

# Sinfo

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## The Art as the Other Place of the Society

**This year's Prešeren Award winners:**

ACTRESS ŠTEFKA DROLČ AND PAINTER ZMAGO JERAJ



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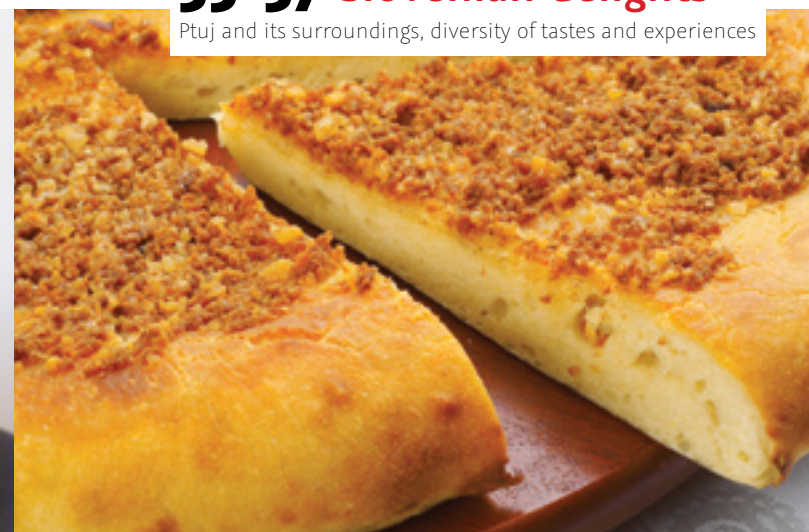


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Veronika Stabej

## Dear readers,

We can easily say that February is a special month in Slovenia, time of the year when we try to put even more specific focus on culture in the broadest sense of the word. On February 8 we are celebrating a cultural national day, in name dedicated to our great poet France Prešeren, when we present awards for lifetime achievements and outstanding achievements on the fields of arts and culture in the past year.

So in this issue the key word is culture. We are featuring two outstanding artists, recipients of this year's lifetime Prešeren awards, actress Štefka Drolc and painter Zmago Jeraj; presenting a different angle on the life of the poet France Prešeren. We are also celebrating 100th anniversary of outstanding painter Zoran Mušič, who has probably reached the biggest recognition outside Slovenia's borders.

In Focus Stojan Pelko is reflecting on the Art as the second end of society, two ambassadors of culture are presenting their views on everyday issues.

Prime Minister Borut Pahor in his first interview in Sinfo reflects on major issues and challenges facing Slovenia, with focus on international relations of our country.

In the presentation of the natural and more specifically also culinary beauties and delights we are presenting Ptuj and its surroundings with great variety of taste and experiences. Taste Slovenia! This might be a good opening for the presentation of our country not only on culinary field, but also with cultural delights next month in Berlin, where Slovenia will be prominently featured with a Gala evening. One of the great Slovenian artists, Zoran Predin will be there with his musicians.

Winter sports are indispensable part of our lives and we are immensely proud of the results of Tina Maze. Another well important international event is Vitranc World Cup that takes place at the end of February in beautiful ski resort Kranjska Gora.

### Sinfo – Slovenian information

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Mateja Malnar Štembal

## Prime Minister Borut Pahor in Great Britain and France

Overcoming the financial and economic crisis was also among the topics during the Prime Minister's visits to London and Paris in the first days of February. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the Slovenian Prime Minister agreed that the crisis was global and that it should also be resolved in such a manner, but that it has not affected economic relations between the countries and, with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, they estimated that the entire EU, and within it the Eurogroup, should resolve the crisis together and should in particular keep in mind their responsibility to their citizens.

In Paris, the Slovenian Prime Minister also visited the headquarters of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and met the General Secretary, Angel Gurría. They mainly discussed Slovenian inclusion in this Organisation and agreed that Slovenia could become a member of this elite club already in 2010.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Slovenian PM estimated that the entire EU, and within it the Eurogroup, should resolve the crisis together.



photo: Kristina Kosec /Bobo/



photo: Kristina Kosec /Bobo/

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the Slovenian Prime Minister agreed that the crisis was global.

## Croatia still on the agenda

The European Commission has become more actively involved in efforts to solve the border issue between Slovenia and Croatia by making a proposal on forming a special Council mediation group. In the middle of the month, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Samuel Žbogar, among other things indicated that Slovenia would withdraw its objections if Zagreb accepted mediation, but Zagreb is not keen on that, and is persisting in the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

In the previous month, both countries continued to seek support among political partners in dialogue in Europe, and the announced meeting of Prime Ministers Pahor and Sanader should have taken place - the nature of which is supposed to be more informative - and a solution to the dispute among the countries is not to be expected yet.

Senior representatives of both countries agreed at least on one fact - that the problems are being resolved by so-called 'silent diplomacy'.

Passions were high again over the accession of Croatia to NATO - after the discussion had been put off, at the

Urgent session of parliament, aimed at adopting a special resolution on Croatia and averting a referendum on its NATO accession.

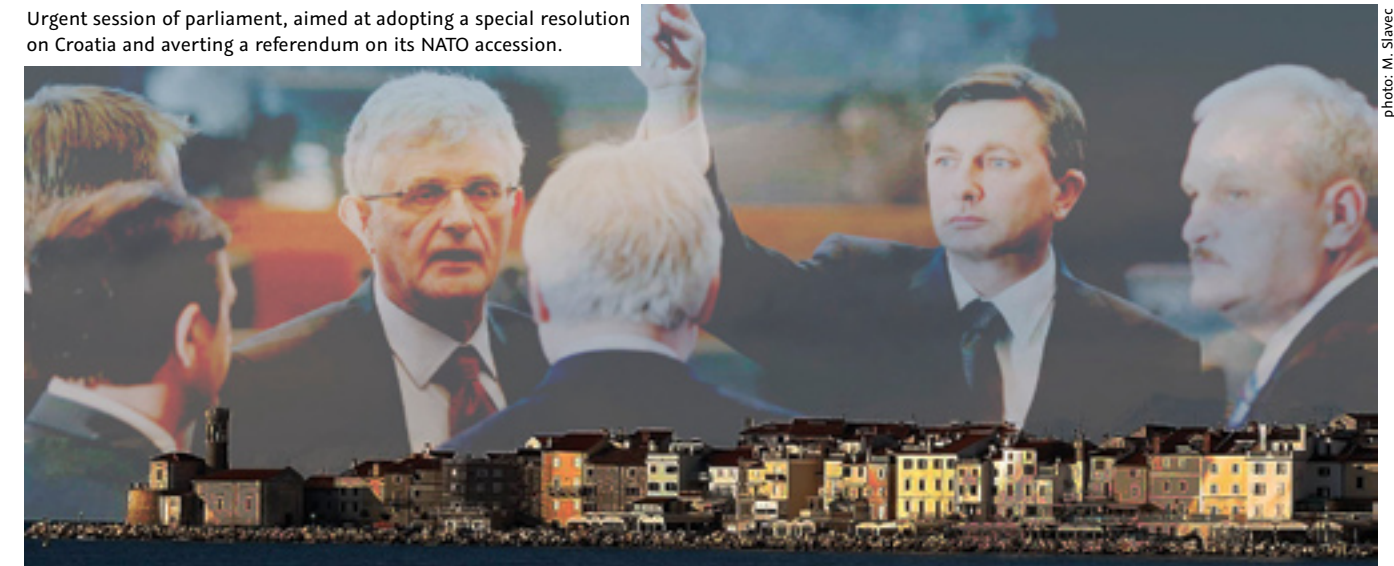


photo: M. Slavec

## A second package of measures

After the Slovenian Government adopted the first package of measures to mitigate the consequences of the financial and economic crisis in November and December 2008, a second followed in mid-February which is even more extensive. While the first package focused primarily on increasing liquidity in the bank system, reducing the use of public finance, and preserving jobs by providing additional incentives to the economy, the second is mainly development-oriented, but directs a considerable proportion of the resources into promoting the credit activity of banks and consequently improving the liquidity of enterprises, as the credit activity of banks is still low due to continued uncertainty in European markets.

The second package of measures to mitigate the financial and economic crisis was prepared on the basis of comparative experience with programmes to counter the crisis in other EU Member States, in particular in Slovenia's biggest foreign trade partners. The measures follow the recommendations of the European Commission to restore the economy, and relate to the financing and liquidity of enterprises, the labour market, life-long learning and social protection, infrastructure, energy, the environment - for sustainable development and improved use of cohesion resources.

A component of the second package contains amendments to the budget for 2009 and cost-cutting by the Government by means of reducing expenditure on salaries, organisational and staff measures, measures for reducing the costs of material and technical conditions for state and public administration and savings measures proposed to other players.



Stojan Pelko

## The Art as the Other Place of the Society

In one of her first public appearances, the new American Secretary of State, the former first lady of the White House and the Senator for New York, Hillary Clinton, as part of the “tough-minded, intelligent diplomacy” has also included cultural diplomacy. Today, culture is actually so global and so massive that one could easily take it for the “weapon of mass destruction”. Therefore, from the perspective of a language, a culture and a nation of a few million, it is worth asking with which tactics one can defend oneself against the potential danger - might precisely the development of smart power have the potential for nations of small editions? In other words: can we fight the majors of populist culture by betting on minor, borderline, daring and different popular culture?

The bet on top daring art and dangerous independent culture is firstly being fought in the interpretation of the notion of culture itself. At a time when culture is far from just being verbal, artistic or musical, and is being at least as audio-visual as multimedia, of course debates on cultural education, media literacy and, last but not least, cultural politics are being conducted in a far more global and mass manner. Recently, when we were on the ground floor of the Ministry of Culture, opening a space for a debate on such multi-dimensional modern cultural politics, we put our bets on its dialogic structure and its openness, but at the same time on the necessary self-limitation

of the politics. The providing of cultural forms is not involved, and the bureaucratic approval of the forms even less – it is all about diffusing the possibilities of creating, and access to top creations.

In the present reactions to this year’s celebration of Prešeren’s Day, we could very concretely feel that this debate is far from being abstract and distant; instead, it is being fought again here and now, with each event and its interpretation. Slovenia loves to be proud that has in site, and instead of ordinary soldiers, set up a statue of a poet, and that with a state ceremony honours top artistic creators – but does it dare to reach over and to break through the general formats also in celebrating the person in whose honour the celebration is held? Therefore, sometimes one might say more on the current perception of culture with a concrete example than with extensive strategies and abstract paragraphs. Along with all the risk that a competent clerk is at all undertaking the discussion on the concrete event, and even more, that in this discussion he takes very foremost and personal position, I allow myself a somewhat different interpretation of the celebration, as I experienced it that Saturday evening, under the ceiling of Gallus Hall. As I was staring at it with admiration, following the directional tempo of Diego de Brea, I swore that the very same evening, in the lobby of Cankarjev dom, I would oppose anyone who might try to reduce this polished ceremony in the detested manner to “cake throwing”. Luckily, I did not meet many critics that evening, but instead the critiques poured out in the letters of the readers. I write to the writers so that readers can read, and we might awaken even some seers. Every time art undertakes to say

Prešeren Fund Awards have been awarded to soprano singer Sabina Cvilak Damjanovič, actor Marko Mandič, sculptor Tobias Putrih (not on the picture), writer Goran Vojnovič, director Miran Zupanič and composer Nenad Firšt.



Actors Jernej Šugman and Janez Škof



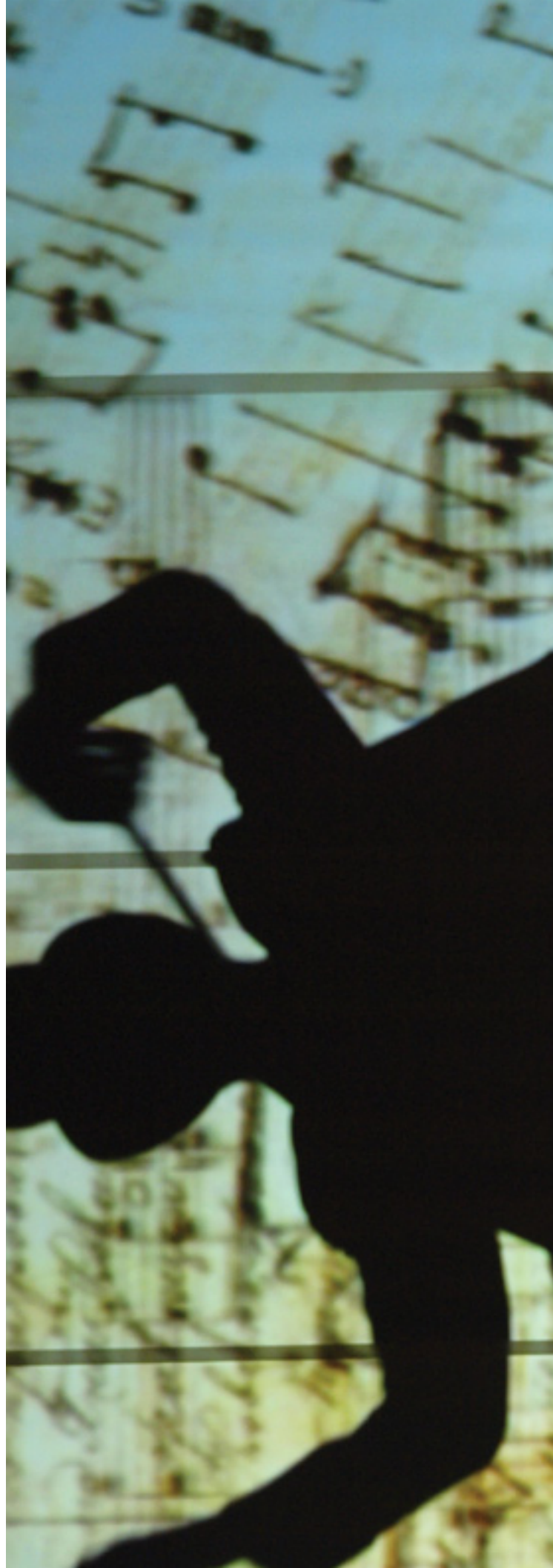


## IN FOCUS

something about its time, it speaks also about itself – and every time, at that period, words, sounds, images and thoughts intervene in a new way. In the effort of the two top theatre actors who, with the best intentions, intended to create something new - namely, the cake-champagne arrangement for people in whose honour a celebration is held - they managed, despite their good will, to fail, even twice - we can perceive that undoubtedly human impulse which is capable of making something new from the existing: by cutting, arranging, moving and relocating, since the new is born from the old. Of course, it does not succeed immediately; even more, the common efforts encounter the mutual teases, and misunderstandings, but the desire to exceed remains. The French philosopher Alain Badiou writes that a fundamental characteristic of the twentieth century is a passion for the real, which oscillates between destruction and reduction. How does one think about both poles of this couple? Destruction is always merely destruction, but on the other side of the equation: first, creation appears; second, a new beginning; and third, formalization. “Art provides the first guiding thread for our attempt to think destruction/subtraction couple” (page 76).

Therefore, Badiou – like another Frenchman, Foucault – believes that art is that other place, a different spot, where social phases and changes are not just shown more clearly, but are sometimes even created. Therefore, art enlightens us on how to think what we are not or even how to behave towards this – but always in terms of destruction and formalization, demolition and creation. That is why art takes itself with such a level of fatalism, and that is why the art is often truly fateful for entire nations, in good and in bad. That is how I understood the basic dualism of the celebration of Prešeren's Day: without the painful destruction (cakes, champagne, clothes, tables ...) there would be no sublime creations (singing, ballet, poetry...). Since destruction can never solve the conflict between itself and creation – only creation, the sublime forming of something new, can show us retroactively that the destruction was a necessary phase in the birth of the new. “The conflict between formalization and destruction must be levelled with the formalization.” Diego de Brea is a formalist, even a very strict formalist. I could even say that he has learned his method more from film canvases than from the stage. Film is the sublime art of the 20th century which taught us that reality needs to be recorded, cut, newly tied together and projected, and then we might come closer to the structure of dreams and logic of thoughts – therefore, precisely to that which makes us most independent, most human.

What Diego de Brea has learned from the film was not only beautifully shown in the film portraits of the prize-winners (who, through layering images, letters, photos, notes, voices, music, and movable pictures, reach the audio-visual richness of Peter Greenaway's films), but was also shown in the burlesque features of the both performers (did anyone ever dare to reproach Chaplin, the most subtle ally of the humiliated and the offended, for throwing cakes in a time of crisis, playing with rolls, or making fun of a cheese sandwich with soap?) in the framed (set) canvas (project), cut to sequences, in the middle of the stage, in the disclosing of the lights, and the dark wall behind the canvas, in the moment of giving the most moving



award. Without the cut, there is no editorial totality, without the subtle destruction and sublime creation. And only from the weight force of dirty clothes, stained knives, and wet faces, the matter of ballet steps and theatre costumes could be wrenched on the reflected crystal water surface, and has reached for a spiritual place beyond physics, following the example of the butterfly's shiver of the wings. True art teaches us that, without physics, there is no metaphysics, and that without ethics, there is no poetics. Someone who can not recognize Velazquez in Bacon's popes, is readily forgiven. But someone who can not see a dirty palette, black thumb, worn-out frock, and a layer of dust in glittering colour images has no clue about art. The celebration of Prešeren's Day made us see and know from what art is really born: from the recognition that it can not go on, either together or singly, until there is a breakthrough; from pain, because it more often fails than succeeds; that even the artist often does not know why he or she succeeded – and is painfully striving to repeat the unrepeatably practise. That Saturday evening, all of this, little by little, was on the stage. Those who came close enough to the art – and that evening, there were many such people on stage, behind the stage and unusually plenty in the hall – dare sometimes, only rarely, to leave it all to coincidence: to place the elements and wait for it to happen, to come. Just like in the film *Field of Dreams*: “If you build it, he will come.” But this risky game is for the observers, even very close ones, awfully hard to bear, and is sometimes literally unbearable: producers go crazy, organizers call insurance companies, the heads of the performers turn grey... Only the artist trusts that it would happen and it would come, because deep inside, he or she is firmly convinced that has done everything within his or hers power. That is why the artist waits very peacefully, although there are only few minutes left to the rise of the curtain, to the first note or the first light. And then there is light, walking on water, and rage and noise in the hall.

Therefore, can contemporary Slovenian culture learn something from its own ritual of celebrating people in whose honour the celebration is held? That Saturday evening, art was not revealed

to us in its pressed dinner jacket or fine façade, but with the stage, and behind the stage, with wrong paths and human sweat, with cutting and slicing – and perhaps it said more about itself than all the beautiful pictures of this world. Next to the scene, there is always something obscene. ‘A Toast’ is a toast; on the harp and on the accordion, but only when they utter the sound together do we become aware of all the things that unite them. Something like this goes for the destruction and creation on the stage of this celebration of Prešeren's Day: we became aware of everything that unites and joins them. And because we are on the stage of art, the actor can berate the president, and the president can bow to the actress. A topsy-turvy world? Perhaps not at all – perhaps it is precisely because of this that we need this other place inexorably, where we can still turn around the world to infinity. In *The Century*, Badiou writes of the power to “cross the lines” when infinity becomes a quality of the ultimate. This is no longer the (romantic) nineteenth century of the artist as sublime mediator between the Ideal and the sensual, but the (post-romantic) twentieth century of materialistic formalization, when the ultimate is a result of the scenery of coincidence, eventful insecurity. When something happens in a scene, takes place in a scene, most willingly when it happens between two scenes, when it happens in the cut between two scenes. This time of eventful insecurity is a time on the brink of en-lightening of a work and dis-owning an artist. “Ideally viewed, the artistic work of the twentieth century lies merely in the visibility of its action.” We are not then making a fetish out of the work of art, but the ideal work of art of the twentieth century is actually that we see the event, that we see its making and doing.

From the director who has successfully transferred the Bartholomew's Eve of Queen Margot and the crystal night of *Twilight of the Gods* from the film canvas to the stage, one can truly not expect that he will shut his eyes to the fears of our homely nights. Haughty Spring Celebration, this Ver Sacrum, is therefore for all of us a unique secular, pagan baptism: where there is water and faith, there is also crying and moaning; where there are cakes and doubts, there are also cries and shouts.

High-profile ceremony in the Cankarjev dom arts centre





Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Maja Slavec

## THIS YEAR'S PREŠEREN AWARD WINNERS: ACTRESS ŠTEFKA DROLC AND PAINTER ZMAGO JERAJ

ON 7 OF FEBRUARY, THE EVE OF THE SLOVENIAN CULTURAL HOLIDAY, THE GRAND PREŠEREN AWARDS FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT WERE PRESENTED TO ACTRESS ŠTEFKA DROLC AND PAINTER ZMAGO JERAJ.

### The actress Štefka Drolc personifies peace, beauty and composure

Everyone speaks of Štefka Drolc in superlatives, and we are no exception, as at 85 years of age, she is still performing on stage. Her last première was on October 8 of last year in Cankarjev dom Cultural Centre, in a theatre performance entitled 'Ella'. The concept of retiring doesn't really exist in her world. "I never stopped performing, even after I retired. Acting gives me the strength to work under any conditions. For me, life and theatre are but one great stage. You are always performing and acting, creating roles with your heart and your devotion, with knowledge and maturity. My profession requires endurance. There are days when I feel completely useless, but when I act, I forget about tiredness. If I had to decide and name my favourite role, that would be a hard choice. On film, I especially felt close to the character Francka in the movie 'Na klanecu' ('On the Hill'). Then the character of Cankar's mother – it felt as if I lived with this character, as if this was really me, as if the character amalgamated with me and she spoke exactly as I would. I also loved the role of the mother in the movie 'Blossoms in Autumn', as well as the role of Tildica in the movie 'Na svoji zemlji' ('On Our Land')." This unity between the actress and the character is felt in every interpretation, theatre or film role, or reciting Prešeren's 'Unmarried Mother', where it seems that the verses become a part of her.

#### What does acting mean to her?

"When acting, one is always descending upon an unknown land and discovering surprising things within oneself. One is always surprising oneself. It's nice when a director connects with you, when he is convinced that you are the right person for the role. It feels good when a director allows you to express yourself. On the contrary, it can be difficult if he interferes with your interpretation too much."

Štefka Drolc holds a place among the greatest Slovenian actors of the 20th century, and no doubt also at the beginning of the new. Her name will forever be written among the greatest. She is the first lady of the Slovenian theatre. She always invests a great deal of reason in her performance and by no means any less of her heart. Although she was always a modern actress, there was something Goethe-like in her performances. She left a mark with her magnificent creations, with shades of character so distinctive of her performance and with her ability to develop a deep connection with co-actors and directors.

The living legend of Slovenian theatre received a standing ovation when receiving the award. Ms. Drolc expressed gratitude to all the co-workers who participated in her development. "I am an actress, with all my being," she said. "We always speak about the theatre, but today I wish to speak about those who have nothing. We need to make an effort so that we could all feel good. And another thing – we will not last without culture. This is especially important for us, who are squeezed among bigger nations. We, as a nation, have to preserve every path of culture, everything that makes us who we are. What seems important to me right now is to respect one another, to listen and to hear, to try to understand one another. It happens too often that we overlook one another, and this happens especially to those who sit comfortably in their armchairs and arbitrarily judge others."

#### Is the Prešeren Award the pinnacle of an actor's career?

"I don't regard it in that sense. I know it is the greatest award an artist can receive here. It means a lot to me that so many people are pleased and believe the award went to the right person. I could cry with joy that I was the one to receive it, I regard it with great tenderness and if people agree, it only makes me happy. I consider it a great responsibility to place an award in the right hands. I'm happy if they believe they awarded the right person. It was deeply moving to stand on the stage and see the whole auditorium stand up and applaud. It made my knees weak."

#### Where does this gracefulness come from?

"I wish the world was more graceful. It can caress you so sweetly. But there are times when I'm not so graceful, and I simply want

Štefka Drolc was born on December 22 1923 in the town of Ponikva. Before the Second World War she spent some time performing as an amateur actress. From 1945 to 1947 she was a member of the Drama theatre in Maribor, she spent the 1947/48 season with 'Triglav Film' in Ljubljana, joined the Permanent Slovenian Theatre in Trieste in 1948 and stayed with them until 1959. The following year, she joined the SNG Drama theatre in Ljubljana.

She often cooperated with 'Oder 57' (Stage 57) and other experimental theatres. In 1982 she began teaching at the Academy in Ljubljana.

She began her career by playing cheerful and positive characters, but by the time she joined the theatres in Trieste and then in Ljubljana, her roles became deeper and more expressive, ranging from the classical and contemporary repertoire to comedy and grotesque.

These were the roles that showed the essential traits of her expression: passionate inner incandescence, while maintaining a strict and restrained expression on the outside; the intuitive ability to merge herself with the role and express herself in a wealth of details; the ability to express opposing mental states without losing the coherence of the role.

Ms. Drolc received numerous awards for her performances: the Prešeren Award in 1964, the Sever Award in 1977, the Borštnik Award in 1980, 1982, 1997, the Borštnik Ring Award in 1983, the Silver Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia in 1996 and now the grandest of them all – the Prešeren Award for lifetime achievement.

Although her acting career is closely connected with the beginnings of Slovenian film – she appeared in the film 'On Our Land' – she didn't appear in films very often. She was also memorable in 'Blossoms in Autumn', 'On the Hill', 'Story of Good People' and 'My Dear Iza'.

As a teacher at the Ljubljana Academy, she taught drama classes and speech to numerous generations of students, offering them her vast knowledge and leading them through the mysteries of acting.





to cry in disappointment with myself, but I just want to be a good person. I have moments when I react imprudently and I feel sorry after that. Where does the gracefulness come from? I had a wonderful mother, she never raised her voice to us kids, she was so quiet and kind, like a warm flickering light, always there when we needed her.”

Like a film camera, which she says is the quietest silence and the most trustful ear.

This year's celebration in Cankarjev dom Cultural Centre received some bad reviews for being too burlesque. “When I saw these wonderful actors (Jernej Šugman and Janez Škof) I started laughing. Thanks to them I completely relaxed before I went on stage and received the award. Receiving such an award makes one happy and confused, but it also weighs one down with great responsibility. During their perfect performance all those

mountains of responsibility that I felt lifted and I was able to receive the award relaxed and confident. And it was only because of them. It was something special, how relaxed I felt. With all my inner light I was able to say what I wanted and the audience accepted it – I received full connection, full sincerity. This is exactly what is missing so much in our society. Exactly what we need. Sadly, we can not yet comprehend how important it is to listen and to hear each other. The ultimate purpose of culture is to reach the people, so that they hang paintings on their walls, place statues in their gardens. Culture is a link between people - the awareness of common values connects us.”

**Have you fulfilled all your expectations of yourself?**

“I did all I could. I probably didn't do everything the best way possible – but that was the best I could do.”

Yes, Štefka Drolc really is one of the great artists of our time.

## Zmago Jeraj: I tried to drive each stage of my artistic marathon as fully as possible

Academy-trained painter Zmago Jeraj is a respected personality in the Slovenian visual arts of the second half of the 20th century, and of the present His painting, drawing, graphics, photography, illustration, book design, set design, graphic design and film put him among the Slovenian creative elite. “As a versatile visual artist, I tried to drive each stage of my marathon as fully as possible. For the moment, I most enjoy classical painting, but to obey the tyranny of modern media, I do “photo-shopping”. I considered both kinds as individual declarative types and, of course, as useful tools in making technically more demanding and contextually more complicated, usually figuratively directed painting ideas.”

He does not name his works, although each of them he feels has a rich private iconography and mythology. “The motive, which usually strikes me as an individual image, I translate personally and forward it without literary junk. However, such ‘paganism’ is inappropriate for recording works.”

He has received several awards for his work - in the last year alone, the Glazer Award of Maribor City and the ZDSL

Award, and in 1985, the Prešeren Fund Award for artistic achievements in drawing and gouache. What do the awards and the Prešeren Award in particular mean to him?

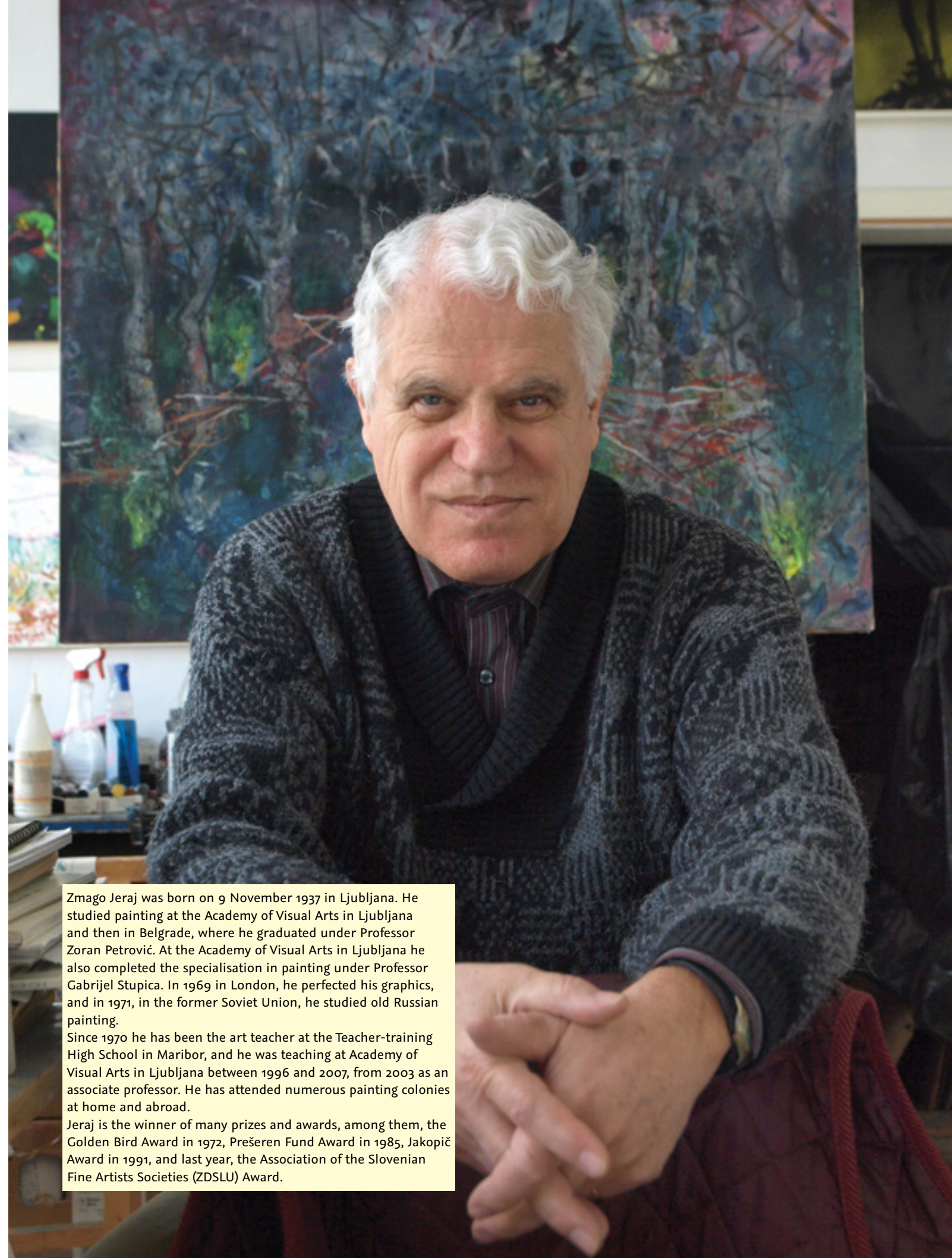
“Each acknowledgement is usually a nice personal fact; however, it is true that some awards constitute a part of a social agreement with which the environment wants to prove its creative condition. I can only express satisfaction if the opinion prevails that my efforts contributed a little to this general good condition of society.”

Jeraj's work is open to all initiatives, flashes and creative impulses; it is cosmopolitan and polyglot. Nevertheless, it is difficult to comprehend, and even more difficult to explain, since he refuses to help the spectator. He tells us stories of our everyday life, which are so very usual we overlook them. When he offers them through the optics of his view, threaded as episodes and connected in an original subjective manner, we are enchanted and surprised, because all is known and yet all is different. Human personality cleavages, loneliness, alienation and getting lost in the urban spaces of industrial civilisation are topics that have always interested him

How does he see himself in his creative pathway?

“The larger the opus gets, the more discontinuity passes to continuity. Each preoccupation truly attracted me, but when I exhausted it, I was looking for a way forward. And many things attracted me.”

He studied all the main phenomena and movements of post-war painting, from abstraction to minimalism and conceptualism, to pop art and modern figurative painting and modern images, but he is probably most noted for the reflections to which he committed himself in the eighties.



Zmago Jeraj was born on 9 November 1937 in Ljubljana. He studied painting at the Academy of Visual Arts in Ljubljana and then in Belgrade, where he graduated under Professor Zoran Petrović. At the Academy of Visual Arts in Ljubljana he also completed the specialisation in painting under Professor Gabrijel Stupica. In 1969 in London, he perfected his graphics, and in 1971, in the former Soviet Union, he studied old Russian painting. Since 1970 he has been the art teacher at the Teacher-training High School in Maribor, and he was teaching at Academy of Visual Arts in Ljubljana between 1996 and 2007, from 2003 as an associate professor. He has attended numerous painting colonies at home and abroad. Jeraj is the winner of many prizes and awards, among them, the Golden Bird Award in 1972, Prešeren Fund Award in 1985, Jakopič Award in 1991, and last year, the Association of the Slovenian Fine Artists Societies (ZDSL) Award.



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Barbara Jakše Jeršič

## Prime Minister Borut Pahor: Slovenia is not going to change its position without a change in circumstances

Currently, the most important issue on the Government's agenda is the credit crunch. "So far, matters stand well; we are, however, aware that we are a small and open economy, greatly dependent on global economic mainstream," stresses the Prime Minister Borut Pahor. In his own assessment of the results of the measures taken, Pahor estimates that Slovenia has been executing its task well, but the problem is the fact that economic growth in Germany, Austria, Italy and France, the most important countries for Slovenian exports, is not very good. "We can do something, but we cannot resolve the crisis by ourselves. No one can," said the Prime Minister.

### Prime Minister, is there a chance that the International Court of Justice at The Hague would resolve border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia?

The condition for Slovenia to consider this option is for the Croatian side to comply with the principle of equity. The Slovenian-Croatian Commission of international experts for resolving border issues, which has recently concluded its work, has not achieved this compromise. The Mixed Commission recognised that the "cut-off date" was 25 June 1991. As previously, Slovenia will continue to underline the fact that all the actions of Croatia in trying to predetermine the border are legally void after this date and cannot be a subject in determining the border.

If the circumstances, which dictated that Slovenia withheld consent for the continuation of Croatia's accession negotiations with the EU, remain unchanged, Slovenia will not change its decision at the upcoming accession conference with Croatia at the end of

March. Slovenia absolutely welcomes the European Commission initiative on mediation as a solution to the dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. This is the best and probably the only solution in this moment. I want the content of the European initiative to be acceptable to both parties, but I cannot talk about its results at the moment. The solution will certainly be a compromise. Even a Nobel Prize winner could not find a magic solution.

Nonetheless, there is another option for a solution, which Slovenia has never given up, which is a bilateral settlement, if Zagreb would agree.

### For Slovenia, probably the key condition to accept a compromise solution is to get free access to the open sea.

Absolutely. Ljubljana does not want to cause problems in the EU; however, I am willing to take this risk if I protect national interests thereby. There is no point in trying to sweep the problems under the carpet now, since at the end, the accession of Croatia to the EU will have to be confirmed by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly.

Otherwise, within the EU, Slovenia does not need support from other Member States with respect to the dispute with Croatia; it only needs their understanding. The level of understanding of the problem or knowledge of why this issue is so important for Slovenia has increased a lot since last December within the Member States.

### What do you expect from the meeting with Prime Minister Sanader?

A solution is not to be expected from this meeting. However, the meeting can help to create an atmosphere to achieve a

solution. In relation to the initiative given by the European Commission to solve the dispute, diplomatic conversations are currently underway. You know, there are moments when politics should be quiet and let diplomacy work.

Considering the Croatian persistence in solving the dispute at the International Court of Justice, Slovenia has never formally committed to it - former Prime Ministers Janez Janša and Ivo Sanader at Bled only concluded an informal agreement on this option, if the Mixed Commission had agreed on the details. Nonetheless, the Commission failed to reach an agreement.

I would like to put special emphasis on the fact that a solution to the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia before the latter becomes a member of the EU would be an important message for other Western Balkan countries to solve their disputes prior to joining the EU.

### Croatia has also border disputes with Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, therefore an agreement with Slovenia would be a 'good message'.

Absolutely. Slovenia strongly supports the accession first of Croatia to the EU, and then of the other countries in the region. Prior to accession to the EU, Slovenia was also warned to resolve the border dispute with Croatia. The result of these warning was the Drnovšek-Račan Agreement, approved by the Slovenian Government and Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, while in Croatia, it was not approved even by the Government.

### On 9 February, the National Assembly ratified Protocols on the Accession of Albania and Croatia to NATO by a conclusive majority. What is your comment on that?







In this case, Slovenian politics did its job properly and came out 'a winner'. It acted thoughtfully, decisively, understood the hierarchy of goals, set authenticity as the first priority and thus confirmed its determination. We can be reasonably satisfied. I would specifically underline the significance of ratifying both protocols by a great majority in the National Assembly; all 78 present members of the Parliament voted for the accession of Albania to NATO, while 75 MPs voted for the accession of Croatia, and 11 were against it. It should be recalled that the first hundred days of this Government have not yet passed, which means that the Government took a great risk when submitting a proposal to the National Assembly, which requires a two-third majority. This is a time when the post-electoral passions are still high and a two-thirds majority is difficult to achieve. Slovenian politics succeeded, not without problems, but with wisdom and patience.

**In addition to the Croatian issue, Slovenia also faces the economic crisis. How?**

Let me first say that no country can solve the crisis alone. Slovenia is leading the fight against the crisis well; however, the problem lies in negative economic growth in the most important Slovenian export markets. Currently, the most important issue on the Government's agenda is the credit crunch. So far, matters stand well, but we are aware that we are a small and open economy, strongly dependent on the global economic mainstream. In my own assessment of the results of the adopted measures, I estimate that Slovenia is executing its task well, but the problem is the fact that economic growth in Germany, Austria, Italy and France, the most important countries for Slovenian exports, is not very good. We can do something, but we cannot resolve the crisis by ourselves. No one can. Therefore, Slovenia supports the initiative for the earliest possible meeting and discussion on further actions at the European level. It is worth recalling that an informal EU meeting will be held on 1 March in Brussels, dedicated to financial and economic crisis. The EU should examine the efficiency of the actions to mitigate the financial and economic crisis and further

steps. Of course, we cannot just wait and watch what is going on. We should act at the European level, whereby Slovenia wants to incorporate the best initiatives.

**The government adopted on 19 February the second set of stimulus measures. What are they focused on?**

Mainly around kick-starting lending and boosting investment. The credit crunch will not calm down by itself and if it does not calm down at all, companies will start grasping for air. A new guarantee scheme, worth EUR 1bn, will be put in place covering loans to businesses. Participation by banks will be required and the guarantees will be capped according to the company's assets and revenues. In case the situation deteriorates further, the State will subsidise individual loans to companies. Up to EUR 500m will be available for this measure.

Another measure, which has already been confirmed by the Finance and Monetary Policy Committee, involves increasing by EUR 160m to EUR 300m the share capital of the state-owned development bank SID.

The amendments to the relevant law, to be adopted in March, will allow the bank to improve lending to exporters and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The second part of the measures will increase spending in certain areas. It includes EUR 40m for the labour market, lifelong learning and social security. The money would be used for the "social economy", vouchers for retraining and helping graduates find jobs. EUR 20m will be earmarked for weatherproofing public buildings, and EUR 15m on broadband for public institutions.

Most of the measures require budget funds. The Government is expected to adopt a supplementary budget for 2009 next week, but spending will have to be trimmed as the current figures would put the deficit at 3% of GDP.

The government will thus reduce material costs and scale back some state investment, which would bring the deficit to 3% of GDP. If it turns out that the problems are bigger, we will slow down some investments or push them back to 2010.

**How are you going to solve the liquidity problem?**

So far, Slovenia is taking the right action to solve liquidity problems at the national level. This is a problem faced by the entire developed world, but for the moment, I would not say liquidity is the biggest problem. It is absolutely not a problem to be underestimated; nonetheless, concerning the adopted measures, it is not a problem that would occupy the Government a lot. Currently, I underline the loss of jobs as one of the most important issues; therefore, the Slovenian Government focused its first package of actions on preventing job losses. At first, this decision was taken with a certain doubt by the business community and the public, but at the end of the day we can see that everyone in Europe is seeking a solution to preserve jobs.

**There is a great risk of protectionism in fighting against the crisis. How do you comment?**

That is not a good and appropriate solution to the problem. While protectionism may help an individual country, it has a negative impact on the rest of the world.

**In developmental breakthroughs, the government pins great hopes on science.**

The Government has firmly decided to pin great hopes on the role and significance of science for developmental breakthroughs, particularly during the financial crisis. The draft supplementary budget envisages almost 12 per cent more resources for research and development. We are aware of the great role of science. This is not just a word, this is also a decision related to increasing funds. There are 58 million euros worth of resources for science and technology to fight against crisis, of which 35 million are for tenders for technological incentives in commercial companies. The remaining part is partly used directly for science via the Slovenian Research Agency and partly for B balance for credits granted via the SID bank. By increasing resources, the government is trying to ensure that Slovenia does not lag behind other countries due to undernourished science, but it will go hand in hand with them, or maybe even ahead of them.



Vesna Bertoncelej Popit, DELO, photo: STA

In the past month, the European Union has twice praised us, twice scolded us and once offered assistance. First, the European Commission established that Slovenians, among all EU Member States, are most content with their life. But it seems that this research was done a while ago, because in the current unstable conditions such evaluations are probably considerably less favourable. It also assessed that in 2009 Slovenia will be one of few EU Member States with positive economic growth. As per the latest Commission estimates, in 2010 most EU Member States should have positive economic growth, and Slovenian growth with 2.8 percent would be among the highest.

The two EU assessments are therefore considered as praise. On the other hand, we have heard criticisms from the EU, and especially from the European Parliament, because of our blocking the pre-accession negotiations of Croatia, caused by the disputable border maps. The European Union would like Croatia and Slovenia to solve the disputable border issues prior to Croatia joining the EU. As was emphasized some time ago by Peter Mandelson, former European Commissioner for Trade, and now a member of the British government,

the European Union by its very expansion with new members has ensured economic growth so far. So they would not, of course, approve if any country hindered these plans. But as our neighbour also has difficulties with crime and corruption, and because of the required restructuring of its shipbuilding industry, and since there are a few other countries, which are threatening to block negotiations as well, in the EU some people still doubt whether it will be possible to conclude the accession negotiations with Croatia by the end of the year.

Last month, Angel Gurría, OECD General Secretary, assessed that negotiations regarding Slovenian membership, which started in 2007, are running very smoothly, and that Slovenia, which waited eleven years to start accession negotiations, would be accepted at the beginning of next year.

**IN SLOVENIA, THE GOVERNMENT HAS PREPARED THE SECOND PACKAGE OF MEASURES WHICH SHOULD, AS THE MINISTER OF FINANCE FRANCE KRIŽANIČ STATED, FINANCIAL MINISTER, CURE THE "FINANCIAL CRUNCH", BECAUSE THE BANKS ARE ALLEGEDLY SITTING ON MONEY AND NOT LENDING IT TO COMPANIES.**

France Križanič, Minister of Finance



Peter Mandelson, former European Commissioner for Trade, and now a member of the British government

A lot of attention last month was also given to the salaries and bonuses of some managers, as well as consultants. A lot of indignation was aroused especially by the one million euro bonus of the manager of Nova Ljubljanska banka, Marjan Kramar, who was replaced by the former manager of Ljubljana Stock Exchange, Draško Veselinovič. The government has been appealing for moderation regarding state company managers' salaries, but managers are not in favour of this solution. On the one hand, they say that then they will have salaries like those who are paid on the basis of collective agreements; and on the other hand, in a situation when workers' salaries have been reduced and employees dismissed, managers would still have the so-called European salaries. Among others, Members of Parliament have decreased their salaries.

Despite that some people warn of excessive populist campaigns, which could lead to a situation where it would be difficult to find top managers, who are not so numerous in the small Slovenian environment anyway.



The chairman of Russian gas giant Gazprom, Alexei Miller, during his visit to Slovenia.

**THE GOVERNMENT ALSO EXAMINED PUBLIC SECTOR PAY IN MORE DETAIL, WHICH HAS NOT, AS THEY SAY, INCREASED FOR SIX YEARS, AND NOW THEY WOULD SLIGHTLY REDUCE THEM, AND ALSO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, IN ORDER TO REDUCE PUBLIC SPENDING. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO PREPARED A SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET, ACCORDING TO WHICH, REVENUE IN 2009 WOULD AMOUNT TO 8.8 BILLION EUROS, AND EXPENDITURE TO 9.9 BILLION EUROS. THE BUDGET DEFICIT WOULD AMOUNT TO 2.7 PERCENT OF GDP.**

Although we perhaps have already forgotten, it is worth mentioning that in the past month Russian natural gas came back. The presidents of Russian and Ukrainian government, Putin and Timošenko, finally agreed that from next year on Ukraine would pay the same price

for gas as the other European countries. The head of Gazprom was also in Slovenia, as there were believed to have been negotiations on the so-called southern pipeline going through Slovenia. But even if negotiations with all the countries involved were completed soon, it would take several years for the pipeline to be completed, and gas transported through - bypassing Ukraine. So the gas crisis could be repeated next year.

During the Russian gas eclipse, Geoplin as the main Slovenian gas distributor was emptying its warehouses in Croatia and Austria, using up gas and ensuring additional sources, which of course also created a lot of costs. While Geoplin is calculating the additional costs, it is already clear that the damage will not be paid for by Russia and Ukraine, but Slovenian consumers of natural gas, which will add more salt to the wounds in these times of crisis.

And lastly, some statistics. Slovenia ended the past year with an average of 5.7 per cent inflation – the percentage was the same last December, while January saw 0.4 percent deflation. Average monthly net earnings amounted to 982 euros last November, and average gross salary to 1550 euros. According to provisional data from the state Statistical Office, the export of goods last year increased by 1.9 per cent, and imports by 6.7 per cent. Last year, Slovenia achieved almost 69 per cent of total export of goods - half a per cent lower than the previous year - to EU countries; at the same time, it met as much as 78 per cent of its import needs in the EU. Therefore, for Slovenia, the revival of economic growth in the EU is of key importance. Meanwhile, a Slovenian, Igor Dumas, the manager of Fiat France, became the French commercial manager of the year.



Ivica Buljan, Theatre director

## MY ACTIVITIES IN SLOVENIA

The beginnings of my theatre life are linked to the Slovenian 'scene'. At the end of the 80s, I was a student at the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb while also working as a theatre reviewer on Start magazine, which had a cult status at that time and dedicated much attention to the Slovenian retro-avant-garde and to Mladinsko gledališče. After receiving a scholarship in France, I decided to dedicate myself to stage direction. The first project was 'A Name on the Tip of the Tongue' by Pascal Quignard, which I made in 1995 in the tunnel below Ljubljana Castle. Towards the end of the 90s, I was appointed director of the Drama of the Croatian National Theatre in Split. My close collaborators once again came from the Slovenian theatre. They were Vito Taufer, Tomi Janežič, Eduard Miler, Matjaž Berger, Matjaž Pograjc and Niko Goršič. The year 1999 marks the foundation of Mini teater Ljubljana. This was the most important step in making a decision about one common theatre where creative artists from Slovenia and Croatia would gather.

In 2002, I established Novo kazalište in Zagreb. It is the theatre that had co-operated with all of the Slovenian-Croatian projects we had realized up to that point. Our most famous performance of the first phase is 'Schneewittchen After-Party' inspired by a play by the Swiss author Robert Walser. It features Ana Karić, Veronika Drolc, Robert Wärtl and Niko Goršič. That piece was followed by 'Media material', a performance that continued the bi-lingual theatre practice. Seka Bulić performs in Croatian, while Marko Mandić and Ditka Haberl act in Slovenian. 'Media Material' was played at equal frequency in Slovenia and Croatia. Our partners were Festival Karantena of Dubrovnik, Zadar snova and Teatar ITD in Zagreb. 'Marš', a performance inspired by the Song of Songs, was our biggest project. It was in cooperation with the Croatian National Theatre of Rijeka, featuring artists from Chad and Azerbaijan alongside Slovenian and Croatian actors. The performances of 'Kvartet' and 'Macbeth after Shakespeare' are also co-productions, the latter being our artistically most demanding work so far. It featured Marko Mandić, Milena Zupančič and Polona Vetrih and a team of young actors.

My experiences of Slovenian theatre are even more complete, if I mention the three shows I directed at the Slovenian National Theatre: 'Duel Between a Black Man and Dogs' by Koltes, 'Madame de Sade' by Yukio Mishima and, finally, 'Oedipus in Corinth', which won the Borštnik Award for the best performance, direction and actors. Afterwards, it also won the Sterija Award. I directed two pieces in Mladinsko gledališče – 'The One and the Other' by Both Strauss and 'Young Flesh' by Herve Guibert. Both pieces were performed at the Borštnikovo srečanje. My Slovenian experience is enriched by the work in Kranj ('Dramas of Princesses' by Elfriede Jelinek) and in Trieste ('Pigsty' by Pier Paolo Pasolini). I feel comfortable saying that I know the entire theatre scene well, and feel free and inspired about it.



I often quote historical cases in whose shadow I like to be discreetly seen. Ignacij Borštnik is a great name in the Slovenian theatre, with experience that lastingly connected him to Zagreb and its theatre. Vika Podgorska is the greatest Croatian tragedy performer, but also a great Slovenian actress. Branko Gavella, a Croat, had a strong impact on modernizing theatre directing in Slovenia, as Bojan Stupica did with his work for the Croatian theatre.

I feel creative and inspired in the ambience of the Slovenian theatre. Here I encounter actors and artists who react to challenges and are ready to undertake a shared exploratory risk. The relationship created with artistic theatre is unique even for European circumstances, so I would like to point my directorial focus towards a new Mini teater due to open in 2009. It will represent the continuation of European projects. The first one will be a coproduction of 'Sallinger' with French, Slovenian and Croatian actors.

Zoran Predin, Singer – songwriter

## IN THE EMBRACE OF AN OLD LOVE

As a small child, I visited Maksimir Zoo in Zagreb with my parents. Travel by train from my native Maribor was a real adventure, which I fondly remember. With my class, I visited Tito's birthplace at Kumrovec and Stubice, the site of the peasant uprising of Matija Gubec. In the summer I spent my longed-for holidays by the most beautiful sea in the world, the Adriatic. With its islands and winding coast full of magnificent gulfs, it enchanted us again each summer.

In 1979, it was the first time for me to perform with my band Lačni Franz in Zagreb in the old student campus on Savska road. They accepted us as their own, since we easily overcame language barriers and made many friends. The second was in the famous Lapidarij at Stari grad, and we were taken afterwards to Stara vura, which was the first bistro in my life. There we got to know urban life that we still hadn't had in Maribor. The next prestigious club was the legendary Kulušić, which was considered the Mecca of the Yugoslav New Wave. There, I met Darko Glavan and the now unfortunately deceased Dražen Vrdoljak who were the best music reviewers on the Yugoslav music scene. At my concerts I also met and made friends with Arsen Dedić, the greatest Croatian singer-songwriter, and Boško Petrović, the world-famous vibraphone player. Today, I am also friends with Oliver Dragojević, who is undeniably the most well-known Croatian singer.

Now, after thirty years of performing at Croatian music venues, I know the whole country, from Osijek to Varaždin and from Savudrija to Dubrovnik. We are always kindly accepted and treated well everywhere. When the war was still going on, I gladly went on holiday with my family to Zavala village on Hvar Island, to which a narrow tunnel from Jelsa leads. On the small island of Šćedro is Kod Ive restaurant, with the most delicious grilled fish, which also Croatian President Mesić likes. I met the President Mesić recently on a Croatia TV show, entitled Nedeljom u dva.

This year in March, I will give concerts again in Croatian theatre halls. The short tour will end on March 23 in Zagreb with a concert in Vatroslav Lisinski Hall. You are cordially invited.





# THE OTHER LIFE OF THE POET FRANCE PREŠEREN (1849 – 2009)

The legacy of poet France Prešeren (1800-1849) appears to the Slovenians to be modest, but it is actually invaluable: two years before he died, he self-published the 'Poems' collection, in which he collected his poems of the preceding twenty-year period, of which the majority had already been published in the Ljubljana German journal of that time, *Illyrisches Blatt*, and in the periodically issued Slovenian literary magazine 'Kranjska čbelica'. The collection was issued in a total edition of 1200 copies, of which 150 the poet distributed to his colleagues and friends, while of the remainder, which were on sale, a little over 300 were sold before his death, and in the following 16 years, until the next edition of the 'Poems' was issued in 1866, a little over 500. The complete edition therefore remained unsold for almost twenty years.

## PREŠEREN AMONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES

These facts can be interesting, as they illustrate the response of contemporaries to a masterpiece of the poet, who wrote a series of poetic creations in the spirit of European poetry of that time using what was until then an undeveloped literary Slovenian language. Prešeren was a remarkable personality in the environment of provincial Ljubljana and the relatively backward Carniola country, both for his education and his talent; however, at that time, his uniqueness was recognized by only a few. He was generally noted, but possibly more due to his bohemian nature and life than due to his poetry, which exceeded the intellectual capacities and artistic comprehensibility of the contemporary audience, which also applied to the majority of the otherwise quite narrow range of Slovenian intellectuals. Only a few recognized a genius who had succeeded in articulating the individual's destiny and the destiny of his nation in a perfect form, which had far-reaching consequences for the Slovenians in the next decades.

## COMPLETING HIS PORTRAIT

Awareness of his poetic excellence grew slowly only in the following decades, and half a century had to pass before he became generally recognized as 'the greatest Slovenian poet' and at the same time a kind of prophet of the Slovenian national awakening and subsequent national and cultural emancipation of the Slovenian people. In these decades, his biography and the value and meaning of his work were established: contemporaries had to compensate for what they had

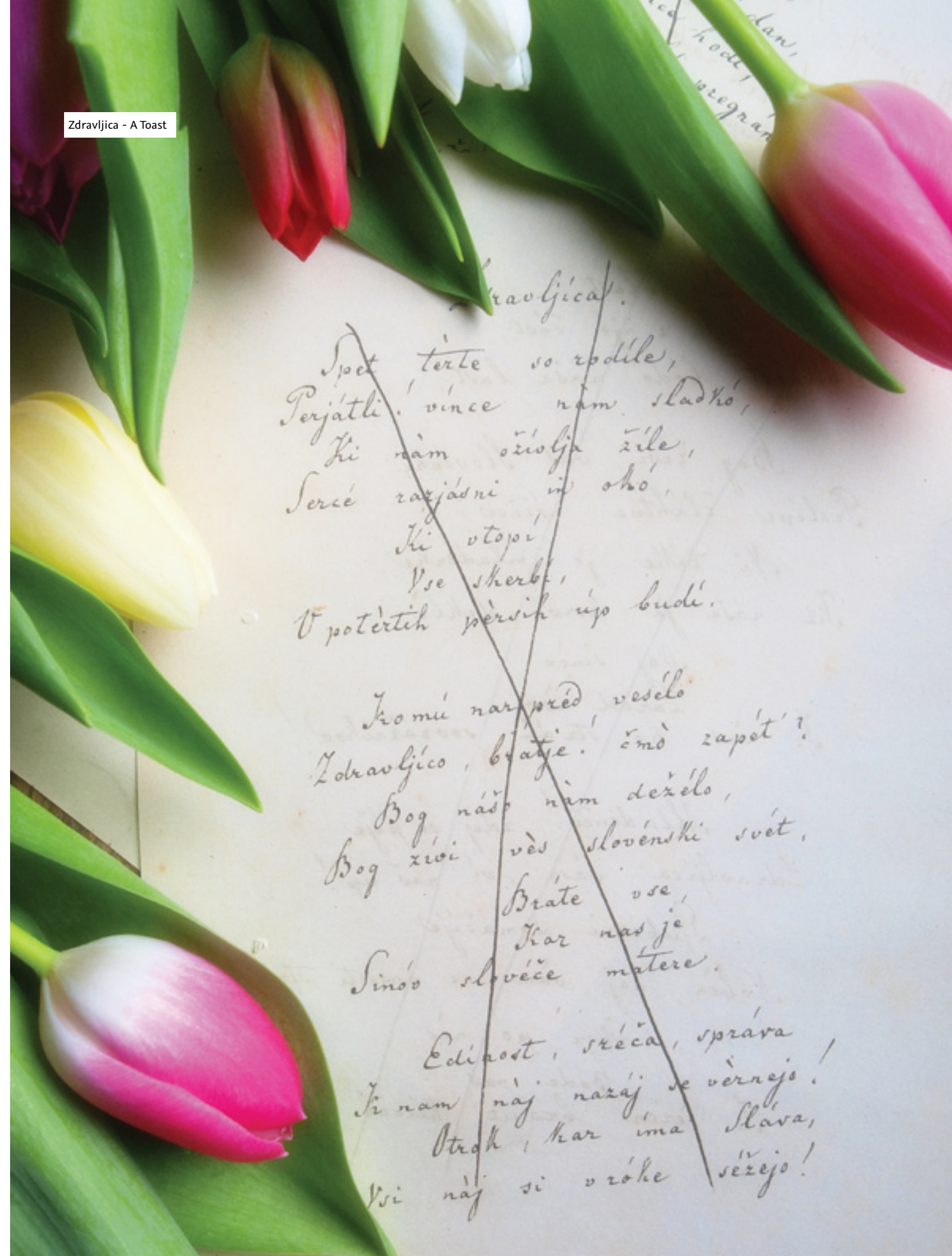
missed, since in his lifetime hardly anyone had paid him due attention, only after his death were testimonies collected, which shed light on his appearance, his nature, his mental and emotional features, to form from these fragments an almost complete image of the poet.

## PREŠEREN IN THE FINE ARTS

Trouble had already begun with his appearance, since Prešeren never sat for a portrait, although he had quite a few among the Ljubljana painters. Almost to the present day, there have been many guesses as to whether there nonetheless exists a contemporary portrait, but the story of forty years ago about a portrait dating from 1838 has never been completely confirmed and unanimously adopted within expert circles. Therefore, the portrait of Prešeren, painted from memory by Franz Kurz zum Thurn und Goldenstein a year after the poet's death remains the starting point for the image of Prešeren, and this very portrait has remained the basis of all subsequent representations in painting or sculpture, which are not few, and in which more or less noted painters and sculptors represent their vision of the poet's face and stature.

## SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF PREŠEREN

At the same time, in the second half of the 19th century, Prešeren studies began to develop briskly as branches of literary history on the basis of documentary material and other sources, in an attempt to establish the domestic and foreign resources which Prešeren used when creating his poetry and his personal and literary contacts and the influences that



Zdravljica - A Toast



Jože Osterman, Polona Prešeren, Ivan Martelanc

encouraged and inspired him. Up to the present, a considerable corpus of scientific work has been amassed, at first encyclopaedic and positivistic, and later more interpretative, which illuminates Prešeren's life and work from numerous perspectives and in all dimensions. There have also been some interesting experiments to represent Prešeren's life in literary, novelistic forms, and lately by some film makers. A screenplay was written soon after World War II but the film has never been made. Nevertheless, on the 200th anniversary of Prešeren's birth, a TV series based on a new screenplay was made, which was also available in a shorter film version.

### PREŠEREN'S POEMS SET TO MUSIC

Prešeren has been brought closer to the Slovenian people by his poems in musical settings, some of which have become popular, and efforts to bring Prešeren close to people and to their perception of time through music are still alive. Moreover, the seventh stanza of 'A Toast', which was set to music in 1905 by Stanko Premrl, became the official Slovenian anthem in 1989, before the official independence declaration of Slovenia.

### PREŠEREN'S STATE-FORMING TRADITION

Prešeren slowly moved from the narrow circle of literary experts and cultivated intellectuals towards ordinary people, which was also due to the contribution of the gradual rise in the level of education. People began to understand better his poetic expression and he increasingly took an integrating role in the rise of Slovenian nationalism, which in its last phase, at the end of the last century, resulted in the national independence of Slovenians and independent Slovenia. Despite some narrow-minded moralist prejudices and obstacles which accompanied Prešeren during his life and originated primarily from Roman Catholic circles, as Prešeren was considered to be a free-thinker, a free spirit, soon a general consensus developed about him and his poetry, since everyone

acknowledged him. Therefore, he always remained above the ideological divisions which frequently run through Slovenian society, in some periods even fatally, until the present.

### UNVEILING PREŠEREN'S MONUMENT

The manifestation of the poet's general popularity was the unveiling of his majestic monument in the centre of Ljubljana near the Ljubljanica River in 1904, attended by approximately twenty thousand people, no small turn-out for that time. Photos of the event show that it was a great popular feast, but there was still some disapproval in the Catholic circles of the semi-nude muse above the poet's head, who regarded it as an insult to religious feelings, as the monument was erected in front of one of the main Ljubljana churches, in a square which was called Mary Square, but which was renamed Prešeren Square. Beneath the Prešeren monument, a step away from the noted Three Bridges, young people gather today, particularly in the spring and summer, and arrange dates there.

### AWARENESS OF PREŠEREN IN THE PRESENT

Prešeren has thus become more and more a household figure: his collection of poems, which has been through innumerable editions, is in almost every Slovenian home; in every Slovenian town there is a main street or square named after him; his picture is hung in several public spaces, particularly in schools and cultural institutions, and in many other places in Slovenia one can find a statue or memorial plate to his memory. This is especially true of Prešeren's house in Vrba village, near the renowned Bled holiday resort, and his grave in Kranj, which are special commemorative sites.

December 3, Prešeren's birthday, several years ago became the open door day of Slovenian culture, when all Slovenian cultural institutions open their door to the visitors free of charge, and February 8, the date of Prešeren's death, was declared a Slovenian cultural day by the resistance movement in occupied Slovenia

in 1944, before the end of World War II, which after declaration of Slovenian independence also became a national holiday celebrated by numerous memorial events. On its eve, there is a central national celebration each year, at which since 1947 the Prešeren Awards are given to the best artistic creations each year as the highest recognition to individuals who have throughout their lifetime through their creative achievements contributed to Slovenian art and culture, while Prešeren Fund Awards usually go to younger artists as an incentive to their promising artistic development. For his uniqueness, Prešeren still remains the highest and unachievable measure of artistic creativity.

**On Prešeren Day itself, for a number of years, there is a poetry marathon in front of Prešeren's monument near Three Bridges in which Slovenian actors, members of the Slovenian Theatre Actors' Association, for several hours - and pro bono - continuously recite Prešeren's poems for passers-by, who stop for a shorter or longer time and listen to the verse and then continue on their way. If live performance of verse touches their souls and hearts, Prešeren, whose bronze image watches over the happening, can be satisfied. His 'Poems', which was at first recognized by a very narrow circle of his contemporaries, has now become the property of almost everyone.**

### THE CENTENARY OF ZORAN MUŠIČ

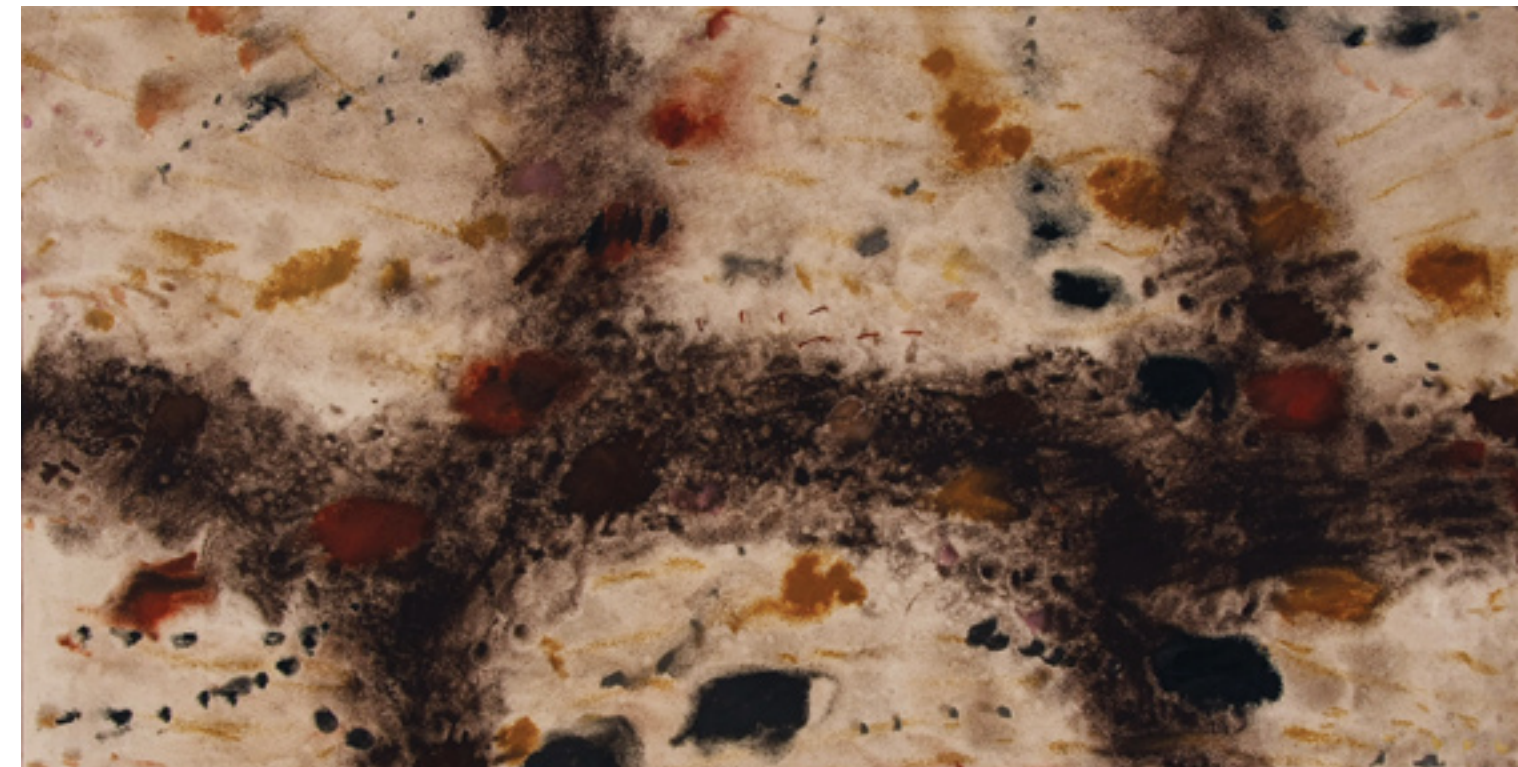
Zoran Mušič, a Slovenian painter born exactly one hundred years ago, is the best known Slovenian maker of fine art. His work is exhibited in the world's most prestigious galleries, mostly those of Paris and Venice, where Mušič spent most of his working life. Marked by internment in Dachau, where he saw the darkest side of human nature, as well as by sun-lit Primorska, Mušič created an opus where fear and anxiety meet the brightness of optimism. His mysterious attitude to the homeland from which he left, maybe even escaped a few years after the end

of the Second World War, and his distance from the political system in power at the time, inspire substantial interest among art historians, as well as those who deal with the history of politics.

In honour of his anniversary, three exhibitions were opened in Ljubljana and Nova Gorica. In the HIT business building, sixteen works Mušič created in various techniques were displayed. The exhibited paintings are mostly owned by private collectors in the Gorica area. Another Mušič exhibition was opened in the TR3 Gallery in Ljubljana, where the artist painted the unthinkable horror of this life. 'The Spanish Vision' is the title of the

documentary exhibition that opened in the National Gallery. Through documents, quotations, articles and some preserved works, it focuses on the lesser-known part of the author's work, after he finished studies in Zagreb, and military service in Bileća. Then, the exhibition unveils the part of life he spent on the Iberian Peninsula, of which he wrote extensively in letters, sketches, and of course, paintings. The curator of the exhibition is art historian Gojko Zupan.

The centenary will bring many events over the course of the following months that will bring the life and work of this master closer to the public.



### SLOVENIAN FILM AROUND THE WORLD

Slovenian director Blaž Kutin presented his debut, film 'We Never Went to Venice' in the non-competitive section of the 21st festival 'Premiers Plans', taking place in Angers in France. Also, Martin Turk, with the film 'Every Day Is Not The Same' and Špela Čadež with 'Marathon', participated. All the films are short documentaries.

Kutin's film is to travel to the 32nd Gotheburg International Film Festival, the biggest in Sweden. There, audiences

will also be able to see 'Forever' by Damjan Kozole and a film made by the Emotion film production house, directed by Stephen Komandarev. In nearby Trieste, the 20th International Film Festival of Alpe Adria Cinema took place, with films from Central and Eastern Europe being presented. In the competition section, Slovenia was represented by 'I Know', directed by Jan Cvitkovič, and partially by the film 'Mostar United', where producer and director Petra Seliškar took part.

Sadly, there were no films from Slovenia

in the competition programme of the Berlinale. Some Slovenian films have, however, been presented in the festival market under common brand of Central European Cinema. Among the Slovenian movies so presented were Prehod (Passage), the directorial debut of Boris Palčič, and another feature, Otroci (Children) by Vlado Škafar. "Darfur: War for water" is another internationally successful Slovenian film presented in Berlin. The documentary was made by Tomo Križnar and Maja Weiss.



**ŽIŽEK FROM SLOVENIA SPEAKS OF EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS**

The famous Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek - more often seen abroad than at home - this time surprised by merely displaying a readiness to lecture in the lobby of the Ministry of Culture, upon Minister Majda Širca's invitation. The Ministry, which opened its door in recent

months, hosting series of lectures on social issues, must have been extremely proud to have someone like Žižek give a lecture there. Žižek was provocative and unconventional, as may be guessed from the title: 'America vs. Europe: a Cultural Battle?' Defining the cultural differences between both continents, he attracted attention in particular by stating the thesis that Americans are logical idiots, because they always have the problem of

taking a habit just as it is and they tend to take things literally, while we Europeans are more inclined to be creatures of habit. He then went on to define the differences by saying Americans are more Hegelian, while Europeans are dominated by Kantian aspects. The crowded hall listened to the lecture with extreme interest. The website that aired the lecture live had an extraordinary number of visitors, as well.

Slavoj Žižek



**KAMILA VOLČANŠEK IN VENICE WITH SEDUCTIVE LADIES**

Although the mid-generation painter and illustrator Kamilla Volčanšek does not leave the impression of an intense presence in the Slovenian world, her distinctive dedication to exploring the female is becoming an increasingly interesting thematic challenge, which has already won a large audience. Probably due to the fact she joined the Slovenian gallery A + A, where she exhibited a selection of seductive ladies. The paintings in the collection are seen a little bit differently by everyone, because they can represent a painting or a sculptured product, writes curator Nada Zoran in the exhibition catalogue. She believes that Volčanšek, like Japanese painting that represents the peak of abstraction, builds a bridge between the worlds of sculptor and illustration. It was most definitively an interesting and challenging exhibition on display in Venice during February.

**FILM ABOUT SLOVENIAN SWIMMER MARTIN STREL SHOWN AT SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL**

It has been almost 30 years since American actor Robert Redford founded the Sundance Film Festival. The idea behind it was to help the makers of low-budget movies. Sundance became globally recognized. There were more than 3000 entries at this year's event in Park City. Among them was 'Big River Man', a film about Martin Strel, a Slovenian ultra-marathon swimmer and his swims in the world's biggest rivers, especially the Mississippi. The film, narrated by Strel's son Borut, tells of an extraordinary man whose lifestyle (overweight, hedonist, alcohol consumer and high blood pressure) is by no means suited to his grand achievements of thousands of miles of swimming. Director John Maringouin created the film out of this contrast. A film that amuses, but at the same time makes one realize that individuals can achieve goals bypassing strict rules. The film, sponsored by actress-producer Olivia Newton, won one of the 30 festival awards. Strel was the focus of interest of the American media and in public eye, while the film was given good opportunities for wider distribution in American cinemas.





**EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY SVETLANA MAKAROVIČ IN NUK**

Svetlana Makarovič the mischievous and provocative Slovenian writer and actress, is celebrating her 70th birthday. The National and University Library of Ljubljana (NUK) has marked the occasion with an exhibition of her work. The name of the exhibition Svet: svet, Svetlana (World: world, Svetlana) alludes to the grand scope of Makarovič's creative opus. Her witty response upon learning the name of the exhibition was that the scope of exhibition scared her, but that in 70 years of work, you are bound to create something. She added that her future work would be connected to the rehabilitation of the fairytale.

Four connoisseurs of Makarovič's work, exhibition curator Marijan Rupert, the director of NUK, Lenart Šetinc, and literary historians Irena Novak Popov and

Svetlana Makarovič



Mileva Blažic, stressed that it is difficult to categorize Makarovič's volume of 438 works within the standard frameworks of literature. The author builds her own system of values that put her at the very top of classical Slovenian literature.

**PAINTING AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE VICTORY OF GOODNESS**

Mohorjeva družba publishing house in Gorica recently issued a valuable work – a monograph by art historian Vesna Koršič Zorn about the church paintings of Tone Kralj in the area of Trieste, Gorica and the Kanal Valley. She limited the work by presenting paintings done in churches between 1930 and 1965. The core of the work is the suffering of Slovenians under fascism. Kralj, through his expression, influenced by the ideals of the fight for liberation, puts his faith in a righteous solution and the victory of goodness. In the churches that were painted after the war, the themes were mainly scenes

from the Bible. They are inspired by motifs of the popular art which was put in Kralj's cradle, since he was introduced to it through the family wood-carving tradition. That is how he embodied his yearning to come closer to the human soul.

The book is bilingual, in Italian and Slovenian. The intention of the author was that our Italian neighbours should be addressed through the translation into their language, as that is the easiest of ways for them to recognize this otherwise unrecognized artist, who despite relative anonymity took part in the Venice Biennale several times, and other exhibitions throughout Italy. The extraordinary photographs are the work of Carlo Scлаuzer from Gorica. It is due to his efforts that Kralj's work is brought to us in its full beauty and meaning.

The essence of Kralj's paintings from the first period is to tell with images what was forbidden to be spoken under fascism. In those times, merely saying a word in Slovenian was considered a crime. Kralj was born in Dolenjska, but gave his heart to Primorska, the region to which was fully dedicated during its darkest of hours, staying loyal until the day he died. He saw art as a tool that speaks more intimately to people than words, and therefore it has an extraordinary spiritual and ethical mission. The human qualities of the painter Tone Kralj - optimism, responsibility, goodness and honesty - intertwine with his artistic calling, so we have difficulty separating the man from the art.

Kralj needed to work hastily, almost in hiding, fearing undesired visitors. That is why he did not decide to make technically more demanding frescoes, but instead, decided to paint on dry roughcast, which has consequences for its preservation, and makes restoration more demanding.

The Slovenian clergy immediately saw an ally in Kralj. It is worth recalling that the clergy of Primorska were a strong pillar in maintaining the Slovenian's independent spirit and national consciousness. Those men of cloth who dared ask Kralj to paint one of their churches were fearless visionaries. Church painting is an important part of Slovenian art, as it outlined for it an entirely new path, which gave it a new quality. It halted the epigone which lasted several decades between the 19th and the 20th centuries. So Kralj became a renovator, and almost the only creator of church painting in his time in Slovenia.

**SLOVENIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE EMZIN COMPETITION**

The culture magazine Emzin awarded the Best Slovenian Photography awards for the 15th time in a row. The competition is highly regarded in professional circles. This year, the award for best reportage went to Maja Hitij, while the best author's photograph award went to Samo Rován. Blaž Zupančič and Branko Blaž Lesjak took second and third places in this category.

Hitij won the recognition awarded from Dnevnik publishing house for a series of photographs called 'The Dispute of 60 Years'. "The series of black and white photographs shows through a specific environment, a very personal and somewhat more emotional grasp, where the interpretation of events from the area of classic photojournalism is given universal humanistic, even artistic dimensions," the jury wrote.

In the section of Authorial photography, Samo Rován convinced the jury with his non-cliché display of a wedding. Rován

makes a playful and dynamic exploration of happy events, with anthropological participation, but he does not leave out a personal note, the jury explains. The second best work in the section was a photograph by Zupančič, 'The Windows'. Jury believes the author fetishized the seven windows to display mental processes aimed against the visual perception of a subject.

Branko Blaž Lesjak won the third Pristop award for Authorial photography for a series of eight colour squares in which he follows the recognized tradition of underlined aestheticism and poetic openness of prosaic motifs that through years has become a constant in the Emzin competition.

The international jury saw 497 items - altogether, 2934 entries. There were 29 names on the shortlist. The photographs shown at Emzin represent the production of Slovenian photographers of different generations, content, formats and techniques. The exhibition in Cankarjev dom closes on March 8.

**CAMERATA OF BERLIN PHILHARMONICS IN SLOVENIA**

In the middle of January, the Slovenian audience had the pleasure of hearing, for the first time, one of chamber ensembles of the famous Berlin Philharmonics. The concert took place in Nova Gorica. Camerata, the youngest ensemble of the Philharmonics, was established in 2001 by 12 string musicians. The members created a repertoire of pieces that not only covers the period between the baroque and modern periods, but also offers a wide palette of adaptations for smaller ensembles. Camerata is led by concert master Thomas Rimm. It is comprised of recognized soloists, among them Albert Mayer, Wenzel Fuchs, Miša Majski and Tatjana Vasiljeva. At the concert in Nova Gorica, they performed Mozart, Mendelssohn-Bartoldy and Schonenberg. The audiences, who filled the space completely, were exhilarated.





Miša Čermak, photo: Iztok Dimc and archive

# Kempinski Palace Portorož

Precious past of the valuable future



The story of the celebrated Palace Hotel of Portorož is almost a century long. With the slogan ‘When the old meets the new’, it opened its doors to the public in October last year, after undergoing total renovation. The International Hotel Kempinski Palace Portorož (yes, the famous Kempinski hotel chain will be managing the Slovenian beauty for the next 20 years) is in the Five Star Superior category, which makes it the first luxury hotel in Slovenia. And if it is true that its opening gives new élan to tourism in Portorož and all Slovenian Istria, we wish it, because of the kindness and professional behaviour of its owners and managers, and for its cultural, tourist and natural benefits, a lot of success on its journey through time.

The old Hotel Palace was once the trademark of Portorož. The town, that was first mentioned as Portorose, in 1894, was created in an area famous for its medicinal brine and mud. At the very end of the 19th century, a hotel with 30 rooms, a casino and a dining hall was built. Plans for building the main hotel as we know it today date back to the first years of the 20th century. The hotel was built in 1910 in typical Secessionist style, open, with direct sea access.

But soon after, the building of additional premises began, such as the old thermal capacities, kitchen and service space, so the hotel lost its harmonious appearance. Since it was never seriously renovated, in time the old hotel lost its high category and reputation and eventually was closed down for 15 years. But even through tough times, the hotel never lost its charm. The charm of the splendid entrance hall, Crystal Hall, the gentlemen and ladies saloon, all gave a special touch to the life of Portorož. The Palace never lost those features. The hotel, along with the surrounding park, was proclaimed a cultural monument, and the protected monument of a natural feature, but that did not help it to be renovated. It slowly decayed. During that period, the local people, who constantly read about who the new owner might be, and when the renovation would eventually start, wondered why nothing was being done. It was for that reason that the decree of the former mayor, Vojka Štular, that ended the 39-year lease, was necessary. One year later, the municipality, as the owner of the building, rented it for renovation to Istrabenz Hoteli Portorož. With that, a new life began, both for the old/new Hotel Palace, and for Portorož itself.

The old palace remained as it was, distinguished by its Secessionist style, in tune with the time at the beginning of the 20th century, but with a new part attached. The hotel has 181 rooms and suites of the highest category (named Piran, Venice, Rose, Laguna etc.), suited to guests with distinctive tastes and special demands. The hotel is also more than adequate to host protocol events of the highest rank. There is a presidential suite, located in the historic part of the hotel, which is designed for the most discerning of tastes, with its designer furniture in the living room, dining hall for ten people, two luxurious bedrooms with bathrooms, and a library, spread over 230 square meters. It also features a truly spacious terrace with a view of the Piran Bay. All rooms are air-conditioned and have sophisticated

audio-video systems, telephones, internet access, mini bar, safe, bathroom with a bath, shower and bidet, alongside every essential needed for a comfortable stay. Most of the rooms have a balcony; 81 have a sea-view; 102 overlook the park. The hotel also features rooms suited for those with special physical needs. In the old, historical part, the Crystal Hall, with feature virtually unchanged throughout a century of history, never ceases to charm. The adjacent spaces are a home to an excellent pastry shop, piano bar, restaurant, wine cellar, trend bar and congress centre. Guests may also enjoy shopping in the most prestigious boutiques. The new part of the hotel offers a spa centre featuring brine and mud from the nearby salt pans of Sečovlje. When such elements are combined with alternative healing methods and holistic treatment, the highest quality is guaranteed.

Of course, the first sign of quality is the professional relationship with clients, regardless of the contents of their wallets. If this is something Hotel Kempinski Palace Portorož retains, then there is no fear for the future of Slovenian elite tourism. It will then be embodied in the words of the manager of Kempinski Palace Portorož, Thies C. Bruhn, and indeed become ‘Europe’s best-kept secret’.



## Special services offered by Kempinski Palace Portorož

The offer of international cuisine, high-quality wines and other beverages, home-made pastries and cakes are all to be found at the Fleur de Sel restaurant, Sophia Restaurant, Forma Viva pastry shop, Ladies Saloon, Bubbles Club & Gentleman’s Saloon, Palace Club lobby bar, wine bar and wine cellar, Pool Bar and Party Suite with a private terrace and a jacuzzi. The hotel offers top conference capacities with state-of-the-art audio-video equipment. Special lines of cosmetics, Carita and St. Barth, are available at the Wellness Centre. Alba Rosa is a treatment in the steam room with a private jacuzzi. Features include indoor and outdoor swimming pool, park in front of the hotel, six stores with prestigious trademarks and the possibility to rent an Audi Q7 or A8.





## Thies C. Bruhn, manager

### Why Slovenia, and what are your goals and expectations?

The International Kempinski Group manages luxurious hotels in precious old palaces. If we have dedicated ourselves to developing the Middle-Eastern and the Chinese market in the last few years, now our orientation is Europe, especially because Kempinski is the oldest and best established chain of luxury hotels in Europe.

The rich nature and culture of Slovenia and Portorož offer strong foundations for the development of the highest-level tourism. The last year's opening of the Kempinski Palace hotel – the first luxury hotel in Slovenia – is therefore a great challenge, a test and an important encouragement for the tourist development of Slovenia. It brings new standards and new demands that enable entry into a different segment of tourism. That is confirmed by the fact that the German Bild newspaper declared Slovenia, with the Kempinski Palace Portorož, the trend destination of 2009. This is a chance for Slovenia to strengthen its position in those markets where it is already present and to enter new ones.

The Kempinski Palace Portorož, the 61st hotel in the chain, is an extraordinary building, a palace where the past meets the modern, while offering comfort to the most demanding guest.

### How do you feel in Portorož, given the fact that you have spent the last few years in Germany?

During my career I have lived, as you said, in Germany, but also on a cruise ship in the Bahamas. Portorož is a wonderful

place and I truly enjoy being here. I like the Mediterranean climate, because it is winter time and everything is still green. The temperatures are also very high for this time of year.

### How do you spend your days? Do you have time for your hobbies?

I came to Slovenia in July of last year and I must admit I have not had a day off work since. When I do have some spare time, I will no doubt dedicate it to exploring Slovenia. Given the fact that golf is my hobby, I am looking forward to trying out the Slovenian golf courses.

### Have you made any friends here?

So far, all the people I've met in Slovenia have been very kind to me. That makes me certain that the friendships I've made and will make here, will stay even after I finish working here.

### What is your impression of us?

The Slovenians are very pleasant, kind and ambitious people. My team also has some talented and ambitious Slovenians. But I have noticed that you can get overly sensitive at times. It is good for a man to be proud of his country. I am proud to be German. But with that I am, we all are, European. But based on what I've seen so far, I remain optimistic. I believe those things will soon change, as has happened in other EU countries.

### Have you already seen Slovenia? What do you like?

Slovenia has mountains, forests, sea, plains – all close together. I like to call your country 'Europe's best-kept secret'. Slovenia's tourist development lies in elite tourism. I want all Europeans to discover the natural beauty of Slovenia and the kindness of its people.

Jože Osterman, photo: archives

# A decade of the TerraFolk band





Polona Prešeren, photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

The self-consciousness and the spontaneity with which the new Slovenian music has stepped into the world over the past three decades deserve admiration. In the 80's, when Slovenia was still part of the former Yugoslavia, many things pointed to the fact that it was music breaking the ossified frameworks of the existing country, opening new horizons. The birth of punk bands brought to life socially-critical Yugoslav rock, with bands from Slovenia playing an important role. Those events contributed to creating the *Druga godba* festival that introduced new, creative playfulness and sincerity, which were recognized by audiences at home and abroad as the harbingers not only of the new music culture, but of the new social order. One child of that environment, that sought roots in the originality of folk music, upgraded by the sounds of new urbanisation, is the wonderful group TerraFolk. The playfulness of their music, taken to the very edge, combining old, archetypal sounds of ancient history with the sounds and melodies of today are the trademarks of TerraFolk. In ten years, the group has become a true musical legend, known at least as well abroad as at home.

The beginning of the group was a little unusual, but not uncommon. Two curious musicians, Boštjan Gombač and Danijel Černe, were making music in New Zealand in 1999. During that time they performed extensively as street musicians. That experience created a challenge. Upon returning to Ljubljana, they were joined by violin player Bojan Cvetrežnik. Together they performed at the well-known Lent Festival in Maribor. The audiences cheered, as they stretched a repertoire that was supposed to fill half an hour of music, to more than three hours. An amazing connection with the audience gave birth to fantastic improvisations, which was to determine their future work. During the course of the following year, the band's leading men, Bojan and Danijel, were composing music on the Côte d'Azur in France. At that time they started playing regularly in Slovenia and abroad. The creation of a homogenous, faithful audience opened the band to the market and enabled it to develop. In August 2001, they toured England, performing in London and Bristol. Consequently, they published the album 'Stereo FolkLive', which they presented in Croatia and England in the following year. At the end of that year, TerraFolk published the album 'Jumper

of Love'. In 2003, they performed 108 times and won several awards, most notably the audience Winner of Awards for World Music at radio BBC3. They had nine concerts on the tour of England and Ireland in February of 2004. TerraFolk spent most of that year touring various European countries, but also forming a new band that placed the group firmly on the top of the list of Slovenia's most desired performers. Once the summit was reached, the hard work of fighting to stay on top, often more difficult than the climb itself, began. It would be impossible to list all of the concerts that took place in the following year, except to say that they were mostly outside Slovenia. But it is worth mentioning one of the more significant European awards for folk music - the Best Act of the Folkwoods festival, which TerraFolk won in the Netherlands in 2005. After the first two albums, the group published an album in 2004, 'N'taka', then the album 'Live at Queen's Hall' in 2006. Their latest album 'Full Circle' came out in 2008. Pieces from that album are being presented to audiences around Slovenia at ten concerts during February. The core of the group is three excellent musicians Bojan Cvetrežnik – CV, Danijel Černe and Marko Hatlak, who is one of the most talented young Slovenian musicians. When on tour, the group is joined by other excellent performers, among them many foreigners. During the current tour, an Irish violin player and a singer, Ula Palisser, is performing with them.

TerraFolk often receive amazing, even euphoric reviews from leading music experts attracted by the unique atmosphere of their performance. Let's read what Shetland Times critic Jonathan Lee wrote in May 2007 after hearing them perform in England:

Nothing could have prepared us for what was about to happen. Enter TerraFolk to take the festival by storm. The eccentric, highly talented Slovenian four-piece won the audience over straight from the start. It was five minutes of pure musical theatre, with, in the middle, the grand entrance of a special guest - top Slovenian classical violinist Anja Bukovec. If TerraFolk were to steal the show, and Bojan stole our minds, Anja stole our hearts. Perfect.

In similar fashion, but much shorter, an admirer expressed his opinion on TerraFolk on the web:

### TerraFolk rules.

So let's extend our best wishes to them on their tenth birthday.

## Diversity of tastes and experiences

**Taste Slovenia!** This short phrase encapsulates the diversity of adventures in Slovenia and the intensity with which the country can be experienced. In Slovenia, "tasting" is not limited exclusively to culinary delicacies. Slovenia can be tasted, experienced and felt in a multitude of ways. There are sports, cultural delights, gastronomic treats and enjoyment in the wellness centres.

To taste is to feel, to discover, learn, explore... You have not truly experienced Slovenia until you have tasted this land via short trips, active holidays, or short and long breaks at the diverse cultural and natural junction of the European Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain. And this time, it is the edge of that plain we are set to visit. More precisely, we are going to visit the town of Ptuj and its surroundings, where you can allow yourselves to be spoiled in thermal water and, at carnival time, visit an event featuring unique local masks called kurenti. If that does not appeal to you, the offer of spoiling your taste buds is vast.

In half a day, you can take a tour around the city's landmarks: the castle, old city centre, provost church of St. George, the Orpheus monument, City Hall, the Minorite monastery and the library and, of course, the oldest wine cellar in Slovenia. As you take in the vibe of this pleasant old town, you can feel how rich Ptuj's treasures are. For hedonists, the treasure no doubt lies in good food and a drop or two of the home-made wine. And for the cherry on the top of the cream – taking a trip to the spa to be spoiled.

### A bow to Spring

Kurentovanje is one the most-known local particularities. Kurenti are masks which according to a folk tale, drive away the winter and bring springtime. Kurenti masks are usually worn by boys dressed in sheepskin coats, with a frightening mask on their heads. They have cow-bells around their waists and a hedge-stick in their hands. Kurentovanje is a time that brings magical joy and playfulness, but also a little mysticism. It is one of the most significant traditional festivities in Slovenia and Central Europe.





# slovenian delights

## A bow to the taste-buds

While the menus in the old days were quite simple, it is those very dishes that have now evolved into top culinary revelations. Food based on natural sources from Ptuj and its surroundings is being promoted. Typical of this region are dried meat products, as well as potato dishes, chicken, meat from tünka (pork kept in lard) etc. In general, there are many meat dishes, such as goulash and steaks. The cuisine of the region is also marked by Viennese, Hungarian and Croatian cooking.

Soups are very popular here, particularly the well-known meat soups. A little bit less popular, but well liked locally, are potato, sour and cream soup, turnip and potato soup, and even soup with wine or apples. Besides potato, beans, turnip and cabbage, the use of pumpkins and cucumbers is frequent here. The local people are known for their ability to make many excellent dishes from these ingredients. Buckwheat and corn žganci are ranked highly on the list of popular dishes.

The way food was prepared in kitchens in castles, monasteries, vicarages and wealthier households had a significant impact on how meat dishes are prepared today. Typical of Štajerska are dry sausages, black pudding, roast sausage and meat from tünka. On St. Martin's Day – the time of the must's transformation into wine – guests are served goose or duck. Pumpkin seed oil, with its beautiful aroma, gives a special, unique taste to various dishes. Sweets and desserts have a very special place, especially if you are among those who enjoy pastry, strudels and cakes whose tastes are developed to the point of greatest refinement. Potica is the best known Slovenian cake, made exclusively on holidays. Ptuj and the surrounding area are most known for buckwheat and corn potica. Flancati and doughnuts, as well as gibanica and kvasenica (leaven cake) from Haloze, are among the favourite sweets varieties. The Ptuj region is known for its excellent breads – made of wheat, poppy or rye.

Ptuj cuisine is complemented by the traditional cuisine of Prlekija, which through the centuries was shaped by the gifts of nature and the habits of the people populating that part of Slovenia. The type and choice of dishes were closely connected to the seasons of the year, religious festivities and farm household work. A big part of that rich heritage has been preserved: tünka of Prlekija, minced lard with onions and chives, dried cheese, cottage cheese with pumpkin seed oil, pacani murki (marinated gherkins), toasted bread with garlic and pumpkin seed oil, mushroom soup with buckwheat žganci etc.

Simple everyday meals were replaced by a rich offer of various dishes at holidays. The food found on every holiday list includes smoked pork, meat soup, different types of roast, potatoes spiced with crackling, cheese and buckwheat flat cakes, kvasenica and potica. As is the case with all the other cuisines, the food of Prlekija is ever-changing, adjusting to the needs of time, remaining distinguished for its palette of dishes and tastes, which grew into the trademark of the region.



'Kurent'

Typical Ptuj dishes are: chicken Ptuj style, Ptuj sauce, Štajerska soup, turkey with mlinci pastry, black pudding, cucumbers with potato, cabbage Štajerska style, Štajerski dumplings, buckwheat and corn potica, gibanica from Haloze, mushroom soup with buckwheat žganci, and sour soup with pigs' trotters. Well-known specialities are dry home-made sausages, meat from tünka, bunka (desalted whole parts of better-quality pork stuffed into pork stomach and beef intestines, mildly smoked and air cured), roast sausage and black pudding.



The oldest wine of Slovenia is kept at Ptuj Wine Cellar.



## Wines of the Ptuj Cellar

The beginning of the Ptuj Wine Cellar dates back to the establishment of the local Minorite monastery in 1239, making it the oldest wine cellar in Slovenia. The first label, the so-called Wiber-Schwab, bears the mark 1790. The Ptuj Cellar has sound and light effects that intertwine with the beautiful wooden barrels. Visiting the cellar is a special experience. In the wine archives, the visitor will encounter the treasures of the cellar, such as the oldest archive wine of Slovenia – a bottle from 1917, made from The Golden Vine.

Today, the company deals mainly with the wine production. Since 2007, they have been represented by the Pullus brand – a project unveiling the new millennial concept of change from the Ptuj Cellar. The first changes came in the vineyards; the last took place in 2007 with the new name that the wines of Ptuj Cellar will carry.

Pullus wines kept their virtue alongside all the typical features of the famous wines from Haloze and Slovenske Gorice vineyards. Yet, simultaneously, they became livelier, flirting with seekers of a rich taste, aroma and freshness. They also became more in tune with culinary delights. The wine is targeted at customers and marked by fine origins and a rich tradition – whether it be a fresh, young Pullus wine, a mature wine, sparkling wines, special vintages, or a Pullus archive wine.

Many medals prove Pullus is truly a wine with taste. Pullus was among the wineries receiving most of last year's awards. Their Haložan (made of Šipon, Laški Riesling, Sauvignon, Pinot Blanc, Renski Riesling and Rizvanec), a white house wine, enjoys with great popularity among Slovenian wine-drinking circles.

## Wellness retreat at Terme Ptuj

Going to Terme Ptuj is like jumping back to the days of Ancient Rome. The Romans who lived in ancient Ptuj, then called Petovia, enjoyed the thermal springs. Mostly rich patrician families came here, where they, while enjoying a medicinal bath, discussed politics, economics and gossiped. Even later, during the Middle Ages, Ptuj never renounced the pleasures that the water offered. Thermal spas have been recorded here as early as in 1311.

The culture of enjoying watery pleasures was revived in the 19th century, since the nearby Drava River invites swimmers during the summer months. Public baths were built with an outdoor swimming pool and cabins, as well as an indoor swimming hall, offering a steam bath, showers and bath cabins. The first visitors, seeking to try the healing effects of spas, began coming.

Spas were very popular in the 1960s. At the same time, geological exploration took place in the hope of finding oil. The result was more thermal water erupting to the surface. Ptuj got its recreation-tourist centre in 1975 which later became Terme Ptuj. Today, Terme Ptuj is a modern thermal complex, offering many different therapeutic and recreational possibilities.



Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

## Tina Maze is Slovenia's No1 skier

Slovenia was among medal winners at the Val d'Isere World Skiing Championship thanks to Tina Maze. The Slovenian alpine skier won silver in giant slalom, making this the first World Championship skiing medal for Slovenia in eight long years. The championship was marked by bad weather and difficult tracks. Bad weather even prevented the group competition.

Our hero was overtaken by mere 9 hundredths of a second by Kathrin Hölzl from Germany. The silver medal is Maze's first trophy won at a big competition. It is a crown to her successful performances in the World Ski Cup.

After the first run and problems with ski glasses that got fogged with dew, Tina Maze came 15th, disappointing high expectations. The disappointment was bitter, also because her performances have been steadily improving throughout the season. Tina Maze started her second run aggressively, with a lot of anger, and made the run of her life, bringing herself and Slovenia to the winning podium. Božo Jaklin, the head of the Slovenian female team, rated Tina's performance as one of the best in her life.

Tina Maze created her own team before this season. It has a condition trainer and a physiotherapist, both in the person of her partner Andrea Massi, an Italian who speaks Slovenian flawlessly. He is the head of Tina Maze team that, besides him includes, trainer and technician Andrej Perovšek.

The rest of the Slovenian team did not come close to medals at this championship. We had great expectations of Andrej Jerman in the downhill. The performance that brought him as far as the first fifteen proved this is not his season.



## Biathlon Worlds: Gregorin Takes Silver in 15 Km Individual

Teja Gregorin has won the first medal for Slovenia at the Biathlon World Championships in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The 28-year-old finished second in the women's 15 km individual race, 39.5 seconds behind the winner, Kati Wilhelm of Germany.

Wilhelm (44.03; 1/1) was too strong in racing for the Slovenian, who also had a single miss, and for the bronze medalist, Norway's Tora Berger, who finished 46.5 seconds behind.

"I was without any success this season until today, and a good performance came at the right time. I didn't lose my self-confidence and it paid off. I have also been good in practice lately", Gregorin said after the race.

She is satisfied with her running and an improvement in the shooting area. "Today I fought for every shot, because it is very hard to make up the penalty minutes. This is a dream come true for me," added Gregorin.



Polona Prešeren

## The Vitranc Cup is the pride of Kranjska Gora



photo: A. Fevžer, STO

Kranjska Gora winter sports centre is a place closely connected to the way Slovenians perceive skiing and its tradition. Kranjska Gora is more than just the location of World Cup ski competitions. It is the one cradle of Slovenian alpine skiing that gave birth to our sporting heroes, true legends of winter sports. It is also the place where many Slovenians stood on skis for the first time. Kranjska Gora remains the cultural and social centre of the area, rewarding visitors with its worldly vibe and alpine idyll.

The beautiful surroundings and great locations have their charm, and it is therefore no surprise that the love of skiing and almost religious interest in the World Cup matches were born here. The splendour of this winter recreation centre attracts ski fans from all over Slovenia. The valley of the Sava Dolinka River, where Kranjska Gora lies, is also exceedingly romantic in these winter days. I remember very well when horse teams took visitors on tours of the town. It made me believe I was in one of the most fashionable alpine resorts. Today, Kranjska Gora is a modern winter centre with a rich offer of wellness and high-quality accommodation and, of

course, with a wide palette of options for recreation. Cross-country skiing tracks are well prepared, attracting more people every year. In the summer, Kranjska Gora is an excellent starting point for mountaineering, biking, or adrenaline sports for the truly brave.

### HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Kranjska Gora has an excellent location and is easily accessible, as it lies on the border between Slovenia, Italy and Austria. It was developed in the second half of the 14th century, when local people started cutting down the surrounding forests and turning them into farm land – mostly pasture for sheep and cattle.

The strategic importance of the location was evident during the First World War, when Russian captives built a military road over the 1611-meter high mountain pass Vršič connecting the Sava Valley with the valley of the Soča River, on the other side of the Julian Alps. Kranjska Gora started gaining a reputation as a tourist centre with the railway that made it accessible to visitors. Later, the name of Kranjska Gora became world-famous through ski jumps and ski flights at Planica. This encouraged the rapid tourist development of the area around Kranjska Gora, particularly when the first ski-lifts were opened on the slopes of Vitranc.





photo: J. Skok, STO

## PODKOREN

The mysterious village of Podkoren is even older than Kranjska Gora. It treasures beautiful stories from the times when there was no tourism in the Upper Sava Valley. A paved medieval road ran through the village that, as early as in the 15th century, served as a connecting point between the provinces of Kranjska and Koroška. The post carriages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire brought news from faraway lands via the Korensko sedlo pass. Until 1990, when the Karavanke tunnel was opened, Korensko sedlo road was the main traffic connection with Central and Northern Europe.

Kranjska Gora and Podkoren are not only connected by physical proximity - the location on the border between three countries - but also by common history and the tourism success story due to the achievements of the heroes of the white slopes at the traditional World Ski Cup contest taking place there.

## THE STORY OF KRANJSKA GORA

was written by World Ski Cup contests in slalom and giant slalom for men, the so-called Vitranc Cup, where Slovene ski aces recorded top results. The first Vitranc Cup took place between March 4 and 5 in 1961. The contest was divided between giant slalom, on the first day, and slalom, on the second day. Bojan Križaj, a skiing legend, often inspired enthusiasm with his excellent results. Among the aces were the talented Rok Petrovič, and the multiple winner of Vitranc, Jure Košir. Now, Bernard Vajdič and Mitja Valenčič are our aces on the Vitranc slopes. At the end of February, Kranjska Gora hosted the best world skiers for the 38th time. The caravan of the 'white circus' returns to Slovenia after the peak of this year's season - the World Championship in Val d'Isère.

The people of Kranjska Gora are known for making sure that not only the sport part of the competition is enjoyable. They enliven the event by offering extensive tourist programmes in which several thousand people take part. This is no surprise, since the best Slovenian performers light up the stage. So far, the explosion of fun has never disappointed.

Tadej Golob, photo: archive

# Praslovan\* on its way to the world

## Zoran Predin

**The former Lačni Franz\*\* now swings. And still, no one is sleeping.**

There are very few musicians who started their careers as young men and remained on the scene for 30 years, let alone stayed true to themselves, as is the case with the man we are portraying today. By 'true' I do not mean the same image (although Predin still likes to wear the German officer-type leather jacket he bought from a mailman after one of his first concerts, in exchange for two litres of wine), or the same music (although Predin likes to perform a tune or two from his first record), but the curious search that has been his trademark throughout his career.

### Lačni Franz

It started in Maribor on a June day in 1979, when there was still socialism in the air. Predin came to the cellar of the drummer of the Zeus group, whose lead singer was doing military service. So the audition began. He was required to sing 'Child in Time' by Deep Purple. He thought that was passé and said he preferred to sing something by The Doors. This was the beginning of the first part of his career of ten years, during which Lačni Franz made nine albums. Many of the band's songs (named after Hungry Joe, a character from Joseph Heller's 'Catch 22') became the messages of a generation. Perhaps the one which resonated most through time has been 'Praslovan' (Ancient Slav), which asks who brought communism to this part of the world and why. His worldly version of Prešeren's 'Zdravljica' also deserves mentioning. It is because of Predin's revival that later - although no one today would admit this is true - it became the Slovenian national anthem.

The end of Lačni Franz came parallel to the end of Yugoslavia and the end of a big, common market. Lačni Franz was one of the very few groups in the market that audiences in other republics took into account and even - although they never stopped singing in Slovenian - tried to understand. But, despite that "the band is, after ten years, used in the same way a sock would be," Predin says, explaining his decision to perform independently, because "an author's creative circle undoubtedly closes after ten years with the same team, with more or less the same sound, no matter what it does. Not all of us are the Rolling Stones."

**'The sun shines and your hair is a mess' (Sonček je in ti si skuštrana)**

It was not easy. Lačni Franz was a trademark whose safe shelter he renounced and brought upon himself the fury of Slovenian punk and intellectual circles, which never truly accepted him. Pop singer Predin did not let them deter him and he made two pop albums. The first one went to the very top of the charts. The song 'Sonček je in ti si skuštrana' was Song of the Year 1992 in Slovenia.

But pop declined in Slovenia and, since Predin persisted in refusing to become a part of a scene obsessed with being seen in the media at any cost, he retreated. Hidden behind a tambourine in the Šukar band, who played gypsy music in Slovenia, he went to France in 1996 to visit the gypsy festival in St. Maries de la Mer, in the Camargue, which was the place to be for gypsies and other vagabonds. The Camargue is a swampy oasis, where French outcasts used to hide, where the skies are blue, and where wild, white horses, bulls and flamingos roam free. It is said that it was there Van Gogh painted the most beautiful sunflowers and cypresses. It is also the place to listen to 'Baila, baila, baila' by the Gipsy Kings. Šukar played a few songs before Gipsy Kings came on stage. The setting of the local church gave Predin an idea of what musical genre to develop. Gypsy music?

He made an attempt at a joint album with Šukar, called 'Mentol bombon', which actually means chewing gum. He characterized the song as 'Transition Czardas'. It is about a young Hungarian girl waiting for her Western prince to arrive on one of the beaches on the Adriatic. But before she gives her heart away, he must demonstrate to her at least one symbol of the western world, like chewing gum.

But it took only one gypsy album for Predin to realise this is not the way to go. 'Mentol bombon' was OK, because it was a mix of true gypsy music and Predin's own touch, in this case, the lyrics. "You can not play such music, if you do not live it, if you don't live the cruel gypsy life. That can not be done academically, even with the most sincere of intentions and emotions". So, what now? Perhaps chansons. Predin has experience from the days of Lačni Franz, when he created a joint album 'Svjedoci



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- priče', with the greatest Yugoslav singer-songwriter Arsen Dedić. "A lack of energy, often too much world-weariness, overly pompous worship of nostalgic poetry ... Audiences fall asleep ..." Or maybe rock again, a genre he was dedicated to for over a decade.

Luckily, while spending time with the gypsies in France, Predin encountered gypsy swing, which brought together the best of both worlds.

### Gypsy swing

Gypsy swing is the invention of Belgian guitar player Django Reinhardt, who lost three fingers on his left hand in an accident, so he had to learn how to play with the remaining ones. He had to invent his own way of playing. Reinhardt succeeded; doing it so well, that out of deformity came a music style. But it was an instrumental style, until Vaya Con Dios came with the song 'Nah, neh, nah' and showed that not only could gypsy swing take more demanding lyrics than those of rock, but that it can also be lively enough to eliminate the fear of snoring in the audience. "Playing swing is marked by a rhythmical particularity - the sound of other times", Predin explains. "Out of the popular performers, it was best handled by those ensembles that came from jazz. In Slovenia, that was the Avseniki band, global kings of folk music, who did not play the polka in the German way, but their way. Better, softer, they swing it a bit."

In his first gypsy swing band, called Mar Django, Predin gathered excellent musicians, a very fortunate Ukrainian-Bosnian-Slovenian combination. Its basic tone came from Saša Olenjuk of Sarajevo, a musical wunderkind, guitar and violin player. They made an album 'Ljubimec iz omare' (Lover from the Closet) and were able to take it on international tour. Gypsy swing was already very popular. Despite its elite character, due to the technical difficulty of performing it, the genre won audiences around the world. Mar Django performed in France, in Ireland and the UK, where they had a performance at the BBC. The ensemble caught the eye of one of the producers there, and who knows where that would have taken them, had Olenjuk not decided to cancel the arrangement with the group due to other obligations. He was preparing a Tchaikovsky violin concert at the Slovenian Philharmonics and was distracted by the different

order of fingering on the guitar. Without a good guitar player, there is no good gypsy swing. Predin re-lived the following few years in electric fashion with the rock band Globoka grla (Deep Throats). After that time, a new guitar genius called Igor Bezget replaced Olenjuk. Bezget's tone is darker, faster, more jazzy. In the meantime, Predin's son Rok grew up (one of his five children). He became an accomplished rhythm guitar player. The new gypsy swing band included the members of Mar Django, Nikola Matošič and Gašper Bertonec, so Predin again began to think about a breakthrough beyond the country's borders. The feet just get up and dance...

It has been ten years since Predin's first attempt at gaining international recognition. He began with the album 'All-Purpose Lover' where he combined English and French translations. He continued with the album 'On the Wings of the First Kiss', featuring his most recognized songs translated into five foreign languages (English, Spanish, German, French and Italian). "With our ethno music, despite its beauty, we can not compete in the field of rhythm with African, Greek, Irish and Mexican music", Predin says. "But we could do it with our originality. So, since God created the beard for himself first, I began with the tunes I know best", he explains.

Last year he published the album 'Inventura'. It was released in Croatia with songs sung in Croatian. It was a successful precedent and Croatian critics awarded it the title Album of the Year. Through such work, Predin builds bridges, not only the musical, but he also brings people together. If he succeeded in bringing two neighbouring nations together, why not do it in other parts of Europe with the English or French languages?

"My goal? I would like to perform throughout the world. Perhaps I would never have pressed on with that idea so much, had I not, listening to a song by U2, called »The City of Blinding Lights« from the album »How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb«, heard that Bono used the same melody I did ten years before in the song 'Okupatorka'. And if that can happen to such a successful author, than I guess some of that genius is in me, too. I am convinced that the audience in a club in London or Paris will be surprised when they hear us, particularly with the gypsy swing performance. It is lively music. The feet just get up and dance..."

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He characterized the song as 'Transition Czardas'. It is about a young Hungarian girl, waiting for her Western prince to arrive on one of the beaches on the Adriatic. But before she gives her heart away, he must demonstrate to her at least one symbol of the western world, like a chewing gum.

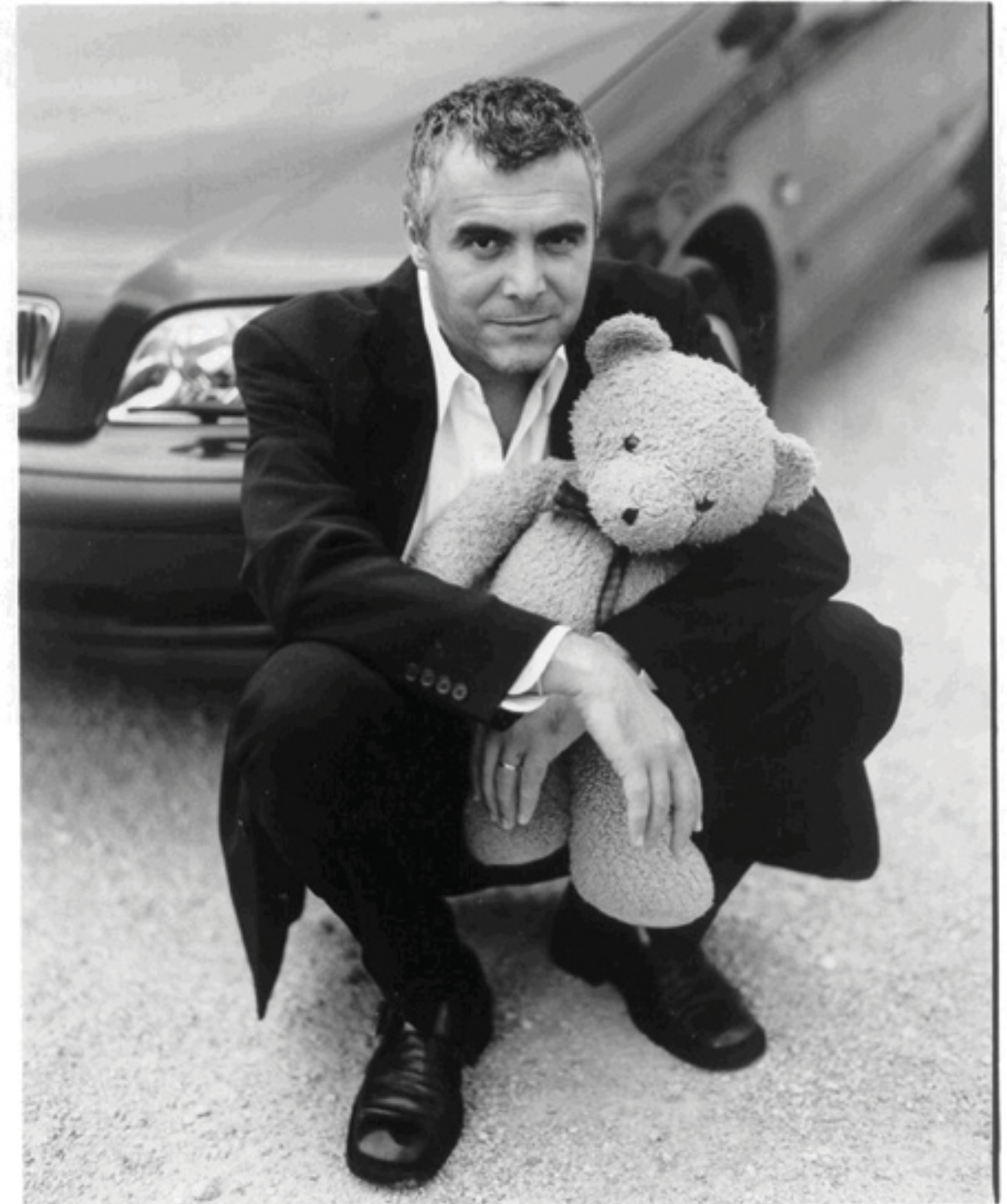
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\* Praslovan 'The Ancient Slav'  
\*\* Lačni Franz 'Hungry Franz'.





Anja Hreščak, photo: archive

# In Slovenia, you can sleep in an igloo

Apart from skiing and cross-country tracks, the management of the Slovenian ski slopes took care of additional attractions this year. They built Eskimo villages on Rogla and Krvavec and a snowboarding and free-style ski park on Vogel and Rogla respectively. This year's winter brought reasons for celebration to ski slope managers, as the season is far better than last year. Plenty of natural snow puts smiles on skier's faces, as it enables them to ski better and longer into the season. More visitors are using all the Slovenian ski slopes.

## Eskimo villages on Krvavec and Rogla

The cable railways of the largest Slovenian ski centre, Pohorje, started running in mid-December. Alongside existing capacities, they opened a new six-seat chair lift called Pisker II, and a new ski track, believed by skiers to be among the best on Pohorje, if not in the entire country. In future, they plan to extend the track down to the valley, to make it accessible by car.

Pohorje has more than 41.5 kilometres of slopes of varying difficulty, at between 325 and 1327 meters above sea level. There are 27 kilometres of cross-country tracks. The slopes are linked by a system of 5 chair lifts, 16 ski lifts and one circle-cabin cableway. The interesting thing about Pohorje is that it is practically on the doorstep of Maribor city centre, so you can reach the cableway by public transport.

A few kilometres away, on Rogla, an Eskimo village was built again this year due to its great popularity last year. You can even spend the night in the big igloos, for which the demand is extremely high, Rogla officials say. Beside the skiers, for whom all the ski tracks were re-made (100 hectares of surface, 11 lifts and two four-seat chair lifts, plus several tens of kilometres of cross-country tracks), snowboarders have reason to be happy, too. As in previous years, they can enjoy the park built especially for them and free-style skiers.

A similar Eskimo village was built on Krvavec, too. Last year, the igloo, offering food, beverages and accommodation for the night, was visited by as many as 10,000 visitors. This year, the village was expanded from one to two igloos. They have the capacity for groups of up to 120 people. It took approximately 8500 tons of snow to build the village. It was made with the balloons used to cover tennis courts. The village on Krvavec recently received the Golden Sower award for the most innovative Slovenian tourist product.

This year, Krvavec ski slope, which was covered in three meters of snow in mid-February, celebrates its 50th anniversary. The event was frequented by many beginners on Krvavec, remembering how, 50 years ago, they came to the mountain, covered with blankets, with wooden skis and sticks, not knowing what to expect. They had to walk uphill in order to ski, so most of the skiing pioneers agree that 1960 was a milestone - a freight cable car connection from Gospica to the tower was opened. Another significant event took place six years later, when they opened a single-seat chair lift from Tiha dolina to Njivice. The celebration of half a century of skiing on Krvavec was marked by the opening of a new four-seat chair lift at Tiha dolina.

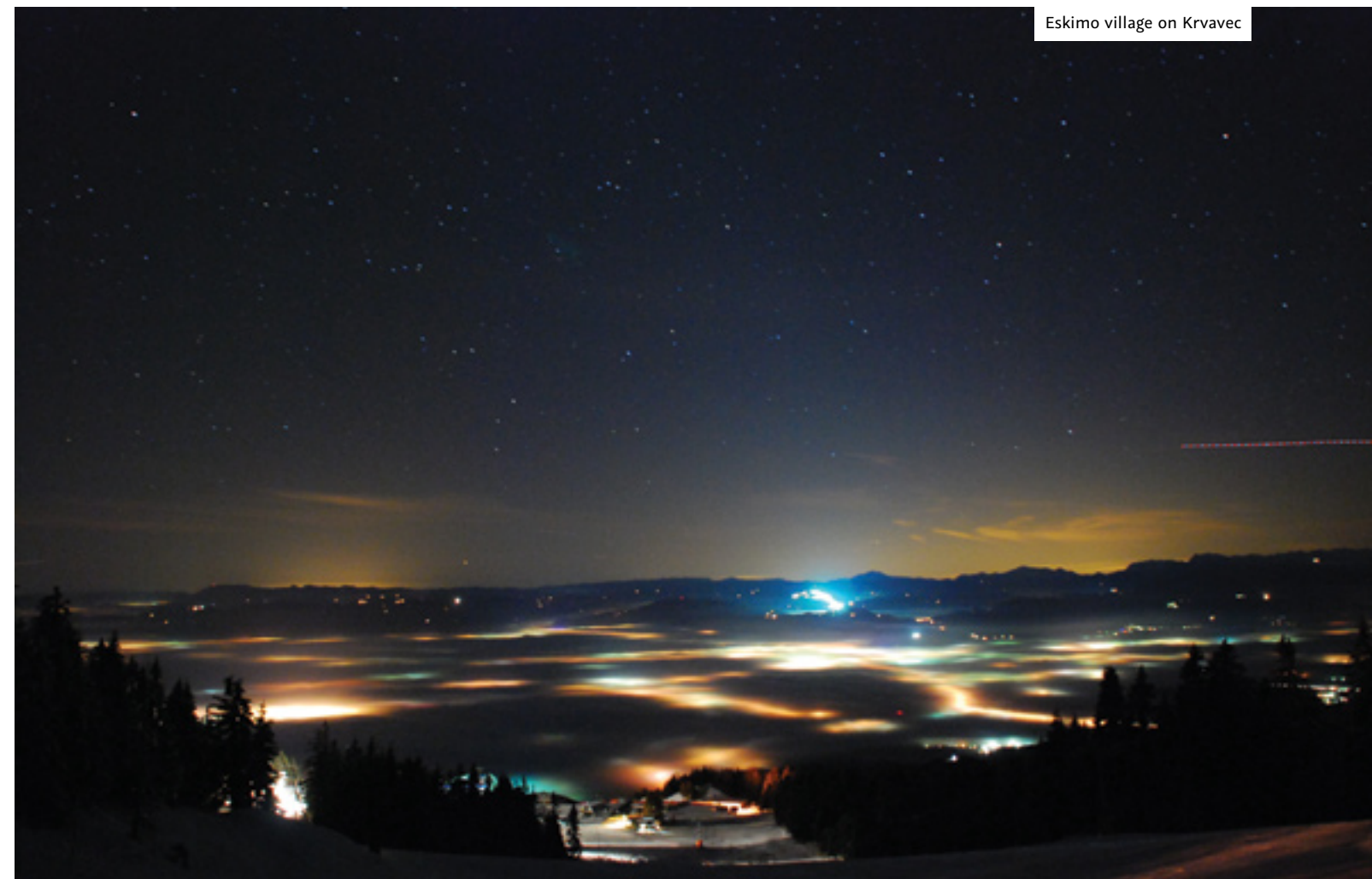
Meanwhile, more than three meters of snow have been recorded on Mt. Vogel, above Lake Bohinj. Beside almost 19 kilometres of permanent track, as on Rogla, they offer a park for snowboarders and free-style skiers.

## Excellent season even in less known resorts

Even less known Slovenian ski slopes report a promising season. Out of all the ski slopes, Kanin, without doubt, has the most snow. If we added up all the snowfall between previous year's November and last year's December, Kanin would have a snow cover of 11 meters. Due to warm weather, some of the snow has already gone, so the station at the top of the mountain has some 880 centimetres of snow. To avoid accidents, workers on Kanin trigger artificial avalanches.

Due to plentiful snowfall and an avalanche in January, a pillar of the cable car between stations C and D was damaged. Management

Eskimo village on Krvavec



Eskimo village on Rogla





solved the problem by offering free transport to hotel guests to the ski slope of Žlebe (Sella Nevea) and Tarvisio in Italy. But in the second half of February, workers on Kanin finished repairing the damaged pillar, at 1884 meters, and restarted the service before the school holidays.

At the beginning of February, the two hotels in Bovec at the footsteps of Kanin, had 50 per cent occupancy. The guests were mainly from Italy. There were also a few Americans, Romanians, Hungarians and Czechs.

The management of Velika Planina ski slope, where there was about two meters of snow at the beginning of February, say they are happy with the number of visitors. It exceeded 20,000 even before the school winter holidays started, which is more than during the whole of last year's season.

They attribute the success of this season to more moderate ticket prices and also to a special offer – night sledding on an illuminated

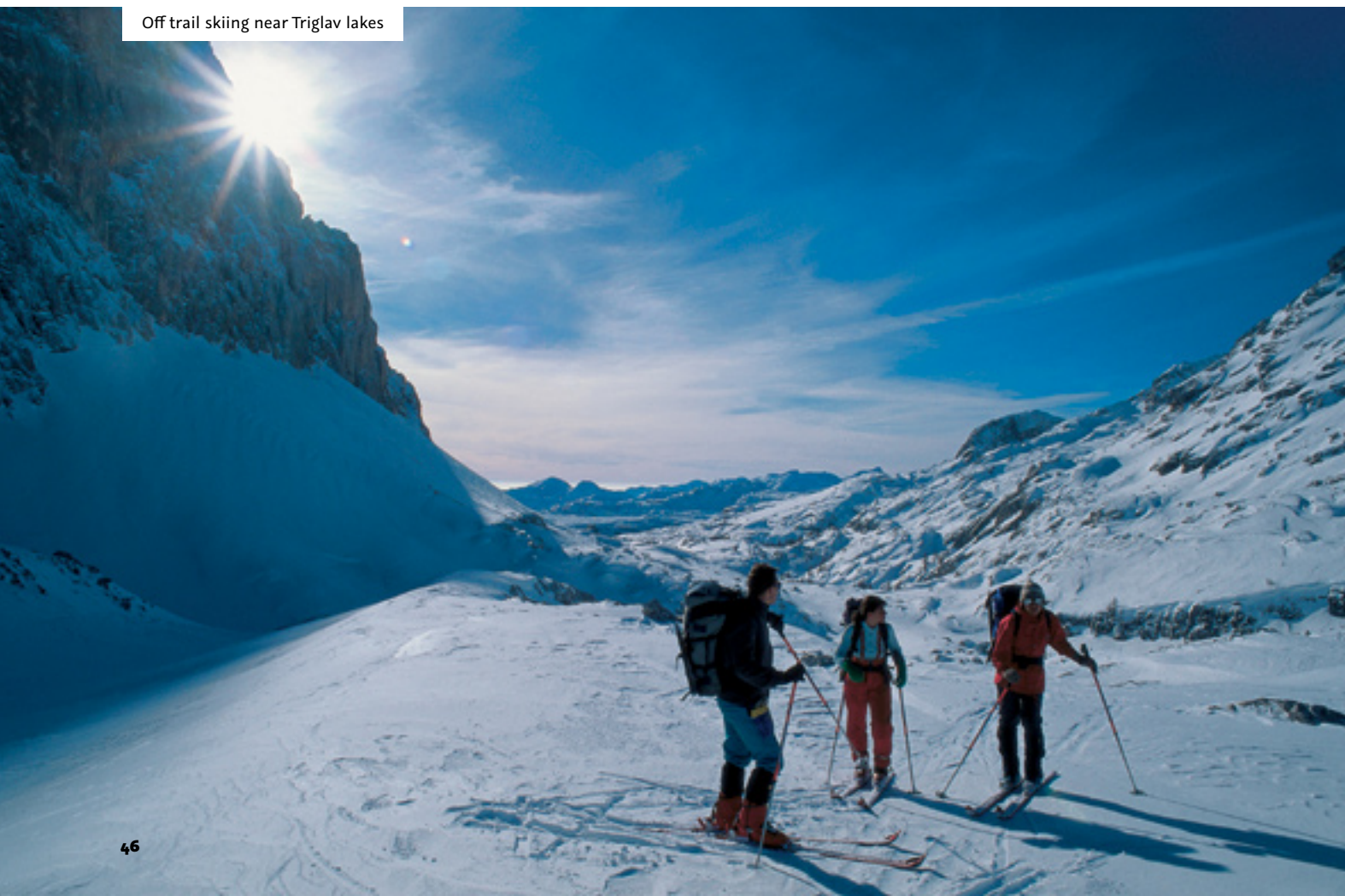
course. Obviously, sledding is very popular, as the ski centre hires out all of their 60 sledges on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. They believe that at least half the visitors bring sledges from home. Due to the high demand, sledding has been organised even on Thursdays and other days for groups that register in advance, since February. Naturally, sledding is something you can do on Velika Planina in the daytime as well.

This year's season is expected to be better than last year's in most resorts, the employees at Cerklno Ski Centre say. Last year they had a turn-out of about two million skiers in 100 skiing days. This year, the slopes are equipped with 100 computer-guided water cannons, so if the snowfall is modest, they can cover the 70 hectares of ski slopes and 18 kilometres of cross-country trails with artificial snow in 5-7 days. But this year there is far from a lack of snow. Apart from traditional winter sport festivities, they also organize ethnological and entertainment shows, similar to those on other slopes, as well as skiing courses, ski-kindergarten, winter play hours and creative workshops on snow for the youngest.



Ski slope on Krvavec

Off trail skiing near Triglav lakes



Snowboarding on Vogel



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



Kurenti are masks, who, according to a folk tale, cast-away the winter and bring springtime.

photo: Tomo Jeseničnik