



INTERVIEW

KOEN UVIN
IN CONVERSATION WITH
ROMINA LISCHKA

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Four times a year, the sun, seen from the earth, occupies a special position in its passage across the sky: twice it is perpendicular above the equator, at one time it is perpendicular to the tropic of Cancer and at another time it is perpendicular to the sun, above the tropic of Capricorn. This last position marks the beginning of winter. Solstice is the first of four special concerts in which Romina Lischka and Hathor Consort, each time on the days of the solstice and equinoxes, will perform music affiliated with these astronomical events.

How did you come to put together a Winter solstice program, and what ideas are behind it?

Romina Lischka : Actually, it's something I've been working on for a long time, those almost magical moments in the course of the sun, the turning points that those sun cycles signify for different cultures, have always fascinated me and especially the rituals associated with them. Those rituals and folk customs show up in a lot of cultures, maybe even all cultures. I have been fascinated with them for at least seven or eight years, seeing temples and other buildings oriented in relation to light and conceived in such a way that the light enters them in a special way at a certain moment. Often this is at the time of an equinox or solstice. This particular alignment is also found in prehistoric structures. Stonehenge in southern England is the best known and is in fact a giant sundial.

But very old Indian temples were also designed in this manner. Those turnings give structure to the year. And in turn, that includes celebrations and music. I wondered about the origins of those customs and what was actually being celebrated. I also realized that the musical traditions that celebrate the birth of light still live on in many cultures today and went looking for musical remnants of the oldest European culture, namely the Celtic. Christianity has covered up and transformed many of those Celtic traditions, but there are still remnants of those ancient traditions to be found. Christianity has covered up and transformed many of those Celtic traditions, but there are still remnants of those ancient traditions to be found.

It didn't just stop at Celtic music. You provided me with an impressive and very varied list of songs and instrumental music that could be covered in the program.

Yes, it has become a abundant harvest. This is also thanks to Anna Maria Friman and Indrė Jurgelevičiūtė. Together we explored Scandinavian and Lithuanian musical traditions. We selected traditional songs with lyrics that reflected those ancient customs and rituals, but at the same time were also appropriate in terms of atmosphere. You never know exactly how far those traditional songs go back in time, but somehow you still feel that connection to a culture that is often very old. This music is going to be the starting point of our journey.

In that long list I can make a few clusters, a cluster of English Renaissance songs, there is music from the Far North and also Lithuania ...

We are in full preparation for the program but let me say right away that there will be no noticeable clusters in the program, everything will be mixed together, sometimes you will even hear music from totally different musical traditions mixed together. That geographical division seems artificial to me anyway, some musical traditions are very different from region to region. We also bring music from the Alps. There, residents of neighboring yet secluded mountain villages often spoke a completely different dialect and had a different musical tradition. Especially in Scandinavia and in Lithuania, we have found very beautiful songs. The nights are long there, people look forward to the moment when the light increases again. We found songs about the rising sun, an ancient sun prayer and a song about a village in ice, very imaginative ... There are specific songs that deal with certain times of the year, in this case winter. That's actually what we were looking for, songs specifically about those times of year and describing these moments.

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I guess the biggest surprise in the program will be the input of music from Indian classical music. You, yourself, are at home in Indian music?

Yes definitely, Indian classical music is definitely one of my passions music, I grew up with it and trained in it. I am fascinated by the melodicism but also by the rhythm that is totally different from the early music that I also know and play. The freedom in form and improvisation really appeals to me.

Indian dhrupad (ed. sung ragas from the North Indian tradition) are also very time-specific. In India, there are also specific festivals and times of the year when certain ragas must or may be sung. For example, one such raga is sung between four and six in the morning, during the sunrise. This gives a special tension and creates a very special feeling.

Koen Uvin

The magical moment when the sun is at a turning point, has led from time immemorial in many cultures leading to rituals and celebrations.

Over the next four seasons, Romina Lischka, each precisely on the solstice or equinox, in search of stories in traditional music that still sing of light today. For this first edition - with the winter solstice - she goes into the darkness of the Far North. Romina Lischka, Anna Maria Friman and Indre Jurgelevičiūtė collected music from different cultures that celebrates the birth of light.

