

Bohuslän Big Band - Mia Kempff

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Who are you?

I have lived my entire life in the City of Music, now and then moving into a new neighborhood. Growing up in the Classical Quarters, I grabbed a guitar at an early age and ran off to Basking Street.

I found my first own den on the colorful Avenue of Mainstream Pop selling daydreams, and later spent the lifetime of a band in the noisy Port of Hard Rock. We worked in our sweat and succeeded in shipping out some loads of music to the world. Breaking up with the band I was standing at the crossroads, not knowing which way to go. That is how I discovered Bluestown, where I settled for a while and grew roots into the black soil.

Years later I met a new friend living down at Digital Square, and even though I was busy building a small cottage in the unplugged outskirts of town, I started to spend more and more time with him.

Suddenly one day a girl I had met down in Bluestown gave me a call. She invited me to a very special place I had never been before. It was simply music - PlanetZappa...?

How did I relate to Zappa's music before this Bohuslän Big Band - project?

Well my big brother played "Overnite Sensation", "Apostrophy" and "One Size Fits All" a lot when I was like 8 - 9 years old. He played it so much that I knew all the lyrics phonetically. I couldn't tell what the lyrics were all about since I didn't speak English at the time but I loved the melodies and all the humor in the music. This made things very easy for me when we started to rehearse with the big band since I could fake all the lyrics immediately, my 8-year-old-me just took over.

How come I got the job anyway?

I had been playing together with one of the horn-blowers in a Rhythm & Bluesband some years ago, and she came to think of me when they started to talk about this project. They wanted someone who really did not sound like Zappa, someone who could sing in an original style. I was very flattered and also scared shitless because I actually didn't think I could pull it through. Me singing with a big band as a front person - music by Zappa The Genius - forget it! But since I like to challenge my fears, I accepted.

So how did it work out and what came with it?

We had quite a lot of time to rehearse so the songs had a chance to settle themselves in me. I like to experiment with my different voices (styles of singing) and this was a great opportunity to do so and to use all different voices in the same show - even the very silly ones and that never happened before. The songs have so many layers, when you think you "know" the song there will always pop up a new musical layer from a hideout somewhere and grin in your face. - "Oh, so you never heard me before?" - and with that a new way to perform it. Like "Son of Orange County"; you can sing the song from the beginning and put in the feeling that this is very soon, in just a couple of bars, become very absurd. OR you can choose not to do it - and then what happens - which one of the ways gives the greatest effect, which way to sing the song is best for the song? With every song I really had to try a lot of different angels and think it through thoroughly.

I will never forget the first gig at Nefertiti in Gothenborg. When the last note of "Zombie Woof" hit the speakers, the audience sounded like we just scored a goal in an international footballgame. And I think that we had made a score, because to keep that concentration and that focus at the very top for 120 minutes felt just like something footballplayers do. It was an amazing feeling to play with the band. I, who had never been singing with a big band before, got struck by the massive impact we must have made from the stage - 23 musicians just blasting away.

The Zappa-project gave me a bunch of great lessons in music, almost like a training camp (there's that footballplayer again!). It helped me stretch my capacity to the limits and beyond, so in that way it has also made me braver knight of music. It has actually made me a more beautiful person - or should I call it one more of those ugly motherfuckers?

By Mia Kempff

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