

**Klaus  
Koenig** Jazz Live Trio



**Autumn Girl**



**Jazz Live Trio**  
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## **Autumn Girl**

Writing pieces for improvisations is a difficult business. You need a good idea that sticks with the listener, a logical and interesting development, and a convincing ending. Even though our music is often only 16 or 24 bars long, that doesn't make things any easier. And then there is always the question of style: if you maneuver melodically and harmonically in a stylistic space that was conquered decades ago, the piece may be attractive and acceptable, but imitation does not have the same significance as invention. One has to live with that.

Compositions need a title, if only to be registered with the musical rights societies as the property of the author. If, as in my case, you've reached about opus 200, the search for a suitable title can be a bit tough. The criteria according to which titles are come up with in Jazz and pop are many. Songwriters who write for singers and work



with a lyricist have it easy. A title can always be easily derived from the lyrics. If you don't have lyrics to back you up, you might find a hint of the mood of the song or a clever play on words, or, more often, you're simply left with a bothersome problem to solve, beyond the musical one.

The wonderful early Romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy wrote a lot of very beautiful compositions for piano, which I know well because I was once given the honor to produce them for the radio. He generically called them «Songs without words». Bundled into eight booklets of six pieces each, there are 48 such «songs» that manage quite well without lyrics. I have, shall we say, borrowed this practical procedure from him, albeit not 48 times. I have in any case managed to come up with some dozen pieces.

And now a few words about the compositions and their titles on this CD:

AUTUMN GIRL: I originally wanted to call the piece (that's dedicated to my wife Ruth - we're both fall babies) a more specific «November Girl». That is, until I discovered quite by chance that Francis Boland, the co-leader of the legendary Kenny Clarke-Francis Boland Big Band, had already used this title. As if that wasn't enough, when I looked through my record collection, I found that I had played the piece myself once when we accompanied my friend Gianni Basso on a tour of Italy, and also recorded it on an LP in Milan. The tune had completely slipped my mind. My «Autumn Girl», as it happens, is 68 bars long, which is not to say that it is particularly difficult to play. The real difficulty, as with every piece, is to fill the form with the most imaginative, inspired content possible.

CANZONETTA PER GIANNI commemorates this good friend Gianni Basso, who was arguably Italy's best-known Jazz musician in his younger years. Thanks to him I had unforgettable (musical and non-musical) experiences in Italy, a country that has always particularly attracted me.

Of course there are also SONGS WITHOUT WORDS (tracks 2 and 9). MORE NO MORE somewhat obscures the meaning of the title, which everyone can interpret in their own way.

I remember BABY POINT as a line from an Antonioni film and it struck me as a good title for this somewhat audacious blues.

SINE NOMINE: I straight out couldn't think of a title for this ballad.

As the title suggests, LINE FOR SEVEN THINGS comes from the repertoire of our quintet «Seven Things». As a trio, we kind of brushed this piece against the grain in the studio. As a result, it bears little resemblance to the quintet version.

SONG FOR A CHILD: In his early years, Herbie Hancock tried to simplify his pianistic language in his recording «Speak like a Child» without having to accept any loss of musical substance. Needless to say, given his high standard, the result is quite convincing. I wasn't thinking that far ahead when writing this tune. I was only interested in a language that avoids slipping into the mundane while maintaining the greatest possible melodic and harmonic naturalness. Actually, this often delicate balancing act is always on my mind when writing pieces.

ERACI: «The music speaks for itself»: The great Miles Davis didn't think much of putting his music into words. For this time, I'll just follow his lead and let the music speak for itself.

By agreement, in our group the writing and the composition of the improvisational backgrounds is entirely in my hands. Fortunately, my fellow players put up with the frequent revisions and new versions I put them through without complaining.

I hardly ever get a piece right on the first try. Pleasure and frustration go hand in hand. The pleasure of having a supposedly good idea and the frustration of not being able to logically and consequently develop it, or, if a composition is completed, realizing the next day that the result is very weak and you have to keep working on it, or even toss the whole thing in the bin. For me, composing is not an end in itself. That's why I don't see myself as a composer. My pieces have a specific purpose. They are necessary in order to have playing material for concerts and recordings. And as is often the case today, as a player I write my own music. As best I can.

The relationship between the composed and improvised parts is always a problem. The aim is to balance the written and the improvised, to create a whole in which the two parts are dimensioned in such a way that the improvisation does not become an end in itself. Through overlong drum solos for example, as was often the case in the past. The great Miles Davis is known to have often admonished his long-time comrade-in-arms John Coltrane to play shorter solos. Coltrane, for his part, objected to this, arguing that he needed this time to build up and round off his solo.

Humans - or let's be more precise: Occidentals - perceive the four-bar pattern in music as a natural unit. This can be consciously negated for the sake of a special effect, but the four-bar and its doublings appear to us as correct, as normal. Composers of popular music have always exploited this phenomenon. Almost all songs from the illusory American Songbook, which continues to be the most important model for improvisation for many Jazz musicians today, also accept this phenomenon. My pieces don't use a fixed form, although my faster pieces always go on for eight bars or multiples thereof. My ballads on the other hand, have any possible number of bars, since with slow tempos, the four-bar feeling gets lost on the listener.

Writing ballads is perhaps the most difficult task for a Jazz musician who wants to compose his own music. The same probably applies to the task of playing ballads. During a tour through a few Swiss cities with the wonderful tenor player Booker Ervin, I once complimented him on his sovereign ability to master fast and very fast pieces with complete ease. He replied that playing fast pieces was not particularly difficult. Ballads were the big challenge. It was only later that I realized what he meant by that: filling the bars with the right notes is very easy. But drawing a meaningful, logical line through a slow tempo that moves the listener remains a goal that you may never achieve to your total satisfaction.

Among the American «name musicians» that I was allowed to accompany, I had the most frequent contact with altoist Lee Konitz and tenor Johnny Griffin. I had a fairly friendly or even comradely relationship with Konitz in particular for several years. And of course I was always able to play with him. While he stayed with us for a while, there wasn't an evening when he didn't suggest after dinner that we go to the studio and play something. He simply couldn't do without daily contact with that which was closest to him in life. He also liked to talk about his eventful life in the center of Jazz, the Big Apple. While playing, he encouraged me to play fewer chords and rather improvise a second line. In his generation, «contrapuntal» improvisation was an important topic. Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Bob Brookmeyer, John Lewis: they were all influenced by it.

Two-horn improvisations in a slightly different context have almost become a trademark in our group «Seven Things». Our two professors have known each other so well and for so long that such passages are a safe bet for us. Within limits. For the time being, we have had to give up trying to lead both wind players through a fixed harmonic sequence rubato, i.e. without a fixed tempo. It would take a lot of patience and time to get to grips with this difficulty. On verrà.

But back to Lee Konitz: I noticed that he, like Griffin, liked to play the same pieces over and over again, although both of them certainly had a hundred or more songs in their heads that they could have played at any given moment. Over time, I came to understand why these Jazz greats were not interested in playing as many different pieces as possible: when all is said and done, the problems are the same in every piece. The original, the individual song is therefore not important. The only thing that matters is, "How can I get through the harmonies of this piece today, for the 1001st time, even more logically, even more elegantly, even more inventively"? It makes no difference what the piece is. It seems to me that we are approaching the core of what improvising in Jazz means: drawing the best line through the harmonic structure, that's what it's all about. Particularly for horn players.

A pianist has more improvisational possibilities than a horn player. After all, he has the chords at his disposal. However, in order to get on the same page as the wind instruments, a piano player can use octave parallels to find his way through the harmonies. Then he is on an equal footing with the «horns» and can gauge how difficult it is to find the best possible path through a forest full of harmonies. A very good exercise, and at the same time a stylistic device for the piano player, which I use again and again. I will never find the ideal line through the harmonies. But that doesn't bother me. The journey is the goal.

**Klaus Koenig**

**Klaus Koenig, p, composition**, studied at the Acoustic Institute of the University of Music in Detmold, which he left in 1962 with a degree in sound engineering (with a distinction). He worked as a recording manager for the Swiss radio station SRF in Zurich until 1997. Alongside this he developed several hundred shows for the jazz department. In 1964 the radio station made him responsible for accompanying guest soloists in the radio concert series «Jazz Live». His «Jazz Live Trio», the most important players in which included Isla Eckinger, Peter Frei as a bassist, Peter Schmidlin and Pierre Favre as drummers - could be heard in more than 100 live broadcasts with soloists from around the world until 1982. The performers included many top American and European musicians such as Art Farmer, Dexter Gordon, Slide Hampton, Clark Terry, Benny Bailey, Phil Woods, Cliff Jordan, Kenny Wheeler and Albert Mangelsdorff. A 13-CD series by TCB documents this series of concerts. Longer-term links were established with Johnny Griffin, Lee Konitz, Sal Nistico, Franco Ambrosetti, Gianni Basso, Roman Schwaller and others. The group «Magog», made up of Hans Kennel, Andy Scherrer, Paul Haag and the Jazz Live Trio, was formed on his initiative in 1973 and enjoyed a great degree of international success. The collaboration with the actor and reciter Gert Westphal in a «jazz and lyrics» programme spanned several decades. A «classics and jazz» programme developed over several years with the classical pianist Annette Weisbrod. Participation in around 40 albums. Work on musical theory (on the tempering of keyboard instruments in old music) and musical education (piano voicing). In 1998 he had to stop his musical activity due to an illness in both of his hands. After many years of therapy, the 2012/2013 season with the old/new «Jazz Live Trio» and the 2013/2014 season with the «Seven Things» quintet with Dani Schenker, Christoph Merki and the trio meant a return to the music scene. In 2024 five albums are on the market, three of them having received five star reviews in the press.

**[www.klauskoenig.ch](http://www.klauskoenig.ch)**



**Klaus Koenig**  
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**Patrick Sommer, Andi Wettstein**  
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**Patrick Sommer**, b, born in 1976. Patrick studied contrabass and electric bass at the Swiss Jazz School in Bern and in Los Angeles. He lives in Zurich and works as a freelance musician. A solid feeling for timings, a broad stylistic and instrumental range, an unswerving taste and his ability to adapt make him one of the most in-demand bassists on the Swiss music scene. He holds regular concerts both in Switzerland and abroad and is involved in theatre and dance projects as a musician and composer. Selected discography: Tony Renold Quartet: Places (Unit Records 2011); Plus Baschnagel's Latin World: Son Song (Altrisuoni 2011); Martin Lechner: Gentlemen Are Hard To Find (BHM 2011); Bucher Sommer Friedli & Aeby: Expanding (Dryrecords 2011); Bucher 5: Here And There (Unit Records 2010); Limber Lumber - R, ðsli Sommer Sartorius: Diapassion (Unit Records 2010); Tim Kleinert Trio: Free Passage To Now (Covariance 2010); Peter Zihlmann & TOW Orchestra: Tales Of The Old World (Unit Records 2010); Roli Frei & The Soulful Desert: Strong (Sound Service 2010); Adrian Frey Trio: No Flags (Unit Records 2010); Julian Amacker Universe: A Tea And Me (FF Records 2009); Marianne Racine Quartet: Jazz (2009); Patrick Sommer: Speechless (Rock Archive 2009); Bucher Sommer Friedli: Farb (Dryrecords 2008); The Moondog Show: Marfa (Fazerecords 2007); Tony Renold Quartet: Timeless Flow (Universal Records 2005); Lisette Spinnler Quartet: in Between (TCB Records 2004). He has been playing for the Jazz Live Trio since 2012. [www.patricksommer.net](http://www.patricksommer.net)

**Andi Wettstein**, dr, born in 1978. Studied the drums at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles and at the Zurich University of the Arts. His active involvement in concerts has brought him together with, among many others, Franco Ambrosetti, Peter Madsen, Theo Kapiladis, Adrian Frey and Tobias Preisig. In addition to his artistic work, he also teaches at the Staufen School of Music. Future projects: The Murder Of Amus Ames, Mistura, Markus Bischof Trio, Ray Bourbon, Kabel, Jazz Live Trio.

**TCB 01232** Magog Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival 1973  
(Originally released 1973 by Evasion Records, Lausanne)

**TCB 01262** Gert Westphal und das Jazz Live Trio  
Jazz & Lyrik – Heinrich Heine & Gottfried Benn

**TCB 01302** Magog  
(Originally released 1976 by JAPO Records, Munich)

**TCB 02212** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 21  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Sal Nistico / Tony Scott

**TCB 02222** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 22  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Albert Mangelsdorff / Francois Jeanneau

**TCB 02242** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 24  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Gianni Basso / Guy Lafitte

**TCB 02252** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 25  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Idrees Sulieman / Benny Bailey

**TCB 02262** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 26  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Karin Krog / Enrico Rava / Miriam Klein

**TCB 02272** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 27  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Phil Woods / Eddie Daniels / Stuff Smith / Leo Wright

**TCB 02282** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 28  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Kenny Wheeler / Alan Skidmore

**TCB 02322** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 32  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Sahib Shihab / Art Farmer / Clifford Jordan

**TCB 02342** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 34  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Slide Hampton / Karl Berger / Glenn Ferris

**TCB 02362** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 36  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Johnny Griffin / Hal Singer / Leszek Zadlo / Ferdinand Povel

**TCB 02382** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 38  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Dexter Gordon / Magog

**TCB 02392** Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 39  
Jazz Live Trio Concert feat. Franco Ambrosetti / Andy Scherrer / Roman Schwaller /  
Hans Kennel / Thomas Grunwald / Daniel Bourquin

**TCB 32502** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
Nausikaa

**TCB 33102** Klaus Koenig Seven Things  
Piazza Rotonda

**TCB 35202** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
Night Thoughts

**TCB 35402** Klaus Koenig Seven Things  
Seven Things I Always Wanted To Say

**TCB 36202** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
Music for the Gentle Man

**TCB 36602** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
It's a Foreign Language

**TCB 36702** Klaus Koenig Seven Things  
Kings and Illusions

**TCB 37602** Klaus Koenig Seven Things  
Dark With Excessive Bright

**TCB 37702** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
Songs For Leila

**TCB 38302** Klaus Koenig Seven Things  
An Homage to Celia

**TCB 38602** Klaus Koenig Jazz Live Trio  
Autumn Girl

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