



Les Reines Prochaines



About Les Reines Prochaines

Starting in 1987 as Les Reines des Couteaux (the queens of the knives), Muda Mathis, Teresa Alonso and Regina Florida Schmid showed their first performance in a underground space in Basel. It was all about political statements, rebellion against the bourgeois society and last but not least about feministic aesthetics and action. All of the founders are visual artists and created music by chopping vegetables for a soup, singing and some synthesizer sounds. One year later they continued as Les Reines Prochaines, created music- and multimedia-performances and new members associated with the group: Fränzi Madörin and Pipilotti Rist. Since then Les Reines Prochaines are on tour with changing group members but hold by a strong core. Present constellation: Michèle Fuchs, Fränzi Madörin, Muda Mathis, Barbara Naegelin, Sus Zwick. Almost all of us learned to play our instruments by just joining the group. The use of music as a medium is as equally important to us as the performance and visual environment. This mixture gives us the freedom to cross cultural borders and categories of the various arts. Over the years creating shows and music has been developed in our own personal style – sometimes we would call it professional dilettantism.

Each band member writes her own songs about her personal musical worlds, everyday images, memories and fantasies. They all sing and they all take turns providing accompaniment on the trumpet, saxophone, euphonium, accordion, guitar, bass, drums, strings and synthesizer. The instruments regularly change hands between the different band members, though some tend to be played regularly by the same one.

Interview Max Magazine in Kiev September 2005

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You are considered to be video artists, who are making music. How did you start, what's the history of your group? Did the changes in time and members of the group influence your music?

It was all about a performance. There was an independent, alternative "Culture-Garden" in Basel, a place for creative experiments as there were many of these self-governed places in the 80'ties. and 1987: Muda Mathis, Regina Florida Schmid und Teresa Alonso (coming from the fine art), were cooks chopping food in a loud rhythmic way. There were minimal patterns from a synthesizer and singing to it. They called themselves "Les Reines des couteaux" which means; the queens of the knives!

Other girls joined the band. First Fränzi Madörin and Pipilotti Rist (1988). Later came Gabi Streiff, Sus Zwick (1991) and Sibylle Hauert (1995). Michèle Fuchs (1998) and Barbara Nägelin (2001)

Now we are Muda Mathis, Fränzi Madörin, Sus Zwick, Barbara Naegelin und Michèle Fuchs. We also always have our own technician to tour with us. This year she also helps us out with props and other creative stage accessories. Her name is Tina Z'Rotz and she is a visual artist too.

(Please have a look at our homepage)

Of course, each new member is also composer and author. She brings in a new musical instrument, new possibilities and sounds. As every woman has different interests and predilections the influence on the performance is quite big.

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As we know, your live performances are not only emotional, but very conceptual, with brilliant costumes and decor. Who does your scenography? How are you making your own fashion? How do you conceive your performance in Kiev?

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It's all us. We develop the whole thing together. We take ourselves some days time in a quiet place and we go for brain journeys (almost without drugs). We use objects that are in our environment and we built things we want to use on stage.

We look at it all and decide if it is how we like it or not. We find solutions or we don't. In this case we try to accept provisory solutions. In the end we get used to what we have or we keep on trying out until we are happy. We create a show to be played for at least a year. (Depending on how often we get to play it!) Of course we adapt it to the place we are going, sometimes we have to shorten it a little -but as we always communicate a lot with the audience, the show never seems to be the same. We hardly ever play "old songs", meaning songs from another program. Especially because we respect the unique character of each member as an author and front singer of her own song. (Therefore the audience can not wish songs of CD's from past shows)

Our costumes are just the clothes each of us chooses for herself. If we think we look good we are happy. We try to keep our own style each and give some sort of collective picture as well. We like very much to feel comfortable, moving and jumping around on stage. I guess we have some sort of collective feeling for the picture we offer to our audience.

Fränzi Madörin is a professional and passionate tailor and knows how to realize colourful outfits. Tina Zrotz who is our technician, as well produces parts of our props. Les Reines Prochaines are as well into and far off fashion.

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You are the most popular women's music group from Switzerland.

You think so? Thanks!

We are definitely the most popular "off scene quiet tip".

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Do you consider yourself feminists?

Yes.

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Some critics have characterized your music performances as coming from "the artistic concept of professional dilettantism", some – as "punk", some – as "cabaret" or "burlesque". Do you associate yourself with such terms?

Yes, these are all influences among others, like the time we live in, or our proper age.

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With which international music performers do you sympathize?

"Stiller Haas" CH / "Taj Mahal" US or Afrika? / "Meredith Monk" US
"Lhasa" Canada / "Asita Hamidi" Turkey? / "Carla Bley" US / "Eivor Palsdotti" Island / "Fanfare Ciocarlia" Romania / "Kronos Quartett " US /
"wizards of twiddly" GB / "Nick Cave" US / "2Raum Wohnung" D / "Shirley Anne Hoffman" Canada/CH / "Robert Wyatt" GB / "Albert Mangelsdorf"
And many more

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It's the matter of coincidence, but in Ukraine you became well-known with your re-make of Chris Isaac's single "Wicked Games". Can you tell the story how this idea came to you?

"Wicked Games" is a special song we have recorded for a CD which is called ; "coeur on beurre". It is the Good bye song of the period with Pippilotti Rist. "Wicked Game" has never been performed on stage, but we exceptionally added it to our CD, not least because it goes very well together with the theme of the CD "coeur on beurre" witch means heart of butter...

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And, by the way, what do you think of today's re-make and DJ culture, do you have some favourites?

As you might know; except for very few songs, we don't cover songs. We are not against covering at al l- we just like to invent our own music, beginning by zero. (Of cause we are influenced by everything we've lived and heard since about 240 years (all together).

Music is to be shared and it's always nice to sing along and hear different interpretations of songs. Just like different views of a piece of art.

Kruder & Dorfmeister

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For most people it's difficult to you use trivialities as the sources of inspiration. How do you conceptually render pop culture phenomena?

It is not a new thing to take trivialities as sources of inspiration. We would rather say that issues of our every days live inspire us a lot. We think it is important to deal with that real world surrounding us. As a bucket full of proofs of our social, political and cultural habits. That is what we can tell about and be active analysing and criticizing etc.

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How would you regard today's video art? Is it a kind of practice, community, lifestyle?

Video is a contemporary medium, it permits the creation of art, just like painting and sculptural art. Video permits personal and individual expression. It took 30 Years, for video art to find its way into our museums. Today, video cameras and computers are part of everyday life. They have entered in the households of our parents and into those of our uncles and aunts.

It is important for (male and female) artists to learn about modern art media. An artist's personal view of our world should help us to counter the omnipresent and overwhelming (mainstream) commercial pressure.