



## Press Kit: ROTH – Keyfiddle Journey

Thomas Roth has made a name for himself as an exceptional nyckelharpa player. Roth's unique style of playing this little-known historic instrument has gained him international notice. After enriching the medieval music scene for 30 years as Geyers' frontman, he entered new territory with his nyckelharpa. Although the nyckelharpa, or keyfiddle as it is also known, is nowadays mainly played in the Swedish or medieval music scene, Roth takes this exotic instrument on a journey around the world. Peru, Wales, Sweden and Italy are among the stops enroute. While he wrote a hymn about Munich, the song *Latin Harpa Swing* combines the ease and the rhythmical diversity of South America with the remarkable sound of the keyfiddle. Thomas Roth performed with a variety of musicians from different cultural backgrounds in a cooperation culminating in the CD 'Ingredients'. From this project a band of 5 musicians emerged.

The newly formed band **ROTH - Keyfiddle Journey** created a special crossover Roth sound, in which the enchanting sound of the keyfiddle is the centre-piece of each song - sometimes subtle, sometimes as overt as an entire orchestra. Redpipe, whistle, keyboard, guitar and drums complement the sound. The band principally plays original compositions. The band ROTH transports the listener into a panoramic soundscape, lightly evoking the harmonies of one country and then another, in a place where folk, rock, latin and classic fuse. Vocal sections alternate with instrumental pieces in a fascinating journey, on which the listener is always curious as to what might come next. The comments from band leader Thomas Roth create a relaxed atmosphere which nevertheless differs from gig to gig - after all, a journey through space and time always generates something new. The number of musicians interested in joining the project has increased as well. And thus Roth cannot just be heard performing with his band of the same name but also in a variety of other line-ups, including as soloist in a large orchestra.

## Press Release (short form)

Thomas Roth has made an international name for himself as an exceptional nyckelharpa player. He performs in a variety of line-ups as well as with a large orchestra. For some time now he has been performing with his band ROTH – Keyfiddle Journey on a musical trip around the world. Supported by other equally talented musicians, Thomas Roth's truly unique performance on the Keyfiddle transports his listeners into a magical world of diverse cultures. United with Elias Maier's Celtic bagpipe and Irish flute, Frank Tischer's Hammond organ, spinet, piano and keyboard sounds, Florian Huber's djembe, cajon and drum rhythms, and Thomas Schmitz' bass guitar. The band ROTH steals its listeners away into musical dream worlds where different eras, national sounds musical styles merge and blend. The band chiefly plays original compositions.

## CV Thomas Roth

For more than 30 years Thomas Roth is a professional musician known as one of the best nyckelharpa players worldwide

Roth's style on the nyckelharpa is absolutely unique. He releases the instrument from its corset of Swedish and medieval music - the typical terrain of the nyckelharpa or keyfiddle today. Roth takes the instrument on a journey through the most diverse of cultures and musical genres, creating his inimitable crossover Roth sound where high speed sequences alternate with slow, sentimental notes. His style of playing benefits tremendously from the fact that he learned the violin as a 5 year old and hasn't stopped playing since. It comes as no surprise that Roth is highly knowledgeable about classical music.

After his A-levels in 1976, Roth studied classical singing at the University of Music and Visual Arts in Stuttgart for a few semesters as well as English, German and History at the University of Stuttgart.

He subsequently majored in education with a minor in philosophy at the PH Ludwigsburg. It was during his time at university and his teacher training that Roth's involvement in the Stuttgart music team began. In 1985, he co-founded the medieval group **Des Geyers Schwarzer Haufen**. By 1999 he had played countless gigs at festivals, in clubs, castles and medieval banquets. He and his band were invited to a variety of TV shows such as 'Drehscheibe', 'Im Krug zum grünen Kranze', 'Fröhlicher Alltag', 'Teleillustrierte' and 'Festival der Spielleut', as well as singing 'Servus, Grüezi und Hallo' with Maria und Margot Hellwig in an RTL TV show. In 1990 he joined the theatre group 'Das Ensemble' from Ellen Schwiers on a tour which lasted 123 days.

The production of Romeo and Julia received its first award, with the music mentioned as a deciding factor. Roth took on minor roles in the production, as well as playing the violin, mandolin, hurdy-gurdy and the nyckelharpa. In the band he additionally played the bagpipe,

as well as making a name for himself as lead singer and for his profound and humorous comments.

Roth recorded CDs such as 'Die Erste', 'All voll', 'Stella splendens' and 'Balladen über Liebe, Leben und Tod' – musical versions of Francois Villon poems - 'Des Geyers schwarzer Haufen – Live 99'. At the start of the 90s, Roth founded the duet 'Heiter bis Folkig' with the guitarist, songwriter and singer Mike Janipka.

Following on from a what was a very success era together, the duet have now joined forces again.

In 1987 Thomas Roth met Ex-Deep-Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore at the Götzenburg concert in Jagsthausen.

Roth's band were sitting in a bar after their show when the landlord asked them to come into the backroom: Ritchie Blackmore, who had just heard their performance, was there and would like to meet the medieval band. No one got to bed that night, and Roth and Blackmore have been music friends ever since. Roth has repeatedly played as supporting act for Ritchie Blackmore's band Blackmore's Night in Germany, Czech Republic, France, Denmark, Norway and America. Locations have included the legendary Olympia in Paris - where Thomas received standing ovations - the Broadway in New York and in the House of Blues in Chicago.

In 1999, in the midst of all these concerts, came a turning point: 4 members of the Des Geyers Schwarzer Haufen separated from the fifth and preformed from then on as Geyers. The Geyers, an institution of German medieval music, stands out in a scene where medieval bands and springing up like mushrooms, frequently performing in a martial manner with an emphasis on visual effects. In contrast the Geyers focuses on the pushing the boundaries of its music and creating the genre HistoRock. The HistRock album 'Lästerzungen' follows the release of the CD 'Und dein roter Mund'. The band then moves away from rock into quieter waters with its album 'Königsweg'.

At the same time as his work with the band Geyers Roth developed a stand-up comedy programme with the title 'Geilheit duldet keinen Aufschub'. And in parallel to his tour for the album 'Königsweg' he worked on a new CD with the nyckelharpa as focus. He invited musicians from around the world to join the project, marking the beginning of a global journey with his nyckelharpa. And every time the producer Steffen Burkhardt let other musicians listen to the material recorded to date, they wanted to join the project. This is the reason that practically a whole orchestra appears on Roth's CD 'Ingredients'. From there, it seemed the obvious next step that the studio production should appear live on stage as well. Thus Roth founded the band ROTH - Keyfiddle Journey, which premiered at the end of 2014.

## **Formations**

### **ROTH – Keyfiddle Journey**

The keyfiddle travels around the world. From Munich via Wales to South America and to many other countries, but always in the realm of pure fantasy. Thomas Roth and his keyfiddle are supported by Frank Tischer (keyboard), Elias Maier (redpipe, whistles), Florian Huber (drums, vocals) and Thomas Schmitz (bass guitar). The programme is based in folkrock with excursions into jazz and classic.

### **Tom and Herry and their Flea(s)**

Just like Tom and Jerry, Thomas (Tom) Roth and Harald (Herry) Scharpfenecker (classic guitar) enjoy playing this acoustic programme on their own, but depending on requested ensemble and location, can bring some friends (fleas) to perform with them. A programme equally suitable for smaller venues with fine world music. The duet can be complemented by Florian Huber (percussion, vocals), Elias Maier (whistles, redpipe), Brenda Bobke from Brasil (percussion, vocals and dance) and Javico Rodriguez from Peru (guitar, percussion, vocals).

### **Thomas Roth and Wolfgang Stute**

Guitarist Wolfgang Stute played with Heinz Rudolf Kunze for many years and is a brilliant musician and percussionist who feels comfortable with a variety of different styles. In this programme Wolfgang Stute's compositions - which were originally written with the violin as a supporting or partially solo instrument - are accompanied by Thomas Roth's keyfiddle. This combination creates a whole new sound. And conversely Thomas Roth's compositions get a new contemporary resonance through Stute's open and other-worldly style. Beautiful and exciting.

### **Thomas Roth and Frank Tischer**

The programme with duet partner and keyboarder Frank Tischer is powerful and upbeat. Frank Tischer's rainbow of sounds and styles coupled with Thomas Roths extraordinary keyfiddle playing transport the audience to new worlds: to mystic places, to saloons, parlours and classic concert halls. Their mutual time together in the band ROTH - Keyfiddle Journey has moreover made them into a well-rehearsed and adept team, resulting in delightfully dynamic and unanticipated interaction both musically and verbally. Frank Tischer is also a member of the Spencer Davies Group, the Hamburg Blues Band and plays with the guitarist Miller Anderson.

## **Heiter bis Folkig 2.0 Thomas Roth and Mike Janipka**

In the nineties Thomas Roth played with singer, guitarist and songwriter Mike Janipka. At that time they performed they performed very successfully as the band 'Heiter bis Wolfig'. Now they're back in combination again (Heiter bis Wolfig 2.0), mixing past and present. They combine classic songs like 'Mull of Kintyre', 'Scarborough Fayre' or 'Paint It Black' with their own songs such as 'Zusammensein in Harmonie', 'Dummenblues' or 'Geilheit duldet keinen Aufschub'. They have injected new life into previous titles, but most of all the audience can look forward to their new material. Their unique brand consists of their distinct and expressive voices, their spontaneous dialogue and witty wordplay as well as their musical passion.

## **ROTH – Medieval Colours**

It's not surprising that after 30 years of playing medieval music Thomas Roth knows its repertoire off by heart. But he also seasons this music with his own ingredients such as groove, extravagant harmonies and a fine finish. He is regularly booked as a support for Blackmore's Night, where he performs at locations such as the Prinzregententheater in Munich or the Olympia in Paris. Providing the locality and, more especially, the technical requirements are suitable, then ROTH – MEDIEVAL COLOURS is an extraordinary, fine medieval act.

## **Press comments**

### **Reutlinger Generalanzeiger**

'Nyckelharpa meets bagpipe and drum, virtuoso Paganini-style violin riffs meet archaic vocal lines – fascinating!'

### **Marbacher Zeitung**

'The Nyckelharpa is a kind of a violin with keys - mostly popular in Sweden or with friends of medieval music. Roth and his musicians however proved in an extended 2-hour plus performance just how brilliantly versatile this instrument can be. But most impressive was Roth's solo shortly before the interval. With fingers which sped across the keys and bow dancing, Roth initially created classic baroque from Bach before suddenly changing genre and gliding seamlessly into the opening riff of Deep Purple's 'Smoke on the Water'. This daring but utterly successful combination sums up the concert throughout.'

### **Backnanger Kreiszeitung zum Auftritt der Winterkulturtage im Schwäbischen Wald 2014/2015**

Thomas Roth sends his keyfiddle, or nyckelharpa as it is also known, on a trip around the world, touches a variety of different music cultures and nevertheless manages to create a truly unique, homogeneous sound. And this sound is powerful: driving rhythms und high-speed playing, such as in the English traditional song 'Ridiculous Sisters', alternate with wonderful slow and sentimental melodies, for example when the band reaches the heart of Wales ('Welsh Air').

In between the band goes on an excursion to classic music and at the latest then it becomes clear to the audience that Roth's performance on the keyfiddle is somewhat equivalent to a high-wire act without a safety net. There aren't many musicians who would dare to play the prelude of Bach's first cello suite on the nyckelharpa at such speed. But Thomas Roth, who has been a professional musician for over 30 years, presents even this piece with effortless - albeit highly focused - grace. Following that, he captivates with humorous remarks and observations.

### **Haller Tagblatt**

'The new formation of Ex Geyers front man Thomas Roth from Ludwigsburg has brought a fair amount of power to this snowy and peaceful village (...) This crossover Roth sound combines folk influences from around the world with rock and classic. As well as some little-known traditional numbers, the band plays a lot of original compositions from keyboarder Frank Tischer, as well as 'Munich' written by Thomas Roth, a homage to the Bavarian capital.'

## **Backnanger Kreiszeitung zum Auftritt im club junges europa in Backnang**

Needless to say that the charismatic front man with the Swabian, Bavarian and Italian roots is to be found performing on the nyckelharpa, or keyfiddle, as it is also known - it is his virtuoso feats and exceptional versatility on this instrument which have made him famous. The band is quite simply called Roth.

The programme: Keyfiddle Journey. Because the man with the buccaneer aura and his colleagues take the audience on a trip through the world of music.

## **Die Nyckelharpa**

The nyckelharpa is a mechanical string instrument which was first mentioned in the 14th century. For several centuries this instrument vanished into thin air. At the end of 1920s, the Swede August Bohlin designed the chromatic nyckelharpa which is played today. It was August Bohlin as well as the Swedish musician and instrument maker Eric Sahlström who helped this instrument to gain popularity once more.

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