**KIRK KNUFFKE**

Reflecting on his guiding artistic impulse, cornetist-composer Kirk Knuffke says: “I’m concerned with making beautiful music. Even when the music is free and avant-garde, I want it to reach into people’s hearts. I like to play fast and loud and high, but beauty is always first.”A prolific, lauded record-maker, he has made 20-plus albums as a leader or co-leader over the past two decades. His 2022 release — *Gravity Without Airs* (TAO Forms), with pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist Michael Bisio — earned a review of 4 ½ stars from *DownBeat* magazine as well as a critic’s playlist pick in *The New York Times*. As an in-demand sideman, Knuffke also tours and records with some of today’s leading jazz musicians, from vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant and guitarist Mary Halvorson to drummer Matt Wilson and saxophonist James Brandon Lewis. Another recent highlight of the cornetist’s discography as a leader is *Brightness: Live in Amsterdam* (Royal Potato Family, 2020), which included his hip, soulful vocals. Praise for Knuffke’s earlier work includes NPR’s Jazz Album of the Year laurel for 2017’s *Cherryco* (SteepleChase), his homage to Don Cherry.

Knuffke has performed with who’s who of sage musicians, from Tootie Heath, Frank Kimbrough and Karl Berger to Myra Melford, Billy Hart and William Parker. In addition to working with the Matt Wilson Quartet, the cornetist is an ongoing member of drummer Allison Miller’s Boom Tic Boom sextet and guitarist Charlie Hunter’s Quartet. An educator as well as a virtuoso musician, Knuffke regularly passes along his expertise and experience at international jazz camps and in university masterclasses. He has received a Jerome Foundation Composers Grant, he placed second in Europe’s *El Intruso* Critics Poll for trumpet in 2016, and he was dubbed a “Rising Star” in the *DownBeat* Critics Poll in 2015. The magazine has said: “Rhythmically precise, New Orleans funky and full of grace, Kirk Knuffke’s music reflects his multifaceted personality: part musical sage, part jazz philosopher, a self-taught musician with wide interests, endless curiosity and an abundance of good humor.”

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