



ErsatzMusika
Voice Letter
Asphalt Tango (www.asphalt-tango.de)

Living in a big city, everything is strange, impersonal and anonymous. You are longing for family, home and all the things you used to have. All you want to have is a little piece of home, like the smell of mother's kitchen, the tales father used to tell, the feeling of places you know like the back of your hand. Maybe just a letter will bring it all back, some news from those you love, sharing some old memories. ErsatzMusika send such letters.

All the members of the ensemble were born and grew up in the former Soviet Union. They moved to Berlin in the early 1990s, where Irina Dobrovskaja founded the band in 2006. In the name of the band and the album title, Dobrovskaja tells of a music scene in Russia that was very different. They grew up with Russian pop, but also central Asian music and Gregorian chant. There was also a kind of underground music scene; anonymous songwriters, who recorded their songs at home and passed them around on tape. That is what in the end they called Ersatzmusik. The band started playing songs just for a few friends scattered all over the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They shared their common memories and news by recording their letters as songs. The more they shared the music, the more their friends suggested they should publish their Voice Letters.

ErsatzMusika and the unique music they play is hard to categorize. They hardly fit in the gap between folk and world music. Although you find some of the typical sounds of their Slavic roots, like accordion, harmonica, hand organ or xylophone, it is all a bit slower, more thoughtful - reduced.

To listen to Dobrovskaja sing is to feel the sadness, melancholy and disinterest that is deep in the songs. The stories ErsatzMusika tell, and the ways they are told, are as versatile as the intricate history of their homeland. They are about longings of an gulag prisoner, waiting for a crane to come and pass him a message; about a Russian singer who emigrated to Canada, recorded some songs and then disappeared. All of the songs, whether they are telling a story or offer a poem set to music, are surrounded by a beautifully sad mood, slightly sprinkled with humor. It is what you feel when you think about home, when you really miss it. It is smiling with tears in your eyes. - Andrea Meyer

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