

Ben Kraef is a German-Montenegrin saxophonist and composer based in Berlin. Ben graduated from the University of Music “Hanns Eisler”, Berlin. In 2007 he relocated to New York City on a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and obtained a Master of Arts from The City College of New York in 2009.

In the past years Ben has won international acclaim in form of several prizes and awards, among these most notably the Biberacher Jazzpreis (2006), the “Concours International de Jazz de Fribourg” (2007), the Yamaha Saxophone Contest (2007), and the Billie Stoller Scholarship to an outstanding scholar and musician from The City College of New York (2008).

Ben’s activities as a performer have included his membership in the renowned National German Youth Big Band (BuJazzO), where he was part of the concert line-up for a total of three years.

He has had the chance to perform throughout Europe, the Middle East, as well as southern Africa and Japan.

The list of internationally renowned musicians Ben has been performing and recording with includes Lalo Schifrin, Archie Shepp, Phil Woods, John Abercrombie, Fred Hersch, Gunther Schuller, Tania Maria, Jim McNeely, Peter Herbolzheimer, David Gilmore, Jeff “Tain” Watts, George Garzone, Herb Geller, Vincent Herring, Pee Wee Ellis, Tony Lakatos, Ari Hoenig, Lonnie Plaxico, Charles Tolliver, and Yoshiaki Masuo. Ben has also performed with several well-known pop groups, among these “Wir Sind Helden” and Joy Denalane.

He recorded two albums as a leader. The first one, ‘Berlin - New York’, was released in 2010 on ACT and features bassist John Patitucci, drummer Marcus Gilmore, and pianist Rainer Boehm.

His second record, ‘Think of One’ (shoebill music), was recorded in a trio setting with drummer Albert Tootie Heath and John Patitucci.