

# Hermeto Pascoal with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra

**Start time:** 7:30pm

**7pm:** doors

**7.30pm:** NYJO Jazz Exchange

**8pm:** interval

**8.20pm:** Hermeto Pascoal and NYJO

**10pm:** ends

**Approximate running time:** 140 minutes, including interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

## Mike Barnes reached out to Hermeto Pascoal and the NYJO to find out how their collaboration came about.

‘My music is ageless,’ says Hermeto Pascoal. ‘You couldn’t tell the difference between what I composed 50 years ago and today. That’s why I call it Música Universal. It’s intuitive, totally not planned.’ And while it all carries his personal stamp the difficulty in dating it is also down to its multifaceted nature. All manner of influences have fed into it over the last half century including jazz, classical, avant-garde, free improvisation, and Brazilian folk and popular styles like forró, a type of dance music from the Northeast Region, where he was born in 1936.

The way Pascoal synthesises these elements into something magical has earned him the nickname ‘O Bruxo’ – the sorcerer. And as befits the originator of Música Universal, Pascoal is a multi-instrumentalist. He first played his father’s accordion aged eight and went on to become adept at flute, sax, guitar and keyboards. He worked with percussionist Aíro Moreira in Quartet Nuovo in the late 60s, and Moreira alongside singer Flora Purim produced his 1970 solo debut *Hermeto*. As well as leading his own groups Pascoal has played with Miles Davis on his 1971 album *Live Evil*, which prompted the trumpeter to describe him as ‘The most impressive musician in the world’.

Pascoal’s music is also inspired by what he hears around him. As a boy he explored the sounds of his grandfather’s blacksmith shop, and he remains fascinated by the natural world, and the sonic possibilities of everyday objects.

‘I hear music in everything: in a door opening and closing, a car engine, people talking. When people talk, they are actually singing,’ he explains. ‘I developed this Som Da Aura [Sound Of The Aura] concept where I harmonise people’s voices, and it becomes evident it’s actually music. As a kid, I’d like to make flutes from a pumpkin vine. I have made music singing with frogs in a lake, I have written music to be performed inside caves, so it’s just natural to me, it’s not premeditated. That’s why sometimes I meet musicians from the academy with high writing and reading skills and when they talk to me, they feel like they become free! So, yes, freedom and intuition, the marks of the Música Universal.’

He views himself as a conduit through which music enters the world. And even his most challenging and outré compositions have a joyous quality about them.

‘Music is my motivation,’ Pascoal says. ‘During the pandemic I wrote more than 1,500 pieces and sent them out to friends and musicians around the world. I also like to perform and feel the energy of the live audience. As long as I can, I’ll be writing and performing music to all those who want to listen to me and my group.’

‘I taught myself music notation so I could put my music onto paper,’ he continues. ‘I’d like to go on helicopter flights and throw out all my 10,000 or so compositions so people can get them and play them.’

‘It just flows through me, and it becomes a whistle, a drawing, a solo or, in this case, sheet music. They are all the same to me in the sense that after I compose them, they are not mine anymore; they belong to the world.’

This generosity of spirit and need to share his creativity has been the principal inspiration behind tonight’s show, which features a new collaboration with a NYJO 22-piece orchestra. They took him up on an offer he made onstage:

‘We were inspired to get in touch with Hermeto after his 2019 performance at the London Jazz Festival. During his set he held up a piece of paper – and we’re paraphrasing – which asked for young people to take his music and play it freely. Off the back of this instruction we thought he might find the idea of working with a group of young musicians from our professional development pool attractive. Three years later, and here we are.’

Pascoal explains what NYJO will be playing in tonight’s concert:

‘The orchestra invited me and proposed something new. Jovino Santos Neto, a great musician and pianist, who played in my group for many years found a piece I wrote and arranged in the early 70s that has never been performed before. At some point, Jovino began talking to NYJO. It will be wonderful.’

‘My group will also be on stage,’ he says. ‘So, probably, one piece with the big band and the other with the group. Or vice-versa. Anything can change at any time, you know.’

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# Performers

## Hermeto Pascoal & band

**Hermeto Pascoal** keyboard, accordion, bass flute, teapot, cup of water, body  
**Itiberê Zwarg** electric bass, percussion  
**André Marques** piano, flute, percussion  
**Jota P** saxophones, flutes  
**Fábio Pascoal** percussion, stage direction  
**Ajurinã Zwarg** drums, percussion

## NYJO

**George Garford** alto saxophone  
**Asha Parkinson** alto saxophone  
**Emma Rawicz** tenor saxophone  
**Joe Pickering** tenor saxophone  
**Luke Chakrabarti** baritone saxophone  
**Rianna Henriques** flute  
**Ewan Parkin** trumpet  
**Gareth Howell** trumpet  
**Ed Hogben** trumpet  
**Dan Coulthurst** trumpet  
**Ucheena Cohen-Shah** trumpet  
**Joel Knee** trombone  
**Felix Fardell** trombone  
**Connor Martin** trombone  
**Jessica Anderson** trombone  
**Sam Taber** bass trombone  
**David Sztankov** French horn  
**Harrison Dolphin** guitar  
**Andrew Chen** piano  
**Fergus Quill** bass  
**Dan Kimberley** percussion  
**Matt Holmes** drums

## NYJX

**Fergus Quill** bass  
**Mischa Jardine** cello  
**Matthew Holmes** drums  
**Emile Hinton** piano  
**Coren Sithers** saxophone  
**Emma Rawicz** saxophone  
**Joshua Mellard** synth  
**Nat Martin** tenor horn  
**Chloe Dickens** violin  
**Morgan Marshall** violin

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