

SHORT INFO



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Trickster Orchestra unites soloists in a collective of transcultural avant-garde music. Under the artistic direction of Cymin Samawatie and Ketan Bhatti, the Berlin-based orchestra incorporates traditional instruments from Europe, Western, Central-, and East Asia as well as younger instruments such as electronics into a shared contemporary musical language.



Trickster ORCHESTRA

In mythological, folkloric, and religious literatures all over the globe, tricksters are characters exhibiting a great degree of intellect and secret knowledge, which they use to disobey conventional rules and disturb the godly universal order. They are anomalous cultural heroes enabling revolutionary social change – neither good nor evil, neither smart nor foolish. As shape-shifters, they reveal the ambiguity of life and the meaning of imitation and metamorphoses for cultural innovation.

Building on this figure, Trickster Orchestra's musical directors Cymin Samawatie and Ketan Bhatti design new composition methods based on improvisation, translation, and experimental concepts such as mimesis and montage. The ensemble does not just paste different traditions together, but has defined a way to have musicians of different backgrounds discover a common contemporary language. Among the collective, which performs in varying lineup and size, are ca. 40 outstanding musicians and vocalists from genres such as electronic and new music, classical music traditions from all over the globe, jazz, weird pop, and free improvisation.

Trickster Orchestra is a new orchestral concept understanding music traditions as toolboxes for ideas triggering musical innovation. Based in the conviction that present-day culture is post-exotic, Trickster Orchestra envisions music that transcends the traditional boundaries of genres and global cultures, which have spread beyond geographic, "ethnic," and temporal orders. It is dedicated to radical contemporaneity, in which ideas, concepts, and forms of different origins are synthesized to open up completely new musical experiences and textures for both musicians and audiences.

Trickster Orchestra was founded in 2013 by Cymin Samawatie and Ketan Bhatti under the former name of Divan der Kontinente. The orchestra performed in Europe and Western Asia, e.g. at Jazzfest Berlin, Rudolstadt Festival, Silk Road Festival Baku, and at Modara Festival for Contemporary Music. Besides playing concerts, it creates new conceptual formats for trans-medial collaborations, e.g. in working with contemporary dance and poetry. In 2018, the orchestra is supported by the Berlin Senate Department of Culture and Europe.

www.tricksterorchestra.de



Collective (2013 – 2019)

Sveta Kundish vocals | Cymin Samawatie vocals | Rabih Lahoud vocals | Defne Şahin vocals | Bassem Alkhouri vocals, kanun | Golnar Shahyar vocals | Marlene Ito violin | Héloïse Lefèbvre, violin | Biliانا Voutchkova violin | Grégoire Simon viola | Martin Stegner viola | Sarah Rilling, viola | Martin von der Nahmer viola | Knut Weber cello | Uygur Vural, cello | Anna Carewe cello | Anil Eraslan cello | Ralf Schwarz double bass | Demetrios Karamintzas oboe | Dominik Wollenweber oboe | Wu Wei sheng | Milian Vogel bass clarinet, electronics | Markus Ehrlich, bass clarinet | Vladiswar Nadishana flutes, percussion (Kavalla, Duduk, Ney, Hulusi) | Mona Matbou-Riahi clarinet | Lars Zander bass clarinet, electronics | Tilmann Dehnhard bass flutes, electronics | Mohamad Fityan ney, kawala | Susanne Fröhlich recorders, bass flute | Esra Berkman kanun | Naoko Kikuchi koto | Nevzat Akpınar baglama | Alexander Lipan oud | Larry Porter rubab | Taiko Saito marimbaphone, vibraphone | Joss Turnbull tombak, percussion, electronics | Mari Sawada violin | Boram Lie cello | Christian Weidner saxophone, duduk | Hilary Jeffery trombone | Florian Juncker, trombone | Liz Allbee trumpet | Matthias Kurth oud, guitar | Mahan Mirarab oud, guitars | Sabrina Ma marimbaphone, vibraphone | Niko Meinhold piano, guzheng | Korhan Erel computer, controllers, electronics | Simon Stockhausen, electronics | Ignaz Schick, turntables, electronics | Matthias Engler, percussion | Tobias Backhaus, drums | Ketan Bhatti drums, electronics

Cymin Samawatie & Ketan Bhatti (Artistic Directors, Composers)

Reviews (translated from German)

« Inspirational power, heart-touching musicality, sparking blend: a prototype of today's art music. » Westdeutsche Zeitung (Christian Oscar Gazsi Laki), June 2019.

« One of the most exciting contemporary orchestras in Europe. » VAN Outernational (Philipp Rhensius), March 2019.

« This international orchestra masters the creative and shapeshifting as no other ensemble. Nothing sounds interchangeable at will, everything is rather rooted in the profound musical knowledge of all actors. » Das Orchester (Frauke Adrians), February 2019.

« Each musician knows their instrument's intricacies well enough to lovingly push its boundaries, liberating it to new notes and rhythms. The musician becomes the teacher of the instrument, and not the other way around. The musicians allow the instruments not to



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pretend to return to what we imagine they may have been, but to become new articulations of themselves. » WendyMKS Reviews (Wendy M.K. Shaw), April 2018.

« This is transcultural music beyond the comfort zone. You often hear about openness to risk as an absolute term for current jazz music. Here, it is opening windows for free improvisation in new orchestral pieces. » Süddeutsche Zeitung (Christian Broecking), November 2015.

« The concert revealed a compositional idea close to cantata. Instrumental parts alternated with songs. All of this was pulled together by repetition patterns reminding of isorhythmic motets, in which melody and rhythm get entangled. In the next moment, you heard tutti passages, which sounded like a music-caterpillar weltering through the hall as a sound organism. This is music of one world and not world music. » Jazzeitung (Martin Hufner), November 2015.

« In the refugee crisis, we spoke too little about jazz so far. This orchestra almost seems like a comment on current refugee migration in Germany. A beautiful example of the poetic power of integration that this orchestra foregrounds is the piece "Prayers." Vocal lines with religious texts in Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian are the core of the song. They are bound together by contrapuntal compositional techniques in the style of a fugue, which acts as the fourth language involved: the one, which the church musician Johann Sebastian Bach spoke. With this orchestra, Cymin Samawatie shows how intercultural dialogue and harmonic communality can work despite differences. Every member of the orchestra has to be prepared to leave the comfort zone of their musical backgrounds. Clichés are to be avoided. The connecting approach of jazz: It could be a path out of the refugee crisis. » Die Welt (Josef Engels), November 2015.

« Divan of the Continents is a very honest attempt to do something with integrity. It does not just paste different things together to make a tourist brochure of music. It has defined a way to have musicians of different backgrounds discover a common language with jazz at its heart. » Richard Williams (The Guardian/ Jazzfest Berlin), November 2015.

« Rarely in such a framework, one hears music that has so little to do with clichés. Fabulous voices and timeless sounds. The musicians get involved with each other in outstanding ways. » RBB Kulturradio, January 2014.

« A Babylonian mix of languages merges into legible vocals, improvisations become an intercultural sound experience. Transforming distance into proximity is what Cymin Samawatie's global orchestra does. » Der Tagesspiegel (Stella Marie Hombach), August 2013.

