

Born in Vienna in **1930**, **Toni Stricker** traces his roots on his father's side to Burgenland, on his mother's side to the Austrian capital. Growing up in a musical family, he soon became familiar with the melodies and rhythms of traditional Viennese dances and Croatian songs. As a young boy, his greatest wish was for a **violin**, and at the age of six this wish was fulfilled. He received his first violin lessons, and ten years later the instrument proved stronger than other educational enticements: he left school to embark on a comprehensive seven-year **classical musical training** at the **City of Vienna Conservatory**. He had made up his mind to become a musician.

In **1953** he joined the **Vera Auer Jazz Band**, whose members were all destined to make distinguished solo careers: **Joe Zawinul**, **Attila Zoller**, **Hans Salomon** and others. Toni Stricker toured with the band in Switzerland and Austria. During an appearance in Linz he made the acquaintance of the dancer **Sybill**, and they **married in 1954**.

Toni went on to form his own **Quintet**, which played in **Hübner's "Kursalon"** and in the **"Tanzgarten Servus"** in Vienna and for three seasons in Kitzbühel. It was during these years that he made his first radio and gramophone recordings. Appearing as a soloist with the **Carl de Groof**, **Erwin Halletz** and **Johannes Fehring** orchestras, he made his name as a mainstream swing violinist. In **1957** he formed a new line-up, which went on tour from Innsbruck to Davos, Zurich and Geneva. Toni subsequently made guest appearances in **Fatty George's** now legendary **"Saloon"** before spending four years playing with **Bill** and **Heinz Grah** and **Bob Blumenhoven** in Vienna's **"Volksgarten"**.



Already a much sought-after soloist, studio musician and arranger, Toni Stricker now began writing his own compositions: **dance numbers**, **Viennese songs** and **jazz**. There followed a string of engagements all over Europe - tours, television appearances and gala performances.

A recording contract with the German company M.P.S. produced numerous LPs, of which the best was **"Let's Dance with Strings"**.

Gradually, though, Toni seemed to be feeling the strain of his itinerant life, the constant round of studios and concert halls as far afield as Belgium, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Deciding to settle down for a while, he took the post of **concert-master of the Theater an der Wien orchestra** in Vienna.

"Settling down", though, was relative. He continued to perform with **Johannes Fehring** in Vienna but also with **Paul Kuhn** in Berlin, **Franz Thon** and **Rolf Kühn** in Hamburg, **Willi Stech** in Freiburg and **Hans Hammerschmid** and **Max Greger** in Munich. At the same time he was busy **composing and playing, arranging and producing records**. The list of stars he worked with reads like a Who's Who of the show business world of the day: **Peter Alexander**, **Hans Moser**, **Paul Hörbiger**, **Fritz Muliar**, **Elfriede Ott**, **Helmut Qualtinger**, **Kurt Sowinetz**, **Helmut Leherb** and **Lotte Profohs**, **Arik Brauer**, **Heinz Holecek**, **Heinz Ehrenfreund**, **Michael Heltau**, **Ludwig Hirsch**, **Shirley Bassey**, **Marianne Mendt**, **René Kollo**, **Anneliese Rothenberger**, **Erika Pluhar**, **André Heller** and countless others.



Above: Toni with Billy (Sybill) in Kitzbühel in 1954

Left: Toni's first quintet

Below: With Bill Grah, Heinz Grah and Bob Blumenhoven in Vienna's Volksgarten



At this point Toni and his wife made their next momentous decision. Having discovered **Burgenland** for themselves, they resolved to make their home there. Toni had inherited a plot of land in **Bad Sauerbrunn**, within walking distance of his father's birthplace in Sigless, and here they began building themselves a house.

In **1971** their daughter **Barbara** was born. Not that this meant Toni's itinerant years were over - far from it.

In **1974** he gave up his post as concertmaster of the Theater an der Wien orchestra and returned to a life of concert tours, gala performances, radio and tv appearances and recording productions. In collaboration with **Erich Kleinschuster** he made a record series entitled "**Strings and Bones**" and recorded Viennese songs with his own line-up of traditional Viennese musicians. After two years Toni finally had enough of his career as a freelance musician and made up his mind to move full-time to Burgenland and spend his days reflecting on the important things in life. It was a process of "**stripping himself down**" to the essentials - a process in which he could count on the professional and personal support of two friends above all others, **Gottfried Kumpf** and **André Heller**.

It was at this time that Toni teamed up with **Peter Marinoff**, whose work he had long admired as a colleague. The two recorded what proved a pioneering LP devoted to "**Pannonian ballads and Viennese dances**" (thus the title). Years later, when the record was released in Germany, it won the **1981 German Gramophone Prize**.

By **1977** the house in Sauerbrunn was finished, and Toni and his family made their permanent home in Burgenland. They found rural life deeply rewarding. And in the harmony and straight-forwardness of the people and the beauty of the Pannonian countryside in its diversity and rich cultural heritage, Toni discovered a new purpose in his creative life.

From now on he set out to capture all the changing moods of the Pannonian landscapes and to articulate them in his music. A new musical style grew out of the **rural simplicity, traditions** and **scenic enchantment** of his new home, combined with Toni's characteristic, inimitable manner of playing the violin: "**Pannonian music**".

**André Heller** acted as producer for the first two albums Toni Stricker recorded in the years that followed: "**Brot und Wein**" (which won Gold in Austria) and "**Ernte**". The success of these two LPs sparked a new phase of creative vitality. Toni composed the score to **Maria Plachky's** ballet "**Der Purbacher Türk**" for the **Jeunesse Ballet** of the Vienna State Opera (choreography by **Herbert Nitsch**) and the music for a stage production of **Herzmannovsky-Orlando's** "**Der Gauschreck im Rosennetz**" at **Erwin Piplits' Serapionstheater** in Vienna. He featured in a television portrait of his life ("**Toni Stricker - Beruf Musikant**"), performed and went on tour with **Erika Pluhar** and **André Heller**, wrote the music for television fairy-tale dramatisations by **Christine Kövesi** ("**Daniel und die Feen**" and "**Der Nussbär**", for instance) and the scores for **Maximilian Schell's** film version of "**Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald**", the television series "**Ringstrassenpalais**", the **Peter Rosegger** film biography "**Der Waldbauernbub**", and the international television production "**Der Leutnant und sein Richter**" (**Devil`s Lieutenant**).



Above: in Bad Sauerbrunn



Above: Lake Neusiedl

Left: Cover of the CD album "Pannonische Balladen und Wiener Tänze"

Below: with André Heller



On top of all this, Toni appeared in gala concerts and on television programmes such as "Tritsch-Tratsch", "Quiz in Rot-Weiss-Rot", "Dalli-Dalli", "Liedercircus", "Bio's Bahnhof", "Café in Takt" and the very popular "Einer wird gewinnen" with the famed quiz master **Kulenkampff**. And beside his packed schedule of composing and performing, he found time to record a new LP: "**Erdverbunden**", a movingly simple documentation of Toni Stricker's development as a man and musician.

In **1987** he set off on a concert tour of Austria. A jury selected by "Basta" magazine named him the **foremost Burgenland resident** of his day.

In **1988** he recorded the album "**Ornamente**", which again prompted innumerable concerts and television appearances and another tour of Austria.

The album "**Bekenntnis**" appeared in **1990**, followed by a further Austrian tour as well as appearances on concert stages and television in Germany. Austrian television marked his sixtieth birthday with a special portrait, "**Toni Stricker 60**".



In **1991** Toni launched the concert series "**Zauber einer Landschaft - Zauber einer Geige**" in the picturesque setting of the hilltop church in **Donnerskirchen** beside Lake Neusiedl in Burgenland. His accompanist was the concert guitarist **Michael Hintersteiner**.

In the following year he composed the scores for the **Xaver Schwarzenberger** film "**Duett**" (starring **Agnes Baltsa** and **Otto Schenk**) and the international television production "**Der Diamant des Geisterkönigs**".

In **1993-94** he recorded the CD "**Weites Land**", went on extended concert tours (which included a gala concert and television show in **Paris**), gave a series of concerts in Austria, and appeared at a gala in the tent palace on **Vienna's City Hall Plaza** (which had been erected for performances by the Chinese National Circus, brought to Austria by **André Heller**).

In **1995** he composed and recorded the album "**Leben**", starred in a gala at the **Ronacher** in Vienna, won gold for "**Erdverbunden**" and composed the music for the ballet "**Visionen einer Geige**".

In April and May of **1996** Toni toured **North America**, giving concerts in New York City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Chicago, Washington D.C., San Francisco and Los Angeles. Later that year he appeared with a septet and large string orchestra in the **Vienna State Opera** (as part of the programme of the **Vienna Jazz Festival**). And it was in that year that he acquired his house in Le Rayol-Canadel sur Mer on the French **Côte d'Azur**.

In **1997** he toured Italy (Trieste, Milan, Rome and other cities) and recorded the CDs "**Horizonte**" and "**As Time Goes By**" as well as starring in another Austrian Television production, "**Toni Stricker - Über alle Grenzen**".

In the next year he gave **concerts in London** and wrote the music for the CD "**Dialog**", on which he performed with the renowned soprano **Edita Gruberova**. Recorded in Bratislava with the **Slovakian Philharmonic Orchestra**, the album was launched at a gala presentation during the **Haydn Festival** in Eisenstadt.



Left: with accompanist Michael Hintersteiner



Above: entrance to Toni's studio "Le Violon" in Rayol-Canadel

Below: cover of the album "Erdverbunden"



In **1999** he gave concerts in **Bratislava's Philharmonic Hall**, in **Vienna`s Main Hall** of the **Wiener Musikverein**, in the **Bayreuth Opera House** and in many other venues.

In **2000** he celebrated the ten-year jubilee of the concert series **"Zauber einer Landschaft – Zauber einer Geige"** in the **Bergkirche Donnerskirchen**, Best Of-CD **"Charisma"**, Concerts in France and Austria, Gala **"Dialog"** with **Edita Gruberova** at the Burgarena Finkenstein.

**2001/02** Concerts in France, Germany and Austria, Performance in **Abu Dhabi-UAE**, Concert-Gala in the Wiener Ronacher **"Von Pannonischen Impressionen bis Jazz"**; Music for the **Maximilian Schell-Film "Meine Schwester Maria"**. Composition and recording of the CD **"Perspective"** (Pannonien und Jazz), Live presentation in the **Wiener Radio Kulturhaus**.



Above:  
Church of Donnerskirchen

Left:  
CD-Cover "Charisma"

Left:  
CD-Cover "Perspective"

Below:  
Pannonian Impressions

