

Rhaeto-Romansh world music

New CD und concert tour by Corin Curschellas

Corin Curschellas is without doubt the Rumantschia's most prominent singer. With songs sung in one of the least widely used languages of Central Europe, the singer from Graubünden has been touring from stage to stage for many years. Over the years, the list of top musicians with whom she has worked has grown to an impressive length.

It was in 1997 under the motto of "Voices of Rumantsch" that Corin Curschellas first created a work made up entirely of Rhaeto-Romansh poetry put to music. "Valdun" is the name of the album that made the setting of such texts to modern sounds stand out as a landmark in her broad-ranging creative output. Eleven years later, in 2008, the artist from Graubünden conjured up an impressive follow-on work with "Grischunit". This features texts from famous Graubünden poets sung in Curschellas' inimitable voice and the compositions of a top band around the very popular guitarist, Marc Ribot.

With her latest project, Corin Curschellas continues consistently along the path back to her roots and now dedicates herself to the repertoire of traditional folk songs. Yet again, she succeeds in a tense balancing act between the regional and the cosmopolitan, between deep-rootedness and innovation. "La Grischa" is a collection of newly arranged folk melodies from the Romansh-speaking parts of Graubünden in four different idioms (traditional regional versions) of that language.

"We're breathing a fresh breath of life into well-known folk tunes, which I remember enjoying back in the days when I was a child in Graubünden" explains Curschellas. With this programme, she thus sees herself as a cultural ambassador too. Her aim is to contribute to the continued existence of the melodious language of the Rhaetian Alps in all its richness and to enhance the perception of it away from its linguistic territory too.

The charismatic singer is accompanied by Albin Brun, a multi-instrumentalist, Patricia Draeger on the accordion and Claudio Strebel on the double bass. The trio have worked together regularly in other formations and thus already form an ensemble well used to playing with one another. For "La Grischa", the four of them have respectfully preserved the old melodies. The three musicians have, however, devised unconventional arrangements, which bring out the radiance of the folk songs in new harmonies. They have metamorphosed the music into a sort of chamber/folk/jazz style, in which lyrical tones develop into dazzling improvisations. Awash with ideas and not infrequently with a mischievous twinkle in their eyes, they paint airy sonorous images, on top of which Corin Curschellas' warm voice comes across as a particular delight. In addition to the accordion, saxophone, Swiss accordion and double bass, a number of unusual instruments, such as the toy piano, harmonic flute and duduk create the moods that fit in perfectly with the words of the songs.

The theme of the songs is one of the remote valleys in which they came into being: the countryside, the weather, the animals and nature. And what it is that stirs the people living there: suffering, loving and life itself in all its many, different incalculable facets.

Corin Curschellas: Vocals

Albin Brun: Soprano and tenor saxophone, duduk, Swiss accordion, toy piano, harmonic flute and water phone

Patricia Draeger: Accordion and Swiss accordion

Claudio Strebel: Double bass

Recording: SonarSound Studio, Zurich 2012

Mastering: Oli Bösch, Livingroomstudio Berne

Label: R-Tunes 2012