



# Proms at Sage Gateshead

FRIDAY 21 JULY • 10.00pm–c11.45pm

Hope Springs

Sister Green

Hanji!

Sufi Stomp

Surrender to the Sea

Theme of the Local Hero\*

Aurora

**Arun Ghosh** *clarinet*

**Faye MacCalman** *tenor saxophone*

**Jamil Sheriff** *piano*

**John Pope** *bass guitar*

**Dave Walsh** *drums*

*All tracks are first performances at the Proms*

*\*by Mark Knopfler; all other tracks by Arun Ghosh*

**INTERVAL: 15 minutes**

Lahan al-Mansour

La saboteuse

Jamil Jamal

A Shoal of Souls

**Yazz Ahmed** *trumpet*

**Ralph Wyld** *vibraphone*

**David Manington** *double bass*

**Martin France** *drums*

*All tracks are first performances at the Proms*

## Jazz by Other Means

‘We’re going to raise the roof then float away down the river to the sea,’ says Arun Ghosh, the award-winning clarinetist, composer and bandleader who performs in tonight’s jazz-fuelled double bill with acclaimed British-Bahraini trumpeter Yazz Ahmed. ‘I’m buzzing to be debuting at the BBC Proms, especially the Proms in the North.’ He flashes a smile. ‘All the members of my quintet’ – that’s Jamil Sheriff on piano, Dave Walsh on drums, Faye MacCalman on tenor sax and John Pope on electric bass – ‘have their origins in the North of England, and this will definitely be shining through in the vibe we create onstage.’

Bolton-born, Manchester-matured, longtime London-based, Ghosh has developed his open-ear sound over five wildly diverse albums and live shows marked by charismatic, on-the-fly invention. Informed by everything from Bengali folk tunes and South Asian ragas (melodic frameworks) and talas (rhythmic patterns) to stomping punk, indie grooves and the anything-goes possibilities of jazz, Ghosh is an indo jazz innovator who – right from his 2008 debut *Northern Namaste* – has never lost sight of his roots.

Tonight’s set will showcase tracks from his lauded 2022 album *Secluded in Light*, among them ‘Sister Green’ (‘a Bengali/English folk song in praise of nature’), ‘Surrender to the Sea’ (‘about yearning to find peace in that vast openness’) and ‘Hope Springs’ (‘which brings the [punk] vibe of the Stooges, that raw joy that comes through wild and whirling music’). There’ll also be tracks from previous recordings, a couple of solo numbers and a local Northern favourite. Which is? ‘That’s a secret for now,’ says Ghosh.

Having grown up in Bahrain, the daughter of a Bahraini father and English mother, Yazz Ahmed’s jazz fusion nods to her background: from the silvery Arabic modes of the Middle East to the kaleidoscopic patterns of 1970s psychedelia, and from traditional to avant-garde jazz. Electronics

shimmer across her landmark 2017 sophomore album *La saboteuse* and 2019’s *Polyhymnia*, a work named for the ancient Greek Muse of sacred poetry, music and dance and featuring tracks celebrating remarkable women such as Saudi film-maker Haifaa al-Mansour, to whom tonight’s opening number is dedicated.

This is music that tells stories, goes on journeys, allows supporting musicians full creative rein. ‘I always leave my band members space to express their feelings,’ says the Bedfordshire-based Ahmed of vibraphonist Ralph Wyld, bass player David Manington and drummer Martin France. ‘Sometimes things go off on a tangent but that’s the fun and excitement of jazz.’

Praised for her collaborations with the likes of Radiohead, art-rockers These New Puritans and, most recently, Portland-based alt-electronic whiz Kennebec, Ahmed is an adventuress for whom music is a cultural bridge as well as a life force. The feeling is there, palpably, on ‘La saboteuse’, a track that spears her inner critic, and ‘Jamil Jamal’, both of which feature tonight alongside the fabulously lush 2019 single ‘A Shoal of Souls’, with its intertwining textures and glorious cross-genre connections.

Ahmed and Ghosh have featured on numerous double bills in the past: ‘Our connection is that we fuse jazz with the music of our different heritages,’ says Ahmed. ‘I think audiences will love the way that our bands complement each other.’ Their combined presence at the Proms, they say, represents something extra special. ‘The fact that musicians who create the sort of fusions that Arun and I do are being included at the BBC Proms is very progressive,’ says Ahmed. ‘Music should be inclusive. This is a giant step in the right direction.’

*Introduction © Jane Cornwell*

Jane Cornwell is an Australian-born, London-based writer on arts and music, and the recipient of the Jazz Media Award at the Parliamentary Jazz Awards 2022.

## Yazz Ahmed *trumpet*

PROMS DEBUT ARTIST

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Yazz Ahmed is a British-Bahraini trumpet and flugelhorn player. Through her music she seeks to blur the lines between jazz and electronic sound design, bringing together the sounds of her mixed heritage in what has been described as 'psychedelic Arabic jazz'.

Over the past decade she has led her ensembles in performances across the UK and Europe, as well as in Algeria, Bahrain, Beirut, Canada, Kuwait, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and the USA. She has also performed at major festivals such as Love Supreme, Pori Jazz, WOMAD and New York's Winter Jazzfest. Various collaborations have seen her record and perform with artists including Natacha Atlas, Arturo O'Farrill, Obongjaya, Lee Scratch Perry, Radiohead, These New Puritans, Transglobal Underground and the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Her self-released 2011 debut album *Finding My Way Home* saw her first explorations of Arabic music, while her second, *La saboteuse* (2017), won Jazz Album of the Year in *The Wire* magazine and reached No. 18 in *Bandcamp's* Top 100 albums. Her 2019 album *Polyhymnia* evolved from a performance on International Women's Day in 2015 commissioned by Tomorrow's Warriors. The music takes the form of a suite written in celebration of courageous and inspiring women. It was voted Album of the Year at the 2020 Jazz FM Awards, where Ahmed also won UK Jazz Act of the Year.

Yazz Ahmed was accepted onto the London Symphony Orchestra's Soundhub Scheme for composers in 2016. She has since been commissioned by Blue Note Records, the EFG London Jazz Festival, Festival of New Trumpet Music, Ligeti Quartet, Open University and WOMAD. In December she curated an evening at London's Barbican Hall where she shared the stage with Lebanese oudist Rabih Abou-Khalil and Tunisian-American singer and producer Emel.

In 2020 Yazz Ahmed won the Ivor Novello Award for Innovation. She has been nominated for *DownBeat* magazine's Trumpet Artist of the Year and featured in the Rising Star Trumpet category in the 2020 *DownBeat* critics' poll.

## Arun Ghosh *clarinet*

PROMS DEBUT ARTIST

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Arun Ghosh is a British-Asian clarinetist, composer and bandleader. A charismatic and communicative performer and leading member of the British jazz scene, Ghosh and his band deliver a passionate sound driven by soaring melodies, hypnotic rhythms and transcendental textures.

His most recent album, *Secluded in Light*, was composed and recorded during the Covid-19 lockdown under the shadow of grief, and was released and toured in March last year. The tour represented an emotional return to live music for Ghosh, and the album is a celebration of life, emergence and togetherness.

Ghosh has twice been awarded Jazz Instrumentalist of the Year at the Parliamentary Jazz Awards. His musical style takes a multi-era, multi-genre approach in which numerous strands of jazz join forces with a myriad of musical influences from jungle to punk, blues to Bollywood and beyond.

Ghosh's open-eared aesthetic and musical philosophy, and his bringing together of South-Asian ragas and talas with jazz culture and instrumentation, have led him to be considered a renowned innovator of modern indo jazz.