

# CLAZZ – New sonic galaxies with orchestral jazz

In his large-scale project CLAZZ, Luca Sisera has made an old dream come true: to use an orchestra's immense wealth of timbre and tonal power in combination with an agile jazz quintet. The composition process was triggered by the pandemic: "As time passed, I was getting edgy and I needed to do something creative," says Sisera. "For years, I had been considering bringing together classical music and jazz in my own distinctive way, so I decided it was time to grab the idea by the horns. Without corona, this work wouldn't exist."

For the orchestral part, he brought in the orchestra Kammerphilharmonie Graubünden, which comprises 41 musicians, along with conductor Gaudens Bieri, who studied at the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theatre in Leipzig. Sisera's quintet ROOFER served as the jazz band. During the composition work, conductor Mariano Chiacchiarini spent several months assisting him as musical editor. The fundamental and unique factor comes from Sisera himself though: his great flair for polyphony, sound culture and complexity, which he has already conveyed in various formations.

The composition process took almost two years. The work is over 70 minutes long and comprises five movements. A number of compositions by Sisera's jazz quintet ROOFER provided source material, which he used as a springboard for orchestral development. By the end of the process, only a fraction of this material remained. CLAZZ is not a quasi-orchestrated version of ROOFER music, but a stand-alone work, into which Sisera has poured his heart and soul. He even went so far as to relinquish his role as double bass player for the recording, in order to concentrate on composition and implementation as much as possible.

To achieve the desired sound, Sisera also changed the line-up of his ROOFER quintet. Percussionist Dario Sisera was brought in, so as to enable the orchestra to reliably navigate through the often rhythmically complex material. On the other hand, the band's two-member wind section, comprising saxophone and trombone, was downsized to just one wind voice, which is now impressively provided by German alto saxophonist Luise Volkmann. Viennese bassist Andreas Waelti, with his powerful playing style, takes over the bass part (for Luca Sisera). The two regular members Yves Theiler (piano) and Michael Stulz (drums) round off the band with their usual instrumental and interactive excellence.

As an internationally sought-after double bass player and composer, Luca Sisera is one of the defining figures on the contemporary Swiss jazz scene. He is a whirlwind, a thinker and a doer. With his artistry on the strings, his love of classical music, his roots in advanced jazz, and his strengths in both composition and free improvisation, he was virtually predestined to draw on his influences and perspectives for the purpose of realising a symphonic work.

In the encounter between classical music and jazz, which has been reformulated time and time again over decades, CLAZZ is a special sonic entity: Sisera knows how to integrate the jazz band into the orchestral sound, while remaining rhythmically complex and harmonically melodic in a manner that is as sophisticated as it is imaginative. In CLAZZ, as saxophonist and composer Daniel Schnyder writes in his insightful liner notes, Luca Sisera has created a "powerful musical rocket" with which he "sets off for new sonic galaxies".