

Mario Calzada Bio - Long

Mario Calzada is a Spanish drummer, composer and educator whose artistic practice moves between jazz, improvisation, contemporary composition, electronic music and interdisciplinary creation. His career has been shaped by a continuous dialogue between performance and composition: a journey that began within the jazz tradition and has expanded into new forms of musical expression while maintaining improvisation, listening and collaboration at its core.

Calzada's artistic identity is founded on the relationship between the roles of performer and composer. As a drummer, he has developed through years of professional jazz performance, cultivating a practice based on interaction, spontaneity and collective musical decision-making. As a composer, he explores how these principles can be transferred into larger structures, creating music where written material and the creative input of performers coexist.

He began his musical formation in Spain, completing a Bachelor's degree in Composition at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos I in Madrid in 2016. That same year, he founded 3Elementos, a collective created together with musicians from his hometown. The project became an early platform for his artistic development, combining original compositions, improvisation and collaborative music-making, and resulted in the recording of two albums.

In 2017, Calzada joined the Roshan Samtani Jazz Trio, beginning a seven-year collaboration that became a fundamental period in his development as a professional jazz musician. With the trio, he performed extensively throughout Spain in a wide variety of contexts, from jazz clubs and concert halls to international festivals and cultural institutions. Their activity included performances at the International Jazz Festival of Madrid, the International Jazz Festival of Burgos, and Stanford University in the United States. The trio also collaborated with Museos Nacionales, bringing jazz performance into dialogue with Spain's national museum network and cultural programming.

These years established Calzada as an active voice within the Spanish jazz scene. Through continuous performance and collaboration, he developed a personal approach to the drums based on listening, interaction and responsiveness. For him, percussion is not only a rhythmic foundation but a tool for shaping musical form, creating textures and influencing the direction of the music in real time.

During the same period, Calzada expanded his compositional activity beyond the concert stage. In 2017, he composed music for videogames, including *El Secreto de Amelia*, exploring the relationship between music, narrative and interactive environments.

After moving to Maastricht, Calzada continued developing his career as a jazz musician while expanding his artistic activity within a European context. He studied Jazz Drums at Zuyd Conservatorium, graduating in 2021, and later completed a Master's degree in Classical Composition at the same institution in 2025.

His work as a composer is deeply connected to his experience as an improvising musician. Rather than seeing composition and improvisation as opposing approaches, Calzada investigates the space between them: how improvisation can generate compositional ideas, how

structures can remain open, and how performers can become active participants in the creation of musical form.

This research became central to his Master's project, *Composing Improvisation*, which explored the relationship between written structures and improvisational processes. The project culminated in *Democratic Orchestra*, a work examining collective decision-making within an ensemble and questioning traditional hierarchies between composer and performer.

His compositional work includes *Suite for Modern Quintet* (2024) and *Colors and Forms*, commissioned for the November Music Festival in 2025. In 2025, his music was also presented through ContemPLAY in Vilnius, where he premiered a work for chamber orchestra, expanding his activity further into the contemporary music field.

Calzada's work as a composer and conductor continued in 2026 with the European Big Band in Paris, where he conducted performances of his own compositions alongside works by composers from around the world. This project brought together several aspects of his artistic identity, combining composition, ensemble leadership and performance.

In 2024, Calzada became a founding member of the European Jazz Collective, an initiative connecting musicians from different European backgrounds through collaboration and performance. The project reflects his long-standing interest in jazz as a space for dialogue, exchange and collective creativity.

His jazz practice continues to be a central part of his artistic activity. In 2025, he recorded *The Great Wave* in Antwerp, further developing his work as a drummer and composer within an improvisational context. The album was released by No Business Records in 2026 and represents a continuation of the jazz tradition that has shaped his musical identity throughout his career.

Alongside his artistic work, Calzada has developed an extensive career as an educator. He has taught Fundamentos de Composición at the Conservatorio Profesional de Música de Valladolid, Improvisation at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Navarra, and currently teaches at Zuyd Conservatorium Maastricht, where his subjects include Jazz History, Critical Listening, Flamenco and contemporary non-improvisational practices.

His educational work is closely connected to his artistic practice. Drawing from his experience as a drummer, composer and improviser, Calzada approaches teaching as a space for developing creativity, critical listening and independent artistic voices. His pedagogical activity reflects the same questions that appear throughout his music: how traditions evolve, how musicians develop their own language and how artistic decisions emerge through interaction.

Calzada has also contributed to international discussions around jazz and musical practice. In 2025, he was invited to speak at the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) in Spain, and participated in Siena Jazz, strengthening his connections with the European jazz and music education communities.

In recent years, Calzada has expanded his practice into electronic and hybrid performance. Through systems involving sampling, synthesis, digital processing, MIDI controllers and

software such as Ableton Live and Max/MSP, he explores new relationships between acoustic musicians and technology. His electronic work treats digital processes as active musical partners, capable of responding to and transforming live performance.

His recent projects combine acoustic instruments such as saxophones, euphonium and percussion with live electronics, creating environments where composition, improvisation and technology interact in real time.

His artistic work also includes projects engaging with cultural and historical material. In 2026, he developed a new interpretation of *Himno a Burgos* as part of the centenary celebrations in Burgos, connecting historical musical heritage with contemporary performance practice.

Today, Calzada continues to work actively as a drummer, composer and educator. He maintains his presence as a jazz performer while developing new compositions, collaborative projects and hybrid musical environments. His current practice brings together the different stages of his career: his origins in the Spanish jazz scene, his experience as a European performing musician, his work as a composer and conductor, his commitment to education and his exploration of new relationships between acoustic sound, technology and improvisation.

Rather than defining his work through a single genre, Calzada approaches music as a continuous dialogue between different forms of knowledge and expression. Jazz, contemporary composition, improvisation and technology are not separate areas of his practice, but interconnected perspectives through which he explores one central question: how can music remain open, responsive and alive while creating meaningful structures?

Mario Calzada Bio - Short

Mario Calzada is a Spanish drummer, composer and educator based in the Netherlands. His artistic practice moves between jazz, improvisation and contemporary music, combining an active career as a performer with his work as a composer and teacher.

As a musician, Calzada has developed an international career performing in a wide variety of contexts, from jazz clubs and concert stages to festivals, cultural institutions and educational environments. His experience includes collaborations with different ensembles and projects, such as 3Elementos, the Roshan Samtani Jazz Trio and the Maastricht Jazz Collective (MJC), reflecting his interest in musical dialogue and collective creation across different settings.

As a composer, Calzada explores the relationship between structure and improvisation, creating music that connects the traditions of jazz with contemporary compositional approaches. His work focuses on the interaction between written material, spontaneous creation and the individual voices of performers.

Alongside his artistic activity, Calzada is a teacher at Zuyd Conservatorium Maastricht, where he shares his experience as a performer and composer with new generations of musicians. His pedagogical work, like his artistic practice, is based on curiosity, critical listening and the development of personal musical voices.

Calzada continues to perform internationally, compose new works and develop projects that explore the connections between jazz, improvisation, contemporary composition and new approaches to musical creation.