

# Otto Lechner

## Der Musikant

Ein Film von  
Bernhard Pötscher



Mit: Otto Lechner | Anne Bennent | Arnaud Méthivier | Klaus Trabitsch |  
Peter Rosmanith | Pamela Stickney | Max Nagl | Karl Ritter | Patrice Héral u.a.  
Regie/Kamera: Bernhard Pötscher | Schnitt: Paul Sedlacek | Sounddesign/  
Mischung: Tong Zhong | Konzertaufnahmen: Kim Jerrett | David Jerrett u.a.  
Colourgrading: Iziscreenworks/Jimmi Hennrich | Tonschnitte: Joseph Nikolussi  
Produktion: Bernhard Pötscher Filmproduktion

Produktionspartner  
Kultur, Medien,  
Wirtschaft, Umwelt und Sport

Stadt  
Wien

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# **OTTO LECHNER - DER MUSIKANT**

## **The Minstrel**

**A film by Bernhard Pötscher**

### **Press kit**

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## PROTAGONISTS & CREW

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### PROTAGONISTS

Otto Lechner, Anne Bennent, Klaus Trabitsch, Peter Rosmanith, Max Nagl, Karl Ritter, Arnaud Méthivier, Florin Mittermayr, Ingo Inngensand, Patrice Heral, Gabriel Graf, Karl Ritter, Pamela Stickney and others.

### CREW

Directed, photographen and produced by: Bernhard Pötscher

Edited by: Paul Sedlacek

Sound recording and mix: Tong Zhang

Concert footage: Kim Jerrett, Kurt Hennrich, David Jerrett, Mathias Smycka, Deniz Lindenberg, Florian Lindenberg, Othmar Schmiderer, Sonja Aufderklamm, Marianne Borowiec, Roman Plank

Color grading: Jimmi Kurt Hennrich

Sound editing: Joseph Nikolussi

Produced by Bernhard Pötscher Filmproduktion

#### **Produced with the support of**

Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport BMKöS,  
Land Niederösterreich  
Stadt Wien Kultur

Documentary / 100 min / 1:2,39 / Dolby 5.1

## SYNOPSIS

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Musical elementary events and their creator: OTTO LECHNER - DER MUSIKANT (**The Minstrel**) is a film in which introduces the person - not just the musician - Otto Lechner. A cinematic experience with exceptional concert footage and the wonderful humor of the Austrian musical genius.

Keys, buttons, individual notes and chords, descant and bass.

Pulled, squeezed, rapped and sung.

Elementary musical events and their creator.

The film **The Minstrel** is an introduction to the person - not just the musician - Otto Lechner. The musical universe Otto Lechner - blindly in the service of music for decades.



Musical elemental events and their creator. Between the recitation of a story by Franz Kafka accompanied by accordion music and “Dark Side of the Accordion,” his personal homage to Pink Floyd: what Otto Lechner elicits from his accordion is musical elemental power. In Bernhard Pötscher's documentary film “Otto Lechner - Der Musikant” (**The Minstrel**), we encounter such an elemental event and the man who created it.

Yet the accordion, which he plays with unrivalled mastery, is by no means Otto Lechner's only means of musical expression. Nor can this veteran musician be pigeonholed into a single musical genre. All of this can be experienced in “Otto Lechner - Der Musikant” (**The Minstrel**): the musical spectrum ranges from Karel Gott's hit “*Fang das Licht*,” (Catch the light) which Otto Lechner sings with his partner Anne Bennent, to the symphonic poem “Gracchus,” which Otto Lechner composed as a commissioned work for the Bruckner Year 2024. In between, there is jazz, world music, and Austrian songwriting, where Otto Lechner is just as at home as he is in the language, to which he lends musical expression in his own way. “Otto Lechner - Der Musikant” (**The Minstrel**) shows him as he lives and breathes: in France, he succeeds in communicating sounds in a congenial way together with accordionist Arnaud Méthivier. He is no less remarkable when he sings about a trip to southern Burgenland on a Dr. Richard bus: “40 Leit im Nebel, und nix ist passiert ...” (40 People in the fog, and nothing went wrong ...).

But what can a blind man know about fog? Since going completely blind as a teenager, Otto Lechner has explored his music and the world without eyesight. In “Otto Lechner - Der Musikant” (**The Minstrel**), he shares his thoughts. He reveals his worldview and philosophy on train journeys and guides us through his parents' house in the Dunkelsteiner Wald near Melk with literal sure-footedness. On the church organ in his hometown of Gamsbach, he demonstrates how traditional religion has also influenced his music. And: “I am privileged in that I can't see anything,” he says in the film. You can also watch Otto Lechner crossing the street over the Danube Canal on the Friedensbrücke in Vienna. Without any help.

“Otto Lechner - Der Musikant” (**The Minstrel**) is the film in which you can get to know Otto Lechner the person - not just the musician!



My film about the musician Otto Lechner is a statement about an artist who unflinchingly goes his own way. Who doesn't bend - neither in what he says nor in his musical creativity. Not even in an era when freedom of speech, committed journalism, media diversity and free artistic creation are at stake.

Otto Lechner has been musically close to me for a long time. When I asked him to compose the film music for my documentary „Bora: Stories of a Wind,“ we got to know each other personally. We talked about the theme of the film, discussed moods, chatted about all sorts of things. Then I left him alone with the cold wind.

There were wonderful compositions. Wind is invisible, moving air that transcends boundaries. The ability to “show” that invisibility is a gift. And it was a gift to film. On his wind instrument, the accordion, Otto Lechner masterfully accompanies the wind in the film and creates his own narrative employing a variety of musical forms.

So I decided to dedicate my next film to the artist himself.



Otto agreed immediately. But we both had a lot of work to do. I had to make myself aware of what it meant to stand in front of a blind person and film him. It was about finding a balance: on the one hand, to maintain respect for the artist and his vulnerability, but on the other hand, not to suppress my own desire for observation. His humour and lightness should be given wide space. Otto, in turn, found confidence - confidence that my film would not superficially focus on the artist's blindness.

For me, it was a special challenge and responsibility to make a film about a person who would hear the result but never see it. I watched him with the camera while he couldn't see me. To keep that in mind, I decided to question my usual filmmaker's gaze and make the job a little harder.

Today, with every mobile phone and digital camera, images of incredible sharpness can be produced. In this case, I wanted to counteract these automated, standardized viewing habits. I worked with analog photo optics without automatic focus and image stabilization, which didn't improve anything digitally and didn't smooth out movements. In private scenes, I refrained from using technical means, while in public shots of the musician I used multiple cameras on tripods.

Documentaries are subjective, living stories that change in form and content as they are made. A lot of patience is required: a long wait in an effort to identify situations and events that may be important to the film. I worked on the film for nearly three years. Often, it wasn't until the editing of the film that the meaning of a scene or the interpretation of it became apparent.

Otto Lechner is a traveler when it comes to music, he plays in different places on different occasions. In order to make a film about him, I had to travel with him. In this way, I was able to document the diversity and impressive mastery of his musical work and get closer to the human being. In the film, only Otto himself speaks. He takes us through his world. Conversations with him are shaped by a smart, witty, often philosophical worldview. When he sings, he talks about his life.

The film accompanies Otto Lechner from the big stage to the swing in the woods, from the Waldviertel to France, from playing with various musicians to solo programs. The ease and certainty with which he moves his fingers over his instrument is always impressive. The power of a musical primal force is palpable.

It's an entertaining cinematic journey. The protagonist's charm and wit are seductive. The bias that might arise in the viewer given his disability quickly disappears behind the impression of his powerful music, its lightness and accuracy.

Otto Lechner is „The Minstrel.“



## "CHANGING THE AIR IS WHAT I DO" - Interview with Otto Lechner

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Otto Lechner has been blind since the age of 15. There is hardly a musical genre that this accordion virtuoso has not tried his hand at. The film "Der Musikant" (The Minstrel) portrays this artist and his music.

The interview was conducted by Otto Friedrich.

The accordion is his most important instrument, but by no means the only one Otto Lechner plays. The 60-year-old blind artist has been known for many years as a folk, jazz, and world musician, as well as a composer, singer, and performer of literary and musical crossovers. Now documentary filmmaker Bernhard Pötscher is bringing this jack-of-all-trades to the cinema with his music, his concerts, his life, and his thoughts. Otto Lechner - Der Musikant (The Minstrel) will premiere at the 26th Accordion Festival in Vienna.

DIE FURCHE: Despite your wide range, is there any music you wouldn't make?

LECHNER: That depends more on the awareness behind it. But when it comes to music as such, I agree with jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, who said, "I love all kinds of music." That's how I feel too.

DIE FURCHE: The film features the symphonic poem

"Gracchus" composed by you, as well as the Karel Gott hit "Fang das Licht" interpreted together with your wife Anne Bennent ...

LECHNER: ...and my latest focus has been on sea shanties. If you look at a song from the front and you don't like it, you can always look at it from the back. Every piece of music has something beautiful about it.

DIE FURCHE: The wide range of instruments is also striking: you don't just play the accordion and piano.

LECHNER: That's why I like the film title "Der Musikant" (The Minstrel). Because that's the rural aspiration to be the musician in your village. That means you have to know a little bit about everything: a low-level polymath - that's what I always wanted to be.

DIE FURCHE: Nevertheless, art has to do with "skill."

LECHNER: But I don't do anything else but music! That gives you time to delve deeply into one thing or another.

DIE FURCHE: In your case, it's not just music, but also literature; it opens up a whole cosmos.

LECHNER: Literature has a lot to do with my experience of the world. I'm an idealist in that most of it only exists in my imagination. Literature is a way of seeing the world and finding my place in it.

DIE FURCHE: Is that why Kafka—with whom the film begins—is so important?

LECHNER: With Kafka, it becomes clear that it's perfectly normal to feel like a

stranger. Kafka captures this strange feeling of not really belonging, but still being there, quite well.

DIE FURCHE: Feeling alienated is one thing. But in your art, there is also a comedic element. And if you take the village music you mention: it's impossible to imagine it without a touch of comedy.

LECHNER: I once thought: A blind person wants to be funny because laughter is an audible reaction. You perceive your counterpart most directly when you make them laugh.

DIE FURCHE: In the film, you say: "I am privileged because I can't see anything."

LECHNER: I wanted people to laugh at that. It happens that someone says to me: Be glad you don't have to see that!

DIE FURCHE: But music also deals with abysses ...

LECHNER: ... and responsibility. Living with Kafka means that there are abysses everywhere. And that you shouldn't pretend they don't exist.

DIE FURCHE: What are the ways of expressing this?

LECHNER: You're sad anyway. It's just a matter of finding a way to be beautifully sad. In music, I have always found a way to be sad in a comfortable way. That's beautiful, that's the blues!

DIE FURCHE: The film also shows how music is communication—for example, in the improvisations with French accordionist Arnaud Méthivier—a dialogue between two accordions.

LECHNER: If someone is willing to make music with me, then it's clear that they're meeting me on an acoustic level. Those who get involved have a beautiful, pure musical experience. Things happen that should actually be part of everyday musical life - synchronicity, the fact that everything is not based solely on causal relationships or action and reaction, but that the same decision is made in two heads or four hands at the same moment. DIE FURCHE: Do you want to say something to the world with your music?

LECHNER: I do believe that it is a message of sensitivity. But it's not much more than showing people: Listen, this is how it can be done!

DIE FURCHE: Is it easier to cross cultural boundaries through music?

LECHNER: Twenty-five years ago, I lived with the awareness that I could play with anyone, anywhere, anytime. But when you start exploring Moroccan music or flamenco, for example, you realize that you can play anywhere. But to understand what this music is about and what it consists of, you have to really get involved.

LECHNER: It's true, though, that I can communicate better through music than through speech.

DIE FURCHE: In the film, you also talk about your childhood in the Dunkelsteinerwald, the forest south of the Wachau region and how you grew up there in a traditional religious environment.

LECHNER: What has stayed with me is that you need someone to agree with you. It also does me good in music when things have a spiritual connection and are carried by a joy in creation. I do need to say yes despite everything. That you imagine an almighty God who is actually powerless, because if he can do everything, then he can do nothing.





Otto Lechner was born on February 25 in Melk on the Danube, where he also graduated from high school. He comes from the Dunkelsteinerwald region and lives in Vienna and Gars am Kamp.

From 1984 to 1986, he accompanied cabaret artist Josef Hader on the piano, after which he concentrated more and more on the accordion.

In 1987, he founded the 1st Strengen Chamber Orchestra with Hans Tschiritsch, followed by his first CD productions.

In 1994, he created the solo program "Akkordeonata."

In 1996, he toured for the first time with the "Accordion Tribe," an international harmonica quintet with Maria Kalaniemi, Bratko Bibic, Lars Holmer, and Guy Clusevsec; this was followed by three CDs and a documentary film by Stefan Schwittert

1997: Release of an album called "Still" with world music arrangements of Christmas carols together with Klaus Trabitsch

2001: Creation of the first of what are now five audiobooks that Otto Lechner has produced together with his wife Anne Bennent for Mandelbaum Verlag  
Always oscillating between experiment and tradition, theater, dance, and literature; always seeking and creating space for improvisation, he has composed for Peter Burwik's Ensemble zwanzigstes Jahrhundert (EXXj) and the Lower Austrian Tonkünstler, made music for films, and improvised on Haydn's string quartets. He has written the music for the radio play of the year three times, with Götz Fritsch as director and Wolf Haas as author, has worked for the Vienna Burgtheater, and recites Kafka.

His travels have taken him to Madagascar, Tuva, Australia, Singapore, Zimbabwe, Zanzibar, Morocco, Nepal, and India, among other places, and he has been working with Moroccan singer Kadero Rai and other Maghreb musicians since 2001.

From 2017 to 2019, he was artistic director of the “Kultur in der Kartause” festival (Aggsbach, Lower Austria).

Since May 2022, he has been artistic director of the “Invention and Memories” festival in Horn (Lower Austria) and has been awarded the Lower Austria State Prize for Music.

In 2022, the LP “Brother Ray” was released, featuring Lechner as pianist and singer.

In 2023, he released a third album with French accordionist Arnaud Methivier as ARNOTTO, plays as an accordionist and pianist in various small formations, and still enjoys playing for dances.



## BERNHARD PÖTSCHER | Regie | BIOGRAFIE & FILMOGRAFIE

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2000 - 2025 Camera work for feature films, documentaries, television documentaries. Production/camera/editing for numerous television documentaries

1997 Founded his own production company

1985 - 2000 Camera assistant on numerous feature films by Michael Haneke, Christian Berger, Barbara Albert, Michael Kreihsl, Andreas Gruber, Fritz Lehner, Dieter Berner, and many others.

Selection: The Piano Teacher, Nordrand, Benny's Video, 71 Fragments, Arbeiter Saga 4-6, Jedermanns Fest, Der Mautplatz, Die Rückkehr der Jäger, etc.

1982 - 1985 Lighting technician in Munich Sound engineer for Bavarian Radio productions and documentary films by Wilma Kiener and Dieter Matzka, such as "Deckname Schlier"

Founding member of dok.at.

I left dok.at because too many members were only representing their own interests. Four years as a member of the Film Advisory Board



## **filmography (selection cinema) / bernhard pötscher filmproduktion**

- 2025 **DER MUSIKANT / The Minstrel**  
Dokumentarfilm 100 min  
Regie | Kamera | Produktionen
- 2020 **BORA - GESCHICHTEN EINES WINDES / Bora - stories of a wind**  
Dokumentarfilm 89 min  
Regie | Kamera | Produktion
- 2012 **KLEINE PERESTROIKA / Little Perestroika**  
Dokumentarfilm 90 min  
Regie | Kamera | Schnitt | Produktion
- 2008 **AUS DER ZEIT / Out of Time**  
Dokumentarfilm 90 min  
Kamera | Schnitt
- 2004 **SCHNELLES GELD / Easy Money**  
Regie: Sabine Derflinger | DOKUMENTARFILM 90 MIN |  
PRODUKTION & SCHNITT
- 2003 **FUCKING FREEDOM**  
Regie: Kris Krikellis | DOKUMENTARFILM 90 MIN  
PRODUKTION & KAMERA
- 1999 **THE ROUNDER GIRLS**  
Regie: Sabine Derflinger & BERNHARD PÖTSCHER |  
Dokumentarfilm 90 MIN |  
PRODUKTION & KAMERA & CO-REGIE
- 1996 **ACHTUNG STAATSGRENZE / Attention Statefrontier**  
Regie: Sabine Derflinger, BERNHARD PÖTSCHER DOKUMENTARFILM 90 MIN  
KAMERA & CO-REGIE | PRISMA FILM
- 1994 **GERAUBTE KINDHEIT | Stolen Childhood**  
Regie: S. Derflinger, BERNHARD PÖTSCHER |  
Dokumentarfilm 90 MIN  
KAMERA & CO-REGIE | DOR FILM



## Quotes about and by OTTO LECHNER

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*„I see it more as an adventure. The instrument is my wilderness, and when I play, I consciously take risks. I deliberately let my hand fly down onto the keyboard from half a meter away. And I have to do something with what comes out, because there's no turning back.“* Otto Lechner

*„A musician who is always one step ahead of his time.“* Music Austria

*„Otto Lechner makes the accordion sound like Jimi Hendrix once made his guitar sound.“* Klaus Taschwer, Falter (thing replaced by accordion)

*„Otto doesn't sit between chairs. He sits on all chairs.“* Christoph Huber, Porgy & Bess

*„Otto Lechner at the keys means above all: stupendous musicality and a unique “feeling.”* Klaus Taschwer, Falter

*„When you hear Otto Lechner's music, you forget everything you ever knew about accordion music. His music is innovative, amazingly funny, and full of surprises. RamblenPlaying in a duo with Otto is one of the most musically intense moments for me.“* Max Nagl

*„When someone triggers such storms of enthusiasm as Otto Lechner does, it's clear that this is about more than just music!“* Zürcher Tagesanzeiger

*„One of the most important and distinguished Austrian musical personalities of the present day.“* musicaustria.at

*„Music is poor consolation, but sometimes it's the best we have.“* Otto Lechner



## MUSIC LIST from the film

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- „Auf der Galerie“ | Text: Franz Kafka | Musik: Otto Lechner | Jänner 2024
- „Der Gefangene“ | Text: Franz Kafka | Musik: Otto Lechner | Jänner 2024
- „Überall“ | Text und Musik: Otto Lechner | Jänner 2024
- „Dark Side of the Accordion - Meditation 9“ | Musik: Otto Lechner | April 2022
- „Tennessee Stud“ | Komposition: Jimmy Driftwood | Interpretation: Otto Lechner | Mai 2023
- „Netzwerk für Orgel“ | Musik: Otto Lechner | April 2024
- „40 Leit im Nebel“ | Text und Musik: Otto Lechner | Percussion: Peter Rosmanith  
Gitarre: Klaus Trabitsch | Klavier: Otto Lechner | Dezember 2023
- „Gracchus“ | Komposition: Otto Lechner | Orchester der Musikschule Linz | Dirigent: Ingo Ingensand | Juli 2024
- „Fang das Licht“ | Komposition: Michael Kunze, Jiri Zmolek, Zdenek Rytir | Interpretation: Anne Bennent und Otto Lechner | Mai 2023 | Warner Chappell Musikverlag
- „Am Glockenturm“ | Arnaud Methivier und Otto Lechner | Juli 2023
- „La Paillot Improvisation“ | Arnaud Methivier und Otto Lechner | Juli 2023
- „Konzert für Traktor und Akkordeon“ | Musik: Gabriel Graf und Otto Lechner |  
Traktor: Gabriel Graf | Akkordeon: Otto Lechner | Juli 2024
- „Auf der Schaukel“ | Musik: Otto Lechner | September 2024
- „Der Ausflug ins Gebirge“ | Text: Franz Kafka | Jänner 2024
- „Netzwerk“ | Musik: Otto Lechner | Jänner 2024
- „Horner Aufregungen“ | Saxophon: Max Nagl | Schlagzeug: Patrice Heral |  
Akkordeon: Otto Lechner | August 2023
- „Dark Side of the Accordion - Meditation 10“ | Musik - Text: Otto Lechner | Juli 2022
- „Die Zirkelreise des Plubutsch“ | Komposition: Otto Lechner |  
Teremin: Pamela Stickney | Gitarre: Karl Ritter | Akkordeon: Otto Lechner | Juli 2022