



Koenig, Klaus

Seven Things - An Homage To Celia

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In 2012/13 when I plucked up the courage to plunge back into the music scene after a 15-year break due to illness, I initially had in mind a revival of my "Jazz Live Trio". This was the formation that had played on Swiss Radio SRF as the house trio from 1964 to 1982, and was responsible for accompanying the soloists in the "Jazz Live" concert series. My erstwhile colleagues were no longer available after my long break, and anyway, for me it was important to work with players from the younger generation.

That I then met bassist Patrick Sommer and drummer Andi Wettstein was a great stroke of luck, as I know today. The 40 years that separated us in age never posed a problem and there has never been a mean word between us in all those years. Nevertheless, my previous experiences in the 1970s with the group "Magog" wouldn't let me be. Working with wind instruments naturally means a great increase in possibilities. Not only in colors, but also in shapes. So we very soon resolved to build a two-wind quintet alongside the trio work, but not quite from point zero.

I had already had the trumpeter Dani Schenker and alto-saxophonist Christoph Merki (both currently professors at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK) in one of my groups, the quintet "Magog 2". For this relatively short-lived attempt to build on my Magog experiences, I had approached these two horn players. In any case, I had known Christoph for much longer. As a student at the Einsiedeln Monastery high school, he had persuaded the priests to allow "Magog" to give a concert in the monastery to celebrate their graduation. Christoph was the driving force behind jazz there, as of course he had been playing the alto saxophone for a long time. As a result, in addition to studying history in Zurich, he trained to become a professional on his instrument at the Lucerne Jazz School.

Finding a voice in a trio that, as far as possible, doesn't imitate familiar patterns, but rather has a certain degree of uniqueness, is already difficult enough, and perhaps only attainable after many years of playing. For me, leaving the beaten paths in a two-horn quintet seems an even more difficult thing to do. Overcoming the hard bop tradition, which in my view is still virulent in spite of free jazz incursions in recent decades, remains a challenge for every quintet, which in most cases is only achieved over time. Given that Miles Davis' Second Great Quintet with Wayne Shorter still remains the top of the performance pyramid, the measure of all things, a similar level of musical expression could probably only be achieved with a completely different musical language.

We are left with the difficult task of balancing between two extremes: popular music with a memorable melody that delights the listener, and the polar opposite of not involving the target group, the audience, in the composition process at all, shutting one's self in an "ivory tower" and

leaving the music to find its own way.

These questions about style used to concern me a lot. My goal has always been to be as “modern” as possible, to be at the forefront of development. Just not at any price. Abruptly renouncing the connection to jazz history, as was attempted in the 60s and 70s of the last century, was out of the question for me. Approaching new possibilities in jazz in an evolutionary way was my path.

If the recognition of the many difficulties in composing leads the musician to some modesty and humility, that is only to be welcomed. Young jazz adepts will rarely, nor should they be, discouraged. In each new generation, those touched by the arts strive to live their creativity, to express themselves in their art with the goal of always becoming a bit better, of raising the bar even higher. Desperation and desire are very close to one another.

Today, at my advanced age, a firmly anchored style in my/our music surprisingly is no longer an issue for me. Modern or old-fashioned - these are no longer points of reference for me. I like to take note of current trends, but they no longer alter my aesthetic preferences. The music that I write and play today must come as much as possible from within me, from the experiences gained during the long march of decades spent with this music we call jazz. It doesn't consciously, but certainly on an unconscious level does, take into account an imaginary audience.

“If it pleases, it is allowed” states Goethe's Tasso, the embodiment of all that is artistic, including its complications, in the drama of the same name. His counterpart, the princess, a representative of the establishment corrects him with the words “Let that please, which is allowed”. Today I'm rather closer to Tasso's side when I expand his maxim to: "If it pleases me, it is allowed".

Band member

Andi Wettstein	drums
Christoph Merki	alto saxophone
Daniel Schenker	trumpet
Klaus Koenig	piano
Patrick Sommer	bass

Producer

Koenig, Klaus

Mixer

Andy Neresheimer

aufnahmestudio

Hardstudios, Winterthur, on
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Mastering

Andy Neresheimer

Phonotrrophy

Cécile Meier (Cover photo)

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Tracklist

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