

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT



Born on January 29, 1961, grew up in the canton of Basel. 1980 Schwietert makes his first films during the youth unrest in Basel for "Videogenossenschaft Basel". 1981/82 Lives Brazil, where he works as a director's assistant for TV Globo in the music film department. 1983 Attends a guest semester at the California Art Institute in San Francisco. Returns to Europe; 1984-90 Studies film at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie in Berlin (DFFB). 1991 Schwietert founds his production firm NEAPEL FILM in Therwil, where he made two short films, as well as other films in international co-production. 1996 Schwietert achieves international breakthrough with **A Tickle in the Heart**, a film for the cinema about the Epstein Brothers, klezmer musicians who had performed together for over sixty years. Since then he has made a name for himself as an astute music film director. Stefan Schwietert lives and works in Therwil and Berlin. Apart from working as a film director, he also lectures at numerous film schools and supervises other film projects as a dramaturge.

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

Films that tickle the heart and echo in the mind, that strike an inner chord and leave you dreaming: since Stefan Schwietert celebrated a minor stroke of genius with **A Tickle In The Heart** 1996, which also gained him his international breakthrough, he has devoted his attention to the – documentary – music film. Since then he has become one of the important figures in this genre. His films, particularly those made for the cinema – such as **A Tickle In The Heart**, **El Acordeon del Diablo**, **Das Alphorn** and **Accordion Tribe** – are marked not only by a compelling imagery and beguiling musicality, they have also set new genre standards. Indeed, they go far beyond – not only in what, but also in how they tell - what is commonly viewed as a "music documentary". A distinguishing feature of Schwietert's films is the cosmopolitanism and scope which the director conveys through his impartiality: even when Schwietert directs his attention to the homeland – for instance, to Switzerland's national instrument in **Das Alphorn** – or to the ostensibly familiar – accordion music in **Accordion Tribe** – his films are expeditions into fascinating, new worlds. They journey at once into the past and into the future. They tell of ancient traditions and that which is vanishing, while nevertheless referring to the emergence of the new, not least based on this emphasis of the fading. It could also be said that Schwietert's films revolve around the very origins of a type of music, a society and its culture, of life per se. This is palpable in **Das Alphorn** and **Accordion Tribe**, in which Schwietert traces the history of a type of music based on its specific instrument. However, this was just as true for **A Tickle In The Heart** (1996) – Schwietert's film about the Epstein Brothers, who are over eighty years old and enjoying their retirement in a paradise for senior citizens in Florida and their klezmer music – as it was for **El Acordeon del Diablo** – his portrait about Francisco "Pacho" Rada, the Columbian

"I have always attempted to combine the qualities of a fiction film with those of a documentary film and render the difference between the two imperceptible. This is often the case when a film crosses genres. In addition, I hope to be able to prove that a documentary film can be just as dynamic, entertaining and touching as a fiction film."

Stefan Schwietert, 2000

accordionist who is well over eighty years old. But **A Tickle In The Heart** marked the onset of the revival of klezmer music at the end of the second millennium, with brief appearances by Joel Rubin as well. **El Acordeon del Diablo** tells of the tragic and legendary life story of "Pacho" Rada, the model for the figure of Francisco El Hombre, the troubadour in Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. But it also tells of the history of Vallenato: the popular folk music from Columbia's Caribbean coast, which has been fused with other styles of music and has made a triumphal course around the world in recent years. Even more striking than these singularities regarding the content of Schwietert's films are the stylistic characteristics: the unadorned

## FILMOGRAPHY

1986	Das Topolino Projekt
1987	Tapez 36-15 Code Gorba
1988	Fualni 88, the Last Ten Days of a Campagne
1991	Sprung aus den Wolken
1994	Der Schatten ist lang
1996	A Tickle in the Heart
1998	Im Warteraum Gottes
2000	El Acordeón del Diablo
	Voyage Oriental – The George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band in Turkey
2001	Liebeslieder
2003	Das Alphorn
2004	Schwarze Madonna
2005	Accordion Tribe
2007	Heimatklaenge
2007	Big Band Poesie
2012	Balkan Melodie
2015	Imagine Waking Up Tomorrow And All Music Has Dissappeared

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

staging, spontaneity based on authenticity, as well as a purely associative montage comprised of image, sound and text. Hence, Schwietert's films transcend the pure documentary and, in the ingenuity of their director, are formative independent documentary films which appeal to the heart, senses and intellect in equal measure.

An interview with Stefan Schwietert on the cinematic in music and the musical in film, as well as what might be the greatest asset of a documentary filmmaker: an experienced crew, confiding protagonists and fortunate circumstances.

**Are you a musician – or filmmaker?** Stefan Schwietert: filmmaker. And that's certainly because I am no musician: I had piano lessons at an early age, but that turned out to be a rather disastrous experiment. Although I actually loved playing the piano, practicing was an ordeal. So I quit after several years and thus spoiled any active pursuit of music for me. But that did not diminish my affinity to music. I fared in a similar fashion with other arts: painting, acting, architecture and literature. I loved them all, but my skills were too limited to actually pursue a career. Filmmaking was a tremendous discovery for me: all of my interests and passions converge in it.

“Making music is something like a dream job for me. Music is the epitome of sensuousness: you can pick up your instrument spontaneously and just play. That's why I envy musicians.”

**You attended the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie in Berlin.** That's right, and concentrated particularly on fiction films during my first years as a filmmaker – with John Cassavetes and Rainer Werner Fassbinder in mind as role models. I experimented a great deal with narrative forms: one of my first films was **Das Topolino-Projekt**. The film was about a young couple who become entangled in the machinations of the Mafia while on their honeymoon in Italy. I worked with news coverage from the television and interwove this with a fictitious love story.

**How did you come to make documentaries?** That happened after film school. I attempted to make a fiction film as my final project: **Sprung aus den Wolken** is set directly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and tells of an east-west love story. It was then that I discovered that I am not a screenplay writer: writing cost me a great deal of time and energy and I was never satisfied with what I had written. And apart from a few exceptions, all the fiction films made for the cinema in Switzerland or Germany fifteen years ago were written by the filmmakers themselves. This means at that time it was even more important for a fiction film director to write good screen-

**A Tickle in the Heart**  
Bavarian Film Award, Arthur  
Brauner Filmpreis 1996

**Accordion Tribe**  
Swiss Film Award, Best  
Documentary 2005; art-tv kul-  
turperle; Audience Prize at the  
the Würzburg Film Festival

**Heimatklänge**  
Swiss Film Award, Best  
Documentary Film 2008;  
Internationales Forum des  
Jungen Films Berlin, Preis  
CICAE Int. Verband der  
Filmkunsttheater Leserjurypreis  
Tagesspiegel 2007; Zürcher  
Filmpreis 2007

**Balkan Melodie**  
Der Neue Heimatfilm,  
Würdingungspreis der Stadt  
Freistadt 2012

**Imagine Waking Up  
Tomorrow And All Music Has  
Disappeared**  
Visions du Réel, Sesterce  
d'argent SRG SSR pour le meil-  
leur long métrage suisse 2015;  
Warsaw, Doc Against Gravity  
Film Festival, Chopin Nose  
Award for The Best Music Film  
2015

## STEFAN SCHWIETERT

### > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

plays than it is today, with films based on an adaptation of books. So I had to re-orientate myself after graduation. Thanks to a colleague from Vienna who persuaded me to shoot a documentary film about the cabaret writer Jura Soyfer and his contemporaries. **Der Schatten ist lang** traces the effects of the Holocaust and impact of Red Vienna (Rotes Wien) as far as the USA; we met with and interviewed contemporary witnesses from Los Angeles to East Berlin. This experience awakened a desire in my to make documentary films, even though it annoyed me to confine my work to the historical level. Thereafter came the next project, my own first documentary, which also happened to be my first music film: **A Tickle In The Heart**.

**In A TICKLE IN THE HEART is about klezmer music. How did you arrive at this theme?** I attended a "Klezematics" concert at the Knitting Factory in London at the end of the 1980s. That was long before klezmer music had experienced its revival in Europe. I loved the music and was moved by the Yiddish texts. Friends of mine introduced me to the band. While talking with these very experienced musicians, who had just performed highly diverse styles of music, I learned how they rediscovered their own roots in klezmer music, and partly through their grandfathers. In the process, I was told, as is customary in Jewish circles, countless fabulous tales about former klezmer musicians - Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe - some of whom were still performing in Brooklyn. This meant that this vanishing generation of Jewish immigrants who had preserved this music from Europe could still be heard performing live. Now that was a fascinating theme for a film.

"Actually, I studied fiction film. But since **A Tickle in the Heart**, I've had a real taste of documentary films and will continue working with them for the moment."

Stefan Schwietert, 1996

**Are you talking about immigrants who came to the USA before World War II?** Yes, they were immigrants who came to the USA prior to World War II. They were primarily secular Jews – they were followed by the Chassidic Jews during or after World War II. In **A Tickle In The Heart** revealed to me what was to become very important for my later works: music as a vehicle for narration. This had an extremely polarising effect – especially in Germany: in the mid-1990s a documentary film often qualified as such due to an earnest – and often political – theme. The fact that **A Tickle In The Heart** dealt with a grave theme – the film is not only about music, but also about world history, the Holocaust and Judaism – with complete relish, that my film was ultimately an amusing character sketch of three brothers and - also via music – generated a lot of emotion among the viewers; at that time it was all very confusing and it triggered a great deal of controversy. On the one hand, **A Tickle In The Heart** attained an extent that only a fiction film can otherwise obtain. On the other hand, the film was torn to pieces at the Duisburg Documentary Film Festival.

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

I was accused of taking an ahistorical and nostalgic approach and even of dealing irresponsibly with (Jewish) history...

***Germany and Judaism – an infinitely delicate topic. But the controversies surrounding A TICKLE IN THE HEART have obviously not hindered you from continuing to make entertaining documentary music films.*** In this respect, a lot has changed in recent years: you still watch a documentary film even today with the intention of learning something and/or educating yourself. But that does not exclude entertainment a priori.

***In theory documentary films and fiction films are much closer these days. There is complete agreement regarding the fact that every documentary film stages, and every fiction film also documents. In your documentary films the moment of staging is clearly visible; you have also taken a firm stand for staging in a documentary in interviews.*** You cannot impose a (cinematic) language or form on a theme. You have to find them in the theme, and certain topics exclude certain languages. With **A Tickle In The Heart**, for instance, the point was to tell how this ancient Jewish music and culture had survived among the emigrants despite the American culture. In order to render clearly the atmosphere and Eastern European spirit of the music, which lived on in the music and in the psyche of the musicians, and to combine this in turn with the garish life in Florida, I shot the film in black-and-white. And because I do not want to simply recount specific historical incidents in interviews in my films, but rather configure them in image and sound as well, we travelled to New York and met with the orthodox Jews to capture the atmosphere at the weddings in the 1930s and 40s. For all intents and purposes, a documentary film can thus be staged and constructed – as long as you pay tribute to what is just as important: the authenticity. That can be done by allowing a great of space when shooting the film, allowing surprises to occur and living life spontaneously in front of the camera.

***An example of “leaving space” in front of the camera can be seen in VOYAGE ORIENTAL, where you take an excursion to Izmir with George Gruntz and Burhan Öçal. There you visit a harp-maker in his workshop, together with the protagonists; the three seem to have forgotten that you and the crew were even present – and are suddenly in a jam session.*** Particularly crucial in such moments is the crew: the collaboration with the cinematographer and sound engineer. You have to function via eye contact and winking. You have to be able to trust one another completely: in such situations, the human qualities that the two bring with them are



# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

frequently much more important than their technical skills.

**Do you mean sensitivity?** Yes. And experience. Take Dieter Meyer, for instance, who made the soundtrack for **Voyage Oriental**, has travelled extensively and can always relate to people no matter where he is. And with cinematographers it's the musicality that is of utmost importance for my films. Pio Corradi, for example, is an absolute jazz fan.

**Let's talk about montage. With your montage, you often establish a relationship between the inner rhythm of a scene and the rhythm of a piece of music that was recorded in an entirely different place. What's your approach to montage?** Technically, converging the inner rhythm of a scene with the rhythm of a piece of music that was recorded elsewhere is no real art – it's just terribly time-consuming. In terms of montage, there's something much more important to me: producing something that is more compelling and profound than a mere video clip. There are many video clips whose images and music merge fantastically. But it would be fatal if a music passage in any one of my films left the impression that it was a video clip. For me creating a meta-level is the primary task in montage, so that several deeper levels can be elaborated on via images, music and the stories.

**Which is clearly evident in your films. I can recall a scene in ACCORDION TRIBE, where the musicians are riding in the bus on their way to the next concert. While Maria Kalaniemi is speaking in off-voice about herself and the music, the camera is filming the passing landscapes, and her portrait is reflected in the window of the bus.** Language is indeed the third important factor my films. In a scene like the one you mentioned in **Accordion Tribe** I combined image, music and narration, and the landscape thus reflected what Kalaniemi was saying: whatever she does reflects the situation she's in or the landscape she lives in.

**So is it correct to say that you don't really combine, but rather compose?** It is an attempt to transcend what is already given. It shouldn't just be a monologue about a particular theme, the viewers should also be able to experience something. If I want to know how accordionists make their music, where it comes from and why it sounds like it does, it's not enough to observe the musicians while rehearsing, eating dinner or giving a concert. On the one hand, I speak with them about what they do and, at the same time, attempt to render what they tell me so that it can be comprehended with the senses.

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Filme – verführerisch wie wohltemperierte Musikstücke

*That is, if ever, the exact point of criticism concerning your films: there is a sensual nature about them, they tell wonderful and captivating tales – but omit background information and fail to offer viewers what they expect.* That is a conscious decision on my part. More important for me than simply reporting the facts, which you could actually read in a book, is to create an interesting dramaturgic span that goes beyond the theme. I prefer to depart into the unknown... and land, for example, like in **Alphorn**, at a point discussing what tradition and folklore actually are. If I were to describe in detail how an alphorn is made as well, there just wouldn't be enough time in this film. I am interested in shooting films about types of music that have an impact in many areas, meaning films in which I can learn something about a people, their civilisation and culture via music. This was clearly the case with **A Tickle In The Heart**, where it's possible to follow how this klezmer music lives in the people, as well as the danger of it vanishing with them. It was a similar case with **El Acordeon del Diablo**: traditional music in Columbia, like that in my film, is also currently vanishing as a result of television, pop music and globalisation.

*And why hasn't there been a film about jazz or with young musicians in your filmography until now?* It's merely a coincidence that I haven't made a film about jazz yet... and the film with young musicians is presently in progress. At present, I'm working on a portrait on three Swiss artists: Erika Stucky, Arnold Alder and Christian Zehnder. Here, too, the role that music plays in a culture or in a society, and the cultural changes that can be seen in it are all equally important for me.

*Your films are never just about a particular type of music, but instead always profound portraits about fascinating contemporaries as well.* I love getting to know more about people via film. If a director is successful in capturing the essence of a person, in getting close to them and in telling of human fate in a film, then a protagonist in a documentary film functions just like one in a novel. Through this, the film loses its connection to time and themes and lends itself to a broader public. Let's take **Accordion Tribe** as an example. I wanted to shoot a film about the accordion and had done a lot of research but just couldn't succumb to the idea of showing country after country, or a multitude of musicians. Then I met the group called "Accordion Tribe", which is comprised of accordionists from different cultures who came together for a project, and was completely enthused. But when I did a test screening of the rough cut of **Accordion Tribe**, various explanations revealed to me that although the film in this version was absolutely

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

interesting for accordion aficionados, it wouldn't interest anyone else because it didn't get close to the band members as people. So I shot again and edited as long as it took to bring the five accordionists as people so close to the viewer that the film would interest even those who could care less about accordions.

***All of your films are travel films. Is it because of the theme – or I travel a need for you?*** In part, it has to do with the theme, but it also has to do with my concept of homeland, as well as with the fact that travel establishes the basis for further development and change. I grew up in Switzerland; my mother was from Berlin. But it was only with the distance I had due to my travels in South America, my stays abroad and living in Berlin that I developed a desire to explore Switzerland in a film, in **Das Alphorn**. What I find especially interesting as a filmmaker is the friction and the changes that occur as a result. Take Muotathal in Switzerland, for instance, where much has been preserved. When I discover a traditional form yodelling there, then look at how the "Eidgenössische Jodelverband" approaches yodelling, and ultimately see how it all comes full circle when a contemporary musician like Christian Zehnder departs from the traditional to develop his own genuine form of yodelling, it's magnificent. On the basis of this brief story a concrete piece of Swiss history can be deduced: you see the dissolution of a custom, the mentality of museums and cultural heritage in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. But you also see in it the temperate emergence of a creative music generation rediscovering its roots.

***To what extent can this return to one's own roots be viewed as a reaction to globalization?*** At the moment in which everything is possible, there is a great danger that everything becomes arbitrary and insubstantial. It is the reason, to is a return to one's own is infinitely important... And after having spoken so much about music: your own roots, the tradition from which you come, are also very important for filmmakers. When I entertained thoughts of becoming a director of fiction films in the 1970s and 80s, fiction films for the cinema were in the midst of a crisis, both in Switzerland and in Germany. This contributed a lot to my decision to make documentary films: I didn't feel called as director of fiction films to create something extraordinary contrary to the sign of the times. But as a Swiss documentary filmmaker I was able to draw on a strong tradition, and that was a true gift.

***And what, in your opinion, is the most outstanding attribute a documentary filmmaker should have?*** Generally, I would say curiosity in reference to human beings and the occurrences



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Irene Genhart studied film, German language and literature, and philosophy at the universities of Zurich and Berlin. She writes for Swiss newspapers, film magazines, catalogues and encyclopedias as a freelance journalist.

# STEFAN SCHWIETERT

## > Films – captivating, well-tempered compositions

in our world. Besides that, patience and a certain degree of serenity have become very important for me personally. The years of work invested in a film, together with the costs and the viewers' expectations - all of this generates a great deal of pressure that becomes very concentrated during the brief space of time when shooting the film. This is where you decide which footage can be obtained for a film. The danger of wanting too much is great at this moment. Only recently have I succeeded in learning to trust in destiny and the course of things, also due to experiences in my private life. The beauty of it is that this is often rewarded with surprises which, only in retrospect, enrich the film in a manner that I could never have planned.

Irene Genhart, Zurich and Berlin, May 2006

Written and directed by: Stefan Schwieter  
Cinematography: Adrian Stähli

Editing: Frank Brummundt,  
Florian Miosge  
Sound: Dieter Meyer, Jean-Pierre  
Gerth

Production: maximage GmbH, Zürich;  
Flying Moon Filmproduktion, Berlin;  
Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen; SRG  
SSR; WDR - Westdeutscher Rundfunk  
Köln

World Rights: maximage GmbH, Zürich  
Original Version: English (german/  
french subtitles)

The complex nature of this extremely stratified society is captured by the Swiss filmmaker with rare clarity of thought and sincerity. His camera accompanies Drummond from coast to coast, picking up on the "unsaid", those suspended moments in which reality is transformed into something sublime. The sounds are intense and the images move in an unexpected way with the music of the everyday as if they were trying to fuse together to create an entirely new symphony. The magic of film is placed at the disposal of music, which becomes the protagonist but also its guiding spirit, its very essence. Schwieter's latest documentary captures the deep inner self of an enigmatic character who doesn't give into compromise, highlighting his strengths but also and above all his weaknesses. Muriel

Del Don, *Cineuropa*, 29.4.2015



| 2015

| DCP

| colour

| 86'

| Switzerland/Germany

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning and all music has disappeared. Just like that. What will remain when it is all gone: CD's, iPods, instruments? When we don't know anymore what it was: music? He shows it to us: Bill Drummond, the man who with The KLF once conquered the world of pop. An anarchic spirit, an eternal punk who now leads the largest choir of the world: The17, an ever changing ensemble of amateurs with no sheets of music and no rehearsals. The film accompanies Drummond as he finds new voices for his choir: in the open fields or in a factory, in a classroom or in a pub. It is a journey to point zero of music. So we can innocently invent it again. Together, in this moment.

World premiere at Visions du Réel Nyon 2015

Directed by: Stefan Schwietert  
Written by: Stefan Schwietert  
Production: maximage GmbH,  
Zürich; zero one film GmbH, Berlin;

Agitprop, Sofia; Schweizer Radio  
und Fernsehen, SRG SSR, RTS Radio  
Télévision Suisse, Bayerischer  
Rundfunk

Cinematography: Pierre Mennel  
Editing: Isabel Meier  
Location Sound Mix: Dieter Meyer  
Sound Editing: Oswald Schwander

Rerecording Sound Mix: Jörg Höhne  
World Rights: maximage GmbH  
Original Version: French/Romanian/  
Bulgarian (german subtitles).

Schwietert's *Balkan Melodie* is at once a road movie and a journey through time. Starting from the encounter with the eighty-five-year-old Cellier and his wife and drawing inspiration from the wealth of source material in Celliers' richly stocked picture and audio archive, the film looks back to a time that, just twenty years after the fall of communism, seems to be long past. (...) With a congenial combination of visual imagery and sound, Schwietert has adroitly created a magnificent music film that moves the heart – and legs. Irene Genhart, *Filmbulletin*, 10.03.2012

Stefan Schwietert makes use of the Celliers' extensive documentary source material and astutely assembles it to give life to a harmonious story in which the music also gets its fair share. (...) With *Balkan Melodie*, Schwietert adds yet another glittering gem to his filmography. *WOZ*, 08.03.2012

*Balkan Melodie* fuses ethnographic, biographic, musical and social highlights to form a multifaceted cinematic panorama. Stephan Langer, *Kino-zeit.de*, 07.02.2013



| 2012

| DCP

| colour

| 92'

| Switzerland / Germany / Bulgaria,

Over 50 years ago Marcel and Catherine Cellier travelled for the first time behind the Iron Curtain, where they collected the best music in Eastern Europe for years. Marcel Cellier assisted the Rumanian pan flute virtuoso Gheorghe Zamfir and the legendary Bulgarian female vocal choir "Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares" in achieving world fame. The film traces the Celliers' footsteps in Eastern Europe to meet up again with the protagonists from that time – and to discover new musical treasures.

Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Pio Corradi  
Sound: Dieter Meyer

Editing: Stephan Krumbiegel  
Music: Erika Stucky, Christian Zehnder,  
Noldi Alder, Gretl Steiner a.o.

Production: Maximage, Zürich  
World Rights: Maximage, Zürich

Original Version: German,  
Swiss German

"There are sounds, tones and music that touch so deeply you are moved to tears. But at the same time consoling, calming, while eliciting a smile and touching the heart. *Heimatklänge* renders the viewer and listener vertiginous with these voices, its images of the sky and clouds, rocky cliffs, rivers and massive mountains in the Swiss Alps. Where people call, sing, yodel, cheer and take delight in the echo, in the dialogue with nature. This is no platitudinous folklore for tourists. This is genuine emotion, true art. Well worth seeing." H. P. Daniels, *Tagesspiegel*  
Berlin, 12.2.2007

"Echoes of Home encourages you to search for your own sound. It will make you connect to others on a deep level." *Tagesspiegel Reader's Prize*, 2007

"*Heimatklaenge*: or yodelling rocks! It is an interesting phenomenon that most Swiss are ashamed of their own folk music and statt dessen frequently expand their musical horizons with sounds from foreign continents. Thanks to Schwietert, this phenomenon has been counteracted for he has captured the music by the three artists in an outstanding manner. Musically, the film is thus interesting – and can enthuse even those who could care less about yodelling." [outnow.ch](http://outnow.ch)

"Sheer joy to watch Erika Stucky, Noldi Alder and Christian Zehnder annunciate, articulate and phrase noises and sounds and see them turn into mouth, face and body. And above all Switzerland hypnotizes with it's beauty... This film should be longer!" Hilde Meier, *Kultura-Extra*,  
14.10.2007



| 2007

| 35mm

| colour

| 90'

| Heimatklaenge

What does a baby's cry have in common with the echo of a mountain yodeller, and what connects the head tone of a Tuvin nomad with the stage show of a vocal artist? The answer is: THE VOICE. Against a background of powerful alpine vistas and modern city landscapes, **Echoes of Home** enters the wondrous sonic world of three exceptional Swiss vocal artists. Their universe of sound extends far beyond what we would describe as singing. In their engagement with local and foreign traditions, the powerful mountain landscape becomes a stage as do the landscapes and sonic backdrops of modern life.

Blending recordings of performances with stories and classic found footage such as home movies and photos, **Echoes of Home** explores the personal background and development of its protagonists. The film embeds these stories in the landscapes of the Swiss Alps and the country's urban Midland region where the three live, looking for the roots of their music in their geographical surroundings. These musicians are part of a new awakening in the alpine vocal arts. In their engagement with local and foreign traditions, the powerful mountain landscape becomes a stage as do the landscapes and sonic backdrops of modern life. **Echoes of Home** confronts the so-called traditional with the original and the new and allows us to experience and be inspired by the most archaic of all instruments – the human voice.

Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Wolfgang Lehner  
Sound: Dieter Meyer

Editing: Stephan Krumbiegel  
Music: Guy Clucevsek, Lars Hollmer,  
Maria Kalanierni, Otto Lechner,  
Bratko Bibic

Production: Maximage, Zürich,  
FischerFilm, Linz

World Rights: Maximage Zürich  
Original Version: English, German

"There is much to learn in Schwietert's film about the various approaches to making music, about the difficulties of maintaining balance. And there is a great deal of music to be heard, stunning and compelling music. In addition, there are scenes which constitute a documentary road movie, revealing the teasing that goes on backstage, the sound-check, the endless bus rides traversing new landscapes, the exhaustion. Or checking into a hotel, the moments of loneliness in the room... Everyone's home is visited, but never voyeuristically with the camera. Above all, the film imparts the togetherness of these five highly individual musicians. There is a great deal to be experienced during this hour and a half."

Alfred Zimmerlin, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*,  
29.10.2004

"A special treat - the comical reminiscence and daring conclusions, at least in terms of music theory, drawn by the five musicians are just as exhilarating as the music. And at the end it's difficult to know what was more pleasurable: the unprecedented, multifaceted and bacchanal sound of the five accordions or the accordionists' flights of thought." Agathe Blaser, *Züri-Tipp*,

28.10.2004



| 2004

| 35mm

| colour

| 87'

Since their first tour as the "Accordion Tribe" in 1996, this group ranks as the superlative, as the guarantee for musical verve and melodic bliss, for melancholy as well as for explorative, seeking sounds. Five highly individual musicians from different countries come together to form the "Accordion Tribe" and achieve the seemingly impossible, transforming their long disregarded instrument to the worldwide recognition it once enjoyed as a powerhouse of emotions. The film follows these exciting sound landscapes of trancelike intensity and charismatic musicians as they journey through Europe, resplendent with rich musical heritage. Searching for new beginnings, looking to the past and tradition, while embracing the contemporary, fragment and synchrony: embodied in a fascinating and emotionally sweeping project. In these sounds and people the film reflects decisive traits of our current worldly wisdom.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Pio Corradi  
Sound: Benedikt Frutiger

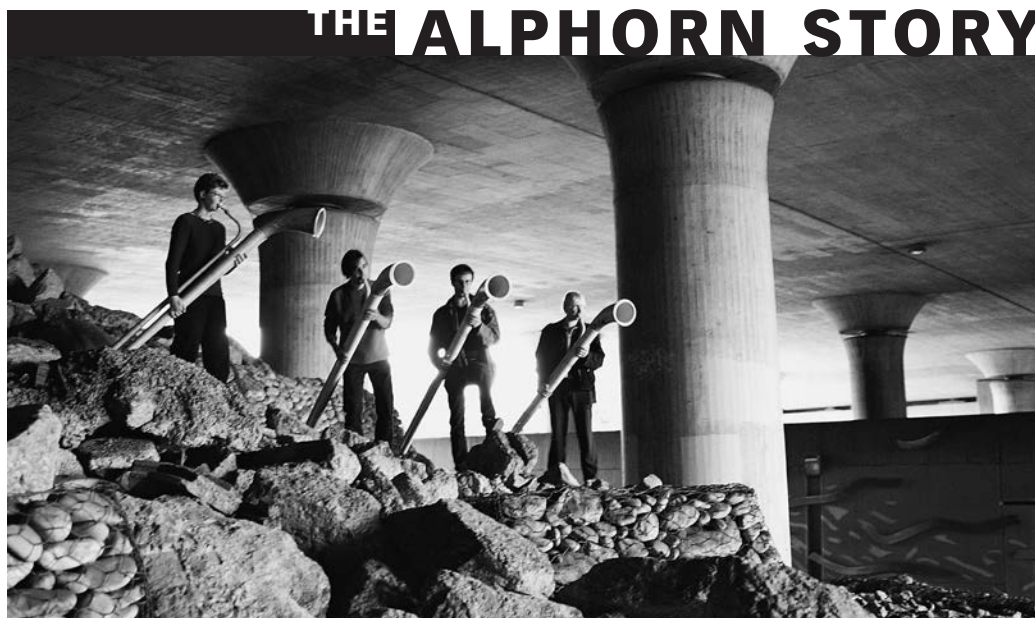
Editing: Isabel Meier  
Music: Hans-Jürg Sommer, Balthasar  
Streich, Hans Kennel

Production: Neapel Film, Therwil,  
Schweizer Fernsehen

World Rights: Neapel Film, Therwil  
Original Version: Swiss German

"Using a very simple question such as what actually makes a melody an alphorn melody, Schwietert analyses the strict regimentation subjected to traditional alphorn music. In second step his film introduces Swiss artists who have made a name for themselves as modern alphorn musicians. The alphorn is captivating due to not only the sovereignty with which Schwietert plumbs the overtones and dissonances between traditionalists and avant-gardists, but also to his cinematic craft. For instance, how he stages the alphorn group "Hornroh" – a visual and musical arrangement in the main hall of the Zurich railway station - is at once a feat and a fest." Nicole Hess, *Züri-Tipp*, 2.10.2003

"Schwietert, who had already meticulously explored the fundamentals of musicality in documentary films such as *A Tickle in the Heart* and *El Acordeón del Diablo*, illustrates this all with a keen sense of the psychology of the instrument and for the people who play it. In magnificent and what seem to be geometrically composed images by cinematographer Pio Corradi. And with technical knowledge, sensitivity, discreet humour and poetry." Alfred Zimmerlin, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1.10.2003



| 2003

| Digital Beta

| colour

| 76'

| Das Alphorn

Since the Romantic Age, Alpine folk music has exerted a particular allure over its listeners. Although this fascination has probably ensured the survival of Alpine tradition, it has not made it any easier to preserve a naturally regressive traditional form. Hence, the alphorn is often misused as a symbol in advertising for Alpine tourism, at best eliciting a couple of nice, but musically limited "rounds" that conjure up images of Alpine meadows. With a great deal of humour, **Das Alphorn** illustrates how tenaciously the ideological ballast still clings to the tormented instrument and how astonishingly diverse and intoxicating its musical possibilities are. A "young" generation of musicians, particularly on the jazz, rock or avant-garde scene, has turned to the traditional music. They have discovered their native folklore according to their own discretion, concomitantly maintaining its roots while exploring the archaic. Schwietert's film takes us on a musical journey, starting with the wild "Büchelsätzli" from Central Switzerland to traditional alphorn melodies by contemporary composer Hans-Jürg Sommer, culminating in the bombastic tones by the "Hornroh" group in railway stations and under highway exit ramps and the modern sound collages on 16 alphorns by Minimal-Musician Moondog, performed by Swiss jazz musician Hans Kennel.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Ciro Cappellari  
Sound: Dieter Meyer

Editing: Tania Stöcklin  
Music: Jan Tilman Schade,  
Rainer Yusuf Vierkötter

Production: Neapel Film, Therwil,  
Zero Film, Berlin

World Rights: Neapel Film, Therwil,  
Zero Film, Berlin  
Original Version: Spanish

"A film about music, the fascinatingly colourful and vivid portrait of an old man in his environment, a film about the zest for life and melancholy in spite of age and the desire to recollect. *El Acordeón del Diablo* imparts fascinating insight into the unique everyday life of the culture, underlining the meaning of music in everyday life. The film allows itself time, portrays people, takes them seriously." Wolfgang M.

Hamdorf, *Filmdienst*, 05/2001

"... a homage that manages without prim pedestals. The kinship with Gabriel García Márquez is highly visible in some parts." *Berliner Zeitung*,

16.3.2001

## EL ACORDEÓN DEL DIABLO



| 2000

| 35mm

| colour

| 90'

The film is a trip to Columbia's Caribbean coast, to the homeland of the grand singer and composer Pacho Rada. It is an immersion into the music of the Caribbean, into the realm of Cumbia, Vallenato and Salsa. It is a world of musicians such as Alfredo Gutierrez, who transformed the corrido music of his homeland into a fiery big band sound. Or Israel Romero, the undisputed star and king of Vallenato, who hurls himself into a breathtaking virtuoso accordion duel with his nephew El Morré. Francisco Pacho Rada himself is already 93 years old. He lives in a hut with a corrugated tin roof on the outskirts of Santa Marta, while his music continues to dominate the hit parade. His life story is a legend. It inspired Gabriel García Márquez when creating the figure of the troubadour, "Francisco El Hombre", in his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In **El Acordeón del Diablo** Pacho Rada tells his version of the story. He held an accordion in his hands for the first time at the age of four and has never been without since. He has spent his entire life travelling from village to village and from fete to fete in his native Columbia, playing and singing for small change. The boundaries between dream and reality are blurred in Pacho Rada's tales, just as they are in Márquez's novels. The daily struggle to survive in Columbia is just as real for Pacho Rada, who has 422 grand- and great-grandchildren, as fables and fairy tales.

Script: Stefan Schwietert, Joel Rubin,  
Rita Ottens  
Cinematographer: Robert Richman  
Sound: Aleksandr Gruzdev

Editing: Arpad Bondy  
Music: The Epstein Brothers  
Cast: Max, Willie und Julie Epstein

Production: Neapel Film, Therwil,  
Ö-Film, Berlin, Zero Film, Berlin  
World Rights: Neapel Film, Zero Film,  
Berlin

World Sales: Celluloid Dreams, Paris  
Original Version: English, Yiddish

"One can only speak of a stroke of luck here, of a wonderfully harmonious portrait of the legendary "Epstein Brothers". Of a homage – at once pleasurable and melancholic – to musicians, a artfully documented trip to New York, Berlin and Minsk, the Belarusian hometown of their parents. (...) Schwietert makes the contrasts in his images sing. With their music the "bawdy Brooklyn Boys", as he once called the Epsteins, evoke a culture whose roots have not existed since the European catastrophe. *A Tickle in the Heart* is also an atmospheric document of this heritage."

Nina Toepfer, *Weltwoche*, 31.10.1996

"*A Tickle in the Heart* was shot in black-and-white. It's the music that's colourful. But to speak of a music film would be false. This film deals with bridging the time periods and cultures in which we move, with handing down and recollecting, and with that indefeasible possession which we unfortunately fail to appreciate these days."

Fred Zaugg, *Der Bund*, 25.10.1996



| 1996

| 35mm

| b/w

| 83'

**A**t the age of nearly 85, Max Epstein is the eldest of the "Epstein Brothers" and the leader of the group with the same name. He is one of the last classical klezmer clarinetists still alive, as acknowledged by his peers such as Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein from Eastern Europe at that time. After having lived the exhausting life of a musician in New York, with as many as 800 gigs a year, the "Epstein Brothers" – Max, Willie and Julie – retired together with their audience. They moved to Florida lived in a suburb comprised of Jewish senior citizens: it is here in this rather lethargic location, the "Brothers" perform their music laden with memories. It is also here that they witness in astonishment the revival of their music. As a result of this revival of klezmer music, they are invited to Europe as the last representing this music genre and are celebrated by a thoroughly intent, young audience at concerts. The Epsteins can only marvel at this wonder: all their lives they had played their music for Jewish immigrants at weddings and celebrations in Brooklyn.

# BIG BAND POESIE

| 2007 | HD | colour | 59'

**V**ienna Art Orchestra: this name has stood for a highly unique concept of big band jazz for 30 years. Founded by Mathias Rüegg on the avant-garde scene in Vienna in the 1970s, the ensemble has since evolved from an improvising hippie collective to traditional big band swing. Rüegg's musical signature is still discernible after a few measures, however: aficionados consider him to be one of the world's leading jazz arrangers. One of the band's particular strengths is the musicians who have been closely associated with the Vienna Art Orchestra for decades.

Soloists such as Wolfgang Puschnig and Christian Muthspiel tell of the manifold history of the band in **Big Band Poesie**. In addition, the film accompanies Mathias Rüegg to Schiers, where he grew up in the Grisons, and reveals a surprisingly private side of the otherwise reticent musician.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Pio Corradi  
Sound: Balthasar Zübel  
Editing: Annette Fleming

Music: Mathias Rüegg  
Production: Schweizer Fernsehen  
World Rights: Schweizer Fernsehen  
Original Version: Swiss German

# SCHWARZE MADONNA

| 2004 | Digi Beta | colour | 45'

**T**he Swiss Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln has preserved the tradition of music and manuscript for more than a thousand years. Its library houses the oldest document of Gregorian Chant: the Codex 121. Together with the Sicilian Calixtinus Choir, French jazz musician Michel Godard and his ensemble develop a musical dialogue inspired by this fascinating musical heritage.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Pio Corradi  
Sound: Wilhelm Zürrer  
Editing: Tania Stöcklin

Music: Michel Godard  
Production: Schweizer Fernsehen  
World Rights: Schweizer Fernsehen  
Original Version: German

# LIEBESLIEDER

| 2001 | Digi-Beta | colour | 60'

**S**chwietert's film combines the original versions of the Fauré Lieder, interpreted by soprano Barbara Hendricks and accompanied by Peter Waters, with jazz renditions by the Treya Quartet. Interviews with Barbara Hendricks and Peter Waters provide personal accounts of their relationship to Gabriel Fauré's music. **Liebeslieder** is a fascinating journey spanning a hundred years of music history and concomitantly a unique approach to this French composer who has received scarce attention until now.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Jörg Jeshel  
Sound: Wilhelm Zürrer  
Editing: Tania Stöcklin  
Music: Gabriel Fauré

Cast: Barbara Hendricks (Sängerin),  
Peter Waters (Piano)  
Production: SF DRS  
World Rights: SF DRS  
Original Version: English

## VOYAGE ORIENTAL

| 2000 | Digi Beta | colour | 60' | The George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band in Turkey

On the one hand, the film tells the story of the meeting of two fundamentally different musical idioms: jazz with its rhythmic swing, its characteristic melody and harmony and Turkish (art)music with its odd meter rhythms, its emotional animation and its unisonal melody in a tone system that is considerably distinct from the European. On the other hand, **Voyage Oriental** also tells the story of a friendship between two unyielding musicians. Together they explore the possibilities of this meeting of two musical minds, the basis of which is a palpably immense, mutual appreciation for one another as humans and artists.

A wonderful, unpretentious and contemplative film that embraces with its charm and never lets go, with a sense of buoyancy at the end.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Ciro Cappellari,  
Felix von Muralt  
Sound: Dieter Meyer

Music: George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, Burhan Öçal  
Production: SF DRS, Thomas Beck & Urban Frye  
World Rights: SF DRS  
Original Version: German

## IM WARTERAUM GOTTES

| 1998 | Digi Beta | colour | 65'

The Wynmoor residential estate is surrounded by a massive wall and located along Highway 99 in the hinterland of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Tight security measures permit entry for only a select few into this paradise, in which approximately 10,000, for the most part, Jewish senior citizens have found a new home. This is also the home of the members of the Emerald Club, all of whom are Holocaust survivors. In his film Stefan Schwietert observes the senior citizens as they carry out their daily lives, secluded to a large extent from the outside world. The Holocaust survivors' painful memories of the concentration camp, loss of family and home are starkly juxtaposed with the external idyll of the club grounds. The film illustrates how strongly present the events of the past still are and how diversely the individuals deal with the past.

The filmmaker became acquainted with the world of these senior citizens in Florida while shooting **A Tickle in the Heart**, whose protagonists also reside there. Access to this strictly guarded estate was only granted because of these contacts.



Script: Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Matthias Kälin  
Sound: Stephan Settele  
Editing: Stephan Settele  
Music: Helene Schneiderman

Production: Trafik Film, Berlin und Neapel Film, Therwil  
World Rights: Neapel Film, Therwil  
Original Version: English



## DER SCHATTEN IST LANG

1994 | Beta SP | colour | 67'

**F**ive friends of the political journalist and writer Jura Soyfer offer their accounts of how they experienced their youth in Red Vienna (Rotes Wien). They witnessed the stunning emergence of a city which sought to create "new citizens" from the ruins of the monarchy, participated in demonstrations, produced left-wing political theatre or attended concerts for the working man in the new community venues. Enthusiastically, they experienced the implementation of a large-scale socialistic experiment in which political activism and artistic engagement were accepted, attracting worldwide interest. This euphoria met its irrevocable end with the takeover by the fascists. The five friends had to leave the country and were scattered all over the world. Several spent many years in concentration camps or captivity, before attaining self-imposed exile. Jura Soyfer died of typhus at the age of 26 in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Traces of his friends can be found in Vienna, Berlin and Paris as well as New York and Los Angeles – with the spirit of Red Vienna shaping their lives in a highly diverse manner still today.



Script: Eva Brenner, Stefan Schwietert  
Cinematographer: Stefan Schwietert,  
Christoph Döring, Tommi Streiff  
Sound: Eva Brenner  
Editing: Stefan Schwietert, Mona Bräuer  
Music: Jan T. Schade

Production: DOR Film Production,  
Vienna  
World Rights: DOR Film Production,  
Vienna  
Original Version: German

## SPRUNG AUS DEN WOLKEN

1991 | 16mm | b/w | 75'

**B**erlin in spring 1990, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Harry, a young artist from East Berlin, meets Micky and Rosie, a couple from West Berlin, and they become friends. The two want to help Harry find venues for his exhibitions. Harry is just an exotic discovery for Micky, someone he can boast about to his friends, although he is unwilling to venture anything new. Because Rosie is unable to detract Micky from his smug satisfaction, the encounter with Harry becomes an opportunity for her to set things in motion, give herself a chance and escape from the insipid sense of security with Micky. But the love that develops between Harry and Rosie cannot last. Both are too preoccupied with themselves: Rosie with finding herself, and Harry with finding his way in the West.



Script: Stefan Schwietert, Nancy Rivas  
Cinematographer: Arthur Ahrweiler  
Sound: Daniel Hermeling, Marc Ottiker  
Editing: Frank Belinke, Stefan Schwietert  
Music: Jan T. Schade  
Cast: May Buchgraber, Rainer Winkelvoss, Christian Spitzl, Oliver Held,

Fortune Claude Leite  
Production: Deutsche Film- und  
Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
World Rights: Deutsche Film- und  
Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
Original Version: German

"And exchange and rapprochement of two worlds: on the one hand, the trendy art scene, mundane parties and exhibition openings and, on the other hand, the working milieu, dingy housing conditions and pub crawls with buddies. The black-and-white film *Sprung aus den Wolken* is convincing as an unpretentious portrayal of a time period and a study of two people seeking and achieving liberation." Rolf Breiner, *Luzerner Tagblatt*, 17.8.1991



TAPEZ 36-15

## CODE GORBA

1987 | 16mm | colour | 14'

**P**ierre lives in Paris. He is fascinated by Gorbachev, who has managed to restore hope despite the debilitated system in the Soviet Union. Caught up in the wave of protests in the late 1960s, Pierre goes out into the streets, attempting to rouse the people back into a new life.

**"An 'obsolete' theme in light of the events in Eastern Europe? Perhaps it could also be formulated the other way around: a film that depicts the emergence of a new spirit, whose ultimate consequences cannot be clearly seen for a long time. Consequences in Eastern and Western Europe."** (Guckloch-Kino Programm).



Script: Stefan Schwietert,  
Andi A. Müller  
Cinematographer: Jean-Claude  
Viquery  
Sound: Roland Olbeter, Lucien Segura  
Editing: Stefan Schwietert  
Music: Sally Air Forth

Cast: Christophe Salengro  
Production: Deutsche Film-  
und Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
World Rights: Deutsche Film-  
und Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
Original Version: French

## DAS TOPOLINO PROJEKT

1986 | Video High Band | colour | 40'

**A** Super 8 camera accompanies a young couple during their honeymoon on Capri. Viewers witness how the newlyweds become entangled in the machinations of the Camorra in Naples as it prepares a worldwide coup as never seen before: The Topolino Project. The film, composed of video footage collected from all over the world (TV stations, secret service agencies, hobby filmmakers), utilises a playful approach to take a closer look at the manipulation of photos for public use.



Script: Stefan Schwietert, MA.LO.LA  
Cinematographer: Tania Stöcklin  
Sound: Claude Gaçon  
Editing: Stefan Schwietert,  
Thomas Schunke  
Music: MA.LO.LA. Thomas Schunke

Cast: MA.LO.LA  
Production: MA.LO.LA, Deutsche  
Film- und Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
World Rights: Film- und  
Fernsehakademie, Berlin  
Original Version: German