

SEBASTIAN GAHLER Pianist, Composer, Keyboardist

YOUTH

A high school exchange in the USA sparked Sebastian Gahler's (*1978) later musical career. At the age of 17, he spent two semesters in Wadena, Minnesota, where he took jazz piano lessons. Having received classical piano training in his hometown of Düsseldorf as a child, he was introduced to jazz for the first time in the US, gaining experience in big bands and other jazz ensembles.

EDUCATION

Back in Germany, Gahler decided to pursue a professional career as a musician. From 1999 to 2000, he studied jazz piano with Robert-Jan Vermeulen at the **Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Arnhem (Netherlands)**. He then completed a one-year program in sound and visual engineering at the **Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf**. In April 2000, he was awarded a **\$5,000 scholarship** from the Berklee Workshop in Germany for the renowned **Berklee College of Music in Boston**.

From 2001 to 2007, he studied jazz piano (artistic training & instrumental pedagogy) at the **Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln**, where his mentors included Hans Lüdemann, Hubert Nuss, and John Taylor. In 2007, he graduated with distinction as a diploma jazz pianist. Over the years, he attended numerous masterclasses, including those with Barry Harris, Julian Joseph, Adam Nussbaum, and Jacky Terrasson.

MUSICAL MILESTONES

In 2008, Gahler returned to the USA for two months, traveling through Minnesota, Florida, and New York. The impressions he gathered during this time later found their way into many of his compositions.

In the fall of 2008, he worked as a pianist and répétiteur for the children's theater production *Major Dux* at the Junges Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. In 2009, he adapted the material into a musical reading for children, which he performed together with Düsseldorf-based author Martin Baltscheit. The production was funded by the NRW Cultural Secretariat.

In 2011, Gahler was awarded the **Düsseldorf City Arts Award** in the Music category.

He has performed live with Stefanie Heinzmann, with whom he toured regularly, and for many years with Tom Gaebel. In 2018, he was part of the **The Voice of Germany national tour** as a keyboardist. He has performed in Italy, Poland, Portugal, Russia, the Netherlands, the USA, Bosnia, and many other countries.

PROJECTS

In 2006, Gahler founded his **contemporary piano trio** with Nico Brandenburg (bass) and Ralf Gessler (drums). The trio mainly performs original compositions and frequently collaborates with renowned guest soloists such as Wolfgang Engstfeld, Andy Hunter (WDR Big Band), Reiner Witzel, Inga Lühning, and Patricio Domingo.

His debut album, *Meditation*, was released in 2009 as part of the prestigious **Jazz thing Next Generation** (Double Moon) series. This was followed by *Trust* (2012, Edel:Content) and *Down the Street*

(2016, JazzSick Records), the latter in collaboration with saxophonist Wolfgang Engstfeld.

In 2013, he founded the **Düsseldorfer Jazz Ensemble (JE:D)**, bringing together some of Düsseldorf's most renowned jazz musicians. The ensemble has released two albums: *JE:D* (2016) and *From Town to Town* (2020), and has performed concerts in Germany, Poland, Italy, and Portugal.


As a key figure in the Düsseldorf jazz scene, Gahler curates several concert series and is a member of the **Music Advisory Board of the City of Düsseldorf** and the board of the Jazz-Schmiede Düsseldorf.


In 2022, he released the concept album ***Two Moons – Inspired by the Works of Haruki Murakami***, a quartet album featuring Denis Gäbel (sax), Matthias Akeo Nowak (bass), and Ralf Gessler (drums). The compositions are inspired by themes and characters from Haruki Murakami's novels, bringing them to life musically. With over **10 million streams** across all platforms, the album became an international success.


With his composition Kafka Tamura, Gahler won **1st place at the CJS Composition Competition** in Cologne in 2023. A state-funded NRW tour is planned for 2025 with support from the NRW Cultural Secretariat Gütersloh.

In 2024, Gahler founded his own label, **Jazz Kitchen Records**. That same year, he released his latest album, ***Electric Stories*** – a groove-based, high-energy jazz album with depth, underscoring his versatility as a musical storyteller. As a featured artist, Gahler brought in renowned New York trombonist Andy Hunter, who has toured with Snarky Puppy, Richard Bona, and the Mingus Big Band and is currently a permanent member of the WDR Big Band in Cologne.

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