



KROKE

KROKE (which means Kraków in Yiddish) was formed in 1992 by three friends, graduates of Kraków Academy of Music: Jerzy Bawoł (accordion), Tomasz Kukurba (viola) and Tomasz Lato (double bass). The group members completed all stages of standard music education, including jazz and modern music. KROKE began to play music which was deeply set in Jewish tradition, and strongly influenced by Balkan music, to enrich it later on with Oriental and Indian sounds, elements of jazz and world music, creating their own characteristic style.

Initially, KROKE performed only in clubs and galleries situated in Kazimierz, a former Jewish district of Kraków. There for the first time one could listen to KROKE's songs. They were later recorded on their first cassette released at their own expense in 1993. While performing at the Ariel gallery they were noticed by Steven Spielberg who at that time was shooting in Kraków „Schindler's List”. Spielberg invited them to Jerusalem, where he was shooting the last scenes. The group gave a concert at Survivors Reunion for those of the Oskar Schindler's list who survived the war. Spielberg also sent a copy of the group's cassette to Peter Gabriel who in 1997 invited KROKE to WOMAD Festival, where the audience gave a rousing welcome both to the group and its debut record called „TRIO” (1996). The cooperation with Peter Gabriel resulted in joint recording sessions at Real World Studio - parts of these recordings were later on used by Peter Gabriel on his record „Long Walk Home”, a soundtrack to Phillip Noyce's film „Rabbit-Proof Fence”.

In 1997 KROKE also released their second album called „EDEN”. On one hand the record carried on the Jewish music tradition, started with „TRIO” and on the other, it was a result of both musical and archival search. The audience received an album which combined traditional ornamentation with modern technique, and traditional motives combined with modern musical sensitivity gave a totally new tone colour. This first period of KROKE's activity was well summed up by a live album called „LIVE AT THE PIT” (1998), recorded in the United Kingdom and nominated for the German Record Critics' Award.

Invitations to the most significant European festivals and important meetings with numerous musicians, and personages of art and culture earned them many concert tours. The meetings and concerts enabled KROKE to find the root of new sounds and music cultures. In their new original compositions even though Jewish or Balkan inspirations were still audible, KROKE more often has been reaching for Sephardic, Arabic, and even Indian sounds. It resulted in the next record „THE SOUNDS OF THE VANISHING WORLD” (1999), an evidence of KROKE’s music evolution and the capability of the musicians to create their own unique style. Gaining enormous popularity in Poland and Europe, the record received in 2000 a prestigious award „Preis der Deutsche Schallplattenkritik” (German Record Critics' Award).

In summer 2001, while on concert tour in Cornwall, KROKE met for the first time with Nigel Kennedy, who immediately presented the group a cooperation offer. The result was a joint record „EAST MEETS EAST” (2003), which was a smash hit. KROKE was nominated for the BBC 3 Radio award in the „World Music” category, and their concerts with Nigel Kennedy played at numerous European festivals received enthusiastic applause. At the same time another KROKE’s own record „TEN PIECES TO SAVE THE WORLD” (2003) was released. This tuneful, climatic album was ranked second on the World Music Charts and was a crowning achievement of group’s ten years on the music market.

In 2004, KROKE released another concert record called „QUARTET. LIVE AT HOME”, recorded at S-5 Studio of Radio Kraków. In the recording a Kraków jazz percussionist Tomasz Grochot took part, and since then he has been recording and performing with KROKE. In 2005, in cooperation with a jazz pianist, Krzysztof Herdzin, the group started to work on Edyta Geppert’s record „SPIEWAM ZYCIE” (2006); the record also appeared in Western Europe, released by KROKE’s record company Oriente Musik as „I SING LIFE”. At the same time the group was working with the Sinfonia Baltica Orchestra on a joint music project. In 2006, one of KROKE’s songs appeared on the soundtrack to David Lynch’s picture „Inland Empire”.

Cooperation with Nigel Kennedy and Edyta Geppert does not make KROKE forget about their own audience. In 2007 following nearly four years of concert tours in numerous European countries (and on their fifteenth birthday) KROKE released another studio album called „SEVENTH TRIP”, a record full of energy, a music journey along new music routes.

On the 1st October 2009 they released their new album "Out Of Sight". The new compositions sound exceedingly enchanting and playful.

Now the musicians play in the original trio again. Contrabass, viola and accordion are more focused than before, are equally responsible for melody as well as rhythm. The album shows familiar aspects and new facets of this great band. Their enormous creativity, scooping from musical traditions and creating a truly unusual sound, is still unbroken.