

ESTHER KAISER SONGS OF COURAGE

VÖ: 31.8. 2018, GLM/ Fine Music www.glm.de

+++

www.estherkaiser.de

“Courage is a matter of the heart, of the core of a person, therefore one can use courageous as a synonym for brave (the French and English word courage is derived from coeur).”

(From: Paul Tillich “The Courage to Be”)



Jazz singer Esther Kaiser understands the term courage as a matter of the heart in her new program **“Songs of Courage”** and would like to combine worlds on her new album, with the goal to find a common musical language for the topics of our time. Jazz sounds meet oriental sounds, Berlin jazz musicians meet refugees from Syria and Iraq.

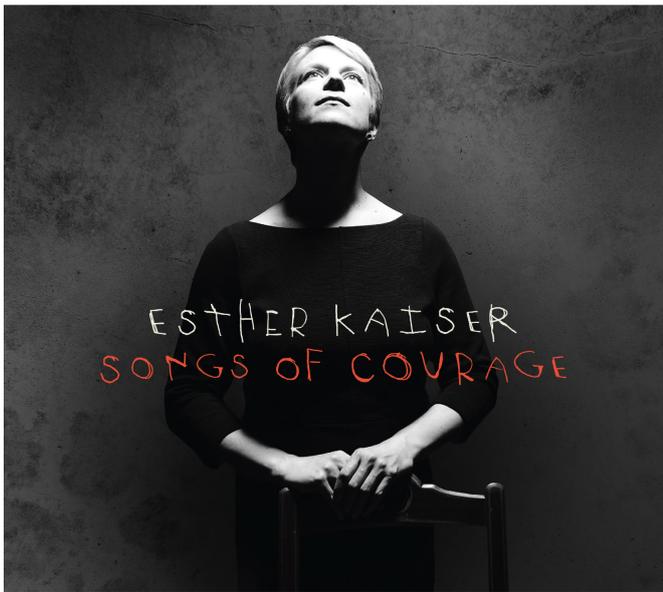
“I was looking for ways to express social issues through my medium, the music. And to open my mouth – in the truest sense of the word. This is important to me, right now, with the current issues, the mood in our society and this sometimes irreconcilable split between people and opinions. Nina Simone once said “An artist’s duty is to reflect the times” – I see it very similar ` Esther Kaiser replies to the question about the motivation for the new album.

Esther Kaiser has looked a lot into strong and courageous artist personalities on both sides of the Atlantic – and has strong links to Eisler and

Brecht as well as to jazz artists like Abbey Lincoln, Nina Simone and Max Roach. The songs of Abbey Lincoln on her last CD “Learning how to listen – the music of Abbey Lincoln” (GLM 2015)

were also a trailblazer and inspiration for Esther Kaiser’s new album “Songs of Courage”. In the course of the band’s live concerts, they were joined by other artists songs – pieces by John Lennon, David Bowie, Suzanne Vega, Hanns Eisler and Chick Corea, for example, which now sound and communicate together in a completely new context.

“I grew up with the music of the 80s, but through my mother’s records also with the political songs of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez,” says the singer “We shall overcome



e.g. is one of the first songs I can remember, I wanted to sing that song in a different way and get rid of the nostalgia of the '68 and instead interpret it based on our current situation in 2018".

The musical result deliberately does not want to get stuck in a stylistic drawer – and moves somewhere between jazz, urban songwriter pop, improvised and oriental world music. And when the exceptional vocalist Esther Kaiser then resorts to exotic instruments such as the Kalimba and the Indian shrutibox, one does not even

think about such musical assignments anymore.

The singer, who besides her concert activity still holds a professorship for vocal jazz at the Musikhochschule Dresden, is accompanied by an international band of top-class instrumentalists; Berlin jazz musicians meet musicians from Syria and Iraq. Bassist Marc Muellbauer, who has played on numerous records for ECM, Roland Schneider on drums and pianist Tino Derado, who know each other from New York's jazz scene, have been part of Esther Kaiser's band for years. Just as guitarist Rüdiger Krause hailing from Magdeburg, for many years the companion of Barbara Talheim and Manfred Krug. In addition, two musicians who have not been living in Germany for a long time and came to here as refugees, but are already actively involved in shaping Germany's concert life have joined the band: Akram Younus Ramadhan Al-Siraj, a young cellist from Baghdad, who has visited Germany with the Iraqi Symphonic Orchestra a few years ago and who is now a permanent member of the award-winning Dresden band Banda International. And Hasan Al Nour, a medical student and virtuoso Kanun player from Damascus with an absolute pitch, who has already led several bands in his homeland.

"While working on this album with my Berlin band and the two colleagues from the Middle East, we were always surprised how close we are, how we all approach music, scales and improvisation – whether influenced by the European-American Jazz or by oriental music. We got along very well very quickly."

This new collective sound also deliberately wants to disturb at some points – when, for example, in Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" suddenly the oriental Kanun sounds – then the song and its contents are moved automatically and painfully close to the current political situation. Some moments in the studio unexpectedly affected the musicians: "When we recorded "Where have the flowers gone" with Akram Al-Siraj on the cello, who is from Baghdad and had to leave two years ago because he – as a free-thinking artist – just was not safe anymore, that went very differently under your skin."

Or the own composition that Esther Kaiser contributed to the new album entitled "Wanderer between the worlds", in which Hasan Al Nours Kanun seems to be narrating and almost urgently breaking into a new world and which is dedicated to the "wanderers of our time". At the latest with the text line "But the waters are so deep" you can see involuntarily the waves of the Mediterranean in front of yourself and everything that one connects with it since the refugee crisis. The album uses such strong and archetypal images again and again and certainly uses a cliché here and there.

"Yes, the title Songs of Courage is maybe exaggerated and also a bit naive and do-gooding – and what can I say – that's what it is. Despite – or perhaps because that's why I chose him. It is intended to stimulate reflection and also to start controversial discussions – that is the task of art and music in my opinion. "

And here we are again with Nina Simone: „How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?“

Album Line Up:

Esther Kaiser - voc, Tino Derado - p, Marc Muellbauer - b, Roland Schneider - dr, Hasan Al Nour - kanun, Akram Al-Siraj - cello, Lauren Franklin-Steinmetz - cello, Birgitta Flick - sax, Franz Bauer - vibes

Courage is.....

„Courage is also the determination to resolve conflicts without weapons! (Hasan Al Nour, Damaskus/ Berlin)

„I take my cue from Coco Chanel, who said: "The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud.“ (Roland Schneider, Berlin)

„Speaking up, even if your instinct tells you to flee“ (Tino Derado, Berlin)

„Courage is very important for me personally. Especially the courage to follow ones dreams. Every one of us has dreams and should trust them. If we do not tire of investing our strength and energy, our dreams will eventually reward us in the real world.“ (Akram Younus Al-Siraj, Bagdad-Dresden)

„...besides speaking up, specifically taking action! Often contrary to our idleness and timidity.... And: Not getting used to circumstances that are unjust.“ (Esther Kaiser, Berlin)

„Courage for me is very connected to standing by your own actions, thoughts and feelings - and perceiving and accepting the responsibility that grows from our own actions.“ (Birgitta Flick, Berlin)

„Courage always leads into the unknown, and is thus the sister of revolution and improvisation. Desperate courage is proverbial, but it is curiosity and ingeniousness that really give us courage.“ (Rüdiger Krause, Berlin/ Leipzig)

„To be courageous means not to let fear dictate your life - as fear is not a good advisor.“ (Volker Greve, Berlin)

„The honest urge to see the world as it is can be courageous in itself. Courage might be finding a space - however small - from which one can contribute something positive to this world.“ (Marc Muellbauer, Berlin)