



jazzahead! 2020: The spotlight in Bremen is on Canada

Global stars will shine and exciting new talents will emerge

January 23, 2020. Every year in April, Bremen becomes a jazz metropolis, with the international jazz scene convening for the jazzahead! trade fair at MESSE BREMEN. This year, 2020, marks a double anniversary: it is the fifteenth anniversary of the world's largest gathering of the jazz industry, while the accompanying festival – with its partner country programme and a CLUBNIGHT spread across a host of different venues in Bremen – has its tenth edition.

The trade fair takes place from Thursday 23 April to Sunday 26 April. The festival starts earlier, on Friday 17 April.

“jazzahead! has come on by leaps and bounds since it started,” says Sybille Kornitschky who runs jazzahead! for MESSE BREMEN. “It is now not just a major player in the jazz business, it has also proved that it can serve as a launchpad for artist’s careers. And it has become a magnet for audiences too. We were determined to do something special this year to mark our double anniversary – which is why we are so pleased that Canada is our partner country. For the first time, a jazz nation from across the ocean is in the limelight. Visitors will see jazz from Canada in all its diversity. And there is another remarkable feature too: a very substantial proportion of female artists and bandleaders.”

The festival starts with a major highlight. The opening evening at Theater Bremen presents a double bill: singer-songwriter Laila Biali, recent winner of a Juno Award, will perform the first half. After the interval, Tanya Tagaq, who is one of the most high-profile representatives of the Inuit, will perform. Tagaq has developed her own completely individual and successful way of bringing the traditional throat-singing of this Canadian indigenous people closer to jazz.

In the two weeks following the opening of the culture festival, further aspects of Canadian culture can be enjoyed, in addition to music. For example, Tanya Tagaq will do a reading from her first novel “Split Tooth“ (2018). The Museum Weserburg is exhibiting works by the artist Kapwani Kiwanga. Her sculptures of black marble and lamps, for example, are a reference to the New York “lantern law“ of 1713, according to which slaves were only allowed to be out at night-time either if they carried a lantern or were chaperoned.

On the opening night of the trade fair, eight Canadian groups – some established, others up-and-coming – will perform for an audience consisting of industry people such as bookers, festival directors and programmers, representatives of labels and the public at the Canadian Night. The programme includes a range of very different artists: trombonist Audrey Ochoa and her band, the quartet of classically trained guitarist Itamar Erez and a joint project from pianist Marianne Trudel and drummer John Hollenbeck, “Dédé Java Espiritu“.



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Jazzahead! also facilitates “bilateral speed meetings“, where business proposals can be advanced. These meetings bring together industry specialists capable of opening doors for Canadian artists in Germany, or for German artists in Canada.

Rufus Wainwright, an established and award-winning artist will be giving the jazzahead! gala concert on the Friday evening of the trade fair at the Glocke concert hall in Bremen’s city centre. This concert will mark the German premiere of the material from his new album, which is currently in the process of being released worldwide.

For the Saturday, the jazzahead! CLUBNIGHT will bring jazz to some 30 venues in Bremen. Canadian juries have selected numerous other bands to perform at this event. For example, there will be performances by the Josh Zubot String Quintet with the brothers Josh and Jesse Zubot and also CODE Quartet led by multi-award winning saxophonist and composer Christine Jensen, winner of two Canadian Juno Awards. Also there is the pianist and composer John Kameel Farah, who mixes for instance elements from Baroque music, Middle Eastern music and contemporary music with improvisation and electronics.

Last year there were 3,408 registered participants from 64 nations attending the jazzahead! trade fair. The combined audience for the trade fair and the 100 weekend concerts was around 18,000 people.

About jazzahead!

jazzahead!, launched in 2006, is the largest jazz trade fair in the world. And whereas it has been growing in size every year, this meeting place for the worldwide jazz industry is also the “family gathering” for jazz; it has never lost its original spirit of fellowship and fun. The 40 showcase concerts during the trade fair, and the jazzahead! Cultural Festival are also aimed at the wider public. Since 2011, this festival, co-created with some 60 cooperation partners, presents the cultural scene of a partner country – there is a different one every year – plus bands from all over the world. These bands perform at the CLUBNIGHT in 30 venues in Bremen. Since 2015, jazzahead! has been funded by the Federal Government’s Commissioner for Culture and the Media. In 2019, jazzahead! was awarded European Culture Brand of the Year.

Further information for editors:

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