's The Juilliard School as a student of Charles Neidich, and of both the Damascus High Institute of Music where he studied with Shukry Sahwki, Nicolay Viovanof and Anatoly Moratof, and Damascus University's School of Electrical Engineering. Azmeh earned his doctorate degree in music from the City University of New York in 2013

Azmeh's first opera, *Songs for Days to Come*, which is fully sung in Arabic, was premiered in Osnabruck, Germany in June 2022 to a great acclaim. He has recently been appointed to the National Council for the Arts on a nomination by President Joe Biden.