



Press Release - 2020, October 1st

## **Strengthening the independent music scene: 2nd generation of jazz excellence grant 'NICA artist development' to start in autumn 2020**

Starting in October 2020, another six musicians will benefit from the funding programme 'NICA artist development' at the European Centre for Jazz and Contemporary Music Stadtgarten Köln

As part of their initiative to strengthen the arts, a special funding programme created by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the state North Rhine-Westphalia aims to support talented musicians in North Rhine-Westphalia to enhance their individual artistic profile and professionalism. This excellence programme is coordinated by Stadtgarten Köln where it constitutes one of the pillars of the European Centre for Jazz and Contemporary Music.

“With the 'NICA artist development' programme, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia intends to promote the development of excellence in the field of free music and thus strengthen the music scene of the state as a whole. Especially at the beginning of their musical career it is essential for young musicians to receive well-structured and long-term support. This is where the programme comes in with professional training as well as networking and performance opportunities. Now the second generation of talented musicians is starting, and I wish them a lot of success,” said the Minister of Culture and Science Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen.

After being nominated by selected event organizers and music journalists from North Rhine-Westphalia, a professional jury selected the following NRW-based six musicians who will start as the second generation within the 'NICA artist development' grant programme this autumn:

- Heidi Bayer (trumpet, \*Lichtenfels)
- Leif Berger (percussion, \*Muenster)
- Sonae (Producer/DJ, \*Cologne)
- Laura Totenhagen (vocals, \*Bergisch-Gladbach)
- Janning Trumann (trombone, \*Uelzen)
- Philip Zoubek (piano, \*Tulln, Austria)

A special feature of the 'NICA artist development' programme is the long-term funding period of up to three years. Each year a new group of musicians selected by an expert jury will benefit from the grant programme. By means of residencies, masterclasses and concert opportunities, the participants can develop their artistic skills within the framework of the funding. International projects are intended to promote networking, for example in the European music scene. Coaching and workshops provide support regarding entrepreneurial topics such as marketing, project management and production. Furthermore, the musicians can gain professional stage experience during concerts at the Stadtgarten Köln or at venues of other cooperation partners.

The jury members are the music journalist Stefan Hentz, the WDR 3 Open Sounds editor Markus Heuger, the WDR jazz editor Tinka Koch, Prof. Anette von Eichel from the Cologne University of Music and Dance, the Artistic Director of the Stadtgarten Köln as well as the Monheim Triennale Reiner Michalke and the musician Ulla Oster. The jury is chaired by Thomas Baerens, Head of the Music Department of the Ministry of Culture and Science.

The state's programme, which was originally launched as a funding programme for jazz excellence, has been renamed 'NICA artist development' in honour of Pannonica de Koenigswarter, a promoter of modern jazz known as 'Nica'. Nica distinguished herself as an important patron of jazz musicians in New York in the 1950s and 1960s with her generous support in the form of money, accommodation, work, and advice.

Information and press material about the NICA artists and the programme itself can be found on the website [www.nica-artistdevelopment.de](http://www.nica-artistdevelopment.de).

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