



Bearing Bass Fruit from Bach & Beethoven Ariane Cap WRITTEN BY JEFF SCHEETZ

Ariane Cap: Bearing Bass Fruit from Bach & Beethoven

JEFF SCHEETZ • JANUARY 7, 2017 • ARTICLES • ARTISTS & EDUCATORS



Austrian-born bassist Ariane Cap is a busy musician! And that is just the way she likes it. From gigging with multiple bands and teaching, to sitting on the board of the San Francisco Chapter of the Recording Academy (the Grammys). She's been going non-stop for a long time.

I talked with Ariane about her career, her ideas about teaching, and the steps she's taken to get where she is today.

"I started playing music when I was five, but I did not pick up a bass until I was 21. The music I grew up with was all classical – Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart were my thing, and I played piano, flute, recorder and took lessons at the conservatory."

But eventually she discovered a world of music outside of the conservatory. "When I was 18, I spent a year in the U.S. and discovered rock, pop, jazz, blues and my mind was blown. Someone handed me a guitar, and because I had a strong theory background, I picked it up very quickly. When I returned to Austria I knew I wanted to play in a band and I joined a few of them as keyboardist, vocalist and guitarist.



To make a long story short one of my bands needed a bassist on short notice and since we couldn't find anyone, I went ahead and bought a bass. A few weeks later I played my first gig and never looked back. I later attended a private bass institute and then the University of Music in Vienna, where I was awarded a scholarship that brought me to the U.S. (University of Miami).

I knew bass was my gig when I learned the bass line to "Cheap Sunglasses" by ZZ Top. It was the second or third song I ever learned and something just clicked. I loved the feeling of the bass on my body and holding down a fat groove. The low end felt powerful and the rhythmic quality came natural. I also loved the versatility of the relatively new instrument and started experimenting with solo bass, tapping, loopers and six string, heavily dipping into my classical background."



While that sounds like smooth sailing, Ariane says that there are still struggles, especially as a working bassist.

"The big struggle of being a working bass player is finding work. Traditional gigs have become fewer in the 21st century. Of course, there is also opportunity in this and so I diversified...creating my own band (OoN) for one, and writing a book on bass. I love teaching and am into learning psychology and learning methods and habit optimizing, so creating courses and teaching is a natural fit for me."

This diversification means she can embrace the whole process. "There are of course work parts to the whole gig – the gear schlep (yep, personal roadies are still the very rare exception), long drives, traffic, dealing with all sorts of 'fires' – but I don't fight these aspects of the gig. I work on being in the 'here and

now' and let the flow of the music take over."

Ariane says that being versatile was a big goal. "I studied most styles, was shooting for live and studio work in all walks of music. I also studied upright bass. Over the years I allowed my own voice to emerge more and more, especially that eclectic part of me, tapping my six string, exploring looping, chord playing and composing/arranging on the bass."

As an educator Ariane has done a very successful course with TrueFire, written a bass book, and runs a popular bass blog. She loves working with students of all levels and offers this advice for beginning bass players.

"Many beginners are very worried about factors such as talent, or maybe their age or background. Or they may have trepidation or scars from things teachers or parents told them about their abilities.

Students often need to be shown the value of a systematic approach, a consistent practice routine, and following a solid course. In my experience, and from discussing this with other teachers, consistent practice with a good program makes up for 'talent' and lost years easily. And of course, it is easy to say 'just go for it' – but so many times I want to grab students by the shoulders and tell them to stop worrying, stop searching whether it is possible for you to achieve your goals, steady looking for a magic wand to change the past, but instead, do the work. Practice. Slow and steady wins the race along with cultivating a positive attitude towards the learning process. The results one generates by doing that makes it easier and easier to keep going.

Also, I think a lot of beginners are focused on learning songs without giving much thought as to how music works (i.e. music theory) and how to best position the fingers, arms, body (i.e. good technique). In my mind those two – theory and technique – go together well because theory can be understood as shapes (scales, triads, pentatonics). As the body executes these shapes, why not incorporate good fingering and good technique practices while learning the principles of how music works, how songs are put together and how the fretboard works? It all goes together, but pays off majorly."



Keeping busy is still the key, and 2017 has more in store of all aspects of what Ariane does best. "My duo OoN is recording a new album. We are currently writing and arranging for it. I am working on a second book that builds on my first, Music Theory for the Bass Player. This next one will be about the Pattern System for the Bass Player and a Reading System. I'd also love to do another TrueFire Course, maybe Pentatonic Playground 2, I have gotten a requests for it."

With no slowing down in sight for the future, if she could go back in time is there anything that Ariane would tell that 5 year old girl who first started playing music in Austria?

"I'd tell her to give it her all. Also to explore all sorts of instruments, not just the piano because there happened to be one in the house. And more styles! A classical background is great, but explore as many styles as possible!"

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JEFF SCHEETZ EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR Jeff is the Director of Education at TrueFire, has released 8 music CDs, and 6 video instruction courses. He's been a teacher for over 30 years and brings his own method and style to students from around the world. He has written guitar columns for many magazines and conducted workshops and clinics throughout the US, Europe and Mexico.

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