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4 RECOMMEND



Jazzdor Berlin 2019



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Kulturbrauerei, Kesselhaus
Jazzdor Berlin
Berlin
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Jazzdor Berlin is one of the few truly, consistently and enduring European minded and spirited jazz festival events around—an initiative taken by Phillip Ochem, the artistic leader of the Strasbourg festival Jazzdor, more than a decade ago.

Long Breath

Unlike other festivals that now and then guest one-time partnering spots the Jazzdor event at Berlin turned out to grow into a unique real long-term annual satellite festival of its own from the very beginning in 2006. And it looks as if a second satellite will be launched next year in cooperation with Budapest Music Center (BMC) in the Hungarian capitol. It will be the offshoot of a longer tight French-Hungarian cooperation including musicians of both countries.

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Eleven

This year's edition presented 11 configurations during four nights chosen and curated by the curating hand of artistic director Philippe Ochem. All concerts took place at the Kesselhaus venue of Berlin Kulturbrauerei in the Prenzlauer Berg borough: three duos/trio, six quartets, a double trio and a new version of the 17-piece Orchestre National de Jazz. 10 of the 11 acts, believe it or not, were premieres.

As a French festival in the German capital Jazzdor Berlin offered a rich mix. There was a Norwegian-German-French configuration (Sandtorv/Gropper/Risser/ Baumgärtner), a French-German configuration (Perraud/Schnabel/Weber/Florent), a combination of French with North-American-English migrants and Berlin related musicians: French pianist [Benoit Delbecq](#), Englishmen [Tom Arthurs](#) (trumpet), a former Berlin resident now teaching in Bern, newest Berliner, drummer [Jim Black](#), and Canadian Berlin residents [Miles Perkins](#) (bass). These were completed by four French constellations: the duo [CLAUDIA SOULAI/Benoit Delbecq](#), the trio of [Naissam Jalal](#) with [Claude Tchamitchian](#) and [Leonardo Montana](#), the Trio En Corps and the [Jean-Marc Foltz](#) Quartet. Three eminent and ubiquitous jokers 'an' through this program: French pianist Benoit Delbecq, French drummer [Edward Perraud](#) and pianist [Eve Risser](#), all three from different generations. Last but not least two young configurations of this year's Jazz Migration selection were presented, the quartets House of Echo and No Tongues. The Jazz Migration program offers emerging creative jazz musicians opportunities to build their careers, develop their skills and get their music out into the world (see [my article here](#)).

Bookended

This edition provided a remarkably distinguished and memorable musical experience at the beginning as well as at the end -both nights formed a strong bookend this year. In between it offered a 'weltes Feld' (wide range) of diversity in terms of backgrounds, temperaments, temperatures, volumes, small and big sounds. I will proceed here from the concerts of these two bookending nights to the concerts of the two nights in between.

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The three musicians of Quest of the Invisible, flautist/vocalist Naissam Jalal, bassist Claude Tchamitchian and pianist Leonardo Montana led the audience in a magical flight into the mysterious whispers and secret fires of the night, roaming the vastness and depths of its shimmering darkness. While this beginning had a mysterious, deepening contemplative character, at the end the group No Tongues wandered along musical echoes of pagan shamanism vocal conjurations, to tap into and merge with ancient everyday voodoo practices. Both groups operated on a deep musical level with a masterful timing and provided their strong expressive musical techniques with a speaking context and a strong significance and impact. Musical expression in both cases stood for something strongly speaking to listeners' imagination and emotion. Especially No Tongues from this year's selection of French Migration program opened a completely new door of highly original expression. Both concerts were examples of a new quality in merging heterogeneous cultural sources and traces, in the case of Quest of the Invisible Syrian, Armenian and Brazilian backgrounds, in the case of No Tongues a diversity of ancient sources.

Not only trio Quest of the Invisible, but also trio En Corps comprising pianist Eve Risser, bassist [Benjamin Duboc](#) and drummer Edward Perraud, that played the last night, reached an outstanding level of musical intensity. Not operating in an indicative narrative frame, a gradually arising wrapping sound body emerged inducing increasing confluence and emanating strong emotive vibrations. En Corps played in remarkable deep immersion, made great use of the big space of Kesselhaus and thereby transcended its usual reach. En Corps played in the finishing night sandwiched between the 17-piece Orchestre National de Jazz (ONJ) and quartet No Tongues.

Due to a new approach OJN is now no longer an ensemble with a stable line-up for a three-year term. Each project can be worked out with its own line-up that also may contain non-French musicians from outside France. ONJ consequently has become an internationally staffed national ensemble (a normal occurrence in the classical field) especially for this [Ornette Coleman](#) program under direction of guitarist [Frédéric Maurin](#), named "Dancing In Your Head(s)"—La Galaxie Ornette." From 'outside' three musicians have been added to the ensemble: Susana Santos Silva, a young Portuguese trumpeter residing in Sweden, [Anna-Lena Schnabel](#), a young saxophonist/flautist from Germany and famous old hand saxophonist [Tim Berne](#) from New York. In how far is the music of Ornette suitable for reducible to ordinary BigBand treatment and rendition? The orchestra had a thick messy sound, which increased the worry. After a short period of getting into the game, it all improved considerably, got looser, edgier and more and more Ornettish with remarkable fiery soloing spots, especially that of [Susana Santos Silva](#). I am looking forward to the next programs when the process has to be run through again.

