

# Corvus Corax – The Kings of the Minstrels

The story of Corvus Corax starts with a journey. Shortly before the fall of the Berlin wall Castus and Wim, who had worked as street musicians in the GDR committed what the regime called "Republikflucht" and left eastern Germany. In memory of a tame raven they had to leave behind they called themselves Corvus Corax. The first album, "Ante Casu Pecatti", was released as a cassette in the same year. Soon the band became known for driving rhythms, sweaty concerts and masterly instrumental technique. With drums and huge bagpipes (handcrafted by Wim), juggling and entertaining interaction with audiences, Corvus Corax contributed significantly to the development of **Medieval Music** as we know it. Albums like "Mille Anni Passi Sunt", were influential to an entire scene from Moscow to Mexico City. They toured in Japan and China, the U.S. and Canada as well as all over Europe.

## Ancient Greeks and taiko drums

Again and again Corvus Corax proved their will to expand their sound universe. Once they followed the trail of the ancient Greeks ("Seikilos"). Later they composed an orchestral work based on the Carmina Burana – a famous mediaeval manuscript. In "Cantus Buranus" movie score elements meet ancient instruments. This monumental piece was also performed in Mexico, China and Romania. While Castus, Wim, Norri & Co. shared stages with the taiko drummers from Wadokyo for intoxicating performances, their albums "Sverker" and "Gimlie" highlighted the use of Celtic melodies and Norse mythology. Anyone who has seen the masks and costumes at recent shows must confess that they succeeded in re-inventing the Vikings.

What is Corvus Corax key to success over decades? First of all, the band is based on an authentic lifestyle. They started touring with no belongings but instruments and a donkey, roaming from town to town. Second we have a passion for music from all around the globe that enriched the repertoire of Corvus Corax with exotic instruments and tunes like the Chinese "Chou Chou Sheng". On the other hand they adapted the Death Metal anthem "Twilight Of The Thundergod" by Amon Amarth. It's not surprising that the open minded musicians also won appearances at festivals like Wacken Open Air. Finally there's Wim's workshop. Besides bagpipes and shawms he also built a giant hurdy-gurdy and the horns that currently evoke the spirits of the archaic north. Played by top-notch musicians, these creations make for a distinctive sound.

## A touch of Hollywood

A screen adaptation of the career of Corvus Corax is still pending, but the band had some guest appearances in movies in the past. None other than Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer ("Gladiator," "Pirates of the Caribbean") approached the kings of the minstrels and initiated Corvus Corax's writing of the music for "Ironclad". In the BBC documentary "The Crusades" presented by Monty Python-legend Terry Jones, their bagpipes and drums are to be heard as well as in the computer game "Dragon Age" or audio books like "The Dwarves" ("Die Zwerge") by Markus Heitz. With bones and sledgehammers, pipes and horns, the septet also accompanied the live cult status readings by actor John Steck.

What will be next is written in the stars, as Corvus Corax were always unpredictable. But one thing is for sure: they will surprise us and reinvent themselves again to a certain extent.