

Michael Dreyer steps back from Artistic Direction of Morgenland Festival Osnabrück, Kinan Azmeh and Shabnam Parvaresh take over in 2025/2026

Osnabrück, 09.07.2024 Since 2005, the Morgenland Festival Osnabrück has shaped the reception of West Asian music worldwide.

Dedicated to the music created between the Levant and Northwest China, the festival has produced well over 200 production ranging from traditional music to large orchestral works. This wide spectrum of creative output includes both underground bands and avant-garde composers from that geographical part of the world. Some notable creations of the festival are Collaborations with the Munich Radio Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin, the NDR Bigband or the Renaissance music ensemble Capella de la Torre, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Staatsoper Unter den Linden Berlin, the Holland Festival and the Gulbenkian Foundation, the premiere of Bach's St. John Passion in Iran, guest performances by the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, Kinan Azmeh's "Songs for Days to Come" an opera fully sung in Arabic. All of these in addition to festival satellites in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Kazakhstan. This incredibly rich and diverse work have helped establish the festival on the international music scene and gave it an important presence online with more than 30 million views of its diverse digital content.

Artistic director and producer **Michael Dreyer** founded the festival in 2005, and since the beginning and long before the post-colonial debate, it was at the heart of its mission to present the music of West-Asia with the respect it deserves and to liberate this music from the vague label "world music"

Under Dreyer's direction, the festival was the catalyst for numerous international careers. Two of these personalities whose careers are closely linked to the festival will shape the program of the Morgenland Festival Osnabrück in the coming years:

Syrian clarinetist and composer **Kinan Azmeh** will curate the 2025 edition of the festival, before clarinetist and visual artist **Shabnam Parvaresh** takes over as artistic director for the years 2026 to 2028.

Azmeh, born and raised in Damascus, studied in Damascus and at the renowned Juilliard School in New York. He is a founding member of the Morgenland All Star Band. He was commissioned by the festival and Theater Osnabrück to compose the Arabic-language opera "Songs for Days to Come" and has performed with his trio Hewan as well as with the NDR Big Band, Giora Feidman and the Osnabrück Youth Choir. He has received commissions from the New York Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the Knights Orchestra, the Elbphilharmonie, the Brooklyn Rider Quartet and Robert Wilson.

Azmeh has performed in renowned concert halls around the world, including the Opéra Bastille in Paris, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, Carnegie Hall and the UN General Assembly in New York. He has shared the stage with musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma, Daniel Barenboim, John McLaughlin and many others.

The clarinetist, visual artist and curator Shabnam Parvaresh was born in Tehran, Iran. She studied fine arts in Tehran and then began her musical career after studying clarinet privately in the Tehran Symphony Orchestra. In 2013, she left Iran to study jazz clarinet at the Institute of Music at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences.

PRESS RELEASE



In 2020, Parvaresh founded the "Sheen Trio", with which she tours internationally. In addition to her work as a musician, she curates the concert series for improvised and experimental music "Klangfenster in der hase29".

Michael Dreyer says goodbye with a large-scale project. He has just commissioned a composition from the Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor: a double concerto for cello and the Persian Kamancheh, written for Yo-Yo Ma, Kayhan Kalhor and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra under the direction of Alan Gilbert. The work will be premiered on June 27, 2025 in Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, and the concert can be experienced in the OsnabrückHalle on June 29, 2025.

"The Morgenland Festival Osnabrück has always been something like two weeks of Utopia for me. I couldn't put it in better hands than those of Kinan Azmeh and Shabnam Parvaresh. They have helped shape the spirit of this festival and will bring in great new ideas, energy and networks," says Dreyer, who has also been the manager of the NDR Big Band since 2022 and will focus entirely on working with this ensemble.

This year's Morgenland Festival Osnabrück will take place from **2 to 17 August 2024**.

Tickets and detailed information about the programme are available at www.morgenland-festival.com, at the **Osnabrück Tourist Information**, at www.adticket.de, and at other **box offices**.

With kind support from: City of Osnabrück, Stiftung Niedersachsen, Niedersächsische Sparkassenstiftung, Stiftung der Sparkasse Osnabrück, Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur, NDR Musikförderung in Niedersachsen, Landschaftsverband Osnabrücker Land e.V., Sievert SE, Friedel und Gisela Bohnenkamp-Stiftung, Gesellschaft der Freunde Morgenland Festival Osnabrück e.V., Musikland Niedersachsen.