

The image features a minimalist architectural scene. A light-colored, textured wall is shown in a corner. A dark, rectangular opening is cut into the wall, revealing a dark interior space. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the textures of the wall and the sharp edges of the opening. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

**Silvan Schmid
Quintet
At Gamut**

At Gamut

Silvan Schmid is a rarity in avant-garde music.

He manages to sound songful even when playing abstractly. His phrasing, note choices and the trajectory of his solos all point to an undercurrent of romanticism in his music. He is strikingly reminiscent, in a European context, of a generation of British, or British-based, trumpet players – Kenny Wheeler, Harry Beckett, Henry Lowther, Ian Carr – who seemed to have the ability to bridge straight, lyrical playing with free music. At one level, that's not such a surprising talent. In order to play free, you probably have to learn to play pretty first. What's hard is to bring the same level of concentration to both inside and outside styles and to remain entirely distinctive in both.

Schmid seems to me to fall comfortably into that category. He's just turned 30, an age at which the average player is still trying out musical personalities for size; but Schmid, who's also worked with alphornist Hans Kennel, with British improvising legend Eddie Prévost, has already such a distinctive voice on trumpet that he's easy to pick out of an ensemble. That may not be deemed an advantage in a group that calls itself the Gamut Kollektiv, where ensemble values are presumably more to the fore than would be the case with a name trio. And yet, Schmid's very individual approach, which has an almost narrative logic to it, works beautifully in the context of a larger improvising group, blending exquisitely with bass sounds and the mobile percussive scratch around him. There are touches, too, of of Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard in the mix, but with little of their skyscraping high-note work. Schmid's confidence in the middle register is a mark of his maturity and self-possession.

He founded and helps to run a regular festival in his home city. Gamut seems like an excellent name both for that event and for the group. The word comes from the Greek letter γ or *gamma*, the note G on the first line of the bass stave but it also refers to Guido of Arezzo's scale of six overlapping hexachords, reaching up to E on the fourth line; and it can refer to the entire range of possible chromaticities in a subset of colours. It has an interesting literary history, too, popping up in Shakespeare and elsewhere. We tend to use it colloquially for anything that can be described as sitting on a scale or spectrum, and perhaps its best-known facetious use was by [writer and wit] Dorothy Parker who said of a famous actress that "Miss Hepburn runs the whole gamut of emotions, from A to B".

Schmid sometimes quite deliberately runs a narrow gamut of sounds. He often finds fascination in repeated small intervals and small-step progressions up or down the scale. He rarely reaches for a dramatic effect that hasn't been prepared for in his development of a solo, which means that when they come, as they do here, they are all the more effective.



Photo by
Xaver Rüeegg

I think of Zurich as a gamut, and Schmid is, to his bones, a Zurich musician. It's a city that seems grounded and liveable, but which presents in its un-brash architecture and quietly fascinating urban geography a sense of infinite possibility. Schmid's music is like an aural Baedeker to the city. James Joyce went there twice to avoid war and to have his eyes treated. They were troubled years for the Irish writer, who was poor, ailing and had a schizophrenic daughter in tow. But Zurich – and Trieste before that – seemed to act as a balm to his spirit and an inspiration to his own urban navigations which were increasingly made in the imagination and not on real but unseeable streets. Schmid seems to share the Joycean sense that if you can get to the heart of one city, you can reach the heart of all cities. His trumpet sound certainly reaches the heart, and rests there.

Silvan Schmid Quintet

As a trumpet player with many years of experience I am still interested in the music of younger colleagues. In the Summer 2016, by pure coincidence I met and heard Silvan Schmid play and I was both impressed and touched by his very special playing. I was pleased to hear a trumpet player who plays "different". Silvan does not sound "out of a School". In his early years he already has his musical dialect. His beautiful tone, his very sensitive articulation and phrasing are an earcatcher. Brilliant technique, but no "flasher". He integrates, without giving any of his personal assets away, into a given situation. Great fulfillment he obviously finds in an ideal way in his GAMUT projects. A fascinating group of astonishing young musicians that creates an ambient where improvisation and composition mutually dissolve into a resolution.

Hans Kennel, trumpet player, 2017

Ma longue expérience de trompettiste ne m'empêche pas de m'intéresser à la musique de plus jeunes confrères. C'est par pure coïncidence qu'à l'été 2016, j'ai rencontré Silvan Schmid ; je l'ai vu sur scène et son jeu très spécial m'a à la fois impressionné et ému. J'étais ravi d'entendre un musicien jouer de la trompette « différemment ». Silvan n'a pas un son « académique ». Ses débuts sont déjà marqués par un dialecte musical propre... Sa magnifique sonorité, son articulation et son phrasé sensibles accrochent l'oreille. Sa technique est brillante, sans « fioritures ». Il s'intègre à toute situation sans rien sacrifier de ses atouts personnels. Il trouve idéalement, et sans surprise, une grande satisfaction au sein de ses projets GAMUT : un groupe fascinant de jeunes musiciens étonnants, qui créent une ambiance où improvisation et composition se fondent en une forme de résolution. *Hans Kennel, trumpet player, 2017 (Translated by Benjamin Mouliets)*

Silvan Schmid Quintet At Gamut

Silvan Schmid *trumpet*
Tapiwa Svosve *alto saxophone*
Silvan Jeger *cello*
Lucas Wirz *tuba*
Vincent Glanzmann *drums*

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-------|
| 1 | Motten ISRC CH 131.1901558 | 5:23 |
| 2 | Spartitur II ISRC CH 131.1901559 | 6:51 |
| 3 | Ins Leere ISRC CH 131.1901560 | 7:27 |
| 4 | Turn Into ISRC CH 131.1901561 | 7:27 |
| 5 | Spartitur I ISRC CH 131.1901562 | 4:28 |
| 6 | In Bocca Al Lupo ISRC CH 131.1901563 | 10:58 |
| Total Time DDD ²⁴ Bit | | 42:38 |

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