

Beat Bag Bohemia

The Fellowship of the Drums



African-Swiss road movie documentary
52 minutes

Author Martin Fuchs Smith

Produced by The Washing Line

Beat Bag Bohemia. The background.

There are many drumming bands but few have what Beat Bag Bohemia offers: Four drummers from complete different backgrounds, both musically and culturally. Rock, Jazz, African and contemporary music melt into an energetic and vibrant fusion.

Lucas Niggli, one of Switzerland's finest drummers, writes the vibrant, smart compositions and is the analytical head of the band. South African's Kesivan Naidoo, a composer of note, brings spontaneity and power of improvisation both on and off stage. Peter Conradin Zumthor, the son of the renowned Swiss architect, has his roots in rock music and contributes a popular drive to the band. Finally Rolando Lamusene of Mozambique adds the African magic to the flavour.

This unique make-up is further complemented by Lucas Niggli's and Kesivan Naidoo's strong personalities, which give rise to an explosive field of creativity, friendship, laughter and com-

petitiveness. These two co-conspirators make it fun to explore cultural parallels and differences.

Beat Bag Bohemia plays deep, mesmeric grooves and inspired improvisational dialogues. They are exceptional for another reason: Unlike most cultural exchange programs, Beat Bag Bohemia has never stopped thriving.

Brought together by Pro Helvetia in 2006 the band toured Switzerland in spring 2007 and thereafter recorded a CD to be released next year on Intakt.

In 2008 Beat Bag Bohemia launches their CD with a tour to South Africa and Mozambique in March/April. In September/October the European launch of the new CD will coincide with a tour to Switzerland, Germany and Austria. The Southern African tour of Beat Bag Bohemia in 2007 is supported and financed by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council.



The characters

Lucas Niggli

*1968, Switzerland, Drums

Lucas Niggli was born in Cameroon. Today he lives in Uster with his partner and three children.

He studied classical music and composing. Afterwards he found in Pierre Favre, Switzerland's drumming icon, a profound mentor. He's current bands include «Steamboat Switzerland», «Zoom» and «Big Zoom».

He has played with world renowned musicians like Barry Guy, John Cale, Butch Morris, Trevor Watts, Fred Frith amongst others. He has performed all over the world including Festivals held in Vancouver, Berlin, Willisau and elsewhere.

Kesivan Naidoo

*1979, South Africa, Drums

Kesivan began studying drums at age 11, and made his onstage debut at the Hogsback Arts Festival aged 14.

In his early teens, he performed in Germany, France and England as a member of the Hudson Big Band. Between 1995 and 1999 he played with the National Youth Big Band, touring New York City.

Kesivan Naidoo graduated with a BA Music (Jazz performance and arrangement) from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and has won a SAMRO scholarship to further his studies abroad. He lives in Cape Town where he's the bandleader of «Closet Snare».

Rolando Lamussene

*1971, Moçambique, djembe/mbira

Rolando Lamussene got into music when he was 19 years old.

He started off musically accompanying the National School of Dance for their classes. Since 1991 he is a member of the music ensemble of the National Company of Dance from Mozambique.

Today he plays several percussion instruments as well as traditional African instruments like Mbira, Valimba and Xitate. He was involved in several international performances featuring Peter Giger amongst others and has toured Europe, Africa and America extensively.

Peter Conradin Zumthor

*1979, Switzerland, drums

Peter Conradin Zumthor lives in Haldenstein, Switzerland.

The father of two children learned to play the drums in his youth as an autodidact. He now works as a freelancer and drum teacher. He has performed in many concerts and toured with different bands and projects in Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia and Croatia. Zumthor met and played with Lucas Niggli as a member of the «Steamboat Extended Ensemble».





Beat Bag Bohemia on tour in Africa 2008

- 24.03.2008 East London, rehearsal
- 25.03.2008 Concert in East London
- 26.03.2008 Trip to Cape Town
- 27.03.2008 CD-launch in a Cape Town Club
- 28.03.2008 Concert at Cape Town International Jazz Festival
- 29.03.2008 Concert at Cape Town International Jazz Festival
- 30.03.2008 Trip to Durban
- 31.03.2008 Workshop at Batt Centre / Concert in Durban
- 01.04.2008 Concert in a Durban Township
- 02.04.2008 Concert in Durban, Jazzclub University
- 03.04.2008 Trip to Maputo
- 04.04.2008 Concert in Maputo, Centro Franco
- 05.04.2008 Concert in Maputo, Rolando's suburb

Beat Bag Bohemia on tour in Europe 2008

is planned for 7th – 21st September 2008. The detailed program is still in preparation stage. Confirmed are various concerts in Switzerland, Germany and Austria (Therme Vals, The Bird's Eye Jazz Club Basel amongst others).

The director's approach

As fascinating as four drummers sitting among their drums conjuring great sounds may seem, the music is not the main focus of this film. It does serve as the context in which the whole film develops. The film is about a journey in which different people come together creating moments and embracing everything that happens along the way.

The main focus is the unique characters that make up the group. The camera follows their journey, observes their friendships and captures their spontaneity and vibrancy. A sort-of «fellowship of the drums» in which the viewer is able to obtain a glimpse into their unique cultural backgrounds while celebrating their current bond and friendships. While the film is about four drummers, two of the characters will play a more central role: Lucas Niggli and Kesivan Naidoo.

This will be a tale of two co-conspirators who have experienced widely divergent childhoods,

life experiences and yet are able to come together to make grand music. This will be about the situations they encounter and musical and friendship challenges that they face on the road. The scenes will show their energy, spontaneity and creative drives.

The backdrop for this film will be the long road as it winds its way through beautiful South African, Mozambican and Alpine scenery to the tunes of the band. On tour we will visit the hometowns of all four players.

Road movies reflect the times and the cultural contexts they are made in. In Beat Bag Bohemia four individuals escape to the road, carrying within them a unique past from whence they came. Drumming is both the quest and the gift that they offer to the road. And the road is where new musical creations are fashioned from present bonds and personal skills. So in the end the four protagonists will return home, wiser for their experiences.



The production.

The film will speak a witty, light-hearted language to match the two main protagonists. The result will be a refreshing, unconventional film with plenty of groove and drive. The idea is that Beat Bag Bohemia will be broadcasted on European and South African TV channels such as SF, 3sat and SABC.

Production Crew

Martin Fuchs Smith St. Gallen, Switzerland
Between 1993 and 1998 Martin Fuchs worked as a TV journalist for Swiss national TV's arts and cultural program «neXt». He produced films about Jazz, classical and contemporary music, design and comic. Afterwards he worked in Cape Town as a director, where he was involved in documentaries about the uplifting of South Africa's former disadvantaged people («I can see tomorrow from here»). He also produced and directed films about Southern Africa's political, social and cultural affairs for TV channels such as SF («Zehn vor Zehn»), ARD («Kulturspiegel») and e-TV.

Alan Wilcox Cape Town, South Africa

Alan Wilcox is a freelance director and producer in Cape Town who's currently producing the two-part documentary «Ancestors», which follows the African migration with DNA-samples (SABC production). At SABC he's involved in the internal training program as a lecturer. Previously he worked as a producer for South Africa's private TV station «e-TV». Alan Wilcox will organise the shooting in Southern Africa.

Camera

Beat Bag Bohemia is a cultural exchange program between Switzerland, South Africa and Mozambique. And so is the film. The entire movie will be shot with a South African cameraman.



Press Clippings

16.02.2007 / Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten

Beat Bag Bohemia

Ideen muss man haben!

Beat Bag Bohemia glänzt mit Trommel-Musik. Da war was los im Jazzclub Neue Tonne! Das schweizerisch-afrikanische Trommelquartett Beat Bag Bohemia entzündete ein Perkussionsfeuerwerk, das es in sich hatte. Lucas Niggli, Peter Conradin Zumthor (beide Schweiz), Rolando Lamussene (Mosambique) und Keshavan Naidoo (Südafrika) spielten keineswegs bloß Trommelexzesse, sondern führten weit ausgearbeitete Kompositionen auf, die strukturell anspruchsvoll, rhythmisch-metrisch komplex und in Sound und Melodie sehr farbig waren.

Einiges erinnert den Hörer möglicherweise an Edgar Varese, der 1931 mit «Ionisation» (einem Stück für 41 Schlaginstrumente und zwei Sirenen) dem Perkussionisten in der ernsten Musik den Weg zur Eigenwertigkeit geebnet hat, nach-

dem er schon Jahre zuvor mit «Hyperprism» und «Integrales» eine grosse Zahl von Schlaginstrumenten in seine Musik einbezogen hatte.

«Phase 1», als letztes Stück vor der Pause gespielt, bestach durch Prägnanz, rhythmische Dichtheit, Reduktion und spieltechnische Brillanz. Das war nicht nur Trommeln, sondern auch Trommelmusik der hohen Schule. Ideen muss man haben – wenn man gute Musik machen will. Diese Erkenntnis wurde durch Beat Bag Bohemia durchweg klingend bestätigt, ganz besonders aber mit der Neufassung der Komposition «Prism» von Pierre Favre, bisher bekannt von der Favre-CD «Singing Drum». Hier trafen sich ausgefuchstes Formenverständnis mit wild wuchernder Spielfreude und trommelsicherer Souveränität (trotz des kleinen, mit einem Lacher «reparierten» Verspielers) auf selten gehörtem Niveau.

Mathias Bäuml

Press Clippings

05.01.2007 / Bagatellen, USA, January 2007
Lucas Niggli BIG ZOOM

Healthy doses of musical amphetamines

The liners on this one liken Lucas Niggli's Zoom ensembles to lenses of varying powers of magnification. It's an apt analogy and one that speaks to the precision properties at play in the drummer's intricate compositions and execution. Intakt has been a receptive home to his past projects with no fewer than nine releases illustrating his talents as either leader or sideman.

The ready-made tag of «chamber jazz» seems a convenient one to apply on the surface, but ends up cursory when it comes to corralling all the band is capable of playing and everything that goes into it. For one thing, there's the recurring complexity of Niggli's improv-friendly charts and the frequently dizzying tempos he insists on playing them in. The lengthy title piece starts as an amorphous dirge, slowly coalescing via one of Niggli's lubricious beats

into a fluttering maze of contrapuntal horn lines. The collective is intimately accustomed to playing together and the closeness allows them to engage in one devilishly clever detour after another, subdividing and reconvening along a serpentine track that is near hitch-less in execution.

Wogram and Puntin manage to sound like a horn section twice and sometimes even thrice their number, pairing together or peeling off in combinations with their colleagues. Both are expert at capitalizing on the voice-like properties of their instruments and the covey of duo and trio passages plugged into the pieces in a wonderful succession of animated, but affable conversations. Schaulfelberger alternates easily between floating gossamer chords and sharper toned rhythm picking, aligning with the growling pitches of Wogram one moment and filling the fissures in a typically earthy Niggli percussion pattern the next as on the jovially rendered "Pidgin."

The antique board game of Snakes and Ladders works as another handy analogue to the Zoom's sound and approach. Players negotiate the pieces at accelerated speeds, ascending and descending so fast that complacent attention often results in missed singularities. The pinball pyrotechnics of Klezmerish "Gross Sprünge" provide a fitting case in point, jockeying between hyperkinetic and relatively restive poles. Even on languid pieces like "Screen Sleep" details abound. Niggli and his friends sustain the subtlety and elegance so often associated with the chamber jazz rubric, but manage to inject healthy doses of musical amphetamines into the circulatory system. The familiar phrase adopted as the disc's title might sound cliché, but as Niggli's music makes abundantly clear, it's a sentiment on worth pursuing with vigor and resolve.

Derek Taylor

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