

Translation of an interview given by Johanna Beisteiner in German for the Blog of Walter Pobaschnig on October 28, 2021. Published on April 16, 2022.

Original German version can be read here:

[„Ich glaube, dass wir innehalten müssen“ Johanna Beisteiner, klassische Gitarristin und Sängerin Wien 16.4.2022 | Literatur outdoors – Worte sind Wege](#)

Literature outdoors – Words are Ways

“I think we need to pause.”

*Johanna Beisteiner, classical guitarist and singer
Vienna, April 16, 2022*

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Dear Johanna, what does your daily routine look like now?

I have imposed a strict work schedule on myself in order to be able to fulfill the solo performance concept I have developed, in which I combine virtuoso instrumental playing on the guitar with classical singing, flamenco dancing and speaking. Fine motor skills, voice and body must be precisely coordinated. In the mornings there are usually two to three hours of technical exercises on the schedule, in the afternoons and evenings I dedicate myself to studying and dancing. In between, of course, I need several breaks so as not to overload myself physically and mentally. In phases I work on my own arrangements and communicate with organizers. You're probably wondering why I'm going through such drastic treatment and not just sticking to the classical guitar repertoire. On the one hand, I would like to revive a performance practice that was largely lost in the 20th century: the independent instrumental accompaniment during an art song performed with bel canto technique, a practice that we only know from works of fine art and historical records. On the other hand, this combination of techniques expands the possibilities of artistic expression and thus opens up new perspectives in the design of solo programs. I can now not only set a recital under a specific theme, but also present it as part of a continuous storyline. I get a lot of positive reactions from the audience. This encourages me to further develop my innovative concept.



Johanna Beisteiner, classical guitarist and singer

What is particularly important for all of us now?

We live in a time of social division that is deepening day by day. I think we need to pause to ask ourselves how this happened and how we can reverse this negative trend. An enormous global upheaval is taking place, which is not only characterized by digitization and climate change. I have the impression that the sense of social cohesion, freedom, democracy and healthy everyday culture is dwindling in our society. The increasingly rough behaviour among people starts with the greeting using fist and elbow – an aggressive technique, which has recently become socially acceptable. That behaviour extends in an increased form through areas that affect all of our fundamental rights and freedoms. Political or economic goals that cannot be achieved by decree are increasingly being attempted to be achieved through threats. We should all think about whether such threats promote the healthy coexistence of people or rather harm it. Why do you resort to such aggressive rhetorical devices at all? Is there a lack of reasoned arguments to achieve desired goals?

We will all be facing a new beginning, socially and personally. What will be essential and what role does music and art play in this?

In connection with the term “new beginning” I remember one of the most formative experiences of my early youth. By the time I was about thirteen, my guitar playing had developed to the point where those around me began to listen intently, and this concentration on the sound of the music changed the atmosphere of a room.



Johanna Beisteiner, classical guitarist and singer

People of different ages, who previously felt a certain imbalance or nervousness, have become calmer and more relaxed while listening, and may have found their thoughts clearer. I made music my profession not only out of personal passion, but also out of the awareness that I could make a difference with it. A successful social, ecological and economic awakening requires both mental strength and prudence. I am convinced that the positive effects that music and culture can have on our mood and state of mind will play an extremely important role in our lives in laying the foundations needed to achieve inner balance. This is the only way we can master the challenges of the forthcoming departure.

What are you currently reading?

I'm reading Stefan Zweig's "Decisive Moments in History". The author fascinates me with his keen eye, with which he examines various events in the story. As I read this, I also ask myself how our handling of the challenges of the present will be evaluated from the perspective of future generations.

Which quote, which text impulse would you like to give us?

A quote from Zweig's foreword to the book just mentioned strikes me as apt: "No artist is an artist throughout the entire twenty-four hours of his normal day; he succeeds in producing all that is essential, all that will last, only in a few, rare moments of inspiration."