

MOERS
MUSIC

VIENNA ART CHOIR



FIVE OLD SONGS

Wolfgang Puschnig	— altosax, bassclarinet, flute, piccolo, exotic flute
Herbert Joos	— flugelhorn, alphorn
Christian Radovan	— trombone
George Lewis	— trombone (only Song 3)
Woody Schabata	— dulcimer, xylophone
Lauren Newton	— leadvocal, vocal solos
Renate Bochdanský	— soprano
Maria Bayer	— alto
Lis Malina	— alto
Sharon Natalie	— alto
Karin Riessner	— alto
Peter Jelosits	— tenor
Kurt Azesberger	— tenor
Christof Prinz	— bariton
Roland Streiner	— bariton
Winfried Stelzmüller	— bass
Johannes Prinz	— bass, leader of the choir
Matthias Rüegg	— composer, arrangeur, conductor, leader

Since its beginnings it is a characteristic of jazz to include and process whatever presents itself to it. What this brought into jazz by a culture or an individual musician is refracted within jazz and becomes universal without losing its original nature thereby. Today, while the notion of "home" (i.e. mother-country) is being redefined and almost becomes a vogue-word again, musicians are beginning more and more to remember their own cultural roots.

Mathias Rüegg, a Swiss jazz musician in Vienna — the distance to his origins allows him to take a look at his roots in their entirety. The detail that has been re-magnified from the whole picture, from this point of view turns out to be more coarse-grained, more stylized, the musical substance is apostrophed — brought into jazz.

"Song 1" is based on the song "Luegit vo Bärig und Tal" by Ferdinand Fürchtegott Huber (1791-1863) which became a folksong. It is probable that F.F. Huber too discovered his native roots while being a Swiss abroad, townpiper and member of the royal orchestra of the court in Stuttgart. Upon his return to Switzerland, the musician devoted all his life to folksongs, "Kuhreihen" (the songs of the cheese-makers and cowherds to drive the cattle home) and

old melodies for the alphorn. Just as Mathias Rüegg now F.F. Huber had already arranged a series of songs which he supplied with arrangements for piano and for guitar, last not least for the interested foreigners, among them many English and French people, who indeed could not sing the songs because of the language, but in this way at least could play them as "songs without words". Or they sung them without words like the Vienna Art Choir — the earliest "Kuhreihen" were sung in Switzerland as well without the words. On the basis of F.F. Huber's collection Franz Liszt composed parts of "Album d'un voyageur" and "Années de pèlerinage" — before Liszt already Beethoven, Rossini, Viotti, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms and others had shown interest for the wealth of Swiss folksongs. Inspired by the same collection many composers of lesser talent have written light pieces in which cowherd's delight is interrupted by single virtuoso storms up and down the keyboard only (often they were meant to illustrate real thunderstorms); cowherd's delight and alpine glow, affectionately treated with irony, also appear at the beginning of "Song 1", the scene being made up of the rays of sunshine on the high mountains (Herbert Joos' alphorn climbing up to c"!), the falling shadows and the red glaciers. As in the other songs the original theme is being quoted

and processed in pars or in toto several times. In between and above: improvisations by W. Puschnig and L. Newton.

The models for "Song 2" and "Song 4" are two especially beautiful songs in the minor key, "Es git kei sölige Stamme" ("Kuhreihen" from Emmental) and "Altes Guggisbergerlied". Both can be traced back as far as the 18th century — "when they are so drunk that their tongues gradually lose their motion" as the story goes — loved to sing old psalms). "Kuhreihen" were also connected with homesickness and desertion of Swiss mercenaries under foreign service. The writer and art historian Johann Rudolf Wyss, jr. (1781-1830) writes "that while serving in foreign armies it was forbidden on pain of death to sing the melody of a "Kühreihen". It awoke . . . that deep yearning, leading to mortal illness, for home." The minor key of both songs facilitates an arrangement of the jazz kind. Mathias Rüegg about "Song 2": "The song "Es git kei sölige Stamme" consists of a blues-related scale with blues type changes and I have consciously tried to create a harmonic relationship to Gershwin's "Summertime".

"Song 3", a scherzo so to speak between the two songs in the

minor key, originates in the dance tune "Zoge am Boge" from ancient Switzerland (canton Uri). At the beginning a version in a minor key, giving both Chr. Radovan and G. Lewis, the trombone players, material for a highpoint of improvisation; at the end the theme is mixed up in a quodlibet with two further songs "Aes wott es Fraueli z'Märit ga" and "Meiteli, chumm, mier wei go tanze".

The final "Song 5" is based on an old folksong from the Italian part of Switzerland (canton Ticino): "La Girumeta" is a song that matches the peculiar character of Italian alpine singing. Mathias Rüegg: "For me it is one of the most beautiful Swiss folksongs. Here I did only little arranging, the minor-key theme is in the foreground".

If, under Rüegg's treatment, the previous songs have appeared in newer and richer colours, this last one comes close to the blues. The red on the mountain tops gave way to a deep blue.

Alex Salzgeber
(adapted by Julian Schönfeld)

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- Song 1
(based on Luegit vo Bärig und Tal) __ 11:47
- Song 2
(based on Es git kei sölige Stamme) __ 5:41
- Song 3
(based on Zoge am Boge) _____4:32
- Song 4
(based on Guggisbergerlied) _____ 7:32
- Song 5
(based on La Girumeta) _____ 9:21

All titles composed and arranged by Mathias Rüegg (SUISA)

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(Alex Salzgeber)

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