

HELMUT SCHÖNLEITNER - „BASSONIC“

For many years Helmut Schönleitner has been a leading bassplayer in Austria and abroad. A visionary musician, composer, producer & teacher who is constantly exploring new directions in the field of creative contemporary music & arts as well as musical education.

His „Bassonic“ journey started in 1976 with him playing electric bass and acoustic upright bass in various Blues-, Jazz- and Pop groups. He studied classical music and double bass at the Conservatory in Linz and started working as a freelance musician, songwriter, producer and teacher in 1984.

Since 1991 he has been a teacher at the jazz department of the Anton Bruckner University in Linz and from 1996 till 2010 head of the internationally renowned centre of culture and arts AKKU in Steyr / Upper Austria.

Both as a bandleader and accompanist he belongs to a generation of bassplayers who successfully expand the role of this multifunctional instrument and discover new horizons. Playing 6- and 7- string fretted and fretless bassguitars since their innovation in the middle of the 80s he was (and still is) one of the pioneers in creating a new standard for his instrument, by using it as an electric - bassguitar.

„Bassonic“ means to discover the variety of sounds that this fairly new instrument has to offer and to apply it to different musical languages. The bassguitar in a new relation to sound and space and as a tool to create it´s own aesthetics.

As a leader of his own group „Helicopters“ he released three recordings „Bassonic“, „Steps“, „Straight Talk“ and as an accompanist, composer and producer he was involved in innumerable productions and concert performances covering many different musical styles ranging from classical music, pop, rock, blues, funk / fusion, latin to contemporary jazz.

Crossing the border of the traditional role of being a musician led to many collaborative projects with different art forms such as dance, literature, theatre and film. He strongly believes that the encounter with other art forms opens up a new creative perspective and being curious about music and arts from all over the world gives you a deeper insight into your own identity both as an artist and a human being.

A few examples are:

„*Rhythm Collage*“ - a collaboration with Indian Kathak Guru Smt. Shama Bhate and 6 dancers of Nad Roop Insitute from Pune/India. An exciting and innovative blend between classical Indian Kathak dance and the contemporaray music of today.

„*Kathak Dreams & Rhythm Movement*“ - an interdisciplinary musical journey with Indian Kathak Solo Dancer Kaveri Agashe.

„*Good news from Africa*“ – Artistic collaboration and film production with Ramadu Dumisani Moyo & Insingizi (Zimbabwe) and L´Ensemble Artistique Nantohi (Côte d´Ivoire).

„*A Bassonic Journey*“ – Duo / Trio / Quartet with Romanian bass virtuoso, multiinstrumentalist and master musician Decebal Badila.

„*World Beat Experience*“ - with Janez Dovč, Catalina Morales and Nino Mureškič. A musical journey through the world, an anthem to the most diverse cultures and their common grounds.

„*Afrikanisches Fieber*“ – Music & Theatre performance in collaboration with actor Hubertus Zorell from Vienna. The lyrics are based on Ryszard Kapuscinski´s fabulous book with the same german title.

A main focus for Helmut Schönleitner during the past 25 years has been education in the field of contemporary music and he has added many innovative teaching programs to this genre. Since 1991 he has been supporting talented young musicians in collaboration with the Upper Austrian government and as head of the AKKU he has built up relationships with a number of renowned artists from all over the world. The main purpose of this unique work is to create a link between young Austrian musicians and international artists in order to cooperate on an artistic and educational level.

Artistic collaboration with (excerpt):

Al Cook, Dana Gillespie, Bogdan, Leila Thigpen, Temporary Jazz Orchestra, Shama Bhate, Decebal Badila, Jaya Deva, Kai Eckhardt de Camargo, Sean Rickman, Peter O´Mara, Insingizi, Pt. Suresh Talwalkar, Gerald Veasley, Rich Brown, Eduardo Niebla, Cristian Soleanu, Hubertus Zorell, u.v.m.

Movies & documentaries (excerpt):

AKKU Goes Macedonia – „Musikalische Begegnungen in Berovo“ (2009)

„AKKU Goes India“ (2008)

„Uhambo LoMculi – The Story of a Singer“ (2008)

L´Ensemble Artistique Nantohi - „Tagebuch einer kulturellen Begegnung“ (2008)

Doug Hammond – „The Talking Drum“ (2005)

„Jugalbandi – A Journey Into The Centre Of Rhythm“ (2004)

„Rhythm Collage - The Spirit Of India Tour“ (2003)

„AKKU Goes India“ (2002)