



# Sinfo

November-December

The Best from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS**

Magic of the Festive Season

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

**SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

*November-December 2018*

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## REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE

When the year is coming to its close, we are rethinking our past achievements and our plans for the future. What have we done well? Where could we be better? When days get shorter and December holidays approach, such contemplations are also accompanied by feelings of close connection to family and friends and appreciation of each other.

Similarly, these days are time of reflection also for us, working in state institutions, attempting to read people's minds and hearts and meet their needs. Studies show that even in the countries with the highest levels of trust one in four citizens do not have confidence that their governments will do the right thing. How do we respond to this? We need to find more efficient ways to connect and interact with people, work harder at listening and conversation, and incorporate common people's problems in our agendas and policies. In the end, our actions always speak louder than words. We should constantly strive to make people feel they matter, feel that we share common values and aims, feel that we all belong to the same community.

The same goes for our national brand I feel Slovenia, representing the beauty of our country to which everyone can connect. Its true asset is that it is all based on the real thing – Slovenia's amazing, well preserved nature, hard-working, active, and creative people, and a unique culture. Thereby, we are extending our feelings of Slovenia and our love for it to foreign visitors, investors, students, artists. You are welcome to join or stay with us in 2019. Let our deeds be good and aspirations high in the upcoming year.

The future is now. Do your best!

**Kristina Plavšak-Krajnc**, Government Communication Office, Director



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### MAGIC OF THE FESTIVE SEASON

A friendly smile, a warm handshake, a hopeful heart and fulfilled wishes will bring out the holiday spirit in you. Life is wonderful, enchanting, boundless and mysterious ... may the magic of the festive season last throughout the year.

Festive gingerbread biscuits.  
Photo: Mostphotos



## SAINT NICHOLAS' EVE

# Abundance in a Bowl

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Traditional procession of Saint Nicholas with angels and devils in festive Ljubljana – much to the children's delight.  
Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA

December is certainly one of children's favourite months of the year. This is the month that celebrates the importance of families, friendship, charity and gift-giving. Miklavž, Saint Nicholas, is the first to bring gifts, but also to remind us of the triviality of material wealth. He is the good man who loves children.

A recollection of the past ... Saint Nicholas' Eve, the house is clean, the table is set, there are five bowls. Tonight Saint Nicholas will come. On those nights our mother, instead of reading us a fairy tale from Hans Christian Andersen, told us the story of Saint Nicholas: "He was born to wealthy parents who taught him, by their own example, to share his material wealth with the poor. When his parents died, he gave all his possessions to the poor and hungry. Because of his good works he was made a saint. He is the patron saint of sailors, ferrymen, raftsmen, and he likes children above all." This was the message we children fell asleep with.

**And in the morning ... the bowls were full of dried fruit and candies, and in each there was a small present and a honey cake with a picture of Saint Nicholas.**

And that day's breakfast was made of all the good things found the bowl. This was allowed on that morning. But we were happy also for another reason: Saint Nicholas' visit meant that we have been good during the year!

### GENEROSITY IS THE GREATEST GIFT

We Slovenians may consider ourselves lucky that no other than Saint Nicholas is the good man from our childhood memories; and one who reminds us what is the most important for children in this festive season.

He continues to bring small presents to Slovenian children. Some

dried fruit, candies and small gifts. Gloves, socks, a scarf or an inexpensive toy. And of course, the image of Saint Nicholas that appears on traditional gingerbread biscuits or, as is more and more often the case, in the version of a small chocolate statue.

**Sometimes there is also a symbolic stick in the bowl, but one of Saint Nicholas' greatest gifts to our children has always been his encouragement to be brave, true, sincere, hardworking and respectful, instead of handing out punishment for failing to be all these things.**

Another of the most valuable gifts that Saint Nicholas brings is generosity. And generosity is the seed from which confidence and trust grow in children's hearts.

### BLESSED TIME

The most important thing at this time of year is the feeling, at least I remember it so, of a close-knit family. The blessed time spent with parents and brothers and sisters is to be cherished. And the fact that Saint Nicholas' gifts are much more personal than those brought by the American Santa Claus or the more Slavic Dedek Mraz (Father Frost). In comparison to Saint Nicholas these are more materialistic, and carry a less friendly message.

Giving thoughtful symbolic gifts demands that we are more original and attentive to the person who will receive them than



things we can easily buy in supermarkets and shopping malls. One such personal gift is the letter Saint Nicholas gives each child. And a handwritten letter, not an email, has a particular charm. “Dear Child ... your Saint Nicholas.”

Soon enough children understand that it is not Saint Nicholas who visits, and that the message of giving and love for their fellow human beings is actually conveyed by their parents; but the

enchantment of Saint Nicholas’ Eve and of the next morning is no less for this small deception. Family tradition and dedicated parents give children the feeling of being loved.

I hope you all find, again this year, dried fruit and thoughtful gifts in your bowls. It fills us Slovenians with pride that Saint Nicholas continues to be welcome in our homes, and this fact in itself tells a lot about our nation and our values.



Saint Nicholas is addressing the gathered crowd while the angels are distributing biscuits, fruits and sweets to the good children, and “parkeljini” will be scaring the naughty ones. Definitely worth seeing, whether you are a child by age or a child at heart!  
Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



Saint Nicholas’ Eve Bowl  
Photo: Damir Kolar



PROF. CHRISTIAN GOSTEČNIK

## The Complete Message of Christmas - Bring out Your Truest Self

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Prof. Christian Gostečnik, Doctor of Clinical Psychology,  
Psychology, and Theology, and a family and marriage therapist  
Photo: Dušan Arzenšek

Messages conveyed by the story of Christmas are so profound that we find them difficult to grasp all at once. They reveal themselves little by little, and everyone probably understands them in their own way.

### **How should the messages of Christmas be understood today, and what does this holiday truly tell and bring us?**

Our day-to-day understanding of Christmas is one of an interesting holiday devoted to celebrating our relationships. It is a holiday honouring motherhood and fatherhood and is celebrated in December, a time of year when we are bombarded with all sorts of commercial products. And yet, it brings out a deep sense of longing in people, leaving them clueless about where all this longing for something new and different is coming from.

### **In the Christian sense, it is about a new birth.**

Yes, it is about birth, God came down to this world and became our brother. This is the most powerful message of Christmas, namely that we are the chosen ones in this world. This fundamental message has then spread directly to our relationships.

### **Christmas is, first and foremost, a holiday celebrating our relationships.**

It can sometimes be difficult to be alone at Christmas, particularly since this holiday conjures up so much longing for something different, a relationship, a sense of belonging. Many people who have spent this holiday alone have told me that this was one of the most difficult days of the year for them, a day that they would have preferred to sleep through or forget, as it acutely reminded them of relationships that did not exist. And their wish is to have relationships that would make them happy, to be able to wish well to others and vice versa, to listen to others and to be heard.

### **What can help lonely people get through Christmas?**

My advice would be to still celebrate Christmas even though they are alone. They can visit a nice place where they will spend the day in the company of themselves. The very idea of Christmas is to create something beautiful in your attitude towards

yourself, because if you do not have inner peace, no one's company will be of much help and you will find everything annoying. If you cannot find happiness within yourself, no relationship will help you. The same goes if you do not let anyone get close to you or if you are afraid to open up to someone. If people cannot find their inner peace, this keeps them stuck in all sorts of unpleasant situations and they have the sense that they are inappropriate, rejected and unloved. Once they accept their situation, they realise that there is actually a certain value to being in the company of oneself. What is for sure is that you will never leave yourself.

### **Christmas is also a holiday celebrating our body and mind, which stores the most profound messages of being desired, loved and connected with others.**

However, in today's world, many find it important to keep up appearances and are driven by the feeling that they must be with someone no matter what, that someone must visit them or that they must visit someone, and so forth, while the very message of Christmas is to find value in yourself.

### **The personal drama experienced by Jesus speaks about the process in ourselves. What is that process?**

If you are a Christian and believe in the birth of Jesus, it is logical to believe that he was an outcast; as such he had much more credibility, since he could truly understand all our pains only if he had been banished and tortured. Birth may be associated with a lot of pain, not only physical, but also psychological.

### **Questions arise as to what happens to children born into this world. Are they**



**loved and desired by their parents? Are they born in the right time?**

What are their parents experiencing upon their birth? For a newborn, birth can be a very traumatic experience, because the newborn will never again be as safe as it was in its mother's body. Questions also arise as to whether the mother will be available enough, whether the ties with parents are truly unconditional or are traumatised by the inability to accept the child at the very beginning. Messages underlying the story of Christmas are so profound that we cannot grasp them all at once; they reveal themselves little by little, and everyone probably understands them in their own way.

**Do you think that the celebration of Christmas has a positive impact even if we are not trying to grasp the story of Christmas as believers, but only respect the holiday as such?**

We live in very tumultuous times, full of distress and trauma, and Christmas gives us an opportunity to stop for a moment. This day is about our inner peace. Deep inside, we can search for the true meaning of Christmas, our fundamental longing, what we want to achieve in life. Christmas dinners symbolise all these questions and thoughts. Christmas is the most profound day of intimacy and compassion among us. If we cannot share these feelings with others, this is the very thing we most long for.

Christmas is a time when the dark is defeated and replaced by light and progress. The revival seen from the outside also happens inside. In winter, nature slows down.

**Christmas Day takes place around the time when the days start to get longer. People used to believe that this day marked the beginning of a new cosmic order.**

On this day, we feel a deep longing inside, something that is so deeply rooted in our mind, irrespective of whether we have religious beliefs or not. We want to stay at home on this day. And

give gifts or receive them. Unfortunately, the holiday itself has become overly commercialised, and the greater commercialism the greater the longing for deeper feelings.

**According to the Christian tradition, Christmas means a kind of redemption. How should we understand this?**

This is a Christian mentality; God is telling us that we are truly the chosen ones and that we are accepted; that we all have our own purpose and mission. We are not alone, someone has chosen us, and this is redemption. Spirituality is developed in every relationship, when you are chosen and someone wants to hear you and cares for your feelings.

**What is the most wonderful Christmas gift in your opinion?**

Mostly, we have enough of everything, at least in the material sense. Our greatest longing is to feel the touch of another human being, to look another person in the eye and wish them well for the holiday season. By extending your best wishes, you give yourself the best gift of all – you can give peace as a gift and see others accept what you wish to give. The act of giving makes us far happier than the act of taking.

**A gift is a symbol of acceptance; I give you this gift because I appreciate, love and respect you. I would like you to know that you are wanted. Those are the most wonderful gifts.**

It also depends on the attitude a person has towards such a gift. I would like to know whether my loved ones and I are united on Christmas Eve. You know, the Christmas holiday season can either energize or drain you. It is often during that season that conflicts arise between people due to poor relationships. While we might still present each other with gifts, we often fail to say something nice to each other because our relationships are burdened with fear and resentment, and such a holiday is not a true one. A true holiday is when you allow yourself to feel the connection with another human being, to be spoken to and feel inner peace. That peace is always there inside us for the taking, we

just have to listen to ourselves. All answers are deep inside us; they have always been there. And this is birth; this is Christmas – to bring out your truest self.

**What is your message to our readers on the occasion of this year's Christmas?**

Find that uniqueness in yourselves. Find peace in yourself and reflect on who you are, what you do, and what relationships are the most important to you.

**You should realise that you do not have to be popular with everyone or do everything that others want. We do not have to "buy" others' love.**

I hope that at some time you will be able to enter this world with your own creativity and uniqueness. That is the most wonderful Christmas.



Live nativity scene, Mojstrana.  
Photo: Matej Vranič



## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR MOTIFS AND MESSAGES WRITTEN IN SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE

### Everybody Is Looking Forward to New Year, Hopes for More, and Wants a Happy Life

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Greeting cards by Maksim Gaspari (1883–1980) are still popular cards for Christmas and New Year holidays in Slovenia. Gaspari was an excellent painter, but his great value is that he was also a “folk artist”. Photo: Slovene Ethnographic Museum Archives

Historically, greeting cards are among most recent Christmas and New Year customs. They are also one of the most pleasant December surprises for our friends and relatives. A little something to show a person we care for them in a personal and original way. This is particularly true if the greeting is sincere and personal.

The first printed greeting cards were made in the 1920s, primarily in Austria and Germany. As Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovenians were also among the first to start sending Christmas and New Year cards.

The printing of greeting cards in large editions began in the middle of the 19th century. The cards became quite popular, which was to a great extent due to industrialisation. At the end of the 19th century family members, friends and acquaintances often lived far apart, and greeting cards shortened the distances among them. The postal service was very important, which was often shown in the greeting card motifs, sometimes even ones with the Christmas and New Year themes.

**During the Christmas and New Year holidays, correspondence was a task almost as important as baking a potica or setting up a nativity scene and decorating a Christmas tree.**

Greeting cards were often printed abroad. Before the invention of offset printing in 1920, the black-and-white pictures were coloured with handmade colour stereotypes. The most common techniques were phototype and letterpress printing. Many of the old greeting cards were true artworks and, like postcards, have become a passion of collectors. Unlike the greeting cards of today – which are folded and thus opened – they were usually unfolded and flat, more like postcards.

The scenes depicted on them were set in nature in winter, frequent motifs being nativity scenes, going to midnight mass, tepežkanje (spanking), carol-singers as the Three Wise Men, and the Holy Family itself. It is interesting that not many greeting cards depicting Saint Nicholas can be found in the archives. The rare few are often humorous, showing Saint Nicholas with his demonic entourage and all the related attributes, such as rods, switches and chains.

#### THE MAKING OF GREETING CARDS WAS A CHALLENGE EVEN FOR ARTISTS

Among the Christmas and New Year cards made by Slovenian artists, the most beautiful are the ones designed by prominent Slovenian painters Anton Koželj (1874-1954), Ivan Vavpotič (1877-1943), Saša Šantel (1883-1945), Maksim Gaspari (1883-1980), Franjo Kopač (1885-1941), Tone Kralj (1900-1975), Rajko Šubic (1900-1983), Mirko Šubic (1900-1976), Miha Maleš (1903-1987), Stane Kregar (1905-1973), Maksim Sedej (1909-1974) and Sonja Vončina (1918-2011), the architects Janko Omahen (1898-1980) and Domicijan Serajnik (1899-1980), sculptor Ivan Pengov, writer and illustrator Ksenija Prunk (1905-1994), teacher Albert Sič (1865-1949), and researcher of Slovenian ornamentation and civil engineer Jože Karlovšek (1900-1963).

**In addition to their artistic value, such cards have some important special characteristics in their designs, messages and motifs.**



Maksim Gaspari (1883–1980) and his colleagues from Vienna started painting postcards at the beginning of the 20th century, thus changing illustrated postcards into something more than mere objects to send greetings on. They strove to give their cards artistic value, and thought that while ordinary people were not able to buy an artistic painting, they could buy a postcard with a greeting that could then find its way into any home. And this is what makes their decision to work in this medium so wonderful.

In some greeting cards a more patriotic function is noticeable (shown, for example, in representations of traditional costumes), which was often emphasised with additional text, frequently the verses of Simon Jenko (1885-1869) and Simon Gregorčič (1844-1906). There were also holiday greeting cards with photographs or humorous motifs. The most common greetings were: “Merry Christmas Holidays!”, “Merry Christmas Holidays and Happy New Year!”, “Happy New Year!”, “Christmas



Bells” and “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”. In addition to the printed greeting (e.g. “Happy New Year”), some senders added a personal written message on the side with the picture, such as: “Mother. From all of us. Your Lojzika.”

Another notable greeting card is one by Hinko Smrekar (1883-1942), showing a motif from World War I and bearing a characteristic Christmas message of peace, prayer, love and family value with the words: “To the Midnight Mass! Just like last year. Oh, not so! Our boys, men are not with us this year – they are fighting for us, shoulder to shoulder, in distant foreign lands.”

**A WELCOME TOKEN OF REGARD**

Let this be a task for all of us – to send greeting cards to our friends and family with a warm and above all personal message. And if the card is home-made, perhaps together with our children, it will really be a personal gift.

**It can also be a message to our children that it is worth making an effort and taking time for the people we love.**

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! A message to you from my greeting card.





## THE FIFTH SEASON

# The Joys of Winter and the Warmth of Holidays in the Treasures of the Slovenian Film Archives

LOJZ TRŠAN, SLOVENIAN FILM ARCHIVES

PHOTO: SLOVENIAN FILM ARCHIVES



Thanks to the relatively early establishment of the Slovenian Film Archives, we are one of the few nations that managed to collect and preserve most of our film heritage. By the end of 2016, the archives' evidence included 11,577 movie titles, recorded on 37,605 film reels and in other formats.

This year, the Slovenian Film Archives (SFA) is celebrating fifty years of operations. In 1968, the Archives became the second specialised institution for recording, collecting and keeping film archive materials in the area of former Yugoslavia, after the Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Thanks to its relatively early date of establishment, Slovenia has been able to preserve and collect more than ninety percent of the films made in its territory. The legal basis for the establishment was the Archives Act from 1966, which added film to the list of archival materials and obliged national producers, especially Viba and Triglav Film, to submit film negatives to the Archives for long-term storage. Besides state-funded films, the Archives contain works by amateur filmmakers, probably the best known among them being the Slovenian painter and printmaker Božidar Jakac (1899-1989).

**The Archives keep over twelve thousand film titles on more than forty thousand film rolls and other media, electronic and digital.**

The oldest are the film recordings of the pioneer of Slovenian film, Karol Grossmann, from 1905 and 1906: *Sejem v Ljutomeru* (Fair in Ljutomer), *Odhod z maše v Ljutomeru* (Departing after Mass in Ljutomer) and *Na domačem vrtu* (In the Home Garden).

The treasures of the Archives thus include documentaries, short and feature-length films, as well as cartoons, experimental and, of course, amateur films. Both short and feature-length films reflect the pulse of artistic creation. On the other hand, documentaries testify to the historical changes in Slovenian society and show everyday life, in both private and public spheres, as well as economic and community development by recording different events.

The SFA also keeps a collection of films made after Slovenian independence. These present the natural and cultural wealth and charms of the country, with a focus on tourism opportunities, ranging from sports to culinary activities.

**One cycle of films named after the four seasons is also of great interest: *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter*. In addition to the calendar seasons, there is a fifth one, entitled *Celebration*.**

This description is apt, because it focuses on the awareness that holidays are a time when individuals stop, relax, reflect on the past and future, socialise and enjoy celebrating. And as the year draws to a close, time seems to condense and slow down, with holidays becoming more frequent.

## WHEN CAROLLERS STILL WALKED ON SQUEAKING SNOW ...

... and brought joy, good wishes and a festive atmosphere to people's homes. The colour film *Koledniki* (Carollers) by Metod Badjura is especially poetic.

**The film shows four carollers setting off from a snowed-in house to bring joy and entertainment to peasant homes with their good wishes and songs.**



The group is comprised of well-rehearsed singers and musicians playing the accordion, clarinet and violin. They were particularly lucky when they arrived at a farm right at the moment when a young man, accompanied by his parents, came to ask for the hand of his future bride. With their music, the carollers created a magical atmosphere. Then they continued on their way to a valley by sleigh, happy and refreshed.

Festive films, with some exceptions, convey positive messages. In *Jutri je novo leto* (*New Year Comes Tomorrow*) by Bojan Jurc, children visit a lonely old woman during the New Year holidays and bring her gifts, thus making her happy.

**Recorded on film are also other festive events with their positive feelings and values. One of the first persons to shoot scenes of winter joy between the two World Wars was Božidar Jakac, the author of *Miklavžev sejem v Ljubljani* (*Saint Nicholas Fair in Ljubljana*, 1931).**

Congress Square, swarming with visitors, was full of stands with different home-grown produce. Naturally, there were also Christmas tree vendors.

After the Second World War, people increasingly celebrated the arrival of Father Frost and decorated so-called New Year's trees. Film news-reels, which took the place of today's news broadcasts at a time when there was no TV, also showed happy children at the Tabor gym in Ljubljana and in Celje, Arja Vas and Vitanje. In the post-war period there was a general lack of goods, and children's faces glowed with joy when they witnessed magical moments or received even modest gifts.

**REFLECTIONS OF WINTER ON FILM**

For Slovenians, the winter idyll has an additional importance because we are also lovers of winter sports, with the Ski Jumping World Cup Finals in Planica being an especially important event at this time of year.

**The ski jumps in Planica were first filmed as early as 1922. The films kept by the SFA also include unique recordings of the first jump**



A scene from the film *Koledniki* (Carollers), 1967, directed by Metod and Milka Badjura

**over one hundred meters, the world record set by the German ski jumper Sepp Bradl in 1936.**

Metod Badjura included Planica in his film *Zimska radost* (*Winter Joy*) from 1957; thus various recordings and statements of the designer of the Planica giant ski jumping hill, Stanko Bloudek, and the ski jumping stars of the day, Janez Poldas and Rudi Finžgar, have been preserved. The documentary recordings were followed by true masterpieces made by Jože Pogačnik and Dušan Povh. The former made the film *Sledim soncu* (*Follow the Sun*), which presented the feelings of jumpers before sliding down the giant ski jumping hill, accompanied by the wonderful musical work *Follow the Sun*. In his film simply entitled *Planica*, which also contains humorous elements, Povh showed the feelings of the spectators as they marvelled at the magnificent achievements of their ski jumping heroes.

**Among the films with winter themes, we should note the black-and-white silent work by Metod Badjura called *Bloški***

***smučarji* (*Skiers from Bloke*) from the period between the two World Wars.**

Expert opinion holds that this film remains unrivalled in Slovenia in terms of quality. An ethnographic film, it shows the traditional method of skiing on the Bloke plateau, the cradle of this sport in central Europe. Skiing there was born out of necessity, due to each winter's high snowfalls. Homemade skis were an indispensable tool for the locals, enabling them to leave home to achieve various tasks. The skis were used to go to church, carry grain to the mill, visit neighbours, and so on. Of course, they were also used for fun, especially by children sliding down the white slopes. An interesting fact about these skis is that a single long pole was used for balance and navigation on the snow, rather than the more common two poles.

**CELEBRATION AT THE HOME OF SLOVENIAN FILM**

The SFA is, of course, open to the public; furthermore, its materials are used by filmmakers, television stations, museums, individual researchers and people who have recognised themselves in older films. As keepers of film, we never forget to say "Please do not throw film away," because those motion pictures may be the last reflections of a disappearing past ...



Planica Ski Jumping World Cup - scene from the film *Sledim soncu* (I Follow the Sun), 1972, directed by Jože Pogačnik



## PIRAN

## How Piran's Guardian Angel Flew Away

PETRA LOŽAR, ANA KRAŠEVEC



The highest spot in Piran, offering spectacular views: St. George's Church.  
Photo: Petra Ložar

This autumn, Piran's landmark St. George's Church tower was for some time without its statue of Archangel Michael, representing the figure described in the Bible as the head of the divine army and a key ally in the eternal struggle against the forces of evil, respected by both the Christian church and Islam. Next year will mark 250 years since "Piran's angel" started watching over the city from its mighty, towering position.

## THE TOWN'S RICH HISTORY

Besides Bled and Ljubljana, Piran is certainly the most photographed city in Slovenia. In addition to a romantic view, the eye-catching image of this medieval town provides an instant insight into the extremely diverse architectural history of the Slovenian coast. According to historical sources, this area has been inhabited since prehistoric times.

**The location of today's Piran was first mentioned as an ancient city in the seventh or eighth century. The settlement, which was then formed on the pointed tip of the *Madona* peninsula, spread to the slope where the Church of St. George stands today.**

In its long and varied history Piran was ruled by different authorities, but most of the time it was under the Venetian Republic. In the second half of the eighth century, the part of Istria with Piran passed from the Byzantine to Frankish authority, later on around 840 it was connected to the Kingdom of Italy, and in 952 it was included in the German Empire. After 1209, Piran moved under the Patriarch of Aquileia. At the time, Istrian cities felt the influence of Venice, yet they developed independently and formed their own administration and legislation. Piran acquired its statute in 1274, and from 1283 on was under the Venetian rule, which lasted until

1797 when the Republic collapsed. Due to its strategic position and fertile hinterland with salt pans, Piran was extremely successful in trading with Venice. According to some sources, Piran supplied Venice with 1/3 of all that city's salt reserves.

## ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH AND ITS BELL TOWER

The influence of Venice did not only foster an economic boom in Piran, but was also evident in the architectural and spiritual life of its inhabitants. Historical sources state that Piran had a monastery, more than 23 churches and numerous chapels. Throughout the centuries, the buildings and their purpose have changed, and now there are only 10 preserved churches in the town. This is still a high number, however, given the small size of the area and the density of the population. The largest and most famous is the Baroque church of St. George, with a bell tower and a baptistery, and which reigns on a hill within the walls of the town.

The slope with the church complex was fortified with supporting arches somewhere from the middle of the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th. The beginnings of the construction of the Baroque church date back to the year 1595, when the Gothic church that stood in its place underwent a thorough renovation, while the old bell tower was demolished and a new separate-standing tower built. Its design was based on the Renaissance bell tower of St. Mark's in Venice. Piran's tower is almost half the size of the Venetian one, but if we consider the altitude of the hill on which it stands, we can almost say that both are equally high. The Piran bell tower is also older than the Venetian one, because the original one in St. Mark's Square collapsed in 1902 due to static errors.





View from the church tower to the Tartini Square below.  
Photo: Petra Ložar

**In 1769, the statue of Archangel Michael was placed on the top of the bell tower, and is therefore due to celebrate its 250th anniversary next year. According to the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Piran, the archangel was originally gold-plated over the copper sheet.**

Placing a 3.7 metre tall statue at the top of the tower was surely no easy task in 1769. In 1908, when it was over a century old, it was removed, repaired and repositioned on an iron axis, which rotates in an iron bed, turned by the wind. When the angel shows its wings to the city and looks towards Trieste (Italy), the bora wind is blowing and it means the weather will be nice. When it points its finger to the city, as in warning, it means that rain or storms are approaching.

Some may wonder why Archangel Michael and St. George are joined together in Piran's most prominent church. A logical answer is found in Christianity itself: both the saint and the archangel are fighters against evil, and our ancestors seem to have believed that the city needs two powerful spiritual protectors. The church was dedicated to Saint George in 1344, when it protected the townspeople and the city from a severe storm. Several centuries later the bell tower was dedicated to Archangel Michael. In addition to the statue and the imposing bells in the tower, there is also a wall clock that was added to it later. From this year onwards, you can also climb up to the top of the bell tower on a renovated wooden staircase with a very special story about 15 angels.

**THE TECHNICALLY DEMANDING RENOVATION OF THE ANGEL**

It was a major undertaking to repair the damaged statue 110 years ago when it was removed from the bell tower for a short time and renovated. This year, however, the wear and tear of the material and the severe bora wind again called for an urgent and unavoidable conservatory restorative intervention.

**We witnessed a spectacular and logistically difficult project of temporarily removing Archangel Michael from the belfry and installing him back after the work was completed.**

The Parish of St. George, with the help of a helicopter and crew from the Slovenian Army along with expert mountaineers and cavers, organized the carefully prepared descent of the angel, which was extremely demanding due to its apparent fragility and damage, as well as the many unknown facts about it. When it had finally reached the ground, the full size of this nearly 250-year-old sculpture and the impressive precision of its production were revealed.

The archangel was renovated at the Gnom Restoration Company in Ljubljana, where very detailed documentary interventions were first performed. The statue was first scanned in 3D technology and all injuries and defects were recorded. With these recordings, they will be able to make a copy of the statue at a later date if the existing one ever fatally fails. The statue was restored in a lateral posture, for which a special stand was pre-set in the workshop. First, they



Restoration of the statue at Gnom Restoration Company's workshop in Ljubljana.  
Photo: Gnom, d.o.o.



stabilized the statue's metal construction made up of four basic rings, which are interconnected with vertical metal belts. The statue was then completely disassembled, since - due to galvanic corrosion - part of the construction which was in contact with the copper sheet was completely destroyed. The missing parts of the wings and arms were added, and the sculpture was completely cleaned of rust and protected with a corrosion coating. The green patina, which gives the statue its characteristic look, has been preserved.

Just over two months after the angel flew from the bell tower, it came back the same way on a sunny October day.

**Before reclaiming its guardian position the statue first made a two-day stop on**

**solid ground – visitors could admire it from up close on Piran's Tartini Square and hundreds of selfies were made with the green giant.**

Piran is undoubtedly a place of rich cultural creation and imagination. It is not merely a small picturesque seaside town, it is the place where many stories were written and many stories will continue to be written. Today, we unveiled one of them ... an angelic one. In the festive days ahead, you are invited to visit Piran, trace the angel's footsteps up the tower and discover many other new, purely your stories.



Jože Drešar, director of Gnom Restoration Company, during the process of restoring missing parts of the hand.  
Photo: Gnom, d.o.o.



Spectators gathered to watch the angel "fly away".  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA





## THE SLOVENIAN PHILHARMONIC

# Through Festive Time with Heavenly Harmony

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

The Orchestra of the Slovenian Philharmonic  
Photo: Janez Kotar

December abounds with first-class artistic events. Among the most popular are the Christmas and New Year's concerts, performed by the choir and the orchestra of the Slovenian Philharmonic. We will again have pleasure of enjoying their music in this year's festive time.

Visiting a classical music concert is a grand occasion on its own, the festive atmosphere being even more apparent at Christmas and New Year's events. Such an event is also an opportunity to dress up, perhaps to even follow a black-tie dress code. This is a time to splurge a bit, so even the ticket price for the concert shouldn't be a big deal. Moreover, concert tickets can be a great gift idea that would certainly delight all those who have an ear for music, and those who want to surprise their closest and dearest with a present that offers, among other things, deep inner satisfaction.

**The tradition of New Year's concerts at the Slovenian Philharmonic dates back to 1984, while the Christmas concerts have been held since 1992.**

This year we celebrate 110 years since the funding of the Slovenian Philharmonic. Together with its predecessors, *Academia Philharmonicorum*, *the Philharmonic Society* and *the First Slovenian Philharmonic*, it boasts a very rich history and is among the oldest in the world. It boasts a very rich history and is among the oldest in the world. But there would be no Christmas and New Year's concerts had not it been for the people who also built the national identity in the field of music.

### IT ENTERTAINS, AND REVEALS ETERNAL THINGS TO THE MIND

In 1701, a few distinguished men gathered at the home of patrician Janez Bertold von Höffer, and decided to establish a philharmonic academy (*Academia Philharmonicorum*). This was not established solely with the purpose of providing occasional musical entertainment, but "by playing to piously recall the heavenly music that will last forever". The organ of Saint Cecilia was thus chosen as their academic emblem, its pipes "spreading their sweet harmony over the Earth with the motto 'It entertains and reveals eternal things to the mind'".

**The Academia followed the Italian models, and its duties and mission were described in the Statutes – Leges. The annual duty of the members was to celebrate the festive day of Saint Cecilia.**



They were also to provide honourable funeral services (requiems) for deceased colleagues, but otherwise they had two types of activities: on one hand they held closed sessions (performances attended by members only), and on the other public performances, which however were held only on special occasions, such as e.g. formal events in the ruling dynasty. They entertained distinguished guests at their official state visits and regularly participated in high masses at the foremost churches of Ljubljana.

But despite the several concerts in festive December days, their programmes only exceptionally included a Christmas or a New Year's concert. But they performed for the citizens of Ljubljana at the annual regatta on the Ljubljanica River, where they played "their most selected repertoire". The sources last mentioning Academia Philharmonicorum Labacensium are from 1779.

Honorary members of the Philharmonic Society, which succeeded the Academy in 1794, included among others, the famous composers Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms and violinist Nicolò Paganini; Franz Schubert applied for the position of music teacher at the Society, and in the years 1881/1882 Gustav Mahler was also among its active members.

**The significant rise of the Philharmonic Society started with the arrival of a Czech, Anthony Nedvěd 1856 – 1882.**

He was an excellent musician who became the choirmaster of the male choir and in 1858 the music director of the Society.

**THE SLOVENIAN PHILHARMONIC HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED**

In the autumn of 1908 national conflicts between the Germans and Slovenes reached their boiling point. Protests and demonstrations, smashing shop windows of German businesses, removing German signs, and other actions brought the Slovene populace together. The army intervened and shot at the demonstrators.

**As a consequence, Ljubljana obtained a Slovenian Philharmonic. During this time, preparations were underway to reshape the old "society brass band",**

**founded in 1900, into a new Slovenian concert orchestra.**

The orchestra was an indispensable necessity for Slovenian music, as without it the work of the Slovenian opera would be hindered too. In agreement with the national musical institution *Glasbena Matica*, the new orchestra was established on 23 October 1908 under the name of *Slovenska filharmonija* (Slovenian Philharmonic). Young Czech conductor Vaclav Tálích was chosen as bandmaster. The very first concert performance was a pure success, and Tálích soon became the central musical figure in Ljubljana. During its first season, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra gave 190 performances, among these two big symphonic concerts, but mainly played at various events. In addition, they also performed in the theatre.

The Graz press, which was generally not in favour of the Slovenians, deemed the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra to be an "inferior inn-entertainment band". Because of such for culture unfriendly atmosphere, Tálích left Ljubljana. Pavel Kozina complained in the New Chords (Novi akordi): Isn't it typical and sad for the music situation in Ljubljana that everyone who is capable must be removed?"

The outbreaks of World War I and II brought about difficult times. After the war, a decision to establish the Slovenian philharmonic was made in 1974, on the initiative of the composer Marjan Kozina, conductor Samo Hubad and musicologist Vlado Golob. The Slovenian Philharmonic had its own symphony orchestra, mixed and youth choir (until 1952), a string quartet and a concert office. Among the names of directors/artistic leaders, there are distinguished names among musicians as well, such as Marjan Kozina, Marijan Lipovšek, Lucijan Marija Škerjanc, Oskar Danon, Ivo Petrić and many others.

**Composer Darijan Božič began his work as director and artistic leader of the institution (1979–1974) with great ambitions to make the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra the best of the kind in the Republic of Yugoslavia and comparable at European level.**



The first concert of a new year featuring soprano Nika Gorič, who has been making a name for herself before the discerning English, German and Australian audiences. German conductor Philipp von Steinaecker selected a vibrant programme by two masterful composers who co-shaped the theatre-music world in late nineteenth-century Paris and Vienna. Photo: Pierre Lidar

At the time, when the Slovenian national identity was beginning to take shape, the establishment of the Slovenian Philharmonic signified a courageous act by the young Slovenian culture.

**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S REPERTOIRES**

Our knowledge about the Academiae Philharmonicorum programmes is only fragmentary. Also the programmes from the first years of activity of the Philharmonic Society have been documented only partially, which renders the regular annual reports (Jahres Berichte), with concert programmes documented in detail, ever so valuable. In the season 1984/85 there were even two New Year's Eve concerts performed. The first one featured Carmina Burana (a scenic cantata that in the sequence of 24 texts tells stories about love and death, happiness and misfortune and birth and death through the eternally repeating life cycle).



New Year's Eve concert in Portorož Auditorium, 2010. Photo: Slovenian Philharmonic Archives



Since 1984, however, the New Year's Concert has been performed regularly on the first day of the New Year. In the first concert, the audience enjoyed the music of foreign composers Johannes Brahms, Camille Saint-Saëns, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Georges Bizet, Pietro Mascagni, Giacomo Puccini and Gioachino Rossini.

In the following years, too, the programme always included one of the world-famous composers whose work was carefully selected by the Slovenian Philharmonic in line with the New Year's festive atmosphere. In 1986, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra at the New Year's concert for the first time performed a composition Rhapsodic Dance by the Slovenian composer Uroš Krek.

**At the first Christmas concert in 1992, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra performed two Schubert's works: Symphony No.8 in B minor – the Unfinished, and Mass No.6 in E flat major.**

In 1999 there was no Christmas concert in the Slovenian Philharmonic. On 23 December (i.e. around the Christmas Eve) a national celebration took place at Cankarjev Dom, Cultural and Congress Centre where the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra – in line with the nature of the event – performed the Slovenian Anthem (the orchestral version of *Zdravljica* by Slavko Premrl) and *Slovenian Folk Dances* by the Slovenian composer Alojz Srebotnjak. The same happened a year later. There was no Christmas concert.



The Orchestra and the Choir of the Slovenian Philharmonic in the front of the building.  
Photo: Slovenian Philharmonic Archives



“OUR VOICES SHOULD BE MERRY NOW”

## Christmas and the Choral Singing Tradition in Slovenia

KLEMEN GRABNAR



The Saint Nicholas Choir consists of fifty singers from Litiya and central Slovenia. In its fifteen years of existence, it has evolved into a top-class vocal ensemble that has won recognition at home and abroad by singing at masses in the local church, and with concerts in Slovenia and across Europe. It boasts three CDs, including *Božična luč* (The Christmas Light, 2003). Photo: Gregor Požun

Ever since the Middle Ages the celebration of Christmas has also been strongly reflected in music. For Slovenians, Christmas has been one of the most important holidays for centuries. The celebration of Christmas and the related holidays has thus produced a rich culture of folk and classical music.

Medieval music for this time of year in Slovenia has been preserved in numerous written records of monophonic Gregorian chants. These belong to the Latin liturgy, and pertained to ecclesiastical institutions. Christmas songs are also included in the 1574 songbook by the Protestant preacher Primož Trubar (1508-1586) entitled *Celi catechismus, eni psalmi* (*The Whole Catechism, Psalms*), which is considered the first preserved proper, i.e. comprehensive, multi-part Slovenian songbook that includes musical notation. It contains four Christmas-related songs, including “Ta Dan ie vsiga vesselia” (This Day Is a Joyful Day), which is of pre-Reformation, medieval origin (the Latin original begins with “Dies est laetitiae”). Another pre-Reformation song is “Eno je dete rojeno” (A Child Is Born), which originates from the Latin “Puer natus in Betlehem”. Today the song is known especially in the polyphonic arrangement by the composer Matija Tomc (1899–1985), and is very popular among Slovenian choirs.

**The artful compositions of two Slovene composers who worked abroad in the Renaissance period stand out in particular in this context.**

The first such composer is Georg Prenner (ca. 1531–1590), who was active in Vienna and Herzogenburg. His opus consists of numerous motets (polyphonic pieces with Latin text), for instance, the Christmas motet “Quem vidistis pastores” for five voices. The other is Jacobus Handl-Gallus (1550–1591), who was especially active in Bohemia and Moravia. One of his most popular songs, known around the world, is the Christmas motet “Mirabile mysterium” for five voices.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw the emergence of new art compositions related to Christmas worship, as well as folk songs with seasonal content.

**The boom of composing choral Christmas songs occurred in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. At that time, composers wrote hundreds of Christmas songs, and many of these have maintained their popularity until the present day.**

These include “Poglejte, čudo se godi” (Behold, a Miracle Is Happening) by Gregor Rihar (1796–1863), the author of over five hundred ecclesiastic compositions; “Raduj, človek moj” (Rejoice, Oh Man) by Leopold Cvek (1814–1896); “Bodi pozdravljeno, Detece sveto” (Hail to Thee, Holy Infant) by Rihar’s student Josip Levičnik (1826–1909); “Noč božična” (Christmas Night) by the Franciscan monk Hugolin Sattner (1851–1937); “Dete rajsko” (Infant of Paradise) by the Ursuline nun Eleonora Hudovernik (1863–1924); “Le spi, nebeško Dete ti” (Sleep, You Heavenly Infant) by Stanko Premrl (1880–1965), one of the most prolific composers of his time; and “Zvezde gorijo” (Stars Are Glowing) by Matija Tomc (1899–1985).

“Silent Night, Holy Night”, one of the most famous Christmas songs today, was written at the beginning of the 19th century and spread from Austria all across Europe and beyond; it was translated into Slovenian in the second half of the 19th century. Slovenian composers continue to create songs for this festive season today.



**OTHER DECEMBER FESTIVITIES AND TRADITIONS ARE ALSO ACCOMPANIED BY MUSIC**

Aside from Christmas, music making in Slovenia has also been inspired by other festivities in December. This includes the carolling that took place late on New Year's Eve or early in the morning of New Year's Day. Although some carols, for instance "Mi novo leto pojemo" (We Sing to the New Year), "Sveti dan je že minil" (The Holy Day Has Passed), and "Veseli glas je zdaj za nas" (Our Voices Should Be Merry Now)", have been preserved in folk heritage, New Year carolling has nearly died out. It lives on primarily as part of the repertoire of some singing groups.

**Speaking of December, we cannot ignore the three characters that still leave a strong mark on the season: Saint Nicholas, Grandfather Frost, and Father Christmas.**

Quite a few musical pieces for children's choirs have been written on the topic of celebrating Saint Nicholas's Day. At such events, children often sing excerpts from "Miklavž prihaja" (Saint Nicholas Is Coming) by the Salesian monk Jerko Gržinčič (1905–1985). On the other hand, one of the best-known children's songs about Grandfather



The Slovenian Philharmonic Choir has released four CDs of Slovenian Christmas music in the collection *Musica sacra Slovenica*; recently, it recorded a new CD of Christmas songs composed by Damijan Močnik, *Oratorium Nativitatis* (Christmas Oratory), which was commissioned by the choir. The CD also includes a selection of adaptations of folk songs for Christmas and a selection Christmas-themed works by the composer.. Photo: Janez Kotar

Frost is "Siva kučma, bela brada" (Grey Fur Hat, White Beard) by Janez Bitenc (1925–2005). In recent years, both "good men" were joined by the character of Father Christmas. He is associated with the song "Jingle Bells", which is also popular in a Slovenian translation.

**A FAIRY-TALE ATMOSPHERE IS ALSO CREATED BY CHOIRS**

Slovenia has an extremely rich tradition of choral singing. It has numerous active choirs, some of which are considered first-rate on a global scale. Many choirs are at their most active at Christmastime, so the range of concerts on offer is very diverse. Quite a few choirs have also recorded Christmas albums.

**The most famous ones include those by the Slovenian Chamber Choir (now the Slovenian Philharmonic Choir), the Saint Nicholas Choir from Litija, and the Ave Chamber Choir.**

In the middle of December, the Slovenian Philharmonic Choir will open the Christmas season with a concert at the Slovenian Philharmonic, in Ljubljana, with a stylistically varied programme full of pleasant contrasts.



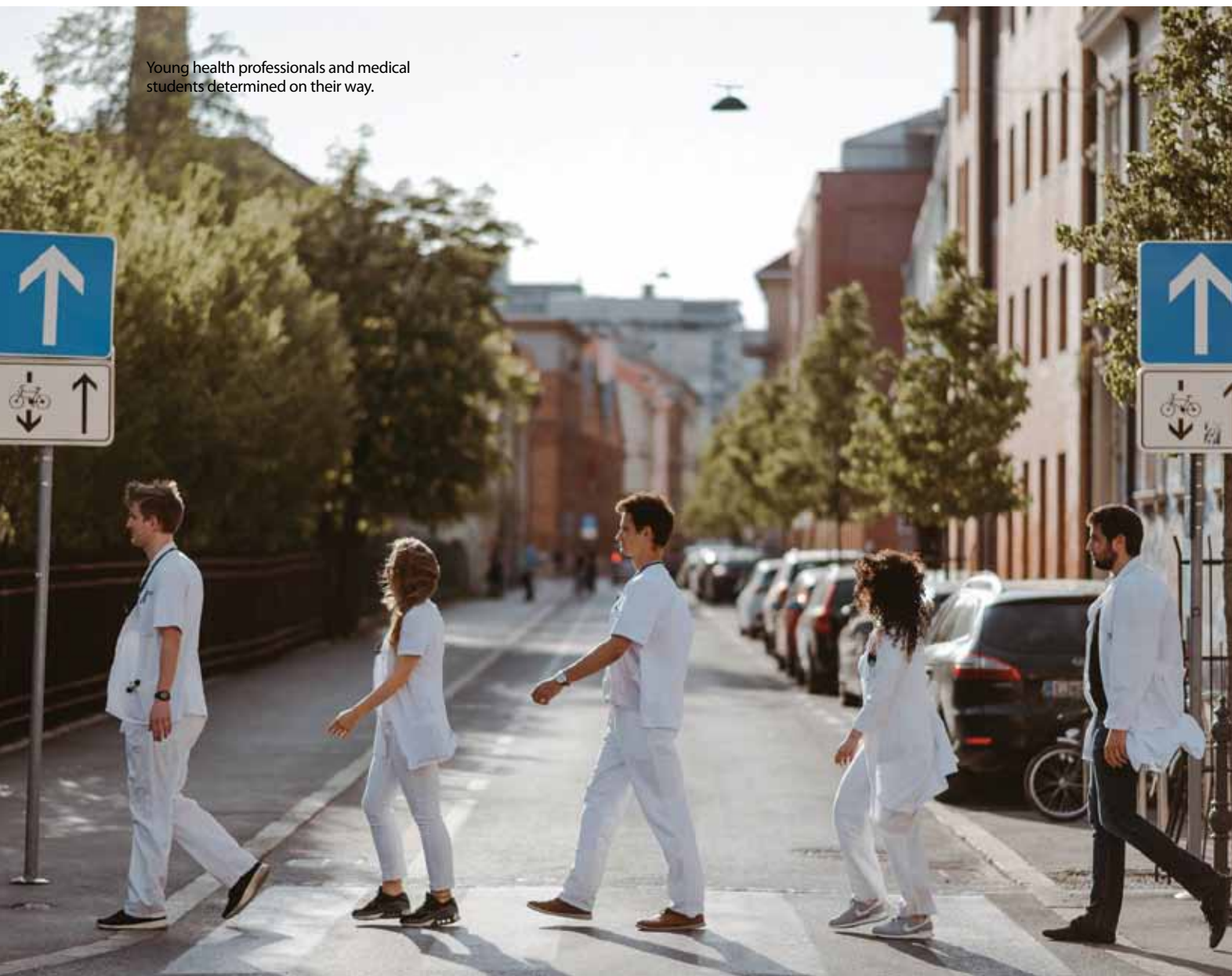
The Ave Chamber Choir released the CD *Eno dete je rojeno* (A Child Is Born), which contains the traditional pieces "Sveta noč" (Silent Night), "Zveličar nam je rojen zdaj" (Our Saviour Is Now Born), "Pastirci iz spanja vstanite noč" (Shepherds, Rise from Your Sleep Tonight), "Božična noč" (Christmas Night) and others. Photo: Daniel Novakovič/ STA



# HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS OF SLOVENIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS

## A Life-changing Experience

ANA KRAŠEVEC  
PHOTO: TOMAŽ KOS



The decades-long tradition of Slovenian medical students training, collecting funds and organising expeditions to tropical developing countries where there are few or no doctors is something rather unique on a global scale.

Every year, the Section for Tropical and Travel Medicine at the Ljubljana Faculty of Medicine organises a series of expeditions to countries in health-risk zones where people lack basic medical care due to extreme poverty, poor infrastructure and a shortage of trained medical personnel. Each year, eight to ten teams travel to four chosen locations. This aid effort has been going on for almost three decades now.

**This is an opportunity for young Slovenian doctors and other staff to gain valuable experience to be used in their everyday work with patients in the national health system.**

Often these teams are compared to and mistaken for Doctors Without Borders; however, many things differentiate them from this international organisation. The main difference is the fact that these expeditions are mounted on a volunteer basis and their members and organisers gather the funds themselves to pay for their travel and the supplies for their work at the clinics. Second, they only work in safe circumstances and areas.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUITY

At the beginning, expeditions were organized to various locations in South America, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa, until it was realized that what mattered was continuity.

**Four destinations were thus retained as a focus: Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Madagascar.**

In Zambia and Uganda, the Section for Tropical Medicine helped build houses for medical staff and clinics, in Kenya they rent the premises for their clinic and in Madagascar the premises for the clinic were built by the missionary Izidor Grošelj. Over the years, it became evident that it was important not only to provide medical assistance, but also to educate people what to do when there is no one to help them, with a focus on preventive healthcare.

Recent research shows that in Kenya seven out of eight health facilities do not use medical supplies such as disinfectants, gloves, running water and soap, and that most doctors do not wash their hands after treating a patient. The task of the expedition members is primarily to interact with the local population and educate them on the importance of respecting basic hygiene standards.

Preparations for participating in an expedition take two years, during which the members learn a great deal, although culture shock can never be totally avoided. Preparation comprises attending dedicated conferences and taking part in a compulsory “tropical weekend”, where practical work and scenario simulations allow the participants to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for tackling medical cases they will encounter during the expedition.

**There are currently three Slovenian teams abroad, in Madagascar, Zambia and Kenya. The team that is to travel to Kenya next year is in the last stage of preparation, which means they are working very hard to collect funds.**

These funds will cover not only the costs of air travel and accommodation, but will mostly be used to buy drugs and medical supplies, and to pay the local nurse and interpreters.



**EXPEDITION TO MAJIWA, 2019**

Four medical students and one health professional will set off to the Kenyan town of Majiwa in January next year. The principal causes of death in this East African country remain AIDS, pneumonia, and tuberculosis; there is also extensive diarrhoea and malaria, and a high rate of infant and maternal mortality. The team is trying to gather the maximum funds to be used not only to purchase as many drugs and medical supplies as possible, but also to have some capital to help seriously ill patients that cannot afford to pay for their transportation to the hospital. They are gathering funds for the expedition themselves in a number of ways, and their goal is to collect 20,000 euros.

**When asked what they will bring back home, the five team members (Matic Mrak, Tonja Mertelj, Eva Ušeničnik, Tadej Voljč and Andraž Jereb) have a clear reply**



**ready: “Priceless knowledge that would be hard to acquire anywhere else.”**

In Kenya we will come in contact with diseases that many people believe can't occur in Slovenia, but that is far from true. In no time at all there could also be epidemics of various diseases in Slovenia, and if that happened our knowledge would be extremely important.”

A critical element of their expedition will also be implementing various programmes, such as one for undernourished children, who will be well fed, and weighed and measured every week. The team are trying to collect as much financial support as possible for these programmes, and so every contribution, no matter how small, counts. A donation of 10 euros will allow one child to receive one high-calorie meal per day for a month.

All expedition members, current and past, are aware that there will be no overnight changes or revolutionary advances from their work. However, they are convinced that the continuous medical care provided in Majiwa will help the local population, and that is the only reward they seek.

They are also aware how significant it is to create a climate of trust that every euro gathered for their expedition to Kenya will be put to good use. Without the confidence that the funds collected are truly and exclusively used for the expedition's purposes, these expeditions would have been over long ago.

**Trust is what they are based on: trust that young medical practitioners will go to those countries, help people to the best of their skills and knowledge and spend every donated euro wisely.**

You can visit these medical students at their stand during the forthcoming Christmas market in Ljubljana and contribute to their Kenya expedition fund by purchasing a T-shirt, bracelet, bowtie, bag or bookmark. You can read more and get in touch with the team via their Facebook page: “Humanitarno-medicinska odprava Kenija Majiwa 2019”.



The Majiwa 2019 team: Matic Mrak, Tonja Mertelj, Eva Ušeničnik, Tadej Voljč and Andraž Jereb.



# MATIC VIZJAK – AN INNOVATIVE FARMER

## Slovenian Micro Farm Wins over the United States

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
 PHOTO: ARCHIVES OF THE VIZJAK FARM



Family business, father and son.

Matic Vizjak, Slovenia’s most Innovative Young Farmer of 2017, firmly believes that success will come if you only believe in it. His motto is simple: “How can you know that something is impossible if you have never attempted to do it yourself? Every new idea is worth gold.”

With such an approach, he is changing the established practices in the world of business, particularly the typical practice of farming, which he has brought to a completely new level. He sees the farming profession as very promising, offering many new opportunities. He starts each day with a wish to do some work that makes him happy. At his organic micro farm in Šmarje pri Jelšah, he has been introducing culinary innovations made exclusively from Slovenian produce and ingredients for the third year in a row.

### SMALL-SCALE FARMING OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER BOLDNESS

He disagrees with the notion that Slovenian agriculture is overly fragmented and divided into micro plots of land and farms. His family has only two hectares of land, yet they make a good living from farming. He sees the characteristics of a good farmer, such as boldness, creativity and courage, which he believes help generate new ideas, as much more important than the number of hectares they have.

His family farm, where his mother, father and younger brother also work, focuses on four activities: beekeeping, the production of gluten-free flour, the production of chilli and vegetables, and, in recent years, the production of two wines – a sweet rosé and the semi-sweet white wine both made from the combination of top-quality grape varieties and chilli.

Thanks to Chilli Wine, the news of the small Vizjak farm has travelled across the ocean all the way to the United States.

In March 2017 in New York, the farm, through combined efforts with the Kolar wine cellar, received three medals in one of the most prestigious wine competitions in the world.

The secret Chilli Wine is based on the harmony of six varieties of home-grown chilli peppers: lemon drop, aji cito, habanero lemon, cherry bomb, cayenne pepper, and devil’s tongue. Chilli Wine is an innovation from Slovenia, and the first of its kind in the world.

### DIFFERENT – HEALTHY – LOCAL

Matic Vizjak has had as many as nine professions in nine years. He worked in the tourism and hospitality sector as a cook and waiter, the head of service, and a receptionist. He was a sailor, and is now an athlete, lifeguard, and personal trainer. In the last three years he has developed into one of the most proactive young farmers in Slovenia; at the end of 2017, he received the 2017 Young Innovative Farmer Award. By the time he was 22 years old, he had visited every continent and spent one year in Australia. Despite the high pay he was earning as a chef in Brisbane, destiny brought Matic back to Slovenia, where he undertook a series of innovative farming practices, putting all his knowledge and experience into developing new approaches to the field. He is a man whose life is about people, nature and Slovenia. Farming is a now trendy activity, he says, similar to being a chef, which is practised at an enviable level in Slovenia. However, Matic says that he strives to bring the farming profession to an even higher level so as to break the stereotypes surrounding it. Those aiming to ride this wave of opportunity need not fear for their future. The trend towards the supply of healthy and locally produced food benefits Slovenia, which has excellent conditions for this kind of farming, he says. He is convinced that people





Chilli wine - the first spicy wine in the world.

in Slovenia live better than people in other parts of the world, and that there are many new opportunities for young people here. They just have to be bold and believe in themselves, and come up with something new, different and innovative. He attributes his success sale to the following formula: different + healthy + local.

**Matic was also behind the initiative for a chilli pepper festival that was held for the first time in Šmarje pri Jelšah, which was visited by thousands of people and saw competitors participating in the Golden Habanero challenge.**

The event has now developed into one of the biggest of its kind in this part of Europe, even though many people opposed it at first, and doubted that it could succeed.

**THE WORLD'S FIRST SPICY WINE**

Matic believes that in every sector there are products interesting enough to attract consumers, they just need to be presented in the right way. Small farms too have the opportunity to become exclusive, and all the more so if they cooperate with others, he says. The Vizjak family have upgraded their products – a chilli pepper is thus not only a small, hot pepper, but an ingredient from which they have made creamed chilli pepper honey, the first spicy wine in the world, and eleven types of chilli sauce. In pursuing new ideas, Matic, a great lover of chilli peppers and spicy food, has put chilli peppers high on his priority list. Together with his father, he realised out that nobody had yet attempted to combine chilli and wine. For two years, they had been trying – mixing, thinking, tasting – and eventually joined forces with their neighbours, the Kolar family and Ivan Kolar, a renowned oenologist. And now they have done it! In wine competitions in the United States, Chilli Wine from the Vizjak farm and the Kolar wine cellar received one gold and two silver medals, competing with more than 4,000 samples and 600 winegrowers. Two families – one victory.

**THEIR LATEST INNOVATION IS CHILLINO.**

The latest idea is a great example of exclusivity, and is completely Slovenian, with all Slovenian ingredients. This is the 'baby' of their chilli



The entire Chillino story is exclusive, created for the moments of calm after stressful day.



wines. The idea is that the chilli wines that received medals, the white chilli wine and the rosé, are mom and dad, and Chillino bambino is the baby. The wine has been put into small 1.25 dl bottles as an elixir and launched as numbers 6 (rosé) and 9 (white). While the former awakens your sixth sense, the latter sends you to cloud nine. The numbers also tell you how long you need to take a short break (and thus chill out) – between 6 to 9 minutes while drinking them. The entire Chillino story is exclusive, created for those moments of calm after a stressful day. The wine is unique, and the bottle can be enjoyed by anyone old enough to drink. It is marketed under the slogan *Chillino-more than vino*, because it is so much more than just wine; it has its own story. However, it has become so popular that it is yet to be supplied to all 96 bars who want it in Slovenia, as there simply isn't enough being made.

Chillino is more than wine, says Matic Vizjak. It is an elixir made from wine and chilli peppers to can give people a more effective short break. Moreover, the small, 1.25 dl bottles and limited production are another example of how small farms can turn what some might see as a weakness into a strength.

**WHAT IS INNOVATION ACCORDING TO MATIC VIZJAK?**

Innovation is when you are brave and bold in creating something new, Matic says. For example, from 900 g of floral honey, a litre of Sauvignon Blanc, or a kilogram of semi-hard cheese, you can create a niche product, which, of course, has to maintain the original quality and purpose.



My advise to young people is to see obstacles not as impediments but as challenges and opportunities for learning for life.

Floral honey can thus become creamed honey with cinnamon, ginger, cocoa, and so on; wine can be enriched with chilli peppers or chocolate, and cheese with chillies, pepper, spices, and the like. Each of these products is an upgrade to a classic product that is interesting for consumers.

“I am waiting with interest to see someone coming up with something offbeat again. Today, young people are connected with the world; they have this potential! Every new idea can add to the value of the basic product, increasing it by a hundred to several thousand percent. I am now in the running for Innovative Farmer of Europe Award. I will have to demonstrate what I have achieved in the past year as an innovative Slovenian farmer, what was my contribution to the community, and how I marketed the products I produced. It is vital that you believe in yourself. It is about having deep conviction and confidence in yourself.”

What would Matic say to young people who are just starting their careers as entrepreneurs? “Get it out of your head, for God’s sake, that you will not be able to achieve much in Slovenia. After nine years of living abroad, I can say for sure that such thinking is not true, and I have proved this with my success. Unfortunately, we devote more time to planning our holidays than to planning our lives, and this is not right. We must plan ahead and determine the path we will take. I would also advise them to see obstacles not as impediments but as challenges and opportunities for learning for life.”



Vizjak family is the first in the world to combine chilli and wine.



# 25<sup>TH</sup> GOLDEN DRUM FESTIVAL

## I feel Slovenia Is a Very Positive Brand

POLONA PREŠEREN



Golden Drum, International Festival of Creativity, just marked its 25<sup>th</sup> edition. The festival is more than an international competition of creative advertising, it is made to inspire, connect and create lasting bonds among advertisers and others.

The festival connects creative people from the eastern side of Europe and beyond. Creators, especially in the world of advertising, continuously draw inspiration from their everyday life. “Anyone who works within the area of communications has to have their eyes wide open at all times, has to absorb experiences, images, thoughts, patterns, relationships, etc. They have to understand life in its fullness. Each experience is precious, whether it is a book, music, art, an inspiring lecture or a random look from a stranger on a city bus,” said the organizers of Golden Drum.

The 25th jubilee Golden Drum Festival hosted exceptional speakers, who shared their thoughts about the quest for inspiration and the sparks that inflame its emergence. The speakers were from various areas – from technology and communications to philosophy, and discussed the sources and meanings of inspiration for resolving the new challenges of the future, and presented examples and ways that help us become the initiators of and directors of change.

### CHALLENGES IN USING OF NATIONAL BRAND

The Government Communication Office took part in the Festival as well, with a panel “I Feel Slovenia: Challenges in Using a National Brand”. Most people perceive the I Feel Slovenia (IFS) brand as an effective tool for promoting Slovenian tourism. It is true that the brand has become established in support of the industry in foreign markets since it was introduced in 2008, but the national brand is far more than just a tourism brand, and much more than just a logo.

Andrej Drapal, the head of the panel and of the group that created the IFS brand, moderated the talk. He presented the potential of the IFS brand together with other members of the panel: Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, the Director of the Communication Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia; Bojan Gantar, director of the company Alpina; and Dejan Roljič, CEO of Eligma.

Each panel member sees the brand from a different perspective, and this is precisely why it is so effective.

**Kristina Plavšak Krajnc comes from Government Communication Office, which is the custodian of the brand, and revealed some formal and informal aspects of its use. “We see our nation branding as a learning process. We certainly make mistakes, but we will not give up. We are building on our internal implementation of the brand and working on added value of the brand in different fields,” she noted.**

Bojan Gantar, director of the company Alpina, shared his experience from the connection that Alpina shares with the brand and emphasized that “huge potential of national brand I Feel Slovenia lies in the R&D, design and in product placement”. Dejan Roljič is the CEO of a start-up company, and shared his thoughts on as-yet unexplored terrain, start-ups and blockchain brands as potential areas where the I Feel Slovenia brand can be established. “Young people maybe don’t quite relate to national brands, as we do live in a time of globalization. We should not be afraid of our young people leaving Slovenia; they will come back bringing a wealth of experience. Let us promote Slovenia abroad and, first of all, change the mindset here. I Feel Slovenia is a very positive brand,” said Roljič.

The I Feel Slovenia brand is a conventional national brand, the concept of which was designed in a somewhat unconventional way. But the brand is available to all entities in the country, so that they can take advantage of the assets and value of the brand with the goal of achieving a better position and higher added value in international markets.

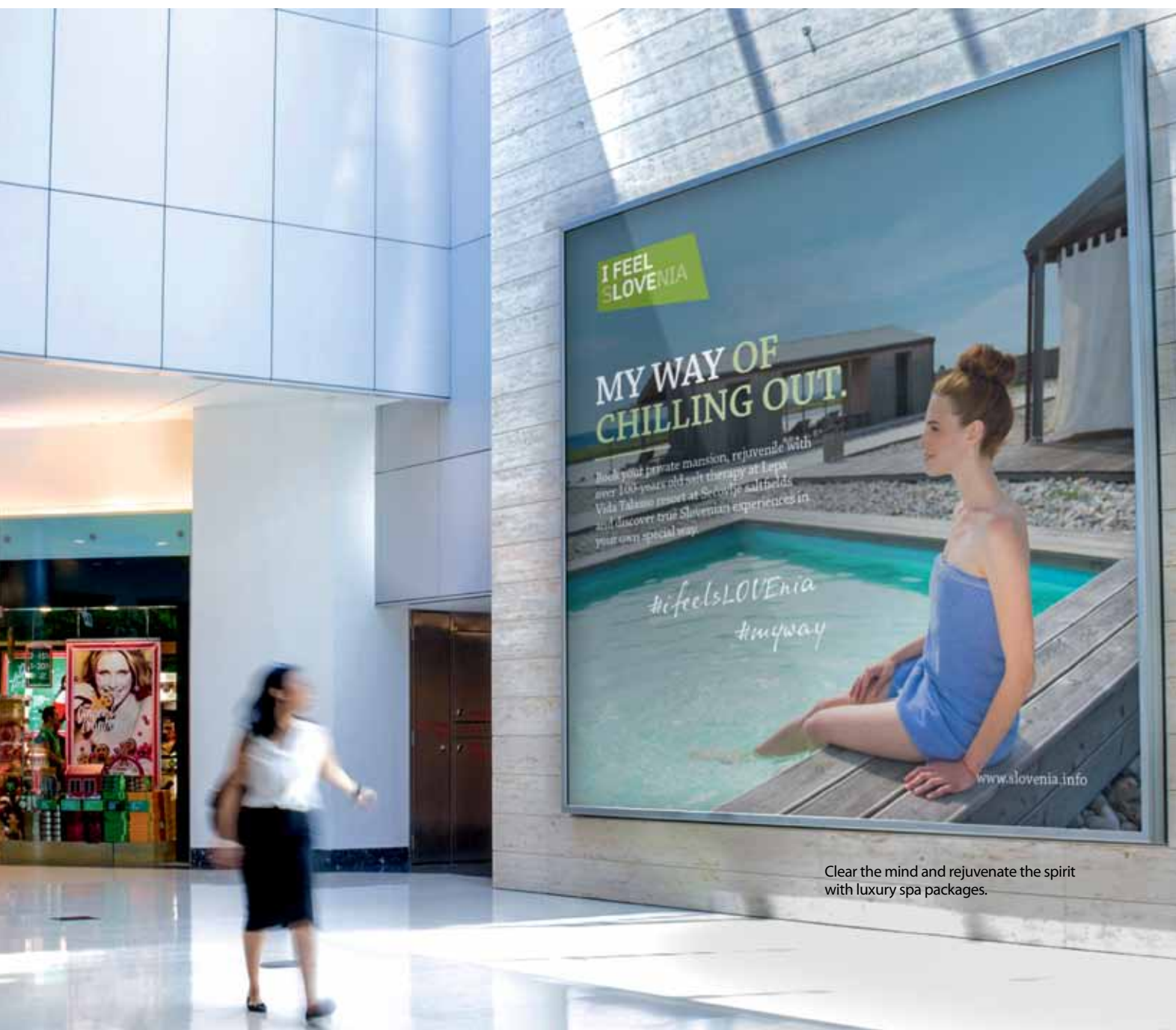
Members of the panel (from left): Bojan Gantar, director of the company Alpina; Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, the Director of Government Communication Office; Andrej Drapal, Brand Developer; and Dejan Roljič, CEO of Eligma.  
Photo: Polona Prešeren



# A NEW CREATIVE UMBRELLA COMMUNICATION SOLUTION TO SLOVENIAN TOURISM

## How Do You Feel Slovenia?

MIŠA NOVAK, SLOVENIAN TOURIST BOARD  
PHOTO: SLOVENIAN TOURIST BOARD ARCHIVES



Clear the mind and rejuvenate the spirit  
with luxury spa packages.

The new creative umbrella communication solution to Slovenian tourism focuses on authentic Slovenian experiences with greater value added. Such experiences are an inspiration for visitors who seek unique stories, authenticity and new forms of luxury on their travels, and require visitors' active involvement.

The solution effectively builds on the story of a green, active and healthy Slovenia under the I Feel Slovenia brand. Its broad and flexible concept underlies the years-old communication platform for supporting the vision of Slovenia as a green boutique destination providing five-star experiences.

### WHY A NEW COMMUNICATION SOLUTION?

In recent years, visitors have come to perceive Slovenia as a green, active and healthy destination boasting an abundance of natural assets and offering diverse experiences. However, times change, and so do guests' values, expectations and wishes, and their perception of luxury. Their lives today are about experiences rather than products.

**They are interested in authentic experiences rather than in what is the biggest, the most trendy or the most luxurious. They prefer inspiring stories and unique moments to standardised products, as the former leave them with memories for life.**

The Strategy for Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism 2017–2021 defines a new communication platform as one of the measures of the marketing policy. The platform, managed by the Slovenian Tourist Board, will provide a refreshed and uniform cre-

ative solution to communication at the umbrella level of Slovenian tourism for the next three to five years.

In compliance with said measure, the Slovenian Tourist Board published in May 2018 a call for tenders for the low-value contract "The Communication and Creative Solution Concept (the 'Big Idea') in support of the I Feel Slovenia brand for Slovenia as a tourist destination".

### THE SOLUTION FOCUSES ON AUTHENTIC SLOVENIAN EXPERIENCES

On behalf of the selected Slovenian–American consortium, creative director and partner of the Yootree communication agency Tomaž Apohal explained the solution as follows: *"In recent years, visitors have come to perceive Slovenia as a green, active and healthy destination boasting an abundance of natural assets and offering diverse experiences. However, times change, and so do guests' values, expectations and wishes and their perception of luxury. Their lives today are about experiences rather than products. They are interested in authentic experiences rather than in what is the biggest, the most trendy or the most luxurious. So how to show today's travellers that Slovenia is a country of countless unique stories and authentic experiences, ones that cannot be found anywhere else? Millions of people have felt Slovenia and each of them has felt it in their own way. With the new communication platform under the I Feel Slovenia brand, Slovenia is becoming a country of experiences tailored to individual needs. It is a destination leaving each visitor richer for the experience."*



THE IDEA BEHIND THE NEW SOLUTION

The idea behind the selected solution is based on the personalisation of experiences and choice. It puts itself in the shoes of the customers, communicates through them, and in this way takes them into account and talks to them in a more experiential way.

**It does not give customers any particular facts or promises about Slovenia, but rather creatively supports them in their pursuit of their personal desires.**

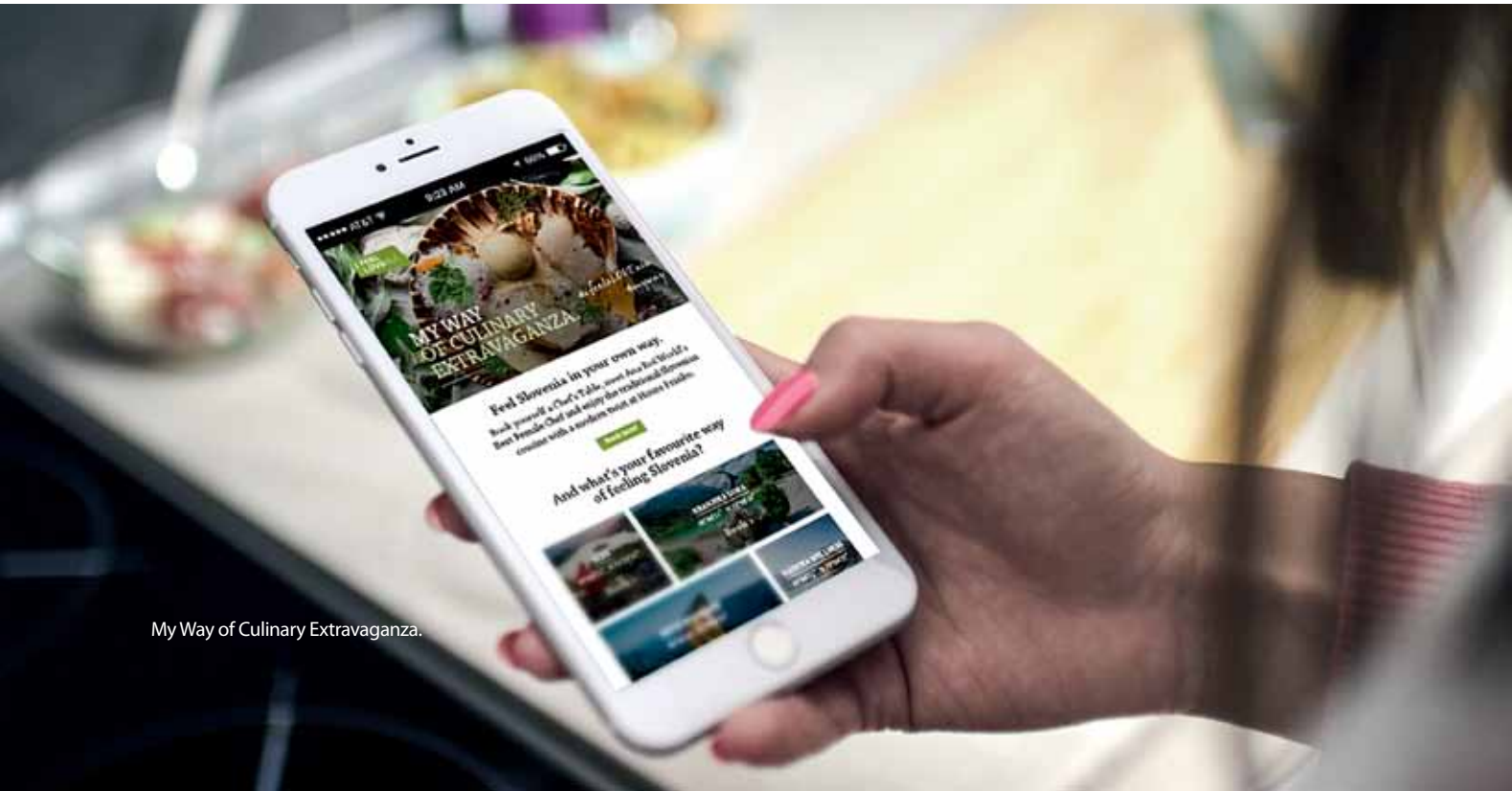
It relates to the individual and offers value in respect of all main segments of Slovenian tourism. It invites an individual to experience Slovenia in their own preferred way.

The Yootree agency further explains: *“This is Slovenia, a country where rather than having to travel by limousine to dinner, I am served culinary specialties under the star-filled sky. A country where a stroll in the woods is not just a stroll but a tree-hugging and barefoot walk-*

*ing experience of feeling the woods, with the dew and pine needles beneath my feet. Where I do not only enjoy a wine-tasting, but taste ‘trophy’ on a personally chosen wine safari. Where I party with the locals until the early morning hours. Where I meet the whole city for lunch. Each and every corner of Slovenia offers unique outdoor, spa, gastronomic, business or cultural exclusive experiences. To my liking. I am discovering all these experiences connected, in the community of international travellers, with tools that simplify learning about the country and planning my journey and help me write my own story of Slovenia. I feel Slovenia. In my own way.”*

**The following words are used in communication at the umbrella level: in English “My way”; in German “Meine art” and in Italian “A modo mio”, while in all languages #my-way is used alongside #ifeelsLOVEnia.**

The Slovenian Tourist Board will gradually integrate the solution in communication tools at the umbrella level within the Slovenian Tourist Board. The solution will be first used in a global digital campaign in 2019.



My Way of Culinary Extravaganza.



The Winter will be something to talk about.



## EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Slovenian Day of Culture in Brussels

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Idrija is one of Slovenia's pearls.  
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Old Slovenian towns, proud of their heritage, came together seventeen years ago and established the Association of Historical Towns of Slovenia. The rich architectural heritage of these towns spans from prehistory through to the Middle Ages, and the Baroque Period to the present.

One third of all Slovenia's towns are classified as cultural monuments. The mission of the Association is the conservation and revitalisation of the towns' historical heritage, and the organisation of a huge number of events. And why visit only one old town on your trip to the country?

**Travelling in Slovenia is easy that you can enjoy several places and their attractions in a short time.. The Association of Historical Towns of Slovenia includes the following towns: Celje, Idrija, Jesenice, Kamnik, Kostanjevica na Krki, Koper, Kranj, Metlika, Novo mesto, Piran, Ptuj, Radovljica, Slovenske Konjice, Šentjur, Škofja Loka, Tržič and Žužemberk.**

#### MOVE FROM ONE HISTORICAL TOWN TO ANOTHER

Celje – a small place that arouses varied and beautiful sensations with its romantic alleys in the old town centre, small thickets to explore in the town park, architecture attesting to the richness and diversity of the past, along with museums, galleries and theatres. All of this can be found in the town centre, with the attractions a short walking distance from each other.

Idrija is one of Slovenia's pearls – the town is famous for its fine hand-made bobbin lace, delicious traditional food of *idrijski žlikrofi*, and the mercury mine (now a museum) listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Jesenice, a town in the valley between Mežaklja and Karavanke, has many faces: historians see it as a town of ironworks, sports enthusiasts as the home of ice-hockey, and nature lovers associate it with the yearly blossoming of wild daffodils. Everywhere the present and past go hand-in-hand, but what enchants the most is the quarter of Stara Sava, where features of the former ironworks settlement may still be admired.

Kamnik, in the heart of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, was in the Middle Ages a flourishing trading town, and the seat of the counts of Andechs from Bavaria. The beautiful architecture that can still be seen speaks of the time when Kamnik was the most important town in Carniola.

In Koper, everything seems to be filled with sunshine. Here the sea caresses the shores of a former island, town squares from the Venetian period almost touch the natural environment and pulse with the life of the green countryside, and the many pleasures offered by Istrian villages are but a stone's throw away.

The only town in Slovenia located on an island is Kostanjevica na Krki, a site of rich natural and cultural heritage. Enjoy its uniqueness and visit the old town centre, the Božidar Jakac Gallery with its sculpture park, and Kostanjevica Cave, a popular tourist destination. The banks along the Krka River and the wine-growing region in the foothills of Gorjanci are popular spots for both leisurely and active breaks.

Kranj, nestled between the rivers Sava and Kokra, is famous for its city walls with three renovated watchtowers, the Gothic Church of Saint Cantianus and Companions, and numerous elegant old townhouses. Its 6,000 years of history have produced a myriad of inter-



esting stories, and many great figures have left their mark. Every year, the town above the Kokra canyon hosts a range of cultural and gastronomy events, and is the home of a vibrant artistic scene.

Where would you look for paradise, if not in remote and unspoiled landscapes where serenity, diversity and rich natural and cultural heritage are intertwined? So welcome to the heart of Bela Krajina, the town of Metlika, on the banks of the Kolpa River, under Gorjanci.

The town of Novo Mesto, which means New Town, is anything but new – it has been settled since prehistoric times. Between the vineyards and the bend of the Krka River there is one of the most important archaeological sites from the Early Iron Age, where researchers have found numerous situlas, elaborately decorated vases used in ancient feasts. If situlas were still used in today's Novo Mesto, the capital of Dolenjska, they would certainly contain *cviček*, the typical wine from the Lower Carniola region.

The medieval town of Piran, marked by centuries of Venetian influence, is one of the nicest and best preserved Mediterranean towns. It offers exquisite nature and culture on every corner, with perhaps the best part being that the many attractions on offer are all so close to each other.

A stroll through the oldest town in Slovenia, Ptuj, will take you passed ancient Roman monuments to the remarkable façades of medieval buildings. Paved squares and streets lead to one of the most magnificent castles in Slovenia, from where the view stretches over a mosaic of tiled roofs on medieval houses, monasteries and churches. ŠE SL

Visit also Radovljica, the capital of the Slovenian beekeeping and chocolate industry. The charming Linhart Square is enclosed by 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century mansions, and discover behind their painted façades the heritage and art of beekeeping and making honey cakes. Radovljica boasts the greatest number of sunny days in Gorenjska (Upper Carniola), and invites you to experience the natural beauty and the culture in its surroundings.

Slovenske Konjice is a charming medieval town that lies below the mysterious mountain of Konjiška Gora and the wine-growing hills of Škalce in north-eastern Slovenia. The town and many villages along the Dravinja River make the valley a unique sight to behold. It's a place that will captivate your senses and you will feel its soul, as well as all the intriguing stories you can find there.

Šentjur is a town with music in its blood, but also one shaped by the railway. Experience it through its museum collections, and get acquainted with its inhabitants. Its surroundings include Lake Slivnik, Resevna Hill and other spots of unspoiled nature and friendly people, offering plenty of opportunities to walk, fish, hunt, cycle and, of course, indulge in good food.

Škofja Loka is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Slovenia. This is the home of the Škofja Loka Passion Play, a medieval morality play, the first Slovenian dramatic text and now the country's largest outdoor theatre performance. This living masterpiece is listed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Tržič has always been a place along a well-trodden road, already used by the Romans, and many centuries later by the town's famous cobblers. Its roots reach back to the mythical times of dragons, and it has the longest tradition of shoemaking in Slovenia. Žužemberk, a medieval town with a castle perched on a clifftop over the Krka River, is a town where time runs differently. You will be surrounded by history and memories of chivalrous deeds, as well as by the burbling of the flowing waters. Indeed, the name of the town itself echoes the sound the river makes as it moves.

#### SLOVENIAN DAY OF CULTURE IN BRUSSELS

The Slovenian Day of Culture, held on 26 of September 2018 on the esplanade of the European Parliament, was an occasion to present Slovenia to Europe. The country thus displayed the variety and wealth of its natural and cultural heritage, and presented the numerous cultural events organized all year long in its numerous historical towns.



Škofja Loka is one of the best preserved medieval towns in Slovenia. Photo: Jošt Gantar





Kamnik was the most important town in medieval Carniola.  
Photo: Jošt Gantar

**In honour of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the Association of Historical Towns presented its members and all their many admirable features. The aim of the event was to promote all seventeen Slovenian historical towns to a wider audience.**

Slovenian music was played on the esplanade of the European Parliament, including the famous *Na Golici* polka. "We chose music to accompany the event, as music is a language that everybody understands" said Mateja Hafner Dolenc, Secretary General of the Association of Historical Towns of Slovenia. She added that the purpose of the event was primarily the promotion of historical towns, and that she firmly believed that it would help to spread the word about Slovenia and its many attractions, all over the country, and entice more Europeans to come and discover them. "We came here, in front of the European Parliament, because we felt it was appropriate to show the wealth of Slovenia's cultural heritage before the very institutions that designated 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage," she said.

The Slovenian Day of Culture was prepared by the Association of Historic Towns of Slovenia in cooperation with the Slovenian Tourist Board, and with the assistance of the Embassy of Slovenia in Belgium, Slovenian Members of the European Parliament, Slovenia's Permanent Representation to the EU, and the Slovenian Business and Research Association in Brussels.

The desire of the organizers was to celebrate the Slovenian Day of Culture in Brussels together with friends of Slovenia and representatives of their twinned historical towns from all over Europe, especially from Belgium and the neighbouring countries of France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, as well as others from all over Europe.

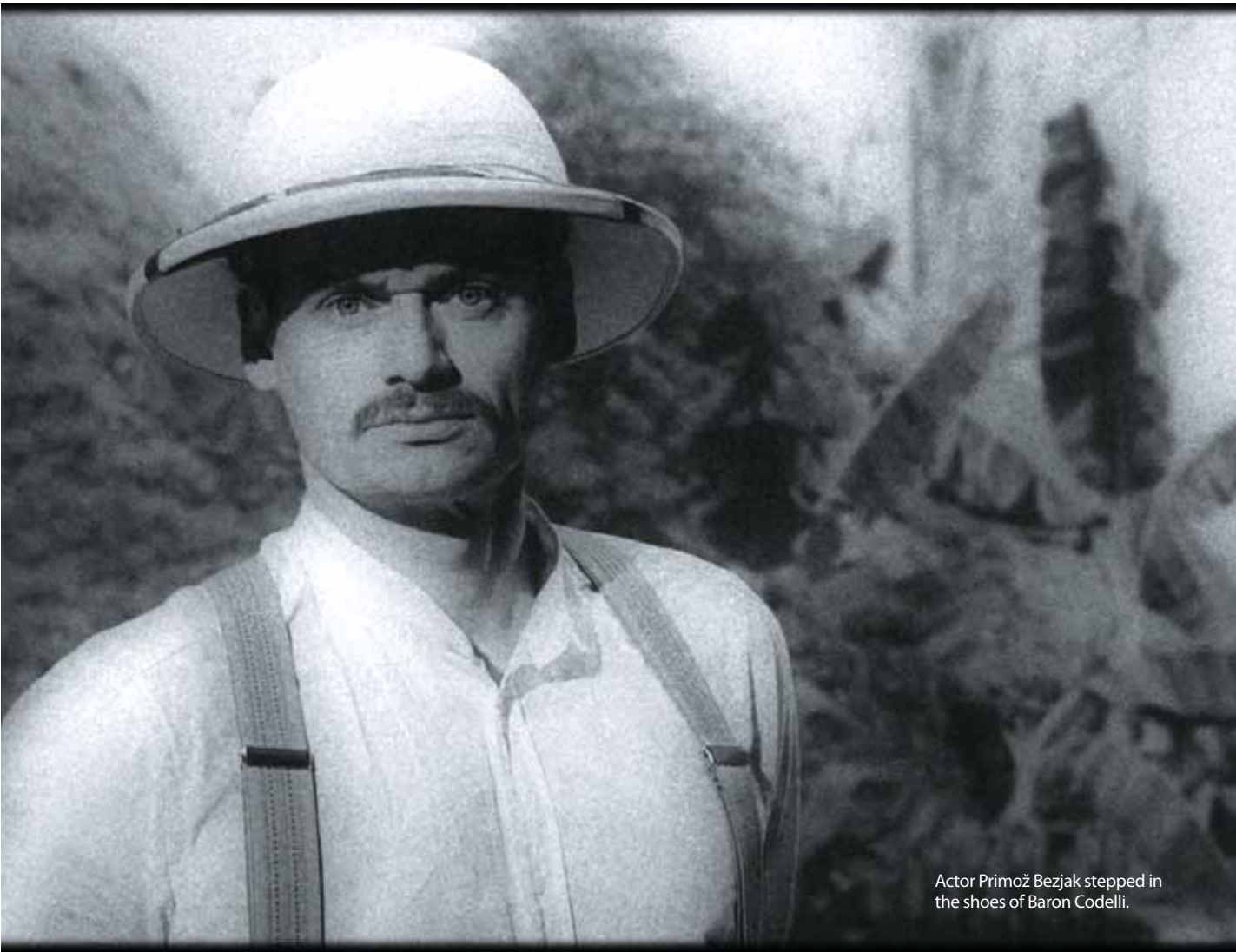
In the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the European Commission in Brussels invited all member states to mark the year with various events with the aim of enhancing the contribution of Europe's cultural heritage to society, through its direct and indirect economic potential, which includes the capacity to support the cultural and creative sectors, and to inspire creation and innovation, to promote sustainable development and tourism, to enhance social cohesion and to create long-term employment.



# A DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT BARON ANTON CODELLI

## The Baron's African adventure

POLONA PREŠEREN  
PHOTO: MIHA ČELAR PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Actor Primož Bezjak stepped in the shoes of Baron Codelli.

In October, the feature-length docudrama *Codelli*, screen-written and directed by Miha Čelar, hit Slovenian cinemas. The film recounts the story of a little-known film project by the Slovenian inventor Baron Anton Codelli.

Baron Anton Codelli is best known for bringing the first automobile to Ljubljana in 1898. Indeed Janez Puh and he are considered to be the pioneers of the car in Slovenia. Anton Codelli was born into a noble family in 1875 in Naples, where his father Karel and mother Rozalija were undergoing treatment based on the area's climate. He attended general upper secondary school in Vienna, then the Austro-Hungarian capital, at an institute for the children of noble families, where he became excited about the idea of patronage. After passing the general *matura* examination, he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the navy. He travelled widely (India, Japan, China) and learned several foreign languages. He left the navy in 1897 for health reasons and began studying law, but soon withdrew from his studies. Out of interest and curiosity, he then taught himself electrical engineering and mechanical engineering. He inherited the Turn Mansion from his grandfather Karl I, today better known as Kodeljevo Castle in Ljubljana.

**The docudrama presents Codelli's rather less-known African adventure. We learn that between 1910 and 1915, in the African country of Togo in the middle of the jungle, Codelli built a radio telegraph station and was the first person in the world to establish a wireless connection between Africa and Europe.**

In 1912 he and film pioneer Hans Schomburgk started film production in Togo. They made several documentary films and in 1914 *The White Goddess of Wangora*, one of the first live-action films made in Africa, which possibly inspired James Rice Burroughs' Tarzan novels. The docudrama is divided into two segments: in the documentary part, the crew, together with actor Primož Bezjak and three of Codelli's descendants, trace the fate of the disappeared film and bring its remains from Togo and Berlin to Ljubljana, where green screen technology is used to re-enact 15 of the scenes. In the live-action part, the authors, in the style of silent film and to the accompaniment of the duo Silence, bring to life 600 photographs from Codelli's personal collection.

### WHY CODELLI?

The author of the docudrama is director and screenwriter Miha Čelar, who in recent years has specialised in documentary films the common denominator of which is that they feature exceptional individuals in a particular field. But why Codelli in particular? "Because I grew up near Kodeljevo (a part of Ljubljana), and as children we would go swimming in the nearest pool in summer and would

admire the castle, which was said to have been owned by a baron who brought the first automobile to Ljubljana. In 2008, during the moving of the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, Dr Marko Frelih happened upon a few boxes with photos of African motifs and telegraph towers and thus discovered the African part of Codelli's collection of photographs. The photograph collection was then exhibited at the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum under the name 'Togo Album', and thus Codelli's incredible story saw the light of day."

**When the film crew visited the village of Kamina in Togo, they found that the remains of Codelli's station still lay there, preserved by the West-African climate like Egyptian mummies.**

"When we compared them to the photographs, we saw that everything matched. Members of the three tribes that protected these remains told us about many myths and legends associated with Codelli and his expedition. They remember him as Fundolli. We gave books with Codelli's photographs to all three tribal chiefs, who thus got to see some of their ancestors for the first time. By giving them the photographs, we also gave them back a piece of their own history," explains Miha Čelar, who travelled to Togo with his film crew.

It is interesting to note that, for the Togo project, the film crew received three vaccinations and malaria-prevention tablets and travelled from Paris to Lomé by plane in just seven hours; by contrast, each time it took Codelli three weeks to sail from the Canary Islands to Togo, where – without vaccine or tablets – he cleared the jungle and built several technological projects which were quite extraordinary for that time: a railway, a thermal power plant and a gigantic radio telegraph station. Today this might be comparable to building a city in Antarctica or a station on the moon!

### CODELLI'S GRANDDAUGHTER

Codelli's granddaughter, Livia Barbo von Waxenstein Reden, has a central role in the documentary part of the film. Unfortunately, she did not live to see the recent premiere at Kinodvor in Ljubljana. "I met Ms Livia Barbo von Waxenstein Reden with the help of members of Codelli's Classic Cars Club, who have been preserving the memory of Codelli for decades. We met for the first time in Vienna, shortly after she moved to the Maltese Knights, a kind of an aristocratic version of a home for the elderly," explains Miha Čelar, who enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the baroness. "On strolls through Vienna's parks, she gradually told me everything she remembered – which she did vividly – and knew about her grandfather. Then I met her daughter, Codelli's great-granddaughter Ales-



sandra Reden, in Trieste (Italy), and Alessandra's daughter, Codelli's great-great-granddaughter, Valentina Zündel Reden in Milan. All three of Codelli's descendants were extremely charming, and I decided at once that I would use them to create the main documentary storyline. In the film, we follow Codelli's path to Vienna, from there to Berlin and Nauen, and back to Slovenia and Ljubljana, back to Kodeljevo, where the story actually began."

Mihe Čelar devoted three years to the Codelli project. After he'd already finished his research, two extraordinary stories emerged: on the one hand the more than 600 photographs and on the other the three living descendants of Codelli: "Considering that the photographs were used to create film scenes and that Codelli's descendants were so camera-friendly, I decided to present the story in a 'live-action documentary' style. Together with Codelli's relatives, I travelled around the world, and with the use of the photographs and the help of excellent Slovenian actors, we made a contemporary silent film. This was a real creative challenge, and even more so since the actors shot almost all their scenes via green screen, without any scenery or props. The ensemble of actors was an additional responsibility for me, as the lead actor and protagonist, Primož Bezjak, whom I entrusted with the task of selecting actors, assembled quite an incredible cast of actors for the project. Among them were Maruša Majer (Ivan), a winner of several awards, Doroteja Nadrah (*Zgodovina ljubezni (History of Love)*), Grega Zorc and Maša Kagao Knez. All of them did an excellent job."

A SPECIFIC DOCUMENTARY GENRE

In the last few years, Miha Čelar has made several extraordinary documentary films. From *Ena sama je mama* (Tatjana in Motherland), which is about Slovenian boys and men, to the three-year project

iOtok (island), which chronicles the efforts of the last 13 people on the island of Biševo in the Adriatic Sea who try to establish a town council to secure the development of Biševo against the aggressive tourism industry, and preserve the authentic life on the island. "We began to live broadcast the story last January, when our team visited Biševo; from there, we broadcast short documentary episodes and interactive content on the last inhabitants of Biševo and their efforts to secure the survival of their island on the interactive web platform iOtok.eu for 13 weeks in a row. The platform and the mobile application had more than 132,000 views from ten countries."

**This resulted in the feature-length documentary film *island*, which was presented at the Slovenian film festival in Portorož in September and concludes the story and reveals how it ends. The film will now tour several festivals and is expected to be premiered in cinemas in spring 2019.**

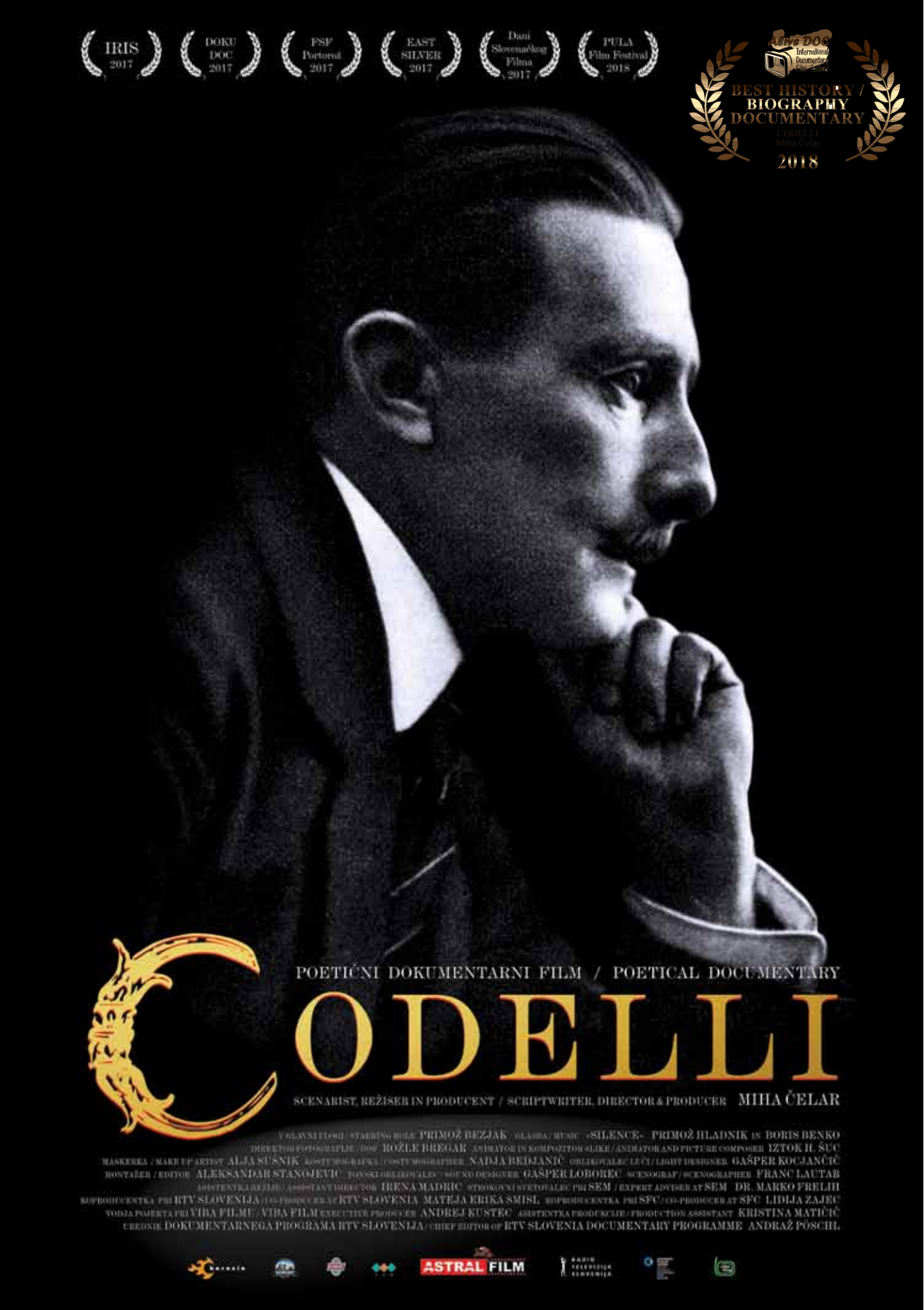
So what will Miha Čelar surprise us with in the future? "I am currently in the middle of filming a music documentary about the legendary Slovenian music group Kameleoni, who in the mid-1960s made the then Yugoslavia go crazy. Together with the gentlemen concerned, all of whom have already turned 70, we are retracing the path of their concert tour – at that time they filled stadiums with well over 20,000 people and, despite having released only nine own songs, they sold over 100,000 records. If we are lucky, we might see them once again take to the stage before the New Year. The film will be completed in February 2019, and is expected to hit the screens next autumn."

Codelli's inventions and patents

Codelli invented a number of items providing a more comfortable experience when travelling by car, such as an electric ignition device for motor vehicles and a small cooling and heating device. In addition, he also invented a mechanical mower, a wireless drive for remote devices, a high-pressure compressor, a planetary wheel drive with a double and internal-gear hub, a wireless drive for devices and machines (even submarines), a high-frequency telephone, an automatic device for determining the position of ships at sea and a rotary engine.

He devoted his work to electrical engineering, particularly radio and television. Together with Albin Belar, he invented a device for wireless reception of a time signal. He became famous in the field of radiotelegraphy and was chosen to set up a wireless telegraphy station in the village of Kamina to connect Berlin to its African colony of Togo, and other German colonies in Africa.

His most famous inventions include a high-frequency telephone and a device for remote transmission of images: a predecessor of television.





# LJUBLJANA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - LIFFE

## Festival of Diversity

POLONA PREŠEREN  
PHOTO: LIFFE ARCHIVES



Simon Popek, LIFFe Programme Director.  
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Every November, Slovenian film lovers celebrate LIFFe - Ljubljana International Film Festival, the biggest film festival in Slovenia, which has taken place in Ljubljana since 1990. Over fourteen days, it brings many less well-known productions that rarely make it to Slovenian cinemas. Ahead of this year's festival, we talked to the LIFFe Programme Director, Simon Popek.

**Simon, how long do the preparations for the festival last?**

This is quite a process. Since the Documentary Film Festival is in March, our LIFFe-related activities begin sometime in May, so the preparations take about half a year. But generally this is a year-long process and we are already thinking about the next year's festival. The core staff consists of about five people.

**What is LIFFe's "formula"? What is the key selection criterion?**

The first thing I would like to point out is diversity. We are a kind of a general festival, but our concept has changed considerably.

**Fifteen years ago there were not many festivals like this; now there are many different genre-based festivals, both in Ljubljana and Slovenia.**

We have a festival of short films, of experimental films ... these can simply outdo us in certain segments they are specialised in. We try to be topical and communicate with the audience, avoiding any excessive hermeticism. We should also remember that 60 per cent of our budget comes from the ticket sales. This means that we select films with our audience in mind, too.

**Since you mention the audience, the theatres are extremely full every year. What is the Slovenian audience like?**

It is definitely demanding. These are people that do not have much time to go to cinema during the year, but are quite picky in their choices. It is also true that Asian or South American films, for instance, rarely make it to our cinemas. The same applies to the independent American productions, which are more or less a rare occurrence in Slovenia. The avant-premiere section is, for

instance, very well attended, although these films will be later shown in cinemas. On the other hand, many of our visitors consciously skip this section because they know that they can see these films after the end of the festival.

**Slovenian productions are not very present at the festival. What are the reasons, in your opinion?**

In comparison to previous years, Slovenian works are more present in the upcoming programme. Lately we have increased our cooperation with the Slovenian Film Centre, but the temporal proximity of the Slovenian Film Festival and LIFFe is such that it makes no sense to screen the same films at both.

**Slovenian films are included in the programme if they correspond to our programme guidelines.**

This year's LIFFe brings three Slovenian feature-length films, one of which will premiere and one will be a part of the competition section.

**How do you select films?**

There is no open call because our number of previewers is too small. I go to festivals and find many films there. Our organisation includes an informal consulting body to pick the films; the selectors are separate only for short films and children's films, because of their specific nature.

**What is this year's focus and why?**

This year's orientations are rather historical, one of them being the Czech new wave of the 1960's.



The focus is on films from the former Soviet Union, from the Baltics to the so-called “-stans”, including Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia. These are countries with small-scale film production and the stars are only rarely aligned so that they make a high-quality production at the same time.

The most constant among them are Georgia and Ukraine, while some other countries do not have any regular production at all.

But I must say that an interesting generation can be spotted. The film-makers also include many women. Their stories are local, which definitely has its charms; they are colourful stories with a local ethnic touch and visual aesthetics, too.

**Will we ever witness a celebrity parade at LIFFe?**

(Laughs) We will see. The 30th anniversary is an occasion that definitely makes us think about it. But it is certainly difficult in a world governed by finance and capital, and film is no exception. Our region has the Sarajevo Film Festival, which is based on celebrities, so our visitors may foster such expectations, too, but celebrity attendance at festivals is very limited. We will see what time brings.



Reports on Sarah and Saleem, Palestine, Dutch and German coproduction in the Perspectives section.



Climax, French movie in the Extravaganza section.

The LIFFe film festival is deeply established among Slovenian fans of cinema. The festival offers an overview of selected contemporary global production and information about films and winners of important awards, as well as educates through film workshops, multimedia interactive projects and accompanying projects.

[www.liffe.si](http://www.liffe.si)

**LIFFe's 2018 sections:**

- Perspectives**, the official competitive section of young filmmakers competing for the Kingfisher Award sponsored by Telekom Slovenije, d.d.
- Avant-premieres**, a selection of the world's finest films purchased for Slovenian distribution.
- Kings and Queens**, films by notable and award-winning virtuosos of contemporary cinema.
- World Film Panorama**, front-runners in five-continent festivals.
- Focus**: East-Northeast.
- Extravaganza**, so-called late-night cinema of daring artists addressing idiosyncratic or sensual topics.
- Kinobalon**, a selection of films for children aged between 5 and 14, celebrating 10 years of existence; in association with the Kinodvor Cinema.
- Tribute**, Christian Petzold.
- Retrospective**, Czech new wave.
- Europe in short**, competitive programme of short film.



## THE 34<sup>TH</sup> SLOVENIAN BOOK FAIR

# Go to at Least One of Nearly Three Hundred Events

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

PHOTO: TAMINO PETELINŠEK/STA



Slovenian Book Fair offers book discounts and thus makes them more accessible to wider audiences.

This year, like every other, the cold November days will be warmed up by the Slovenian Book Fair, which will be held from 20 to 25 November in Cankarjev dom. Here, over five and a half days, nearly three hundred events will be held on six stages.

This year's focus will be on Hungarian literature, culture and cuisine. There will still be many events related to Slovenian and other foreign literature.

### SZIA AND SZERVUSZ SLOVENIA

The fair will offer many opportunities to learn something about foreign guests, with many of these coming from Hungary. Essayist and literary critic László F. Földenyi, and slam poet Gabor Tamas Indiana, among others, will thus present themselves on the Writers' Stage, and an overview of modern Hungarian poetry will be presented to visitors. At the Debate Caffe visitors will be able to hear writer Vilmos Kondor and writer and translator György Dragoman, and later also harpsichordist Miklós Lukács and other Hungarian artists. The guest of honour of the Slovenian Book Fair will be the writer, essayist and screenwriter Péter Nádas.

**In addition to learning about the Hungarian literature, the visitors to the fair will also be able to see some interesting Hungarian films, such as crime drama *Budapest Noir*.**

And this is not all. They will also have an opportunity to learn about Hungarian culture through its cuisine.

### A MOSAIC OF INTERESTING REFLECTIONS, CONTENTS AND SHOWS

On the Writers' Stage, poet and translator Peter Semolič, translator Nina Medved and theatre educator, actor and poet Kristijan Koželj will talk about slam as an important poetic form, and after

the panel we will be able to hear the best Slovenian slam poets, as well as one from Hungary.

**The main theme of this year's Publishing Academy will be youth literature. Attention will be given to authors who care about the direction our world is going in, and we along with it.**

The fair is not only attractive to adults, but also includes an interesting programme for the youngest readers: Cicifest. At Cicifest children will be able to choose from more than 80 hours of programming, including the children's opera *Martin Krpan*, a ballet for children *La Fontaine's Basni* (*La Fontaine's Fables*), another opera *Glasbena Hiša* (*Music House*), and all-time favourites, such as *Žogica Marogica* and *Sapramiška*. This year the Cicifest Ambassador is illustrator Lili Praprotnik Zupančič, a versatile creator and artist who designs, writes and illustrates her own work. A new feature at this year's fair is the professional part of Cicifest, held in cooperation with the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, which will focus on children with special needs and talented children.

The guest city at this year's fair is Postojna, and thus special attention will be given to the life and work of Miroslav Vilhar. For the lovers of film art, the Kolot Society will present a documentary about horse-drawn carriages and cart drivers, *Dediščina furmanstva*.

### A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT ARTIST

The event will also include other content and programmes. Since this year is dedicated to Ivan Cankar and the 100th anniversary of his death, the book fair is an opportunity to see the great writer in



a new light. The visual design of the fair was created by the artist who, among all Slovenian fine artists, has devoted the most attention to the image of Cankar. In 1972, the year of the first Slovenian Book Fair, the Slovenian sculptor, painter and printmaker Janez Boljka created a print that radiates Cankar's power and inner light. It shows the defiantly painful pose of a body without arms, a fighter for the nation's well-being.

During the fair, as part of the programme of the festival *Cankar o Cankarju* (*Cankar about Cankar*), the exhibition *Ivan Cankar will be held in the Gallery of Cankarjev dom*, comprising eight pictures following the writer's life.

On the culinary stage there will be a presentation of various dishes from the times when Cankar lived and created for seven years at the Franzotovi inn on Rožnik Hill. They say that his favourite dish was ričet (barley stew).

Moreover, this year more than twenty thousand books on stages and stalls will be accompanied by chrysanthemums, in memorial to Cankar the brave revolutionary and as a respectful bow to his books.

**A VISIT IS A MUST**

Among three hundred events there will be something for every age and taste. There are no borders in literature and art and the fair is an opportunity to learn something new or to re-examine some old prejudices. We thus invite you to open the door and enter the interesting world of the 34th Slovenian Book Fair.

34. SLOVENSKI

KNJIŽNI

SEJEM

20.—25. 11.



Gospodarska  
zbornica  
Slovenije

Zbornica knjižnih založnikov  
in knjigotrošcev

 **cankarjev dom**

**država v fokusu:** **Madžarska** 

**mesto v gosteh:** **Postojna** 

[www.knjiznisejem.si](http://www.knjiznisejem.si)



A Debate Caffè



## THE SERFS – WHEN THE ANGELS GIVE UP

### The story without a full stop

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Cankar's work *Hlapci* (*The Serfs*) centres on the issue of Slovenian identity. This work and its content have thus long been placed on a pedestal within Slovenian literature and philosophical thinking. *The Serfs* is also the most frequently staged drama in Slovenian theatres, and even the cartoon version is an equally powerful work.

Cankar wrote *The Serfs* in the autumn of 1909, and published it in the same year. The book was first met with distaste, and thus despite the author's wishes the play was not staged in his lifetime. Cankar found the theme and background for this work in the general elections of 1907. These were the first in the Austro-Hungarian Empire based on universal suffrage, although – of course – for men only. The elections were convincingly won by the Slovenian People's Party, which was strongly associated with the Catholic Church, while the National Progressive Party was defeated. Cankar was personally involved in these elections, as he was himself one of the candidates, although not on the lists of the two major opponents, but on the list of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party. He was not elected.

**In terms of politics, Cankar was not interested in taking political sides and single-mindedness, but rather in the possibility that he as a candidate or an individual might expose as questionable the grounds on which the first two parties contested each other.**

The elections offered the writer a starting point to enter the highly complex world of a particular historic moment, to contemplate power, inner conviction, love and loyalty, and attitudes toward death. *"The personal is political."*

At the beginning of this drama, Cankar describes the impact of the clerical party's victory in the 1907 election. The majority of the liberally minded populace submitted itself to the new authorities. The first two acts show a bitter satire of this sudden shift, and the human tendency to corruption. The work features nine leading characters: a Parish priest, school headmaster, Jerman, Komar, Hvastja, Lojzka, Geni, Minka, blacksmith Kalander, Jerman's mother and three groups of workers and peasants. The drama consists of five acts.

#### CANKAR'S WORLD

The relationship between the power of authority and survival, and the exchange of obedience for bread, takes the central position in Cankar's political universe. Jerman persists in his mission, despite many threats and warnings. Though he still hopes that there can be a better future, in the climactic scene of the drama he is faced with a bitter disappointment. "Born to be farmhands, brought up to be farmhands!" This is the message that conveys the belief that "the master may change but the whip remains and will be there forever, because the back is bent, used and eager to be whipped."

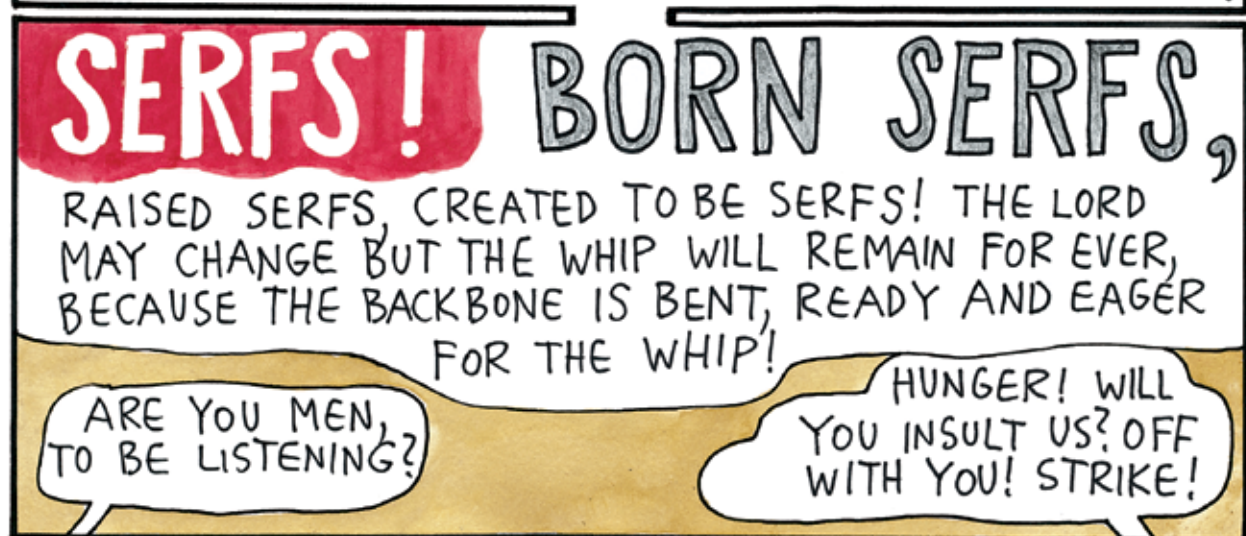
Jerman is a person who also "feels weight on his heart" at more intimate moments, as, for example, when breaking up with his girlfriend. He is someone who is split within himself, someone with a blocked heart. His grief is first of all his own before it spills out and manifests itself in the conflict between himself and the world. Jerman is therefore not a hero.

Besides all the other characters, the character of the mother is especially important in this drama. Jerman loves and takes care of her, but she represents a tie with the "old world". This is a dilemma between faithfulness to oneself, love for the near and dear, and devotion to those one holds close. Jerman does not see a way out of this situation, and so even considers suicide.

The end of *The Serfs* hangs in the air as a miraculous opportunity, the opening of a new life amidst a closed world. In this work Cankar offers us two stereotypes of the Slovenian character: the serfs and Jerman. Are we Slovenes either one or the other at heart? Is this the only choice that we have, or is there yet a third one? Is it possible to step out of this vicious cycle?

Cankar's drama presents us with various dilemmas and exposes stereotypes along with impossible and catch-22 situations. No truth is self-contained. And this story certainly does not end with a full stop.







# THE BAY OF PIRAN THEATRE PERFORMANCES

## When Politics Cannot Unite, Art Can.

POLONA PREŠEREN

PHOTO: SMG (MLADINSKO THEATRE) ARCHIVES



Slovenian theatre season ticket holders visited the Slovenian Cultural Society in Basovizza, where they were offered warm hospitality and refreshments, and learned about the society's activities and the Slovenian community in Rijeka.

The Mladinsko Theatre is a true ambassador of Slovenian culture, as it is the theatre from the country that most frequently tours in different parts of the world.

The Mladinsko Theatre was established in Ljubljana in 1955, and was originally the first professional theatre for children and youth in Slovenia. In the 1980s, it was restructured into a theatre that began to make interdisciplinary connections with various approaches to theatre, and serving as a cultural ambassador has always been one of its prominent goals. Through its activities, the theatre has been becoming more integrated with the international scene.

### THEATRE PERFORMANCES AS NEVER BEFORE

A special tourism and cultural project – the Bay of Piran Theatre Performances – links two cities and two countries: Rijeka and Ljubljana, in Croatia and Slovenia. The artists of the Mladinsko Theatre and the Ivan Zajc Croatian National Theatre from Rijeka are convinced that when politics cannot unite, art can.

The idea for the season performances came from the artistic director of the Mladinsko Theatre, Goran Injac, and director Oliver Frlić. The theatre season that has just started is already the fourth that has taken place.

**The artists at the Mladinsko Theatre say that they wish to present the creativity of the Rijeka theatre to audiences in Ljubljana and, vice versa, to make the performances by the Ljubljana theatre accessible to those in Rijeka.**

This cooperation involves two programme-related theatres from two countries, which are divided by the border issue in the Bay of Piran. "At the symbolic level, we want to erase this border, we want to connect and come together," stated the artists at the Mladinsko Theatre.

### ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In past seasons, this project consisted of two performances in Ljubljana and two in Rijeka. The project also included a guided tour of the two cities. During each visit to the theatre, the visitors and a tourist guide explored another part of the city they were in.

The purpose of the Bay of Piran theatre performances has been fulfilled, and the expansion of the cultural space and its connection with the performances of the two programme-related theatres has enriched the cultural activities of both Ljubljana and Rijeka. The season performances have culturally linked Ljubljana and Rijeka, and strengthened friendly and professional connections between the cities and theatres.

Given the excellent responses and eagerness to discover new adventures in this context, the theatres are continuing their work, and in the 2018/2019 season will be joined by the Slovenian Civic Theatre in Trieste (Italy).

**In this season, the project offers two performances by the Mladinsko Theatre, two by the Ivan Zajc Croatian National Theatre, and one by the Slovenian Civic Theatre in Trieste (Italy).**

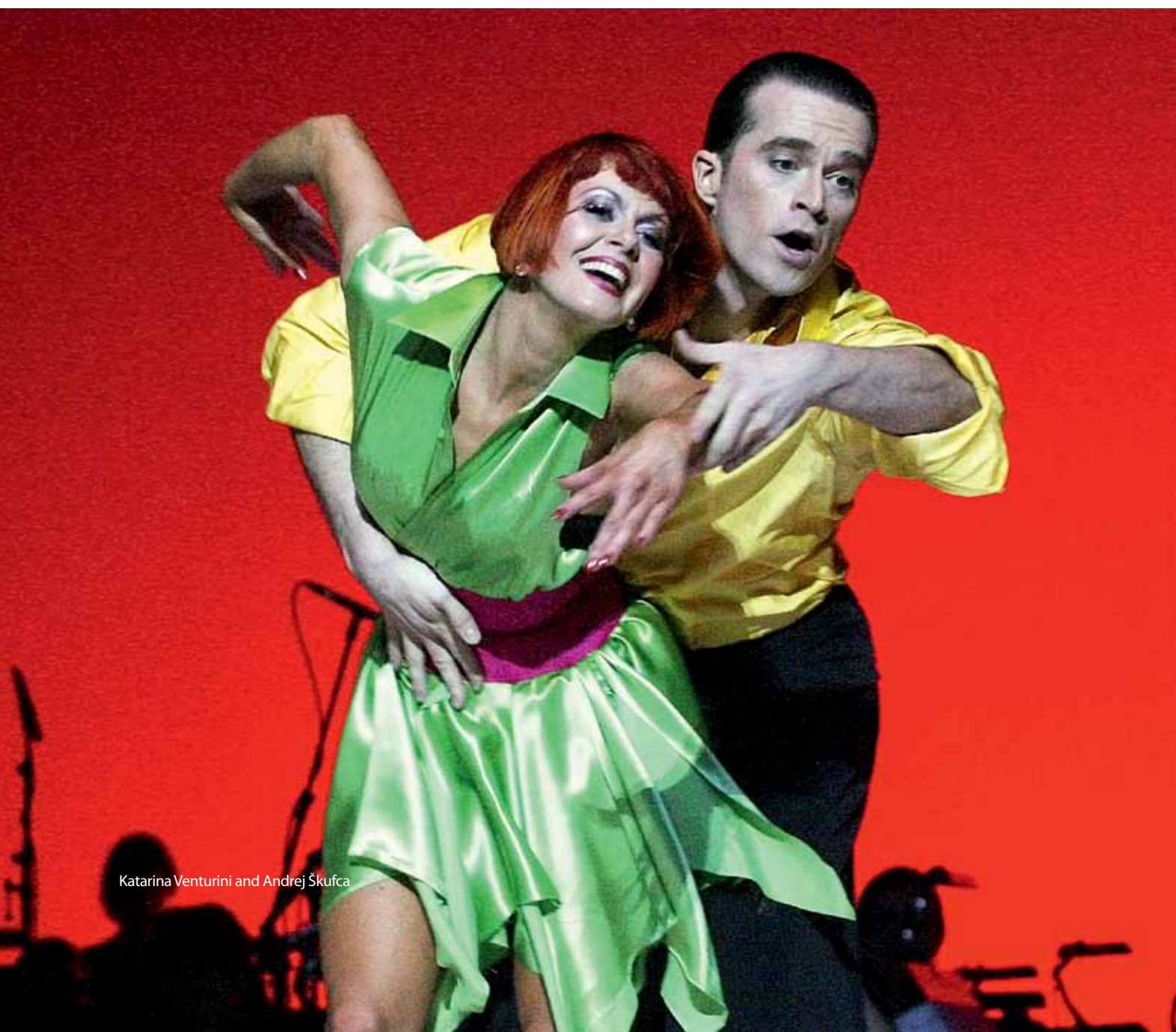
The Bay of Piran joint seasonal programme showed that art knows no boundaries, because this project has made it possible for Slovenian and Croatian audiences to watch selected theatre performances by the two theatres, despite the border tensions between the two countries.



# DANCING IS IN SLOVENIANS' BLOOD

## The Most Successful Slovenian Dancing Couple

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Katarina Venturini and Andrej Škufca

The former professional dancers Katarina Venturini and Andrej Škufca were considered the most successful Slovenian dancing couple during their joint dancing career from 1990 to 2008.

Together, they won 23 first place titles in national championships in both the Standard and Latin American disciplines, four times claiming the World Champions' title in these categories. In 1992 they became the national champions in the Standard and Latin American disciplines for the first time after just two years of competing together. Andrej and Katarina were invincible, and not only on their home floor.

### WORLD CHAMPIONS

In 1996 the couple became world champions in Latin American and Standard dances. They successfully defended these titles in 1997 and 1998. The cherry on the top was when they won the title of world champions in Latin American dances in 2001 in front of a home audience. After 2002 they competed in the ballroom dance category.

**They often topped the podium and achieved everything possible in dance. They established Slovenia's high name in the eyes of the international dancing public and gained an incredible reputation.**

They practiced three times per day, six days per week. Their coaches Fredi Novak and Danijela Škofic Novak kept a watchful eye on their steps, and every year Andrej and Katarina further developed and honed their knowledge and skills abroad. In the course of their career they received many prizes and awards, including the Marjan Rozanc Award and the Bloudek Prize for exceptional achievements in sport. They are most proud of the Ballroom Dancers' Federation award, which they received from the world

dancing community for extraordinary amateur achievements, and they won this two times in a row. In addition to a huge number of medals and cups, their shelves display the City of Ljubljana award, and Katarina was also elected as one of elite athletes who represent non-Olympic sports within the European Athletics Commission. In 2008 the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, conferred upon her the Order of Merit of the Republic of Slovenia for exceptional achievements in dance and for her contribution to Slovenia's visibility in the world.

In 2011 Katarina completed a one-year professional training programme organised by the Dancing Association of Slovenia, and acquired the title of sports dance coach. In addition, she passed the demanding examination for dance judges and became a judge for Standard and Latin American dances.

### A TRIBUTE TO MASTERS OF DANCE

After almost 18 years, Katarina and Andrej rounded off their dazzling dancing career in style with a dance performance in the Gallus Hall of Cankarjev dom, which was crowded to capacity on the occasion. They presented the highlights of their brilliant dancing career in an hour-long performance, with additional appearances from guests, musicians and actors. The performance, organised with the assistance of director Matjaž Berger, was an epic celebration of dance, expressed in the form of thought.

They danced passionately, smiling and taking the audience's breath away.

**They brought the crowd to complete silence, which was followed by a round**



of thunderous applause as they danced with rapid steps and dazzling moves. There are simply no words to describe the harmony that existed between them that night.

They ended their career as a dancing couple on an emotional note, with a friendly kiss, a long hug and dozens of roses. They continued to bow as the thrilled audience leapt to their feet and gave them a standing ovation. Despite the broad smile on their faces, tears shimmered in their eyes.

The four-time world champions then gave their final bow of respect to all those who stood by their side during their long and extremely successful career. The audience at Cankarjev dom consisted of not only the general public, but also the couple's friends, acquaintanc-

es, dancers, relatives and even politicians. The performance, held under the honorary patronage the Mayor of the Municipality of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković, was also attended by the former President of the Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, and his wife.

WHAT NOW?

In 2008, half a year after the end of her career as a competitive dancer, Katarina started her own dance school, *Plesna zvezda* (Dancing star). Her wish and aim here is to teach Slovenians to become good dancers and improve the culture of dance and movement in the country, bringing it to a higher level. She believes that everyone can learn to dance. "A few months after I finished my career, I started my own dance school. Practically overnight I went from a dancer to not only a dance teacher, but also an entrepreneur. That was a great change for me. And it was a very difficult period. At that time I did not have such an excel-



The judges on the dancing show Zvezde Plešejo (Dancing with the stars).

lent team as I do now. It was just me, for everything. If I had not been so well prepared physically, I would not have been able to survive a 16-hour work day," she says.

After almost ten years, she and Andrej Škufca once again joined forces as judges on the dancing show *Zvezde Plešejo* (Dancing with the Stars), which was broadcast on Pop TV. She takes a very responsible attitude to her role as a judge. Competitors work very hard, practice round-the-clock, and are under immense pressure, as they are required to perform live and do their best in a minute and a half after only a week of practice sessions. "This is not an easy task, so in my comments I try to highlight the progress made and what is good about their dancing," she says.

WE SLOVENIANS ARE A DANCING NATION

We can safely say that Slovenians are among the world's best dancers by the number of awards won by professionals in this field. So what contributes to this? In Katarina's opinion, dancing is in their blood. In addition to talent, the targeted and highly professional work of our coaches plays a major role in this respect. "When I started dancing 35 years ago, there were 40 couples just in the juniors' category – and quantity always brings promise of quality." Slovenians in general are good dancers, and dance a lot, mainly polka, waltz and foxtrot.

Are the working conditions for competitive dancers and dance schools better abroad or in Slovenia?

Slovenia has a good geographical position; it takes just an hour by plane from Slovenia to England, which has the best coaches and holds the most important competitions.

Training conditions are very good in Slovenia; we have enough dancing halls available for practice at any time of the day, and coaches are also very professional. However, what has been lacking in recent years is competition; that is to say, more couples that would compete against each other. There are not enough competi-

tive dancers, not enough competition. It is a large number of dancing couples that creates the competitiveness that motivates the performers and so increases quality.

Dance undoubtedly promotes positive feelings and well-being, and this is beneficial for the relation between the dancing couple. "I personally see dancing as giving myself up and letting a man lead me. And that is the best feeling of all."

DANCE –GOOD THERAPY FOR COUPLES

Dance is also the best therapy for couples. It is an activity in which both partners are equal and that they can continue doing into their old age. It is scientifically proven that dancing reduces the risk of dementia and similar age-related illnesses by as much as 76%.

Dancing brings people together and breaks down barriers. For young people, who may feel somewhat awkward in the presence of the opposite sex, dancing is an ideal activity, as it helps bring partners closer to each other.

And this is true later in life as well. "I do not know of anyone who would not like a warm hug, and as you know, when dancing, we are constantly hugging each other."

In general, women feel more comfortable dancing than men. As soon as they hear music, they start moving to the rhythm. This is not the case with men. A man will go on a dance floor only if he believes that he is a good dancer. "I would like to see more Slovenians become aware that dancing has miraculous healing powers, reduces the risk of dementia, and is one of the best activities that partners can enjoy together long into their old age."

Does Katarina ever miss the years when she was a competitive dancer? "Not really, although those were beautiful years. I now have other things in life, I have moved forward, changed my profession. I am a dance teacher and have a wonderful, peaceful family life and the child for whom my husband and I have long hoped for."



## THE BEAUTY OF VERTICAL MOVEMENT

## Slovenian Mountaineering is World Class

ANA KRAŠEVEC



Aleš Česen, Luka Lindič and Marko Prezelj, winners of Piolet d'Or in 2015.  
Photo: Marko Prezelj

Slovenian mountain climbers and their achievements have been drawing the attention of the domestic and international public for many years, even though many of them are personally modest and usually keep away from public glare.

Looking back to the history of Slovenian mountain climbing, Makalu – the fifth-highest mountain in the world – was the first eight-thousander summited by Slovenian (then still Yugoslav) climbers.

**This year the most prestigious Piolet d'Or went to Andrej Štremfelj, who became the first Slovenian to receive the award for his lifetime achievements in climbing.**

## THE BEGINNINGS AND REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Looking back to the history of Slovenian mountain climbing, Makalu – the fifth-highest mountain in the world – was the first eight-thousander summited by Slovenian (then still Yugoslav) climbers.

**With the first ascent of Makalu, which was made along the mountain's south face in October 1975, Slovenian mountaineering became truly considered world class – back then this was merely the third Himalayan wall that had been conquered.**

The expedition consisted of now legendary names: Stane Belak-Šrauf, Marjan Manfreda-Marjon, Janko Ažman, Nejc Zaplotnik, Viki Grošelj, Ivč Kotnik and Janez Dovžan.

The next ascent to have captured the attention of the entire country of Yugoslavia went down in history on 3 May 1979, when Andrej Štremfelj and Nejc Zaplotnik, the author of the climbers' bible entitled *Pot (The Way)*, became the first Slovenians to reach the summit of Mt Everest (8,848 m) – the highest mountain in the world. A decade later, Štremfelj made another ascent that captured public attention, made headlines and even entered the *Guinness Book of World Records*: in 1990, he again climbed the world's highest mountain, this time with his wife, Marija Štremfelj. They became the first married couple to have ever stepped on the "holy mother" – as Tibetans refer to Everest. Marija Štremfelj has also recorded some remarkable climbing achievements herself. She is still the first Slovenian woman to have ever climbed an eight-thousander (Broad Peak, 1986) and the only Slovenian woman to have ever summited Everest.

**One of the most famous mountaineering achievements was made by Davo Karničar, part of the renowned Karničar family from the Jezersko valley, which for many years tended the Czech Lodge at Spodnje Ravni.**

Davo Karničar holds the title of the first man ever to accomplish a ski descent from the top of Mount Everest in 2000. In the same year, he won the Slovenian Man of the Year title, while *Men's Journal* magazine named him the best extreme athlete in the world.

With numerous achievements and various mountaineering projects, climber Viki Grošelj captured a great deal of public at-



tention as the Slovenian with the highest number of summited eight-thousanders and the first to climb the highest peaks on all continents. He is considered a living encyclopaedia of Himalayan mountain climbing. He has written a dozen books, recording his memories, history and data on his achievements on this famed range.

Tomaž Humar completed around 1,200 ascents – as many as 60 of these were first ascents at home and abroad. One of Humar’s most notable achievements was his solo ascent to the gigantic south wall of Dhaulagiri. Climbing in alpine style, he set a new milestone in world alpinism. Due to live internet streaming and huge media attention, people literally followed his every movement. Humar set off on October 25, 1999 and after a week of »duelling« with the mountain and avalanches, after three thousand meters of altitude climbing on untouched and unknown terrain, crossing the ridge along a new direction, Humar was just below the top on 1st November. Frustrated, overwhelmed and hurt, he was before a difficult decision: to step on top and risk life or descend and survive. He opted for the latter. He descended along the north side and was picked up by a helicopter at height of 5,600 meters. Not conquering the top was not important: both professional and general public estimated this ascent as the biggest act of modern mountaineering and Humar was awarded numerous prizes and accolades. Humar died in 2009 due to fatal injuries and frostbite sustained on a solo climb to Langtang Lirung.

Owing to these and many other outstanding achievements – the latest one was this year when Slovenian-British expedition featuring Aleš Česen, Luka Stražar and Tom Livingston conquered the north face of Latok I (7,145 meters) - Slovenian mountain climbers captured the attention and praise of the expert public, so in the 26-year history of the Piolet d’Or award for the most remarkable achievements on a global scale, Slovenians have won eight such awards. Four of these went to Marko Prezelj, a top Alpine climber, mountain guide, photographer and the Head of the Slovenia Junior Climbing Team. Unlike some other

mountain climbers, Prezelj prefers to climb far away from the media glare and believes that mountain climbing is becoming too competitive. Indeed, he has been campaigning for some time that the Piolet d’Or Award ceremony itself should become a mountain climbing festival, rather than being a competition.

**THE 2018 PIOLET D’OR FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENTS IN CLIMBING WENT TO ANDREJ ŠTREMFEJ**

In addition to the achievements mentioned above, Štremfelj participated in over twenty expeditions to the Nepalese Himalayas and worked as an instructor in the Slovenian school for Nepalese mountain guides in Manang. He has also climbed in Patagonia, Pamir, and the USA. Last year, Štremfelj was awarded the lifetime achievement award by the Alpine Association of Slovenia. At the Piolet d’Or ceremony he said that the award was recognition of everything he had done due to the simple fact that he loves climbing. According to his friends, it would be difficult to find anybody who embodies the values of mountain climbing more vividly than Štremfelj, or such a master of climbing in high mountains who would better deserve a place among the world’s true mountain climbing legends. Moreover, at the age of 61, Štremfelj is the youngest recipient of the Piolet d’Or Lifetime Achievement Award to date.

**SLOVENIANS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PIOLET D’OR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

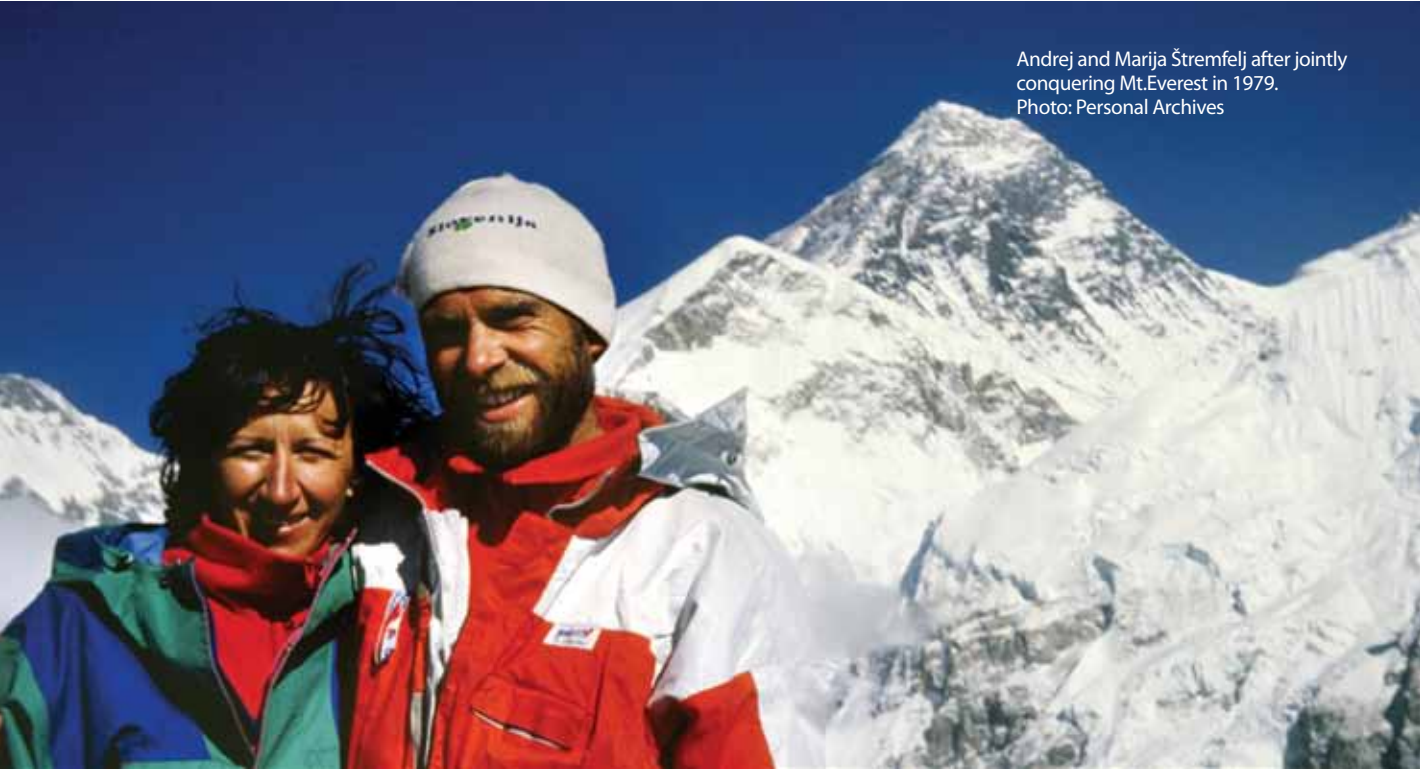
In addition to Štremfelj’s lifetime achievement Piolet d’Or award, the history of the prestigious award is strongly connected with Slovenian climbers, who have won seven other awards so far.

**The first Piolet d’Or was awarded in 1992 to Marko Prezelj and Andrej Štremfelj, who were the first to climb to the summit of Kanchenjunga (8,476 meters) via the South Pillar.**

In 1997 Piolet d’Or was bestowed upon climbers Tomaž Humar and Vanja Furlan for forging a new route on the northwest face of Ama Dablam (6,812 m) in Nepal. In 2007 Piolet d’Or was awarded for the second time to Marko Prezelj and to Boris Lorenčič for climbing a new route on Chomo Lhari (7,326 m); the Piolet d’Or 2007 Spectator’s Choice went to Pavle Kozjek for his solo new route up the Cho Oyu (8,201 m) and for publishing pictures of the killing of Tibetan refugees attempting to flee Tibet via the Nangpa La Pass. The joint winners of the Piolet d’Or 2012 were Luka Stražar and Nejc Marčič for their first ascent of the Dreamers of Golden Caves on K7 West (6858m) in the Charakusa Valley, Pakistan. In 2015 Piolet d’Or went to Aleš Česen, Luka Lindič and Marko Prezelj for their first ascent of

the North Face of Hagshu in the Indian Himalayas; the joint winners of a 2016 Piolet d’Or were Urban Novak and Marko Prezelj, together with American Hayden Kennedy and Frenchman Manu Pellissier, for their first ascent of Cerro Kishtwar (6,173m) in India.

In view of all these and numerous other achievements of Slovenian climbers, I feel it is appropriate to end this article with the words of the renowned American climber Steve House, who recently said: »There is no country that would influence mountaineering as strongly and as deeply as Slovenia ... Slovenian mountain climbers have introduced climbing methods that everyone else had only dreamt about.«



Andrej and Marija Štremfelj after jointly conquering Mt. Everest in 1979.  
Photo: Personal Archives



## DARKO ĐURIĆ, PARALYMPIC SWIMMER

# Sportsman, Champion and Above All an Inspiring Person

POLONA PREŠEREN



Darko Đurić  
Photo:Nebojša Tejić/STA

The Paralympic champion Darko Đurić is an extraordinary young man and athlete who leaves an impact on everyone he meets. He is Slovenia's most successful Paralympic swimmer, with a gold and a bronze medal at the recent World Para Swimming Allianz European Championship in Dublin.

These are not the only awards won by Darko Đurić in his sports career: a few years ago he became the world champion in swimming. Darko Đurić was born with a very rare genetic defect – he has practically no legs and only one arm. At the age of two he was sent to a foster family where he got two foster brothers and two sisters. The family encouraged him to live an independent life to the greatest extent possible. His strong will has always inspired everyone around him.

Today he is the most successful Slovenian Paralympic swimmer, even though he learned how to swim entirely by chance. When he was at school his assistant failed to catch him when he jumped into the water, and Darko simply started to swim. Who could have thought that this would become the start of a successful sports career? "Drawing a line, I could say that the story of my life has been full of challenges since I was born. And despite a relatively dismal beginning, everything continued well.

**I became part of a family which gave me unconditional support, I came to a village where I was accepted the way I was. I found myself a sport in which I could be successful", says Darko Đurić, who has also taken part in the Paralympics.**

Darko was deeply disappointed on his return from the European Championship in Dublin, despite having won the title of European champion at 50 metres and a bronze medal for 200 m freestyle. He had not achieved a similar success in his favourite discipline, 100 m freestyle. He even broke his crutch in anger during

the contest. When the championship was over, he declared that it was one of the most difficult competitions in his career.

Does he still think so now that the excitement has calmed down? "The Dublin contest was indeed very difficult for me. First, I put a great deal of effort into this contest season: I moved abroad where life is different, and I focused 100 percent on achieving this goal. Second, I arrived at the championship with good results during that season, which provided a starting point for the competition for medals in three disciplines. But expectation is one thing, and reality is another", explains Darko. "I woke up to reality at the first competition when I made a beginner's error: I competed with my rivals and not with myself. Finishing in fifth place and a bad start at the championship sent me a bit off the rails, so I had to vent my ill temper by breaking my crutch. Fortunately, I composed myself and won the 50 m freestyle the next day."

**Darko had great expectations before the championship, and trained hard and persistently. As a matter of fact, he worked very hard through the whole year, which is why his initial disappointment was so deep.**

So deep that he started doubting his future sports career. Now that everything is over, he has a clearer view of the situation. "I will persist as long as I enjoy it and feel that I can make progress. Otherwise, it is hard to be motivated to achieve a better ranking", he says now. He is cautious in his predictions. The Tokyo Paralympics certainly remain a dream, but he does not know



what might happen in the meantime. That said, his Paralympic success would be warmly welcomed by everyone in Slovenia.

**SPORTING BEGINNINGS**

Darko was very fond of sports even as a child. He looked up to his brother, Tomaž, who was constantly finding new sports activities. “As a younger brother, I always wanted to follow his steps: I was a goalkeeper at our local football field, played basketball, table tennis, etc. Then, I received an interesting invitation in 2005: I was invited to join the training of the national sitting volleyball team, with which I took part in the youth world championship in Kamnik in the same year. This is how I began my sports career.”

However, he lacked the desire to remain on the sitting volleyball team, and it soon became clear that Darko’s sporting spirit and motivation exceeded that of his fellow players. At practice for sitting volleyball one day it was suggested that he could try swimming. “And so I took part in the world para-swimming championship and achieved a good result in 50 m freestyle without any training. But I still wanted to continue my volleyball career, saying that the tiles covering the bottom of the pool should be counted by others. But still, I decided to practice swimming in 2007 and thus started my

second, much more successful, career”, recalls Darko.

Like anyone else, he also suffers from a lack of motivation sometimes. This occurs particularly when he trains hard and the competition season is long but the achievements fall short of his hopes. “This is an integral part of sports and, I believe, of a career in any other field, so that one needs to sleep everything over, analyse it and become newly aware of the goals that need to be achieved”, states Darko Đurić, firmly.

**Darko is not only a distinguished sportsman, as he is still a diligent student. He has nearly completed his business studies degree at the Catholic Institute, and lives a full life with many commitments in his activities.**

“It is not easy, but a lot can be achieved with some flexibility and good will on both sides”, he says, and adds that the university staff show understanding with regard to the time needed for his athletic pursuits.



Darko Đurić looks forward to a new great success.  
Photo:Nebojša Tejić/STA

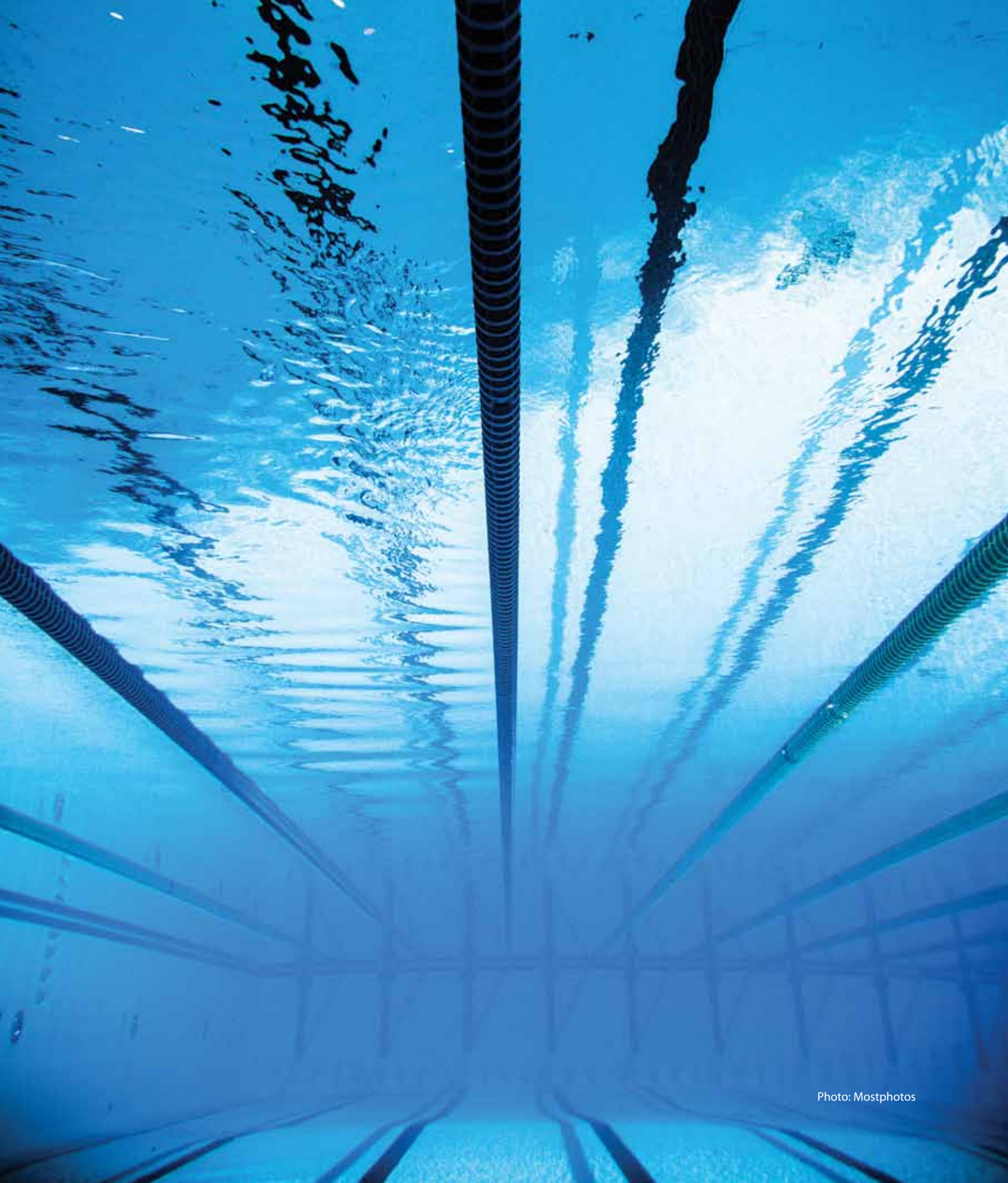


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