

„Europe Spirit“ - European Songwriting-Seminar and Concerts

The big *Europe Spirit Music Project* has been the inspiration - one song in ten European languages and each author telling their own story on Europe. (www.europespirit.eu)

With this backdrop, DH Records Ltd sent invitations to a songwriting seminar in August 2012 at the Chateau du Liebfrauenberg in Goersdorf/France. Fifteen musicians met there - twelve from Germany and three from France, to write new songs for the European community supported by two advisors from each of the two countries. The atmosphere in the chateau has been very conducive. The 200 square metre conference room was used as a studio, and had good acoustics, a small stage and a grand piano. Bilingual morning impressions, European magazines in the foyer and the French cuisine created a special flair.



Heiko Köngeter and Laura Hauser arranging her song „Change“

All this has been the basis for incredible creativity. In an intensive cooperation the fifteen songwriters created 16 songs. There have been some bilingual results and one song has even featured four languages. The Song „Laura canta“ describes the cold reality of the financial crisis in the verses juxtaposed to the situation of the seminar. The chorus describes how the musicians together create something in common, something which is able to connect people in Europe: Music with all the emotions.

France meets Germany

The song „L’Allemagne – Frankreich“ is a clear example of French-German cooperation. Two young female songwriters met at the seminar for the first time. And although their knowledge of the other language could still improve they put their minds together and created their first song – in two languages. Supported by the bilingual lyrics advisor Isabelle Grussenmeyer they wrote a song which aims at the preconceptions each side has got about the other. And there is a quick conclusion, that these prejudices are not more than simple clichés. The lyrics state: “It’s all about what you make of them“.

Writing songs together is an intercultural work “par excellence“. Each author is bringing along their own style and cultural influences, combining them with the styles of working partners bringing out new results. The works are taken home by each musician and to be presented there in the cultural home environment.

The songs have not only been written at the seminar but also recorded in a mobile studio. These recordings have been done under a tight time-schedule; there was just one hour for each song. But these recordings have got something very special, because they capture the excitement and freshness of the first hour. The studio has been overly busy, time was tight and the timetable had to be planned very carefully. Breaks were just for the meals and the dessert was sometimes dropped for working. The high motivation and the productivity of the authors were bringing many songs into the studio, where they have been working ‘til midnight. The coaching by music advisor Heiko Köngeter gave some special format to the songs.



... the Song is done

On the final day the whole group listened to the results and was surprised about the quality of the different songs.

Europe Spirit Concerts in Bretten/Germany and Wissembourg/France

Three weeks later it was all about how to bring these songs onto stage. Together with artists from the Europe Spirit project from the UK, Italy, France and Germany, the songwriters met for two concerts. They rehearsed a whole day at Bretten/Germany in the Kreuzkirche. The concerts had been prepared long before and were well announced in the press. Mayor Martin Wolff had taken the patronage and welcomed the young artists to the 30th European festival at Bretten saying: "Music is uniting nations".

The concert at Bretten was nearly sold out and in the audience there have been several guests from Bretten's twin-towns in Europe, who completed the atmosphere. The community of artists presented a varied and diverse programme. The songwriters did the first half of the evening spreading out the exciting atmosphere from the seminar. It was clear that there was neither a casting show nor a music competition going on. Music unites, because it is a language, which carries on where words are ending or cannot be understood. The artists created a community that could be an example for the community of nations in Europe. When the artists performed the Europe-Spirit-song titled „It's in the music / En Chanson / Der Song / La Musica“ in four languages altogether it was clear, the power this music is providing. The audience responded with standing ovations at the end showing that not only the music but also the idea behind the project convinced them. „We are Europe“ spontaneously interpreted Gunter Hauser, producer of this project.



One day later the artists met at Wissembourg/France to repeat this concert in the church of St. Jean. The mayor Christian M. Gliech followed his colleague from Bretten announcing the Concert while Marc Seiwert, Minister and Bishop at St.Jean did the moderation and translations throughout the programme. The bilingualism at the French-German border-region has been a good basis for this European concert. The multilingual songs from the songwriter have been welcomed as well as the smooth jazz performed by the English-German band „Spirit'n'Jazz“, which completed the concert with their virtuosic pieces before the title song of the Europe Spirit project convinced the audience as well as the gathered press.

Marc Seiwert resumed in his final moderation that "this event surely has been one of the highlights which the church of St.Jean has experienced in its history through many centuries". The daily newspaper „Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace“ used a whole page for the concert review. Under the heading „European spirit in high dosage“ they referred to the term of „fraternité“, which is a term of national dimension in France, and transferred it to the European idea of this project.

Project with a perspective

It is logical that a project with this title cannot be completed quickly. The 2012 events got an unplanned synchronisation with the Eurozone-crisis. But also the communicative quality of the already existing songwriting seminar has contributed to the success of these events. Not only artists have cooperated here but also organisations in the background. ProPop and the Protestant youth in Baden/Germany have cooperated with the Protestant church of Alsace-Lorraine/France, the conference center Chateau du Liebfrauenberg as well as the cities of Bretten/Germany and Wissembourg/France. The German-French-Swiss Upper-Rhine-Conference supported the whole project which has been coordinated and organised by Gunter Hauser and his English-German production team DH Records Ltd (www.dhrecords.com).



There are plans for another seminar in 2013. Further news can be found soon at www.dhrecords.com/e-News. There is also a newsletter which can be subscribed to for information.