

Babylon ORCHESTRA

Babylon ORCHESTRA, founded in 2016, is a Berlin-based urban fusion ensemble that combines European and Middle Eastern music with the sound of a big band and contemporary orchestra.

Our aim is to promote intercultural artistic cooperation and thus to give different musical traditions and cultures a place in a new shared and unique sound world of the present. We bring people with their stories, songs, instruments, rhythms in the hope of providing creative impulses for new musical works. By combining and juxtaposing classical and traditional instruments, such as oud and guitar, ney and flute, kamanche and violin, or other exciting combinations, we also aim to foster a deeper understanding of non-European cultures. The orchestra also sees itself as a platform for exceptional musicians who do not want to squeeze their art into classical or popular musical forms and instead want to find an expression for the specificity of their countries of origin.

Together with our cooperative partner, the Conservatory of Turkish Music in Berlin (BTMK), several artistic and educational projects have been realized since 2017, which have been presented at numerous concerts in Berlin and beyond its borders. The orchestra has performed in many renowned halls throughout Germany, such as the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Elbphilharmonie, the Komische Oper Berlin, HAU1 (Hebbel am Ufer) or the Volksbühne, among others, and has performed with well-known artists such as Titus Engel, Grandbrothers, the Zafraan Ensemble, MAias Alyamani and the Blue Man Group.

In 2018, thanks to a generous grant from the Capital Cultural Fund, Babylon ORCHESTRA's concert series "Between the Euphrates and Elbe. New songs between the rivers". has had the opportunity to invite a special selection of high-quality artists from around the world and has commissioned several composers and writers who have been presented to a wide audience at various venues in Berlin in the form of compositions, readings, songs and scenic performances. Also in 2018, a special project with four Arab composers was sponsored by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) In June 2019, the starting shot was fired for our current series "Babylon ORCHESTRA unVEI-Led", in which we will play seven concerts at both established and alternative venues in Berlin until the beginning of 2021, thanks to the support of the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, inviting several young guest musicians and media artists to Berlin. With Syrian film director Sina Salimi and New Zealand opera director Neil Barry Moss, the online opera "Our Strangers" was created in 2021, based on "The Stranger" by Camus and funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

The collaborations of the past years have resulted in a new repertoire that also shapes our debut album "Babylon ORCHESTRA", which has been released in summer 2020.

Featuring on the album, among others, are exceptional soloists such as Osama Abdulrasol (Qanoon), Layale Chaker (violin), Mohannad Nasser (Oud), the Syrian singer Rebal Alkhodari and the Kurdish-Persian singer Hani Mojtahedy. The debut album was

considered the best record release in the world music section on the best of list by the German Record Critics' Association in November 2020.

In 2021, the ensemble performed with the Rundfunksinfonieorchester Berlin, the Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra, at the Office of the German Federal President, the Konzerthaus Berlin and the ODEON Göppingen, among others. In 2022, the ensemble made its debut in Switzerland with the Sinfonieorchester Biel Solothurn under Yannis Pouspourikas with *Echoes of Mediterranean*, an evening dedicated to the many facets of the Mediterranean and performed at Musikfest Bremen and Musikfestspiele Saar. In 2023, Babylon ORCHESTRA returns to Switzerland twice: to the Alhambra in Geneva with soloist Michal Elia Kamal and to the Verbier Festival with Merve Akyildiz. The ensemble will also perform for the first time with clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and pianist Sanaz Sotoudeh in Berlin and Dubai. Further engagements in 2023 will take the band to the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele and the Kunstfestspiele Herrenhausen and the first EP will be released in June in Berlin.