

## Asja Valcic: Crossover Virtuoso

The cello leads a sonorous, if not largely inconspicuous, existence outside of the classical music world. Emerging from this background, the cellist, Asja Valcic has solidified a conspicuous place for herself in the European music scene. She has played her instrument to the front by continuing to broaden her musical vocabulary and soften the sharp edges between genres. Both the radio.string.quartet.vienna, which she co-founded in 2004, as well as duos with the Austrian accordionist and composer, Klaus Paier (2009) represent stylistic crossovers, which enjoy international recognition. The native of Croatia works as an arranger, composer and lecturer.

"As a musician, who grew up in chamber music, Asja Valcic imbues her jazz with powerful and unusual vitality," according to a review in the British GUARDIAN. "Valcic's cello emits everything that fingers and bows can entice from strings: everything from stunning bass pizzicati to whispering flageolets," writes the BADISCHE ZEITUNG. "She is a cunningly smooth instrumentalist," emphasizes the culture magazine, MIKADO (Hessischer Rundfunk).

As a highly talented student, Asja Valcic, born in 1967, already at 18 completed the music academy in her home city of Zagreb. She followed that with studies at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow and at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold. She has given solo performances among others under the direction of Zubin Mehta and Kazushi Ono; her chamber music partners have included members of distinguished ensembles such as Alban Berg, Brodsky and the Melos Quartet. She was awarded the "Concours international de jeunes concertistes de Douai" in France in 1995.

Parallel to her engagements and recordings in classical subjects, Asja Valcic has increasingly turned to improvisation and new forms of expression for her instrument. The radio.string.quartet.vienna, in which Valcic plays next to Bernie Mallinger (violin), Igmarr Jenner (violin) and Cynthia Liao (viola), is celebrated as an innovative formation in the non-classical-string-quartet genre. To date, six CD recordings with the globally successful jazz label, ACT MUSIC, have appeared. The broadly based repertoire encompasses rock and jazz as well as new music and experimental sound collages. Valcic interprets the cello as a wide-ranging rhythm instrument and substantially impacts the work in the ensemble with her arrangements. Her compositional creations range from the grooving pop song, "Fancy Nancy", which has become well-known via the Swedish singer, Rigmor Gustafsson, through to the tonally and richly picturesque "One Night in Vienna", which is coloured by classical music and appears on the most recent album, "Radiodream".

Along with Klaus Paier, the accordionist and bandoneonist, Asja Valcic has formed a congenial duo for the past several years. They create a new genre with his music compositions for cello and accordion/bandoneon – stylistically fueled by highly different influences and carried out with impressive virtuosity. "The fullness of Valcic's playing sometimes sounds like a complete string quartet and then again very typically jazz tones emerge when she plucks her cello like a rhythm instrument or handles it like a percussion instrument or masterfully works it with her bow," in the judgement of the magazine, JAZZPODIUM. The duo has performed in numerous concerts and at festivals around the world. Following their highly praised debut, "À Deux" (ACT Music, 2009), they will release in new album in 2012.

Asja Valcic has also made a name for herself as a lecturer, among others in Croatia, Germany, England, Japan, Austria and Italy.