

## Heinrich Breloer

Soundtrack: Hans Peter Ströer: Music from the witch's cottage.

Somewhere I had once seen a movie about how film music is done in Hollywood: a symphony orchestra, led by a conductor, plays the music from sheet music directly onto the recorded scenes in a darkened room. It was wonderful, and the longing to experience something so wonderful myself one day in my own movie was not exactly small. And then, at the beginning, I sat with Hans Peter Ströer in a small wooden house on the Bavarian Wörthsee. My movie was playing on a mini TV from a VHS tape and Hansi played his sketches directly to the jerky video tape. It was just a weekend house, the "witch's cottage", in which all the compositions for my films were created over the years on a grand piano and with constantly growing electronics.

The first time I was in the little cottage was in 1986 and the first film was also my first television play: EINE GESCHLOSSENE GESELLSCHAFT, the story of my bitter times in a strict Catholic boarding school in the 1950s. It was an attempt at a montage of scenes and documents, a journey to my classmates from back then and the staging of my memories of the years of torment. When I think back to the film today, I see the photos from the bleak days in a small Catholic town that were presented to me by my friends during the research, the montages of the play scenes in which the boys from back then come to life once again in the play, and I keep hearing a little melody played as a solo on the piano by Hans. This chopin-like sequence of notes was the first leitmotif that we managed to create: a slight melancholy still emanates from it today. It interprets very precisely my view back to the longings, the loneliness, the early suffering and the anger about the great prison of the fifties.

We had understood each other, the musician and the director, and a kind of alliance was made for the future. We both learned a lot in the years that followed and together we dared to take on bigger and bigger tasks.

In 1993, the tapes for my film WEHNER - DIE UNERZÄHLTE GESCHICHTE were in Munich. The young Wehner played a melancholy song on his harmonica, which became a leitmotif for this wild life in which the hopes of the early workers' movement clashed with Wehner's bitter experiences under Stalin's murderous GPU. Of course, there were already the means of suspense for the use of music in the play scenes, but it is precisely these tones of Wehner's harmonica that have stayed with me ever since.

DIE STAATSKANZLEI told the story of Barschel's machinations: a prime minister wanted to finish off the Social Democratic opposition leader Engholm with nervous terror. It was the musical edifice of espionage and counter-espionage that Hans built here. Footsteps follow footsteps - pizzicato basses, and then the dragging violins that pull like the threads with which the great spider of politics makes people catch and stick to each other.

EINMAL MACHT UND ZURÜCK - Engholms Fall tells the same story from the other side as a montage of play and documentary research. Similar motifs such as the footsteps of the persecutors, the mood of being watched, the staging of deceit and the digging of pits for the opponents - the musical spider threads now accompanied the analysis of the figure of the toppling successor, Minister President Björn Engholm. During this work, it became increasingly clear how Hans Peter Ströer's music supports the montage between play and documentation. The motifs clearly spill over from the play scenes into the documentary. The music, which tells of Barschel's death, also runs over the face of Björn Engholm, who is trying to reflect on his part in the story. We continued to develop this link between the documentary material and the music over the coming years.

Our collaboration begins with the development of themes for scripts and scenes. Hans reads into the story early on and develops motifs that I then try out on location. For *TODESSPIEL*, the story of the kidnapping and murder of the employers' president Schleyer by the RAF in 1977, we had the main motifs on location early on and I played them to the team on the long journeys to motivate them and get them in the mood. It was an Arabic-like, strange music, with drums that supported the tempo of the kidnapping, but also clearly marked the irruption of this foreign world and the RAF's alliance with parts of the Palestinian liberation organizations. In contrast, the classical German symphonic sounds stood for the world of the Federal Chancellery, the Stammheim prison and the Police.

In this kind of close collaboration, Hans Peter Ströer can try out compositions at an early stage and provide us with material in the editing room to help us decide on lengths and editing points. He's always at my side right up to the fine-tuning of the soundtrack and main mix, contributing ideas and constantly changing and adapting pieces of music to the overall composition.

Armin Mueller Stahl, who played the role of Thomas Mann so brilliantly in "DIE MANN" 2001, is a musician himself. He is a trained concert violinist and, like Thomas Mann, he knows a lot about music. So it was exciting for us

to see how positively he reacted to the film music of the “Manns” when I occasionally played something on location.

For the many biographically based films, Hans Peter Ströer had to dig through a lot of documents and read up on the stories. In this way, he has accompanied major projects for years, such as the four parts of SPEER UND ER. This story of the seduction of a young architect into the crime of the century of the murder of the Jews was a particularly difficult task for a musician. It was as difficult as it is for an actor to play Hitler and to make him not only a criminal but also a lost human being with his own possibilities.

There are a lot of books, photos and films on Hans Peter Ströer's piano when he prepares for work. But it's always the long walks and conversations when I conjure up the characters with Hans during the storytelling and together we try to get as close as possible to the moods, the reality of life and the inner truths of our characters. The musical answers that Hans sends me after such séances are always surprising, and I immediately have the impression: Yes, that's exactly how I imagined it. How does he do it? How he plays the lonely father Thomas Mann and at the same time musically interprets and accompanies the drama of the highly gifted children. It's nice to hear the motifs at the piano for the first time and a nice surprise when all this is played by a large symphony orchestra. But the minutes in the editing room when we put the finished pieces on the pictures for the first time are unsurpassed. We know the power of the actors, we may have already run through this scene with the dialog and original sounds fifty times in the editing room. And now the music permeates the image - unobtrusively and as a matter of course, it enchants the filmed moment.