

Mrs Wisenheimer - Katrin Weber Trio

A decisive moment in the childhood of Katrin Weber was when she heard her father whistling Charlie Parker's "Ornithology". That sparked her interest in jazz and spurred her on to learn more about the music.

And, as her voyage of discovery progressed, the greater became her enthusiasm for this unique art form and the more intense her desire to be not only a devotee but also an exponent.

As well as having the good fortune to be the daughter of a keen jazz fan, Katrin Weber also had the precious gift of a natural ear for music, an attribute which is immediately apparent when you hear her faultless intonation. And, as she became more familiar with her favourite musical *genre*, she assimilated the essential syncopation and subtle timing of the jazz form, guided by the recorded work of such legendary jazz divas as Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington and Nancy Wilson. In common with those artists, Katrin also knows how to invest a lyric with real feeling. In addition, she is an accomplished pianist with a natural flair for appropriate accompaniment.

When she was a teenager, her enthusiasm for jazz was boosted when she attended house concerts organised by friends in her locality and heard such eminent musicians as Woody Shaw, Johnny Griffin and Baden Powell. Katrin recalls, "I remember thinking, 'Wow! They are playing without any written music - just improvising - and they are totally relaxed and free. It's wonderful - and the rhythm is fantastic. It's the best music I have ever heard!'"

Born in Tuttlingen, Germany, and now resident in Vienna, Katrin Weber studied singing and composition at the jazz schools in Linz and Graz and also had some lessons from Andy Bey.

Since 1993, Katrin has toured with the musical cabaret show "Die Niederträchtigen". She composes and arranges for various theatres and productions in Vienna and Linz and teaches jazz singing in Vienna and in Upper Austria.

Over the years she has worked with Kirk Lightsey, Benny Golson, Pro Brass and the Tuttlingen group, Stella. She founded the Katrin Weber Trio in 2003, with Ilse Riedler on tenor and soprano saxophones and clarinet and Margit Schoberleitner on drums and percussion. The trio performs principally in clubs and at festivals, performing their own compositions, but also undertakes commercial engagements for companies and parties, playing a selection of popular standards.

"I also do cabaret appearances," says Katrin, "and this has an influence on the way we perform. For us, the most important thing is the joy of playing, improvising and grooving together" - and this sentiment very much reflected on this CD.

Ilse Riedler, who was born in Styria and now lives in Vienna, studied jazz in Linz and Vienna. She has worked with the European Jazz Orchestra, the Vienna Concert Jazz Orchestra, the European Youth Orchestra, the Lee Harper

Quartet, Finest Blend, the Edin Bosnic Quartet and Russkaja. She also has a number of compositions to her credit.

Margit Schoberleitner was born in Upper Austria and now lives in Vienna, where she studied classical drumming. She plays both classical and jazz drums, percussion and marimba in a number of different ensembles, including the Vienna Philharmonic, the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Vienna and the Klangforum Wien. She also runs private teaching classes in drums and percussion.

Apart from the accomplished musicianship and compatibility of the trio, they exhibit a high degree of versatility and adaptability in their choice of repertoire. Says Katrin: "What we play is basically jazz, but there are pop, blues and Latin influences and also a classical component. And that is the great thing about jazz - it gives you so much freedom and you can make use of many different elements and mix them all together."

When it comes to listening to music, Katrin Weber has an exemplary eclecticism. She says, "I listen to a lot of bossa nova and samba music, pop and soul. I like Chaka Khan, India Arie, Meshell Ndegeocello, Van Morrison and Prince and, as far as classical music is concerned, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Bruckner. I also love music from other parts of the world - world music, Arabic music and music from Greece, Bulgaria and various African countries."

Katrin Weber wrote the music for eight of the ten pieces on this album and the lyrics for two of them, with three of the lyrics being provided by her good friend, Henry Mason.

The programme opens with Katrin's innovative arrangement of Irving Berlin's immortal 1927 classic, "Blue Skies", in which the A section is taken in 6/4 time and the B section in Latin tempo.

The title song of the album, "Mrs. Wisenheimer" - "wisenheimer" meaning a wise acre or smart Alec - was inspired by Kirk Lightsey, with whom Katrin worked a couple of years ago. Says Katrin, "Kirk called me Mrs. Wisenheimer because he thought I was very smart! So I wrote a song for him and me and for wisenheimers everywhere."

The piece is basically a blues, extended by two-bar instrumental breaks, and has some sturdy walking bass by Katrin on the piano, a wild scat section and powerful soprano saxophone solo by Ilse Riedler

"Summer Love" is a sensitively crafted nostalgic ballad recalling a fleeting romance, the melody of which was written, says Katrin "after a summer of love." Like the love affair, the piece ends on an unresolved chord.

In dramatic contrast comes "Maybe", a song which tells, in uncompromisingly forthright style, of the social pressure and intimidation imposed on men and women by the "politically correct" brigade. It carries the highly commendable philosophy, as propounded in William Shakespeare's "Hamlet": "This above all: to thine own self be true..."

"Für Stefan" is a song dedicated to Katrin's brother, which she wrote two weeks after his tragic death in a mountaineering accident in May 2004. The song incorporates a text by the 18th century German poet, theologian and

philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, and its melody is based on a *motif* from one of Stefan's last compositions, a concerto for organ and orchestra.

A tribute to Katrin's late mother, Elisabeth, follows - "Die Nacht" -with a lyric based on a poem by Joseph von Eichendorff. "I wrote the music a couple of years ago," says Katrin, "and I played it once to Mama. But later I changed most of the parts and also the lyric." On this track Ilse Riedler plays clarinet and Margit Schoberleitner the kalimba or thumb-piano.

Dizzy Gillespie's 1946 masterpiece, "A Night In Tunisia", is given a strong middle-eastern flavour, with Margit playing the tarabuca, a Turkish drum. Katrin handles Ella Fitzgerald's lyric with great panache and there is an enterprising soprano saxophone contribution from Ilse.

The lyric for "Resignation Für Anfänger" was written by the Polish-German-Jewish poetess, Mascha Kaléko (1907 - 1975). "I love this poem," says Katrin, "which is why I wrote music to it." The piece is in brisk 12/8 time and Katrin sings the melody in unison with Ilse's soprano saxophone.

"My Desperate Heart", a song which Katrin appositely describes as being "full of longing and yearning", was written in 1993. Katrin sings the verse *a capella* and then the piece moves into a laid-back Latin mode for the refrain, which has a pleasing chord sequence. Ilse's tenor saxophone solo on this really captures the mood.

"Come On, Hold Me Tight" is Katrin's joyous declaration of love "to a very special person - my beloved Robert." It's a groovy, upbeat piece in cha-cha rhythm, featuring a surprise kazoo solo by Katrin, and it brings to a close a most stimulating, diverse and dynamic session by an extremely gifted trio.

Katrin Weber's ambitions for the future are to go on working with the trio, writing music and playing concerts as long as possible. She never wants to stop learning and developing.

"Making music is so much joy and fun," she says.

And when the Katrin Weber Trio makes music, joy and fun abound!

- **Mike Hennessey, November 2005**