

# Sinfo

January-February

The Best from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS**

Culture enriches us all

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

## SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

January-February 2017

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## ENJOY THE CULTURE

Each year early December, which marks the birth of the country's greatest poet, France Prešeren, heralds the start of a special focus on culture in Slovenia, which lasts until the end of February, the month in which he died. However, Slovenian culture is obviously not limited to the contributions made by a single man. It is diverse and varied, and continues to evolve through the emergence of new ideas and the efforts of many who are the leading lights in their own fields.

Slovenian culture is a complex whole, which encompasses art, knowledge, faith, ethics, laws and customs. We are here to create a new world within the confines of the physical plane we inhabit – a world of culture. In order to achieve this goal, the right spaces and presentations are needed, all of which are provided by the stages, theatres, museums and galleries we have in Slovenia. These platforms allow individuals to express themselves through their ideas and works, as well as through us – the public.

It is true that some forms of expression are easier than others when it comes to creating a national cultural identity. However, Slovenian culture has managed to survive and continues to evolve, and not just in the centre of the country. As proof of the age and resilience of our culture, 2017 will see the sesquicentennial of the Dramatic Society in Ljubljana, and thus the beginning of theatre in Slovenia, as well as the bicentenary of the start of music education. These occasions, and much more besides, serve as proof that culture is very much appreciated here.

This is because culture is recognised as making a vital contribution to the successful development of people, organisations, and communities, and so our objective should be to promote its continued development.

To sum up, may the new year bring you the best of luck, health and satisfaction, but it is our hope that you also take some time out to enjoy the culture around you. Indulge yourselves in this way, as culture enriches us all.

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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#### **CULTURE ENRICHES US ALL**

Culture is part of Slovenian statehood and cannot be reduced to a fashion accessory. We Slovenians appreciate our culture and achievements in music, literature, fine art, the performing arts and other areas. Moreover, we are increasingly aware that culture is not limited only to the traditional arts. In 2017 special attention will be devoted to Slovenia's greatest architect, Jože Plečnik, the man who combined aesthetics with values to create modern Ljubljana. His example, and the celebration of his work that will continue throughout the year, provide another way to think about culture.

## 150 YEARS OF THE LJUBLJANA DRAMATIC SOCIETY

# The development of one of the artistic treasures of Slovenia

ŠTEFAN VEVAR

PHOTO: SLOVENIAN THEATRE INSTITUTE ARCHIVES



The Ljubljana Dramatic Society was a pioneer of modern Slovenian theatre. It has thus witnessed three important stages in its history: the early organisation of theatrical practices, their institutionalisation, and finally the professionalization of Slovenian theatre. In this way it laid the foundations for a new era in Slovenian theatre, that of Europeanisation.

One of the main drivers for the establishment of the Dramatic Society was a desire among Slovenian intellectuals in the late 19th century for Slovenians to have their own theatre. The earlier history of the theatre in this country also contributed to this end, from Trubar's dialogues between father and son in his book *Abecednik (Abecedarium)*, to the Jesuit and Capuchin theatre productions, as well as Linhart and Drabosnjak, visiting Innsbruck comedians and Italian operistas, and more than 100 years of the German Theatre (founded in Slovenia in 1765).

**Anton Tomaž Linhart is a notable pioneer of modern Slovenian theatre, and someone whose work led to the founding of the Dramatic Society.**

Moreover, the general tenor of the age in the so-called Spring of Nations, the wave of political upheavals that occurred throughout Europe in 1848, raised awareness of the need for a truly Slovenian national theatre. The beginnings of the Dramatic Society thus date back to the Age of Metternich and Bach's absolutism (1848–1851), and include activities by the Slovenian Society in Ljubljana (1848–1851) and the Leopold Kordež Theatre Society (1850–1850), and the Ljubljana National Reading Room (1861–1867).

**The foundation of the Dramatic Society was further aided by the success of young patriots still working at the reading room stage, and the first meeting of the Society was held on 24 April 1867.**

The attendees realised that theatre had to go beyond reading rooms, and could not serve as an amusement, cultural institution and stage for declaring patriotic slogans all at the same time. The committee of the newly-founded Society, which comprised twelve members, elected Luka Svetec as president, Peter Grasselli as vice president and Josip Nolli as secretary. The ambitious founding project was reflected in the rules of the Dramatic Society, which were drawn up by Josip Stare and further elaborated on by Stare, Grasselli and Nolli.

### NOT JUST A SLIGHTLY BETTER AMUSEMENT

When Fran Levstik became president of the Dramatic Society in 1868, he introduced amendments to the rules in order to encourage the emergence of original Slovenian drama. From today's perspective he made an especially important contribution, since he relentlessly pursued the idea of a Slovenian theatre which would



Actor Ignacij Borštnik



Actor Anton Cerar Danilo

not only operate as a “slightly better amusement,” but also be a high temple of art that, as he wrote, “aesthetic judges [will] name the most beautiful flower of all poetry on Earth”. He was one of the few people with a large-scale vision of the future of Slovenian theatre, although unfortunately this could not be realized in political, cultural and social context of the 1860s.

One of the Society’s priorities was the theatre school, which was founded in 1869 and, with minor interruptions, remained open for fifty years. Although it was not able to prepare most actors to become professionals immediately on leaving, it taught the basics of theatrical gestures and rhetoric, so its students were able to perform on stage, and for this alone it is very important. Moreover, the managers of the Dramatic Society were aware that teachers in the school could not rely on practical knowledge, but also needed a theoretical background. For this reason, the Society published a work entitled *Priročna knjiga za glediške diletante* (A Handbook for Theatre Laymen) in 1868, which was the first such text in Slovenia. Another achievement was *Slovenska Talija*, a collection of translated and original plays, which was first published in 1867. With this, the Society acquired a library from which it was possible to create a repertoire which eventually grew to 120 books. This is another of the Society’s most significant achievements.

#### FINALLY, AN ART THEATRE WAS GAINING GROUND

**When the greatest Slovenian actor of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ignacij Borštnik (1778–1882), stepped on stage in 1882, it symbolically marked the beginning of a true art theatre in Slovenia.**

However, it was in January 1885, when Borštnik played the main role in Nestroy’s *He Will Go on a Spree* (*Einen Jux will er sich machen*), that the public truly recognised his enormous talent. In 1894, Borštnik moved on to perform at a larger theatre in Zagreb, and left behind a considerable void in the Slovenian scene, which was then dominated by Czech actors. Besides Borštnik, there were many other individuals who also contributed to the establishment of Slovenian theatre. Josip Nollí was among the group of actors who were took part in the Dramatic Society from its earliest days. Up until 1875, he worked as an organiser, actor, singer, translator and author of original plays. After his international career as

a baritone singer took off (1875–1890), he worked to improve the opera performances at the Provincial Theatre, where he worked as a director. Fran Gerbič contributed to the establishment of musical theatre in the country, returning to Ljubljana in 1886 after building a successful European career as a dramatic tenor and becoming, among other things, a conductor at the Dramatic Society. Others who pushed the boundaries of theatre at the time include Zofija Borštnik Zvonarjeva, Anton Verovšek, Avgusta Danilova, Anton Cerar Danilo, Hinko Nučič and Milan Skrbinšek. Anton Trstenjak was also working as an organiser and teacher at the drama school in these years, as well as being a theatrologist, while Ivan Cankar was working as a playwright, and Fran Govekar, Friderik Juvančič and Hinko Nučič as intendants. After Borštnik moved to Zagreb, the Czechs who left the deepest impressions on the local scene included the actor, director and intendant Rudolf Inemann, actor Rudolf Deyl, and conductor Hilarij Benišek.

The development of a Slovenian repertoire was another significant development. While long-based on trivial dramas, farces, comedies and singspiel, after the Society began performing in the newly built Provincial Theatre in 1892 (today’s Slovenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre), the repertoire was enriched with the addition of many plays and operas from abroad.

Initially, the Dramatic Society shared space in the new theatre with the German Theatre, but gradually became more prominent. After the Germans grew uncomfortable with this arrangement they built their own establishment in 1911, the Franz Josef Jubilee Theatre, which is now the Slovene National Theatre Drama in Ljubljana. In 1919, after the Germans left, the building was also open for Slovenian theatre. In 1900, the preeminent Slovenian playwright Ivan Cankar began his theatrical journey, although his plays were too advanced for the time and clashed with the expectations of the audience. As such, his works were not very popular at first, but became more widely accepted after World War I.

During the Great Depression, from 1914 to 1918, the theatre remained closed for four years and a cinema was set up in its building, but as the economy improved Slovenian theatre was reborn. The theatre was then nationalised in 1920, and in the new country – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, it became a systematically financed cultural institution, and the nation’s symbol of its cultural maturity.



Actress Zofija Borštnik Zvonar, wife of actor Ignacij Borštnik.

ACCESSIBLE AND NOBLE

## 200 years of public music schools in Slovenia

BORIS ŠTIH\*



Young violinist (Music School Archives)

Slovenians have always associated themselves with music and valued it very highly, and so as times changed it remained an important factor that brought people together. The teaching of music has played a central role in this process, and in different periods and under varied circumstances, a number of exceptional musicians worked relentlessly to build an excellent system of public music schools, which managed to survive despite the many obstacles it had to face.

Music schools have a very long and interesting history in Slovenia, with the oldest sources dating them back to the Middle Ages. Copies of musical discussions and accounts of early musical education have been preserved from the 12th century onwards. Such efforts were initially focused within monasteries, and later also in large parish centres. Music, especially singing and the basics of musical theory, was included in the Protestant school programs in the 16th century, and in Catholic institutions in the 17th and 18th centuries. Many textbooks have survived from this era, with the most historically important being one written by an organist from Novo Mesto (*Noten-Buch darinnen di Fundamenta zu dem Clavier oder Orgel enthalten*).

### THE FIRST MUSIC SCHOOLS

The first public music school opened its doors in Ljubljana in 1816, with the mission to offer music lessons that were free of charge and accessible to everyone. There, students and teacher trainees alike studied different instruments and acquired basic musical knowledge. When an advertisement for the position of a music teacher was published in newspapers in Klagenfurt, Graz, Vienna and Prague, a staggering 21 candidates applied, including the young Franz Schubert.

Roughly at the same time, in 1820, the music school of the Philharmonic Society started its classes. Organized by a body called the *Philharmonische Gesellschaft* (1794–1919), this was one of the oldest civic societies in the former Habsburg Monarchy. The Society was founded by citizens of Ljubljana, the so-called musical dilettantes, with the aim of encouraging music, and especially instrumental music. They organised concerts with their Orchestra

and, to meet their own needs, started a music school for stringed and wind instruments. The society had honorary members, including such luminaries as Haydn, Beethoven and Paganini. In 1891, a wonderful concert hall was built in Ljubljana – the *Tonhalle* in Kongresni trg square, which today houses the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Later on, music schools were gradually opened in other Slovenian towns and cities, such as Trieste, Maribor, Celje and Ptuj. At first, music schools were established within the German musical soci-



Music Lyceum in Ljubljana, circa 1850, drawing, Narodni muzej Slovenije (Slovenian National Museum)

eties, but later, as the reading room movement progressed, Slovenian music schools also started opening.

### The Glasbena matica Society played the most notable role in founding Slovenian music schools.

It opened its own school in 1882 and continued by establishing associated institutions in Novo Mesto, Celje, Kranj, Trieste, Gorica, Maribor and Ptuj. The basic aim of these efforts was to encourage musical creativity and interpretation among the Slovenian people.

#### MUSIC CLASSES OFFER GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Slovenian music schools experienced an important development after World War I. In 1919, the first Conservatory was founded, and two decades later the Music Academy opened. Thereafter, a

number of music schools were opened and classes thus became widely accessible.

Although such developments were interrupted by World War II, in 1945 the number of music schools started to increase rapidly again, and the network expanded to include all large Slovenian towns and cities, with subsidiaries also opened in rural areas.

### From 1945 to 1960 the number of music schools grew five-fold, and had increased by nine times by 1990.

The Organization and Financing of Education Act, adopted in 1991, guaranteed uniform financing for music schools and special forms of work with talented students.

#### MUSIC IN SLOVENIA TODAY

There are 69 music schools in Slovenia today, 54 public and 15 private ones, offering official educational programs in music and dance. Almost 26,000 children attend such schools, and students from among these often achieve excellent results at international competitions, with many joining leading orchestras after graduation. Following the spirit with which they were first established, music schools are open to children from all social classes if they show sufficient musical ability. Since music is known to have positive effects on the overall development of young people, enabling them to grow their rational and emotional sides, and thus helping them to become more balanced individuals, such accessibility is especially important.

Slovenian music schools hold individual lessons in playing instruments, thus ensuring a very high quality of teaching. Besides working with their chosen instruments, children also attend classes in music theory, which allows them to read music and develop in terms of musical performance and creation.

Group classes encourage socialisation, and from a musical point of

view require the individual players to learn how to work in a group context. Especially important here are the presence of chamber groups, choirs and orchestras in these schools. By playing in a group, students learn how to tailor their personal interpretations and musicality to those of other players, and develop the skills needed for shared work, discipline and responsibility. As such, a diverse programme is included in music schools through numerous solo and orchestra concerts, contributing to the cultural lives of many Slovenian towns and cities.

As a jubilee year, 2016 has seen a number of events which connected musicians in different ways.

### The Slovenian School Museum prepared a retrospective exhibition, and a scientific symposium was organised by the Music Academy.

The most prominent projects include the gala concert, which featured three symphonic orchestras comprised of the best young musicians from the country. On this occasion, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, awarded the Slovene Music Schools Association with the Silver Order of Merit.

*\*Boris Štih is president of the Slovene Music Schools Association*



The Organ Hall at the Velenje Music School (Music School Archives)

A map of Slovenian music schools in 2016  
Source: Ukom Archives





A dark, narrow tunnel with a path leading to a bright light at the end. The tunnel walls are rough and textured, and the path is illuminated by a light source at the far end, creating a strong contrast and a sense of depth.

SLOVENIAN HISTORICAL TOWNS AND CITIES

## Treasures from old towns and cities

MATEJA HAFNER DOLENC\*

Old Slovenian towns and cities, which are proud of their treasures, are connected under the Association of Historical Cities of Slovenia.

Idrija  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The Association of Historical Cities of Slovenia was founded to foster cooperation among like-minded towns, cities, individuals and companies, and its members are well aware that the old, historical centres of such places are both artistic treasures and tourist attractions. We thus strive to maintain everything our ancestors created over the decades, centuries, and even millennia, as this represents an evolving record of their lives, daily work and creativity. All this with one goal – to preserve everything that gives our country its soul.

Each of the historic towns and cities tells its own special story. A story that is created every day and all year round. Each time you tell the story of a place, the characters and events come to life, be it on a stone-built market or in the dark tunnels below it, in a big castle or small lodge on the outskirts, in a cold attic or dark basement.

**You are invited on a journey through 14 historical towns and cities, where stories are poured into adventures, and adventures into precious memories.**

**Idrija** tells a story of mercury ore, which brought international fame to the town centuries ago, with the mine now placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a remarkable technical monument.

**Kamnik** is a town located at the foot of the majestic Kamnik Alps, where the natural and cultural heritage intertwine, and tourists come to enjoy these throughout the year.

**Koper** is a city boasting a rich history, with some of its greatest treasures and stories dating back to the time of the Venetian Republic, while also offering outstanding food and wines from Istria.

**Kostanjevica na Krki** is the only city in Slovenia established on a river island, as created by the magical Krka river, and is a place of artists. The Božidar Jakac Gallery is housed here in a picturesque former Cistercian monastery.

**Kranj** has stories told in verse by the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren. Ancient jewellery and artefacts from Late Antiquity also tell the tale of this settlement, which for thousands of years has been situated between the canyon of two rivers, the Kokra and Sava.

**Metlika** is a picturesque city, which is a melting pot of cultures, religions and nations. It also has an exceptionally rich history associated with the protection and defence of this area, as the city was the seat of the Habsburg Military Frontier for around 200 years.



Metlika  
Photo: Jošt Gantar

**Novo Mesto** is the perhaps most beautiful river city in Slovenia. The local museum houses a remarkable exhibition which tells the story of the late Iron Age, when the city traded with all of Europe.

**Piran** is a city built on salt pans, and even today visitors can admire the salt production facilities presented as both natural and cultural heritage. Piran is the birthplace of the famous violinist Giuseppe Tartini, to whom the town has dedicated a music festival that takes place every summer.

**Ptuj** is a place where residents tell stories from the Roman era onwards, and the 1376 city statute testifies that this is one of the oldest cities in Slovenia. The mystical folklore tradition of this area is preserved by kurents, masked figures who wear sheepskin costumes and chase away evil by dancing at the end of winter.

**Radovljica** is a medieval town that welcomes visitors with fresco-covered buildings, city walls, the only surviving moat in Slovenia, a museum of beekeeping, and a fantastic chocolate festival.

**Slovenske Konjice**, located under the mysterious Konjiška gora mountain range and wine growing hills, has a market town design that is a thousand years old, thus helping it to receive many awards as the most beautiful excursion city, and a gold medal at the European Entente Florale competition.

**Škofja Loka** is the most well-preserved medieval city in the country, and the image of a black African on the local coat-of-arms has inspired many stories. The Škofja Loka Passion Play, the oldest play in the Slovenian language, tells the story of Christ's suffering, and was placed on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage due to its unique status.

**Tržič** used to be a town of shoemakers, but now only the Shoemaker's Sunday event reminds us of the old traditions. Marshal Radetzky, whose famous march is traditionally played by the Vienna Philharmonic every New Year's Day, also used to live in the town.

**Žužemberk**, where the mighty Žužemberk Castle rises above the steep cliff above the river, is the venue of annual market-city days. Stories of the castle continue to live on among the locals, and if lucky you may hear some.



Kranj  
Photo: Matej Vranič

**PEARL STORIES**

Like pearls are put on a string, we too take the stories from our towns and cities to make a colourful and treasured necklace that tells the tales of historical places.

When inquisitive tourists, regular visitors or random passers-by walk through an old town or city gate, the fairy tale aspects of the historical place come to life, and the story is no longer just a tale, but instead one of the treasures of the area to be cherished.

Such stories can become one of the masterpieces that have survived millennia, still living narratives that were written by time.

To commemorate these stories, members of the Association of Historic Cities of Slovenia issued a monograph to celebrate the 15th anniversary of its existence and operation. The monograph initially presents the related towns and cities, and then three of the most successfully implemented renovations of residential, commercial or public buildings in each of them. The book aims to show that, although old, Slovenian cities and towns are vibrant and full of life. As the author, Prof. Dr. Živa Deu, writes in the introduction:

“The wealth of our country is therefore unambiguously measured by the beauty of the old city and town centres. With their uniqueness, diversity and originality forged through centuries, they are an important part of the cultural heritage which belongs to each of their territories, as well as their people.”

You are thus invited to take a journey through Slovenia, where the Slovenian historical towns and cities welcome you with open arms.

*\*The author is Secretary General at the Association of Historical Cities of Slovenia.*



Piran  
Photo: Barbara Kožar

## GULF STATES DAY

## Slovenia determined to strengthen multilateral cooperation with the Gulf States

UROŠ MAHKOVEC  
PHOTO: BOR SLANA/STA



On 15 December 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held the first Gulf States Day international conference in Ljubljana.

The aim of the conference was to define the development challenges and opportunities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and also to strengthen bilateral ties between Slovenia and the six GCC members (the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman). The event aims to evolve into a regular meeting that provides a space for addressing common challenges and finding the means and basis for possible joint action in certain areas.

The conference was attended by politicians, business people, intellectuals and cultural professionals from the GCC states, Slovenia and the European Union, as well as representatives of regional and international organisations. It was held under the patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec. The conference consisted of three panel discussions: Development Visions for the New World Reality, Energy from Renewable Sources for a Sustainable Future, and Development Paradigms – One for All or Several for Better Results?

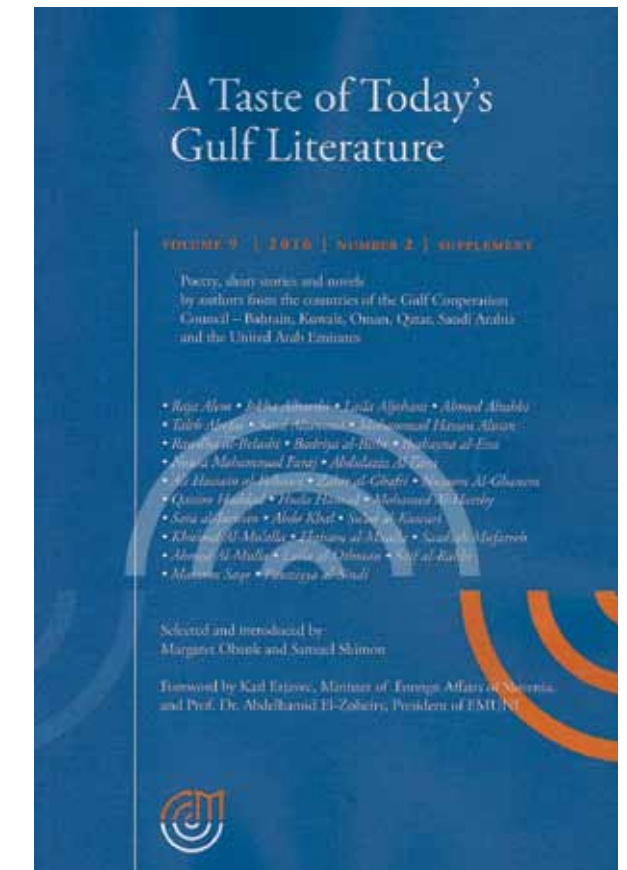
**In his opening address the Slovenian Foreign Minister, Karl Erjavec, stated that the conference had been organised “to find common denominators for dealing with the most pressing problems, such as climate change, energy security and sustainability, as well as strengthening the flow of investments.**

Slovenia thus has a strong interest in cooperating with the GCC states, which have well-thought-out policies for growth and economic development.” Among the Ministry’s priorities are the opening of an embassy in one of the GCC states, as well as the starting of direct flights to the area.

The GCC Secretary General, Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, said in his opening address that despite the short duration of the visit he felt the participants would succeed in taking advantage of all the opportunities offered by this event, and would establish warm and productive relations with their Slovenian partners.

“The GCC states wish to be a pillar of stability in the region, especially in today’s time of rapid and turbulent change. Our common

vision is to maintain prosperity in the broadest sense. We are a central part of the Arab and Islamic world, and are aware of our international responsibilities in this regard. For this reason we are constantly striving for new partnerships, and believe that human development is one of the main sources of strength in cooperation.”



The events accompanying the conference included the presentation of passages from literary works, in a publication entitled *A Taste of Today's Gulf Literature*. Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon, who participated in the launch of this work, are among the world experts in Arab literature, and compiled a selection of contemporary Gulf writing for the *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies (IJEMS)*, which is published by EMUNI University, especially for Gulf States Day. The publication showcases 29 authors from all six Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE).

# PLEČNIK'S HOUSE IN LJUBLJANA WINS THE INTERNATIONAL PIRANESI AWARD

## The Arrea architecture firm impressed the international commission

DANILA GOLOB



The Plečnik House has exceptional cultural value, since it is one of the few houses of an artist that is extremely well-preserved and includes the original furnishings and fittings.  
Photo: MGML Archives

After a complete renovation, the house of Jože Plečnik, the greatest Slovenian architect, came to life once again in the autumn of 2015. Restorers, conservators, architects, designers, landscapers and other professionals did an excellent job, as evidenced by the domestic and international awards the renovated Plečnik House has won.

Architect Jože Plečnik lived and worked in a house located in the Trnovo district of Ljubljana from 1921 until his death in 1957. The house was opened to the public in 1974, but not in its entirety. In 2005, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia prepared the groundwork for declaring it a monument of national importance, together with Plečnik's entire architectural opus. The Municipality of Ljubljana's initiative for the complete renovation of the house in 2007 gave new impetus to take these efforts further. This led to the preparation of precise documentation for the house, recording of its existing state, and elaboration of the conservation plan. In 2010, the institution of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana took over the management of the Plečnik House.

The complete renovation of the complex took place from 2013 to 2015.

**The new facility now provides room for a permanent Plečnik exhibition, temporary exhibitions, study centre for researchers, Plečnik classroom for educational programmes and events, and a museum shop.**

The original ambience of the home is maintained, with many of Jože Plečnik's personal items and pieces of equipment on display, including clay, plaster and wooden models made for various projects, as well as the architect's personal library and drawing tools.

The renovated house has a lobby, hallway, kitchen, bedroom with bathroom, small reception room, circular staircase, studio on the first floor, office and conservatory.

### TEAMWORK

The architect Maruša Zorec was the project designer responsible for the renovation. She works for Arrea, arhitektura, d.o.o., and was chosen for her work on a similar renovation project, the castle dairy farm in Ormož, for which she received the Prešeren Fund award in 2012. Maruša joined the project in the middle of the process, with the associated research and preparations lasting for eight years, and her own work together with the implementation requiring about three.

"The planning and execution involved a large number of experts," she said, "such as my colleagues Maša Živec and Matjaž Bolčina, without whom the project would not have turned out as well as it did, since together we overcame all sorts of creative dilemmas. The conservator Irena Vesel was also very important, as she overlooked the planning and implementation with great devotion, and the work of the Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) representative Jerneja Batič was invaluable, as she stood by our side and coordinated the project with MOL's vision of how the house would someday come to life. The representatives of the museum, who helped create conditions for the realisation of proposals, were also involved in the process from the beginning. A very important role was given to the experts from the restoration centre, especially to Mateja Kavčič, with whom we collaborated very well with regard to identifying and finding materials, processing them and both

renewing and integrating certain structures into the house, so that it has an authentic and unified image.”

**The project dealt with the house at various different levels – from the organizational design, and thus placement of different programs and their integration inside the house, to the architectural design of rooms, use of daylight, set-up of the exhibition, and so on.**

**AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR THIS DEMANDING RENOVATION PROJECT**

In their work, the architects faced the question of how much they should interfere with the original architecture in order to meet the modern requirements and conditions of the profession (in terms of issues such as static rehabilitation, renewing certain installations, fire safety, and the like). It is important that in such cases one intervenes only when truly needed. As Zorec explained, the rooms designed and inhabited by Plečnik offered an insight into the intimacy of the architect’s home, a feeling completely different to that gained from his monumental works. These rooms remained much as they were, as the restoration focused mostly on the other parts of the house, where the supplementary programs of the museum now take place. Their greatest challenges were how to arrange the entrance to make it more lively, how to enable the operation of a modern museum within the old shell of the building, and how to design all the interventions so they would not come too close nor too far from Plečnik’s style.

One solution that the Arrea architects are especially proud of is the arrangement of the central area that brings together the entire contents of the museum. They also point to a door they found, cleaned, installed and presented as a possible Plečnik intervention, which now masks the original entrance with an extremely beautiful wooden doorframe.



Plečnik’s room in the tower.  
Photo: Tadej Bolta



Jože Plečnik in front of the entrance to the cylindrical extension, October 1926  
Photo: MGML Archives

The sensitivity of the architectural interventions made to this building of historical value was also recognized by an international jury, which traditionally consists of lecturers at the annual Piran Days of Architecture, and which awarded the Arrea team the Piranesi International Architectural Award for the renovation of Plečnik House.

The jury noted how the building's development over time was highlighted by means of small interventions, as well as to the quality of each detail and the ability of the team to design both existing and new elements. Upon receiving the award, Maruša Zorec said she was very happy about the prize since it meant that the jury members and her peers recognised what they wanted to achieve with the project. She added, "Architects do not explain their work with words, since the work speaks for itself and each individual can recognize different thoughts, relationships, contacts, atmospheres, and so on in it."

Jože Plečnik (1872 – 1957) was a Slovene architect who had a major impact on the modern identity of the city of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, most notably by designing the iconic Triple Bridge and the Slovene National and University Library building, as well as the embankments along the Ljubljanica River, the Ljubljana open market buildings, the Ljubljana cemetery, parks, plazas etc. Besides in Ljubljana, he worked in Vienna, Belgrade and on the Prague Castle. He is also a founding member of the Ljubljana School of Architecture.



Due to its uniqueness and the fragility of some of the items, a visit to the house is only possible under professional guidance, which is adapted to different age groups and limited to only seven people at a time.  
Photo: Tadej Bolta



Exhibition Place  
Photo:Tadej Bolta

In 2017, Ljubljana will enter into the first year of a decade dedicated to Jože Plečnik, whose masterpieces have helped to characterise the urban environments of Ljubljana, Vienna and Prague. During the complex renovation process, the architects had the opportunity to get to know and “feel” this great master better.

“Plečnik experimented with materials and architectural elements in an interesting way,” Zorec said. “His house was a polygon where he tested different approaches to both assembling things as well as finding new materials and techniques. In their own homes, everyone should allow themselves to go beyond the conventional solutions and discover new possibilities.”

#### **Plečnik House nominated for Europe’s best museum – EMYA 2017**

Along with the domestic and international awards that the Plečnik House has received since its renovation in autumn 2015 (the Plečnik Medal 2016 for architecture, Stele Award for conservation, Valvasor Award 2015 for unique achievements in the field of museology, and the international Piranesi Award 2016), its nomination for the EMYA 2017 award is yet another of the honours which place it among the best European museums.

The announcement of the winners and awards ceremony will be held next May in Zagreb at an event marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Museum Forum, which operates under the Council of Europe.



## VITTORE CARPACCIO IN SLOVENIA

# Rediscovering works of a Renaissance master in Slovenia

BARBKA GOSAR HIRCI, SARA RATOŠA



Detail from the painting *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*.  
Photo: Andreja Ravnikar, RC ZVKDS

The Renaissance painter Vittore Carpaccio was born in Venice at the end of the 15th century. His most famous pictures depict legends of the saints. Although focusing on highly sacred motifs, Carpaccio also included details from everyday life in his work.

In 1516, he created a large altarpiece by the name of *Madonna with Child on the Throne and Six Saints*, which still adorns the Cathedral of the Assumption in Koper.

Five hundred years after Carpaccio's time, the cultural scene of the Primorska region was filled with events held under the name of *Carpaccio500*. The fundamental purpose of the project was to raise awareness and educate the public about the cultural wealth of Slovenia. At the restoration workshop held in the atrium of the Koper Regional Museum, which

**was prepared by the Restoration Centre from the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and by the Museum, attendees could see the ongoing restoration of the last documented paintings by Vittore Carpaccio, titled *Massacre of the Innocents* and the *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*.**

These works, which date back to 1523, were on the right wing of an organ cabinet. The left wing, which was also decorated by two Carpaccio paintings, was unfortunately lost during various historical upheavals over the centuries.



Detail from the painting *The Massacre of the Innocents* after removal of darkened varnish.  
Photo: Emina Frljak Gašparovič, RC ZVKDS



Presentation of conservation and restoration work to the public in the lobby of Koper Regional Museum  
Photo: Emina Frljak Gašparović

### DISCOVERY OF ORIGINAL SECTIONS

Details of the complex conservation and restoration procedures were presented on posters and digitally in the atrium of the Museum, with the media and public showing great interest. The interactions between the conservators and restorers, who carried out the restoration work, and individuals from schools and kindergartens, as well as foreign and domestic visitors, proved there is widespread interest in such events if properly presented.

The conservation and restoration project was launched in 2010. An extensive series of natural science studies carried out by local and foreign experts determined the elements the paintings were composed of. Various pigments and binder substances were thus identified. The material that the master himself, or perhaps his apprentices, used to prepare canvas support was also determined. Understanding the painter's technology and analysing the state of the paintings is the basis for any successful restoration treatments of damaged artworks. When first received for the conservation and restoration process in 2015, the paintings were extremely dark and dirty. There was also extensive damage to the paint layers, as well as areas that had been retouched and overpainted. The surfaces of both paintings were extremely dark, mainly due to the use of non-original varnishes. One of the conservation and restoration procedures was thus the removal of this darkened varnish from both paintings.

**Once this was completed, the beautiful range of colours used by the artist was revealed, along with the masterfully painted details.**

When working on the Massacre of the Innocents the conservators came upon a surprise. The removal of non original paint layer revealed the original portrait of a girl. Once the conservation and restoration procedures are completed, the revelation of the original paintings and remarkable colours used by Carpaccio will allow a visual and stylistic re-definition of the Slovenian art produced by this Renaissance master.



When culture and the arts are closely integrated with education, interesting projects come to life, opening many doors, bringing people together, facilitating partnerships and offering many opportunities for cultural development.

The importance of such cooperation is reflected in numerous successful projects that allow for integration and dissemination of ideas in the fields of culture, education and training. These include events such as I am Growing up with a Book, Cultural Bazaar, Cultural Heritage Week, a collection of handbooks for arts and cultural education, and various smaller projects that promote the integration of kindergartens and schools with cultural institutions or artists at the local level.

The Cultural Bazaar, which has this year will be organised for the ninth consecutive time, is one of the major national projects in Slovenia. It is carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, and in collaboration with the National Education Institute of Slovenia

and various cultural institutions. During all the years this event has been organized, the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre in Ljubljana has been the executive producer of the project, and the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO has acted as its honorary sponsor and partner.

The Cultural Bazaar is intended for the training and education of professionals in kindergartens and schools, cultural institutions and the wider public. In its nine years of existence, starting in 2009, the Bazaar has contributed significantly to the dissemination of the cultural riches that Slovenia has to offer, and thus awakened interest in the arts and cultural education among both experts and general public. This is important, as various studies show that we can use the arts and cultural education to increase motivation

## CULTURAL BAZAAR

# Slovenian culture in one day

NATAŠA BUCIK, NADA POŽAR\*  
PHOTO: NADA ŽGANK, CANKARJEV DOM CULTURAL AND CONGRESS CENTRE ARCHIVES

# KULTURNI BAZAR

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## CULTURE AT A GLANCE

[www.kulturnibazar.si](http://www.kulturnibazar.si) **30 March** © **cankarjev dom** *admission free*

and creativity in children and young people, and so develop the foundations for a more creative and productive society.

In Slovenia, and indeed worldwide, experts are convinced that giving children and young people the experience of high-quality arts and cultural education is vital for their integral development. For this reason, the Cultural Bazaar encompasses a broad range of high-quality cultural and educational projects.

**The main part of the Cultural Bazaar project is a one-day training session for professionals, which this year will be held on 30 March 2017.**

A series of lectures, workshops and expert discussions related to various fields of art, as well as guided tours on the subjects of theatre, music, and dance, plus film performances and performances by artists and artistic groups, will be held in classrooms and halls, while almost three hundred cultural institutions from all over Slovenia will present details of their work in showrooms set up in three lobbies.

On this day Cankarjev dom opens its doors to the general public – not only to children and young people, but everyone who is interested in culture and cultural education. The Cultural Bazaar is free of charge for all visitors, since it is educational in nature and has the aim of creating greater cohesion and integration within the local scene – especially among institutions which may seem



The one-day fair hosts almost 300 cultural institutions as well as numerous Slovenian artists.

to have little in common at first glance, such as those active in the environment and culture.

**Beyond this one day, the Bazaar is a project that works as a focal point for professionals from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, cultural institutions and the general public throughout the whole year.**

The [www.kulturnibazar.si](http://www.kulturnibazar.si) web portal offers important information from the field of arts and cultural education – from data on the latest offers for children and other young people, and professional

training in many different fields of culture, to competitions and the selection of national and international academic literature on arts and cultural education. It is a unique event that works at connecting various participants, who are presented in the related Catalogue of Cultural Education, along with details of their activities. This catalogue is mostly a tool aimed at professionals in education and training, so that they can more easily plan cultural activities and become more integrated with cultural institutions. It is also a useful guide for anyone planning after-school and extra-curricular activities for children and young people, and so making efforts to provide high-quality and creative ways for such individuals to spend their free time.

*\* Nataša Bucik, Ministry of Culture and Nada Požar, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport*



Arts and cultural education contributes significantly to young people's motivation and creativity.

## INTRODUCING AND PROMOTING SLOVENIA IN THE WORLD

# Soft power of cultural diplomacy

UROŠ MAHKOVEC, GREGOR JAGODIČ, BARBARA KOŽELJ  
PODLOGAR, NUŠKA ZAKRAJŠEK, ANDREJA ŠIMENC



Promoting Slovenia's culture and its identity, creativity, and artists abroad is one of the key elements of the country's foreign policy. In previous years, a lot of work has been done to support the Slovenian economy, which is very export-oriented. Nevertheless, the promotion of cultural identity remains of special value, often complementing or preceding economic diplomacy.

In a time of budget constraints, Slovenia has managed to establish two cultural centres – in Vienna and Berlin. Although they are still quite modest, operating within the residential embassies in these two cities, they are the nucleus of a future network.

**Overall, Slovenian embassies are very active in introducing and promoting Slovenian cultural creativity, which is especially vibrant and rich, in cities around the world.**

The state has set up a special financing fund dedicated to the organisation of individual cultural events throughout its entire diplomatic network. One of the basic guidelines is that each diplomatic event organised by the embassy should also be used for presenting Slovenian cultural creativity in the broadest meaning of the word.

### VIENNA

Culture has always played a very significant role throughout the history of the Slovenian nation, and of Slovenia as an independent country. With the purpose of promoting culture and art effectively and in an organised manner, the Republic of Slovenia followed the example of other nations and established its first Slovenian Cultural Information Centre in 2011 in Austria, called SKICA.

SKICA is a joint project of the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs that has clear objectives, namely to introduce Slovenian art to the Austrian and international public, bring together Slovenian and Austrian artists, connect national cultural institutions, bring Slovenian projects and artists to renowned Austrian festivals, fairs and other events, as well as to participate in bilateral relations at the highest level.

**The most important aim of SKICA is to raise the profile of Slovenian creativity in Austria.**

Since the EU places a high value on the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, we are now even more closely linked by culture, which is inseparably linked with the mobility of artists. It is exactly this awareness that serves as a foundation of the centre's actions, i.e. the notion that culture, through cultural diplomacy, also includes the implementation of foreign policy in international relations in the form of soft power. This gives culture a state representative function, in that it can be used to enhance Slovenia's presence on the international stage.

In order to ensure the successful operation of SKICA, it is vital that it is properly placed within the cultural space of Vienna and Austria. Although SKICA does not have its own facilities for hosting events, this has proven to be an advantage as presentations held at important Austrian locations reach a wider public and gain more recognition.



Skica, Austria.  
Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives

Since its establishment, SKICA has maintained partnerships with important festivals such as the Vienna Design Week, Wienerfestwochen, Literaturhaus Wien, Waves Vienna and others, and at the same time is an active partner in the EUNIC Austria network of cultural institutes.

Through EUNIC, SKICA has become a part of both the Austrian and European cultural landscapes. Each year, SKICA organises, co-organises and promotes from 35 to 40 events. Media responses,

attendance at the events and a growing interest in participation show that SKICA has already reached its original goals, and is now a successful model of a cultural centre.

#### BERLIN

The Slovenian cultural centre in Berlin opened its doors on 1 June 2016, when Slovenia was celebrating 25 years of independence. The newly-opened cultural centre, whose primary purpose is to

promote Slovenian culture and artists in Berlin and elsewhere across Germany, was founded in response to the wish for deeper relations between the two nations.

#### The Slovenian Cultural Centre in Berlin is the second Slovenian cultural institution in the German-speaking area.

This is not surprising, as historically speaking Slovenia has had strong ties with this region. The two Slovenian centres work together, in a coordinated manner, ensuring added value to the implementation of their programmes, which work to promote Slovenian culture and artists, of all genres, and establish links between governmental and non-governmental cultural institutions. They also provide support for Slovenian artists when they attend international festivals, fairs and so on.

The Slovenian Cultural Centre in Berlin has been active for nearly six months, and it is already evident that Slovenian artists are becoming more confident and recognised in this context, while their work contributes an important tile in the mosaic of the international art scene. Most of the performers in the projects carried out by the Slovenian Cultural Centre in Berlin have received good reviews, and thus invitations for further cooperation.

Indeed, there is growing interest in the events organised by the Slovenian Cultural Centre in Berlin, and with the Centre's aid many Slovenian institutions and artists have been hosted in the city for the first time. For example, the main Slovenian theatre company, the Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana, made its first appearance in Berlin with the play *Als ich tot war* (*When I was Dead*) by Ernst Lubitsch, adapted from his silent film, and performed in his theatre and the Babylon Cinema.

The Slovenian Cultural Centre in Berlin makes efforts to encourage Slovenian artists to create new pieces especially for German-speaking audiences, where they then have their opening nights.

This is certainly an added encouragement for Slovenian artists to produce more international work.

#### MOSCOW, THIS YEAR WILL MARK EVEN DEEPER CULTURAL COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA

The year 2016 was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Slovenia's independence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, addressed the guests at the opening of an exhibition called *Velika vojna v Krnskem pogorju. Sinovi Rusije v slovenskih Alpah* (*The great war in the Krn mountain range. The sons of Russia in the Slovenian Alps*) in the Museum of Contemporary Russian History. Following his speech, artist Dragan Živadinov carried out an informative performance in the vicinity of Red Square. In Saint Petersburg, the honorary consul of the Republic of Slovenia organised an exhibition called *I Feel Slovenia. I Feel at home*, to mark the anniversary of the nation's independence.

In the country that sent the first man into space, the opening of a memorial room at the Slovenian Embassy in Moscow dedicated to Herman Potočnik Noordung, the pioneer of space architecture, was certainly of a great value and interest.

In addition to such memories of the past, Russian experts in fields of culture and art did not overlook the impressive achievements of contemporary Slovenian artists.

#### The regular autumn programme of one of the most important Russian galleries, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, included an exhibition from the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana called *Neue Slowenisch Kunst: From Kapital to Capital*.

Its opening was attended by the Minister of Culture, Anton Peršak. His visit in September 2016, as well as signing a joint statement with the Russian Ministry of Culture on the presentation of Slove-



Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives

nian culture in the Russian Federation, and of Russian culture in the Republic of Slovenia for the 2017 and 2018 seasons, further encouraged the strengthening of bilateral relations in a cultural context.

The performance of the renowned Slovenian choir Carmina Slovenica, and their project *When the Mountain Changed its Clothing*, convinced the committee that it was worthy of Russia's most prestigious theatre award, and thus this group won the coveted Golden Mask.

The acclaimed M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University also hosted an international conference on the Slovenian language, literature and culture in a Slavic and European context in November 2016, which was organised by the Department of Slavic Languages. A comprehensive two-day conference programme was enriched by an exhibition of Slovenian grammar books and dictionaries, called *Poljub z jezikom (A Kiss with a Tongue)*.

The many successes of 2016 were rounded off with the opening of the Centre of Slavic Cultures at the Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, in co-operation with the International Foundation Forum of Slavic Cultures. The Centre serves as an additional platform for promoting Slovenian culture in the Russian Federation.

Other notable events of the previous year, as organised by the Slovenian Embassy in Moscow, included a literary evening with Ivo Svetinam, the Slovenian writer and president of the Slovene Writers' Association, held at the Rudomino library; a screening of the Slovenian film *Panika (Panic)* at the EU film festival in Kaliningrad; and the presentation of Slovenian products at the Winter Bazaar, a traditional charity fund-raiser in Moscow. The Slovenian Embassy in Moscow is now preparing for further cooperation with the Ministry of Culture in opening and implementing the Season of Slovenian Culture in 2017.

## WASHINGTON

Every year, the Embassy of Slovenia in Washington organises a range of cultural, public diplomacy, educational and science events – all highlighted in the weekly Embassy Newsletter and promoted through the Embassy's website, social, printed and even TV media. The Embassy has a spacious reception hall, which also serves as a gallery space and concert room. On these premises the Embassy often also hosts exhibitions curated by Slovenian museums.

Besides a series of cultural events held at the Embassy, including concerts, film screenings, plays, panel discussions, lectures, wine tastings, cooking lessons, tourist promotions and at least five exhibitions a year, the Embassy presents many of its events in collaboration with other embassies and consulates, non-governmental and nonprofit organisations, Slovenian societies and clubs in the USA, universities and other partner organisations.

**In 2016 alone, the Embassy organised around 140 events, trying to embrace all aspects of the arts, from architectural showcases to films, sculptures, paintings, visual arts, dance, theatre and music.**

Many of these events were dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

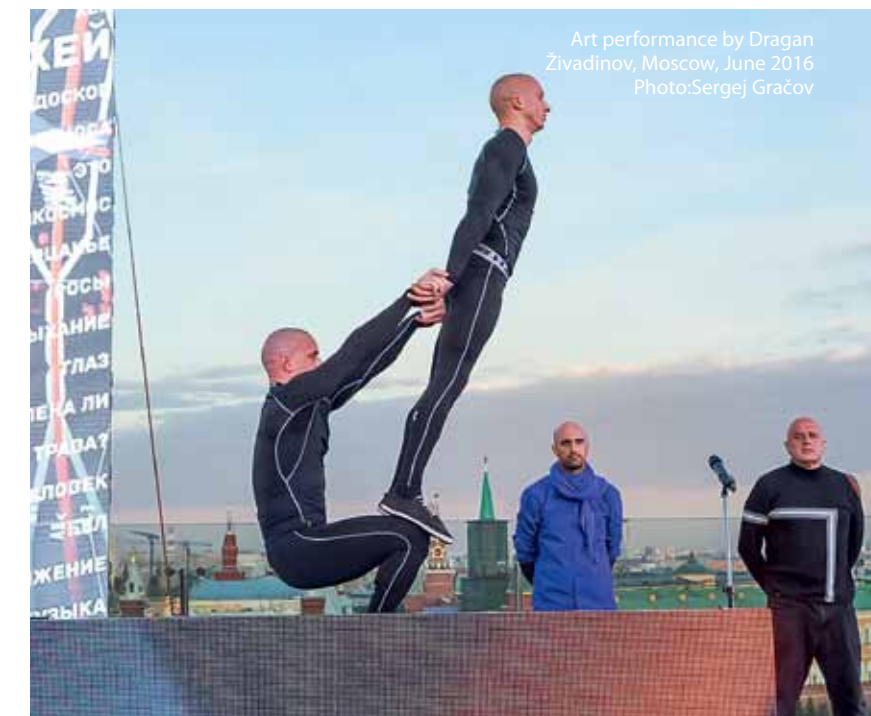
In addition to introducing Slovenian culture to US audiences, the Embassy is also active in Mexico. With the assistance of honorary consuls in Mexico City and Guadalajara, Slovenian writers participate in the Guadalajara Book Fair every year, while theatre groups perform at different festivals (such as FCTAI in Zacatecas). Most recently, curator Vasja Nagy presented the *Art in a Suitcase* project in Mexico, which featured several Slovenian artists.

The Embassy of Slovenia also participates in annual cultural events organised in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Union in Washington, DC, other EU member states' embassies,

non-EU embassies, consulates, non-governmental and nonprofit organisations and universities.

The Embassy is also an active member of two European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) clusters – the EUNIC Washington cluster and the EUNIC New York cluster, both dedicated to promoting contemporary European culture in the US.

The American Slovenian Educational Foundation and Kerže Endowment Fund work enhance cooperation between Slovenia and the US in the context of educational programmes, such as the Fulbright Program. The Embassy regularly collaborates with the VTIS Association and the Society for Slovene Studies, and has for the past three years organised a Science and Educational Showcase for researchers, scientists and scholars, with the support of the Slovenian diaspora.

Art performance by Dragan Živadinov, Moscow, June 2016  
Photo: Sergej Gračov

# THE BALLET *EUGENE ONEGIN*

## A spectacle of illusions and a tale of lost love

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, ALAN KAVČIČ  
PHOTO: TIBERIN MARTA

*Aristocratic Ball*  
In the photo: Anton Bogov, Jelena Lečić,  
Sytze Jan Luske, Tijuana Križman, Filip Jurič,  
Adriana Cioata, Cleopatra Purice, Gabriel  
Marin, Slavčo Stoleski, and Metka Masten.

At the end of 2016, the Slovenian National Theatre (SNG) Maribor Ballet ensemble performed the world première of *Eugene Oegin*, choreographed and directed by Valentina Turcu. Soloists and the ensemble performed to the music of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff, which was played by the Symphony Orchestra of the SNG Maribor Theatre under the baton of Dominic Grier, with Anton Bogov in the leading role.



The SNG Ballet ensemble has been working with unique and original scripts for years, and has thus had various opportunities to perform in European theatres and world-renowned festivals.

#### **SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE ON THE STAGE OF THE SNG MARIBOR BALLET**

*Eugene Onegin*, the jewel of Pushkin's work, was a logical continuation in the series of dramatic ballet performances staged by Valentina Turcu. Turcu is a winner of the highest professional award given by the Association of Ballet Artists of Slovenia, and is an artist who has set new standards in the quality and expressiveness of classical ballet in modern times. The demands of adapting great literature, a unique musical concept, and the excellent cast of the SNG Maribor Ballet ensemble, all presented an artistic challenge for the author and her team, who set out to stage a production with sophisticated, neoclassical style.

*The Eugene Onegin* ballet, as performed by SNG Maribor, is something that should not be missed if you have a chance to see it. Nevertheless, even if you cannot see this show the Maribor Ballet always has a schedule of outstanding performances to enjoy. "Every season, our theatre's ballet programme is enriched by a diverse repertoire of works selected from the classics. We have a broad "iron-clad" classical repertoire, as well as contemporary choreographic manuscripts for dance, literary, musical and imaginary works to excite modern audiences, whether in emotional, visual, physical or metaphysical terms. Even though re-reading such iconic stories poses a great challenge to the authors, choreographers, directors and ballet ensemble who must adapt them, it also allows them to establish their own interpretation, while keeping the work alive, provocative and carnal," said choreographer Edward Clug.

#### **ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS BY VALENTINA TURCU AND EDWARD CLUG**

It is very rare for two such prominent choreographers to be co-creating under the same artistic roof. Together with other members of the SNG Maribor Ballet, Valentina Turcu and Edward Clug have been working to create original, authentic ballet and dance productions. As a result of their efforts, the performances of the ensemble bring joy to spectators in theatres around the world.

#### **SETTING UP A BALLET PERFORMANCE**

Valentina Turcu described the development of *Eugene Onegin* as follows: "A few months before the start of the dance studies, it was necessary to blend the music with the direction and musical dramaturgy of the entire concept. The dancers were thus carefully selected – each individual had to be appropriate for the role they would play. Before setting up the performance, it was necessary to develop the visual style as well as the scenic and costume design. This is like a body waiting for life to be breathed into it."

**At first, Turcu put a lot of work into the development of "scores", the coordination of the music and visual images of the performance, while later focusing on the formation of each phrase, movement, gesture, and composition, writing everything from scratch.**

With each dancer, she outlined her vision in accordance with Pushkin's novel in verses, and then "put them to music" in harmony with Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. She says that the most beautiful part of the performance is the moment of creation, when the choreographer develops the musical and visual concept to perfection and starts exploring the unlimited possibilities of choreography, searching for the moves, combinations, and dramatic moments which coincide with the expression of the roles interpreted by dancers. Paradoxically, at first the choreographer works by setting out the possible boundaries. She then breaks these boundaries by working with dancers who are courageously and honestly fighting for their own place and space for their artistic personality in this "anarchy" of emotions, irrespective of the world created by Valentina.

*Eugene Onegin* is yet another project carried out on the basis of beautiful, sincere and committed cooperation among a group of artists who are not afraid of the complexity of emotions, and to whom their profession represents a unique sanctuary of creativity. Anton Bogov had the title role in the ballet, and also worked as



*Lenski and Olga in a love embrace*  
In the photo: Matjaž Marin and Tijuana Križman

an assistant choreographer, and thus walked many miles by Valentina's side without having any doubt in the final result. Moreover, the final production was aided by the work of many other talented individuals. These include Alan Hranitelj, the great aesthete and master of costume design, creating layers of timeless beauty; Mariko Japelj, bringing his intelligent, clean, and inherent elegance to the scenery; Aleksander Čavlek, the lighting designer; the whole ballet ensemble, with its extremely strong soloists; the Symphony Orchestra of the SNG Maribor, led by conductors Dominic Grier and Simon Robinson, along with the soloists Katarina Lotrič and Denys Masliuk. In speaking of this team Valentina noted, "All of us were guided by intense inspiration during this beautiful creative process."

#### A THOROUGH DRAMATURGICAL RENOVATION

"This interpretation featured a synchronisation of emotion, movement and music formed in an entirely new way, as if put on a blank sheet of paper," said Valentina Turcu. "The ballet deals with realism and speaks with a soul. According to Pushkin, ballet is a dance executed by the human soul."

**The choreographer was deeply touched by Pushkin's writing, which he used to express the deepest human feelings of happiness, sadness, suffering, ecstasy, love, and sorrow, as well as satire, irony, despair and heartlessness.**

She thought deeply about how to translate this into her own recognisable style, far from self-sufficient romance or rectilinear dramaturgy, and how to properly capture all the nuances of character and emotions that are found in Pushkin's text. Although at times reserved, dark and intimate, the resulting Eugene Onegin ballet enters into a direct dialogue with the audience.

The themes that Turcu has been dealing with for many years reflect her own emotional landscapes and longings, as she has a great affinity for the often dissonant depths of the Russian spiritual world, which have become a permanent feature of her creative

work. Valentina Turcu is a graduate of the famous Maurice Béjart Ballet Lausanne. Her rich and extremely varied artistic opus ranges from award-winning ballet performances and contemporary dance shows, to over 40 theatre performances, numerous operas and high-profile ballet gala concerts staged at home and abroad. Turcu is considered one of the most sought-after and respected ballet artists, with audiences often provoked and always enriched by her productions.

**Some idea of the show can be gained from how Valentina Turcu described the characters in *Eugene Onegin*: "Direct. Full-blooded. Sensual. Sensitive. Provocative. Carnal. And very, very honest."**

#### MUSIC STRENGTHENED THE CHARACTERS

In addition to choreography, Valentina Turcu took care of the music concept underlying the performance. This flirts with the authentic spirit of Russian romanticism, and includes Variation No. 18 (Andante cantabile) from the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini (Op. 43) by Rachmaninoff, which serves as the overture to an evocation of the Russian autumn idyll; the famous Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 in B-flat minor (Op. 23) by Tchaikovsky; and the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 in C minor (Op. 18) by Rachmaninoff.

**During the creative process at SNG Maribor, Dominic Grier, who is otherwise a conductor at the London Royal Opera House and also conducted John Crank's *Onegin*, said that Pushkin's characters were put into a realistic context with the selection of music.**

According to Grier, each character received personal attention with regard to the music, and it is extraordinary how well this corresponds with what happens on the stage.

*Onegin and Tatiana bid farewell*  
In the photo: Anton Bogov and Jelena Lečić

COSTUME DESIGNER ALAN HRANITELJ

## In love with the magic of fairy tales

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Alan Hranitelj  
Photo: Mike Crawford

He is a conversationalist you do not easily forget. He stays on your mind, mainly because he is an explosion of talent and lucky coincidences. He is the kind of person you would really like to meet again and have a chat with over a cup of coffee. Oh, but of course... Alan Hranitelj does not drink coffee. When we met at the Grand Union Café in Ljubljana, he ordered tea.

Although he seems distant, he is entirely different. Joyful, smiling, relaxed. First he asks me: "What should we talk about?" and smiles. He is probably very accustomed to engaging in these small chats. Nevertheless, this talk seems to be quite different from all others. The impression he makes is one of creativity and humility. I ask him whether it is difficult when a costume designer has an idea but time and budget constraints prevent him from achieving it.

"No, everything is a challenge to me. I like to work and when I am restricted in any way I accept that. There are always restrictions. Sometimes things are easier to do than at other times. I appreciate every member of the team, from dressmakers to actors and dancers. These are my people." Further on, he explains: "I listen to a director, to his vision. If he wants his piece to be set in a previous century, I'll help him to achieve that. But it also makes no difference to me when a piece is set in the present."

### IT'S LIKE BEING IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLDS

Alan Hranitelj lives in Ljubljana, and came here while still in high school at the invitation of Slovenian director Dragan Živadinov. The first project in which he participated as a costume designer was *Krst pod Triglavom* (*Baptism Under Triglav*), and Hranitelj has settled in well. "To me, Ljubljana is the most beautiful city in the world. I grew up here and it shaped my personality."

**He says he loves Slovenia's smallness and diversity, and the fact that it takes you no more than 45 minutes to be in an entirely different landscape, feeling like you're in "different parts of the world," and that**

**things do not just revolve around the capital.**

He is particularly fond of the Golovec Hill in Ljubljana, and likes taking walks in Plečnik's Žale Cemetery.

### LIFE IS LIKE A MERRY-GO-ROUND

Alan Hranitelj is not only based in Slovenia, of course, and his talent is not a genie trapped in a bottle.

**With him, things are always just "happening." "Sometimes I can't even keep up with it myself," he says.**

"Perhaps it all arises from the fact that I have been craving creative outlets since childhood. As a child, I was totally in love with Disney fairy tales – my favourite stories and all their magic. I have always been driven to continually develop my personality and creativity. My exceptional mother and sister always encouraged me in this pursuit."

Hranitelj was also involved in fashion design for some time in Milan, but he found that this was not the profession for him. As he explains it: "I need other challenges, starting points allowing wider creativity, openness, other activities and other communications. I like small things, but also more megalomaniac projects. I really am lucky. Events tend to just find me. This is my path. My destiny."

Alan is interested in costume design in the film industry as well as theatre. He likes working with people, and most closely with



*Leonce in Lena (Leonce and Lena)* is a political satire and romantic comedy, directed by Mateja Kolečnik. Photo: Alan Hranitelj's personal archive

actors and dancers. When it comes to interpersonal relations, he does not distinguish between professionalism and goodwill, and believes that the most important thing is that the show is done well. Of course, when designing costumes for a show he has his own idea in mind, but it is very important that the actors feel good in what they are wearing. "A costume can always be adapted while retaining your "vision" as a costume designer. By now I know many actors personally, and I take their desires into account when making initial sketches."

"When we were little, we all liked going to the circus: a magical place where something unbelievable happens. Where Jumbo the elephant performs. Although circuses are different nowadays, they still remain exciting, through acrobatics and unbelievable costumes." Alan had an opportunity to work with one of the best circus troupes in the world – the Canadian Cirque du Soleil, which works with a combination of theatre and acrobatics. "By chance, they found a catalogue with my costumes and were thrilled. They decided they wanted me on their team. It was an unbelievable experience. Their shows are performed by top artists. I also work with top performers in Slovenia, of course, but here the financial capabilities of the groups, and thus the creative possibilities, are very different."

**Alan Hranitelj worked with the Cirque du Soleil for four years. He created costumes for the *Zarkana* show, which was performed for the first time in 2011 in the Radio City Music Hall in New York.**

Since November 2012, the show has been continuously performed at Aria Resorts in Las Vegas, USA.

Wherever Alan Hranitelj is as you read these words, I am sure he is busy as usual. As far as I know, he may be in Riga, Vienna or even Ljubljana, doing creative work that he loves.

Given the international nature of his work, one question is obvious when meeting Alan in Ljubljana. "You returned to Slovenia after finishing work abroad? Isn't it too small for you?"

He shakes his head. "I am not limited by space – Slovenia or any foreign country, I can create anywhere. It is true, I love being abroad in big cities – sometimes I need them. But I will always be happy to return to Slovenia and create here, because this is my home."



Dessert collection – miniature creations. Seven little creations were created, each of them with its own colour and form. The creations were named Beautiful Helena, Cardinal Strawberries, Cleopatra's Potion, Thousand-leaved Carrot Cake, Mint Sorbet, Ana Pavlova's Dessert and Jasmina's Butterflies. Photo: Alan Hranitelj's personal archive



*Črne maske (Black Masks)* is an opera in two acts (five scenes) by the Slovenian composer Marij Kogoj. It is not only seen as the best Slovenian opera, also ranking high on an international scale, but also one of the best works in the history of Slovenian culture. *Black Masks* was a co-production of the SNG Opera and Ballet Ljubljana, the SNG Opera and Ballet Maribor, and the European Capital of Culture 2012 (Maribor).  
Photo: Alan Hranitelj's personal archive



SLOVENIANS ARE CINEPHILES

## About museum devoted to film

TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: MUSEUM OF SLOVENIAN FILM ACTORS ARCHIVE

The first Slovenian film was made in 1905, when Dr. Karol Grossman from Ljutomer recorded several that were no longer than a few minutes, although considered feature films at the time. Since then, Slovenian cinema has gone through better and worse times, presenting us with many stories that enthralled us, then went out and proved themselves on the world stage.

To commemorate this pioneer of Slovenian cinema, the people of Ljutomer organise the annual Grossman Festival, although this is smaller than the Ljubljana International Film Festival (LIFFe). LIFFe takes place each November and, in 2016, a total of 103 feature films and 19 short films from 44 countries were presented on 299 screens. Aside from Ljubljana and Maribor, LIFFe films were also presented for the first time in Celje and Novo Mesto. As the number of visitors and interest in the festival has been increasing from year to year, we can now say that Slovenians are confirmed cinephiles.

How and when did we become so? Grossman's films from more than a hundred years ago were the first created in Slovenia, while the legendary film *Na svoji zemlji* (On Native Soil) was the first with synchronised sound. Made in 1948 by France Štiglic, it explores some of the issues raised by World War II.

Of course, Slovenian film was not an island – it was influenced by other filmographies, historical circumstances and those who wrote its history. Much of this can be seen at the Museum of Slovenian Film Actors in Divača. By visiting this place the picture becomes clearer, more holistic and no longer hidden in the details of various parts of history. There are many museums devoted to film history throughout the world, but in Slovenia we only got ours a little more than five years ago. Nevertheless, it is no less interesting than any other such museum.

### MUSEUM OF SLOVENIAN FILM ACTORS

The museum is located at Škrateljnova domačija (*Škratelj homestead*), an old Karst homestead in Divača. This location is not coincidental, as two famous Slovenian film actresses were born in this area: Metka Bučar and Ida Kravanja, with the latter becoming a star of European silent film under the name Ita Rina. In addition to a permanent exhibition on Ita Rina, the first Slovenian film star, the museum presents exhibitions on other Slovenian actors. For example, each year on Ita Rina's birthday, at an event entitled *Poklon* (Tribute), the museum commemorates a different Slovenian star.

The permanent exhibition of Slovenian film actors encompasses the entire period after 1931. The museum is thus devoted to preserving the memory of the stars of Slovenian film, such as Duša Počkaj, Stane Sever, Majda Potokar, Bert Sotlar, Ignacij Boršnik, Jože Zupan and many others. At the same time, the museum also highlights the achievements of contemporary Slovenian actors.

The Slovenian Film Centre of RTV Slovenia, the film studio Viba film and the Slovene Film Archives of the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, all donated items to the museum. The film studio Viba film gave mostly costumes and technical equipment, while some of the items were contributed by the actors themselves. For example, one legend of Slovenian film, Milena Zupančič, donated the Empress Theodora Award from Niš, while Radko Polič contributed the first international award for a Slovenian actor, which he received in Moscow for the film *Idealist* (1976).

The museum strives to present their exhibits in a way that will interest visitors of all ages, who can join organised tours to learn more. Every year the museum also organises a one-week film workshop for children, and every month they carry out one-day creative workshops. The museum also organises special events, such as optical toy workshops, animation preschools, the creation of film masks, optical toys and spinning tops, moving puppets, and so. Such events also provide links between the public and film-making professionals.

The museum now aims to increase interest in its work through greater cooperation with others in the region.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF FILM IN SLOVENIA

Soon after the first public film projection by the Lumière brothers, which took place on 28 December 1895 in Paris, film arrived in Slovenia, mostly through tours organised by different companies. During one such tour the first film in Slovenia was made. It was recorded by Johann Bläser in 1898. The two-minute film was titled *Razgled Ljubljane* (View of Ljubljana), and is assumed today to have been lost.

However, and as noted at the start of this article, the first Slovenian filmmaker was Karol Grossmann, a lawyer and amateur photographer from Ljutomer, who devoted his free time to film, photography and theatre. He created three works that are seen as the first Slovenian films: *Sejem v Ljutomeru* (Fair in Ljutomer, 1905), *Odhod z maše v Ljutomeru* (Departing after Mass in Ljutomer, 1905) and *Na domačem vrtu* (At the Home Garden, 1905). However, these were only projected for the first time in public in 1968.

### MARKED BY THE MOUNTAINS, WAR, AND LITERATURE

It is possible to discern a nation's identity and pride through its films, along with its aspirations, longings and fears, and the same is

true in Slovenian productions. In the 1920s, every Slovenian town had a cinema, and a growing number of films were being made. Metod Badjura and Veličan Bešter were among the first cameramen, and they mostly recorded festive, ceremonial and political events. At that time, mountaineering films, although known as homeland films, had a great influence on the local scene. One of the most beautiful of these, created on the initiative of Slovenian climbers, was the film *V kraljestvu Zlatoroga* (In the Kingdom of the Goldhorn).

After 1945, Triglav Film Productions began its operations. Its first feature film was *Na svoji zemlji* (On Native Soil, 1948), which was written by Ciril Kosmač, although adapted to reflect communist values. The film was a great success. In 1949 it was nominated at the Cannes Film Festival, while in Slovenia a total of 446,000 people had seen it by the end of 1949, making it the most watched Slovenian film in history.

Slovenian film went into decline after its initial period of rapid development, although one bright spot that remains part of popular culture to this day was the youth film *Kekec* (1951). In this period the Czech director František Čap, who was skilful at screenwriting,

editing, directing and production, also participated in the creation of commercial films. His greatest hits were the romantic comedies *Vesna* (1953) and *Ne čakaj na maj* (Do Not Wait for May, 1957).

The cult director Boštjan Hladnik introduced art film in Slovenia. His film *Ples v Dežju* (Dancing in the Rain, 1961) expressed both existentialistic anxieties and rebellious anti-regime thoughts. Indeed, this film is now considered to be one of the best Slovenian productions of all time, despite having been rejected at the time of its release.

### CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION

After Slovenia became independent in 1991, the time was ripe for new hope in local cinema, and new ideals and opportunities emerged with this momentum. A new generation of film creators came forth, such as Vinci Vogue Anžlovar, Andrej Košak, Damjan Kozole, Igor Šterk, Janez Burger, Sašo Podgoršek, and Miha Hočevar, among others. More recent film history is now being written by talents such as Rok Biček, Goran Vojnovič, Nejc Gazvoda, Sonja Prosenec, Žiga Virč, Mitja Okorn, Jan Cvitkovič, and Blaž Završnik.



Originally designed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Škrateljnova domačija (Škratelj homestead) is an example of a traditional Karst homestead.



The statue of Ita Ripa at the Škratelj homestead.

# A nation forged by culture

ANŽE ZORMAN



The mercury mine in the town of Idrija used to be one of the largest such mines in the world. Nowadays listed as a World Heritage Site, its history stretches back to the late 15th century. The town used to be quite affluent, and at the height of its expansion a theatre was built there, financed by the mine employees themselves.

It opened its doors in 1770, and is considered to be the oldest still-running cultural venue of a secular nature in Slovenia. Unassuming as this theatre house may be today, when it is run as a cinema by the local library, it remains an important symbol and reminder of a key development in the history of the nation. From here onwards, in a slow yet steady advance, modern culture in Slovenia started to gather speed.

There is a proverbial phrase about how the Slovene nation primarily constituted itself through culture. This is a slightly esoteric statement, one that alludes to a complex array of historical as well as mythological events and aspirations. However, its basic idea - that the nation got assembled through theatrical stages, reading rooms and poetic flights of fancy - seems a charming one. It certainly sounds a much more civilised basis for a nation than the usual claims of pure bloodlines or monarchic continuities.

Worth noting is that this particular strand of Slovene identity is not only reflected in a regular set of rituals and rhetoric, but is also enshrined in the nation's constitution, a document that was - rather fittingly - initially sketched under the auspices of the Slovene Writers Association.

**Right in its opening lines, following the article declaring Slovenia as a territorially indivisible state, the constitution pronounces the goal of working to "create opportunities for the harmonious development of civilization and culture in Slovenia".**

Though ambiguous, and for all practical purposes more or less inoperative, this constitutional provision nevertheless seems to have had rather consequential effects. For a pocket-sized, mid-income country, Slovenian culture is a remarkably varied and rich.

## AN AMAZING AND COLOURFUL LANDSCAPE

The ecosystem that facilitates such cultural activities in Slovenia is actually a fairly recent creation. Throughout the 19th century, after the Idrija Theatre opened its doors, the process of setting up the infrastructure for a truly national culture was a fairly slow and sporadic one.

Interestingly, museums are among the most notable institutional survivors of those pioneering times, or at least this is the impression one gains from skimming through the timelines of Culture.si, a remarkable project that was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Culture.

**This web-based and Wikipedia-like database comprehensively lists and categorises the existing forces of cultural production in Slovenia, with short, English-language descriptions of a very broad range of institutions, organisers, venues, collectives and festivals.**

The metadata accumulated as part of this project has allowed the portal to set up various timelines. These enable users to gain a rapid overview of the chronological development of contemporary cultural subsystems in Slovenia, and thus their role in the nation-and-state-building process.

As suggested above, the foundations of the Slovene nation are predominantly of a literary nature. However, one can ascribe a slightly more colourful trajectory to the state itself. The process of systematic institutional modernisation and state-building can be observed through a phenomenon that steadily gained traction during the second half of the 20th century - the use of festivals. Though some sociological heavy-handedness was undoubtedly present in their execution, it is possible to see the festivals that took place in Slovenia after World War II as important drivers of developments in their respective cultural ecosystems. Such festivals gave various artists and practices greater public visibility, secured additional funds and exposed them to the international scene.

## BUILDING BRIDGES AND EXPANDING HORIZONS

Once bridges to the outside world and a functional administrative machinery were established, the graphic arts scene in Slovenia was significantly enhanced with the first International Biennial of Graphic Arts, held in 1955. For music, the modern age came to town with the first Ljubljana Jazz Festival in 1960, now the oldest jazz festival in Europe. The Biennial of Design goes back to 1963, as does the Beer and Flower Festival, while the annual Mardi Gras celebrations were formalised and their traditions codified by the early 1960s. Interestingly, although the concept is seen as a recent invention, the promotion of urban cultural tourism was explicitly envisioned by the Ljubljana Festival as far back as 1952.

Over the years an extensive festival infrastructure has thus built, catering for professional fields, like architecture, as well as more niche spheres, such as LGBT cinema. These annual events were a way of fast-forwarding the transition from a collection of war-torn rural communities into a modern society, one equipped with all the main fields of contemporary culture. To this end, when the Slovene Advertising Festival was established in 1991, this marked the time when Slovenia became a fully-fledged capitalist nation-state.

A quarter of a millennia will soon have passed since the miners of Idrija set up their own theatre. While the accumulated cultural machinery for the production of meaning, identity and beauty now stands fully developed in Slovenia, new challenges now loom on the horizon of a seemingly accelerated history. Hopefully, this tiny country will keep producing itself in a profoundly constitutional sense, with the aim of being a truly civilised nation.



## SAPRAMIŠKA

## The most famous Slovenian mouse is celebrating 40 years of life

PETRA ŠKOFIČ

PHOTO: LJUBLJANA PUPPET THEATRE ARCHIVES



Charming Sapramiška

The clever and brave Sapramiška (*Sapra Mouse*) is the most famous Slovenian mouse, and the Sapramiška puppet show is the most successful in the country's history, and has so far been performed 1,783 times and seen by as many as 289,785 people. Sapramiška was also mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records (1989) for having been performed 177 times in one year.

Its author is just as famous as the show. The fairy tale of *Sapramiška* was written in 1976 by the Slovenian poet, young adult writer, chanson singer and actress Svetlana Makarovič. She is the winner of numerous awards, including the Prešeren, which is the highest recognition given by the Republic of Slovenia for outstanding artistic achievements.

*"Svetlana Makarovič is the grand dame of contemporary literature, not only in the Slovenian environment but also in the broader, international context. She is the author of an excellent, original and expressively strong poetic opus with not a single weak poem. At the same time, she is a complex artistic personality who is able to confidently express her ideas in various artistic languages."* Boris A. Novak, poet, playwright, translator and essayist

### A HEROINE FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Slovenian children cannot imagine growing up without the fairy tales written by Svetlana Makarovič. Her literary works serve as the basis for many puppet shows, which over the years have won the hearts of people of all different ages. Svetlana Makarovič has worked together with the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre on thirty shows, the most famous ones being *Sapramiška* (*Sapra Mouse*), *Sovica Oka* (*Oka the Owl*; 1972), *Pekarna Mišmaš* (*Mišmaš Bakery*; 1977), *Korenčkov palček* (*The Carrot Dwarf*; 1989), *Tacamuca* (*Catty*

*Paw*; 1998), *Spet Kosovirji* (*The Cosies Again*; 2000), *Kuna Kunigunda* (*The Kunigunda Marten*; 2003), and *Vila Malina* (*The Raspberry Fairy*; 2006).

**In 1986, the première of *Sapramiška* was staged at the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre.**

It was directed by the Slovenian puppeteer, actor and director Nace Simončič, who started to work in the theatre in World War II during the National Liberation Struggle, and left a profound impression on Slovenian puppetry with his productions in the theatre and on radio and television.

**During its many international tours, *Sapramiška* visited most of the European countries as well as Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Pakistan, Mexico, Venezuela, and more. To this day it remains in the repertoire of the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre, mostly in its original version.**

Copies of the puppets were made on the show's 30th anniversary, while Jaka Judnič, responsible for the show's visual design and one of the most successful Slovenian directors of television advertisements, provided several related animations, and a new, young cast was presented to the audience.

*My lil' teeth, clean and white,  
My lil' teeth, clean and white,  
Like snow they shine, so nice and bright,  
My lil' teeth, clean and white  
My lil' teeth, clean and white  
Look at them smile, what a sight!*

#### A LITTLE MOUSE WITH A BIG HEART

The fairy tale tells the story of a little grey mouse who finds herself face to face with a cat, and she is so surprised that she unintentionally uses the mild swear word "sapramišnazaj" (sapramouseback). This is how Sapramiška got her name. For her birthday, she got three beautiful hazelnuts and unfortunately broke one of her teeth when trying to eat them. This is how she made history as the first mouse who sat in a dentist's chair.

**Years ago, this famous mouse started her humanitarian work in a project raising funds for children from socially disadvantaged families, called *Sponsorship*.**

She also got her own toothpaste in 2016, with some of the profits going to the Sapramiškin sklad (Sapra Mouse's Fund) at the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth, to help children with special needs.

Based on responses of young audiences, Sapramiška still has a long career ahead of her on the stage of the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre. Every show is sold out in advance, and children usually leave the theatre having learned how to overcome fear and recognise the power of friendship.

*"Sapra is presented as a small, sad, disappointed, desperate, miserable and terrified mouse, just as sad and scared as kids can often be, but she can also be brave and fearless. One of Sapramiška's greatest virtues is her ability to express the entire range of emotions that alternate from joy to sadness, despair and the greatest happiness at the end of the story." Mateja Pezdirc Bartol, an associate professor of Slovenian literature in the Department of Slovenian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana*



RECOGNISABLE, POPULAR AND SUCCESSFUL

## There are no rules in determining the success of cultural projects

TANJA GLOGOVČAN, VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Nikola Tesla Exhibition in the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre



Numerous festivals, concerts in different musical genres, exhibitions and other forms of performing arts held in Slovenia are part of an extremely varied cultural programme. In order to keep such projects alive, one must make them recognisable, popular and successful.

The Slovenian capital offers a variety of cultural events that are generally very well attended. Slovenians, for example, attended the opening of the National Gallery in great numbers and with much enthusiasm, and the cultural open days, when events held in cultural institutions are free of charge for visitors are also well frequented. "I am pleased to say that there is great interest in culture and exhibitions organised by public institutions. Similarly, there was great interest shown in the opening of the SNG Opera in Balet Ljubljana – the Slovenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre in Ljubljana. Directed by Tomaž Pandur, the performance of Faust is certainly one of last year's events worth mentioning. The same can be said of the Venice Art Biennale and Architecture Biennale. For the first time, both events took place in the Arsenale and were visited by more than 750,000 people. Furthermore, the Laibach band tour was extremely successful both at home and abroad, as were the performances of other Slovenian musicians," says **Damjana Pečnik**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture.

### THE SLOVENIANS LOVE CULTURE

This is demonstrated by numerous visits recorded at cultural institutions, and by enthusiasm shown at various events.

**In recent years, Slovenians have been increasingly frequenting cultural sites. The fact that the visitation rates are increasing among the youngest population is also encouraging.**

We are aware that culture is an important part of our identity.

Director General of the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre, **Uršula Cetinski**, pointed out the exhibition held at the 160th birthday of scientist Nikola Tesla as a greatly successful last year's event that was organised together with the Nikola Tesla Museum from Belgrade. The exhibition was extended due to great interest. "Besides Tesla's most important inventions, visitors were presented with what is called Tesla's Doctrine. This extremely topical vision of the world, attitude towards the society, social differences and the environment has lately been attempted to be included in curricula across the globe," emphasised Uršula Cetinski.

Each year, the major Slovenian international art film festival called Liffe, which has become synonymous with high quality, attracts

many visitors. Last year, Cankarjev dom boasted an exceptional cultural offer as well as an increasing rate of visitor turnover: "Although many Slovenian cultural organisers had been investing efforts for years, we were the only ones that managed to get pianist Martha Argerich with the Manchester Camerata orchestra to perform, and we also established the new Magnificent 7 season tickets to theatre and dance performances, a programme which opened this year with a wonderful dance show by the National Ballet of Marseille. Our Jazz Festival, which is one of the oldest jazz festivals in Europe, has also evolved, so we were entrusted with the organisation of the European Jazz Conference, which will be held in September 2017 as the most important European event for jazz professionals. Visibility of an event held at Cankarjev dom usually also indicates its financial viability. Among all comparable public institutions that are active in culture, in terms of percentage and absolute value, we have by far the highest share in own revenue, comprising approximately 45 per cent of the nine million budget."

**Damjana Pečnik** shares confidence that Slovenians are greatly enthusiastic when it comes to cultural events: "The upside is that there are still many things in Slovenia that can be seen free of charge on various occasions, when institutions open their doors at no charge for visitors.

**The great numbers of visitors demonstrate that people are thirsty for cultural performances, and there is plenty to choose from.**

In comparison with the rest of the world, entrance fees to Slovenian cultural institutions are relatively low. Lending of books, for example, has recently grown significantly, and libraries lend books to the unemployed for free. I am pleased to say that we bought a bookmobile this year, which allows us to reach the remote areas that have no libraries. This allows us to bring many books, and hence also culture, to people. While the proximity of a library or theatre is normal to those who live in a city, for people who live in remote areas, a visit to a theatre can be quite an undertaking".

Uršula Cetinski shares the opinion that interest in books is very big in Slovenia: "The Slovenian Book Fair (SKS – Slovenski knjižni sejem) proved to be an excellent co-production event within our congress activity which, in 2016, included some globally important science events. The SKS has outgrown the profile of a sales event and ap-



**Damjana Pečnik**,  
State Secretary at the  
Ministry of Culture  
Photo: Ministry of  
Culture Archive

proached the literature festival concept with its last two focus topics, i.e. the French and Italian literature.

**Damjana Pečnik** pointed out the establishment of a library for the blind and visually impaired as a good project. "It made books available to people who normally do not have this option. In her opinion, the exhibition called the *Archives – a Treasure Trove of Memories*, which displayed various contents of the archives in an interesting manner, was also a good project".

"Our projects within the public services usually consist of three parts, i.e. the share of public funds, revenue from ticket sales and funds from sponsors. The public funds dictate the pricing of tickets, which are made widely accessible to people; without them, culture events would be accessible only to a small group of very wealthy people. The more expensive the project, i.e. events in a theatre are always more expensive than dance performances, classical music is more expensive than other concerts, the greater the share of public subsidy. This is how it is done all over the world," says Director General **Uršula Cetinski**.

Last year, Slovenia hosted the World Lace Congress, so almost every Slovenian museum devoted at least one exhibition to lace. The Public Fund for Amateur Cultural Activities also held successful events, including the largely attended Week of Amateur Culture and the Youth Culture Festival of Slovenia. The exhibition called the *Archives – a Treasure Trove of Memories*, which displayed various archived contents in an interesting manner, was also a success. Since 2017 will be dedicated to architect Jože Plečnik, it goes to mention that the renovation of the Plečnik House, which was nominated for the European Museum of the Year Award 2017, was greatly efficacious. This extraordinary achievement shows that Slovenians are

very good at renovating objects from our heritage and presenting them to visitors in an interesting way. Last year, Vrhnika hosted the Ljubljana River Experience and Exhibition, displaying extremely interesting contents from the past, including the world's oldest wheel. The exhibition was set up at the former leather factory and served as a very good example of industrial architecture re-purposing.

**The success, of course, always depends on the public interest. According to experience of Cankarjev dom, the catch lies in a smart choice of events, which must be in the spirit of the time.**

They are therefore seen as seekers of something new, of things that excite the audience in a spiritual and intellectual way. **Uršula Cetinski** is convinced that exhibiting world's artistic achievements is an important framework, a context in which local creativity is strongly encouraged as it allows a comparison between what is local and what is global. This comparison is also indispensable for our visitors at cultural events; for many, the Cankarjev dom artistic programme represents the most important window into the world, so our centre is annually visited by half a million people."

**In contrast to Ljubljana, outside of the city, cultural events are created differently. In a sense, such projects are even more ambitious as they are less institutionalised. They often grow from small ideas and many develop into national projects.**

An interesting example is the Soča Valley, which has been dubbed the Valley of Festivals. The festival was first organised there four years ago, when two friends, Jan Klavora and Peter Dakskobler, met at a bar in Tolmin. The Festival director Jan Klavora had just changed jobs and became an entrepreneur. He was looking for new ideas in how to further place the Soča Valley on the map of interesting tourist destinations. Thus, to the cycling part of the offer that had just started to develop, the two added the running, skydiving and music section. That same year, the idea fully flour-

ished with the help of another two friends and a large number of volunteers from Tolmin. The following year, they added bouldering and kayaking at the town of Kobarid, and the enduro competition at the town of Tolmin. Klavora and Dakskobler have considerably increased the number of competitors and visitors, and in 2015, in terms of content, they finally realised their long-standing desire of connecting the three surrounding municipalities, i.e. Kobarid, Tolmin, and Bovec.

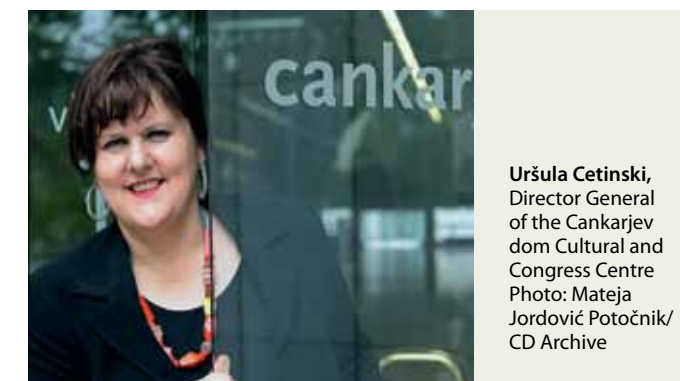
Acting as good entrepreneurs, the young team is constantly seeking ways to attract more visitors at the beginning of every July. As a special treat, they organise the Trans Julius Stage Race at the Soča Valley, which lasts for several days. In this unique event, participants can experience four different destinations within different types of cycling routes, many opportunities for socialising and well thought-out logistics and they have a lot of fun over a long weekend. This is something that would convince a person in Munich to take a car ride to the Trans Julius or to an all-week enduro adventure, which will also include other destinations in Slovenia in the future. Furthermore, the organisers are pondering the idea of a marathon competition extending from the Alps to the Adriatic Sea. They plan to establish the Slovenian cycling transversal called Trans Slovenia together with the cycling enthusiast and cycling guides author Uli Stanciu from Germany. The north-south route will run through the Kranjska Gora town and across the Vršič Mountain Pass to the town of Bovec, past Mount Stol and to the town of Kobarid. From there, it will rise to the village of Krn, drop to the Polog mountain pasture and lead to the hills of Goriška Brda through the hamlet of Kolovrat. One branch should then run over Mount Matajur to the hills of Goriška Brda. From there, the route will continue through the Kras region all to the Slovenian coast.

#### ALONGSIDE TOURIST FLAGSHIPS

**The organisers would like to place cycling alongside the flagships of tourism offered at the north of the Primorska region, which include water sports in the Posočje region, winter sports in Kranjska Gora and Cerklno, culinary tourism at the Goriška Brda hills, and casinos at the Nova Gorica city.**

They are proud of the fact that they managed to persuade people from the Soča Valley to come together and organise a single festival which is visited by more and more enthusiastic sportsmen every year. The towns of Tolmin, Bovec, and Kobarid became recognisable in the wider region due to the offer in tourism, and the participants are thrilled about the running ventures organised along the river. The Soča Valley offers a unique scenery, which gives a great advantage over other such festivals. The organisers are always seeking to provide uniqueness in the offer and forge new stories. They are convinced that people need special stories and interesting experience. They are glad that many festivals in the country are already mimicking their model, and that there are many opportunities for development and earnings for other service providers.

"When organising each event, we ask ourselves what significance would the event bear for the wider environment and how it would affect the surrounding areas", stresses Klavora. They want to develop the festival as an example of good practice, wider vision and pleasant atmosphere. They are glad that the festival does not cater only to young people, and that the older generations, who also look for excitement on many routes in the upper Soča Valley and cycling tours, are happy to attend as well. Many kayakers and rafters find their perfect wave at the emerald Soča river, which is a magnet for water sports lovers. Paragliders and hang-gliders chase good currents over the towns of Tolmin and Kobarid. As the festival would like to be family-friendly, there are many nooks along the river, where the different activities, child care and children's competitions are provided. Of course, there is also no shortage in the music repertoire. Visitors can have fun at outdoor beach parties every night.



**Uršula Cetinski**,  
Director General  
of the Cankarjev  
dom Cultural and  
Congress Centre  
Photo: Mateja  
Jordovič Potočnik/  
CD Archive



## MILAN OREŠKI, THE VIOLIN MAKER

# The violin is a great instrument

POLONA PREŠEREN  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

The violins made by Milan Oreški are unique, as he makes them all by himself in his workshop near Ljubljana.

Milan Oreški has a special approach to making violins, a philosophical, even esoteric one, which is based on his experience with the wood. "Violin-making requires perfectionism, meticulousness and the dedication of a person in their entire being," he explains. "When I make instruments, I have to be completely focused and calm, because at that time there are only two of us, myself and the wood."

Since he is an auto body repairman by profession, and was also involved in producing leather goods and candles, I was interested to know how he started in this demanding business. Milan told me that he first became interested in violin-making about 20 years ago, after he read a newspaper article about the renowned Slovenian violin maker Jože Kantušer, who at that time worked in Mittenwald in Germany. "When reading the article," he said, "I came to the conclusion that the violin is really an outstanding and special instrument."

### WOOD CAN LAST MORE THAN 500 YEARS

Milan has been enthusiastic about wood since his youth, and for as long as he can remember this natural material has inspired him. "I have been dealing with wood from an early age. While making instruments I discovered a number of natural processes that have great importance for both the wood as well as its tone." With such knowledge and skills, he thus works to improve the durability and tonal quality of the wood he uses.

Milan is aided in this work by his collaborations with the Department of Wood Science and Technology at the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. "The results of my research are an indicator of how certain instruments gain their remarkable tone. The processes examined are lengthy – they do not last a year or two, but several years or even decades. Each process is carried out in a natural way because I am not interested in chemistry. I am convinced that wood prepared in such a way will last well over 500 years." Oreški thus believes that the preparation of wood, and in particular the craftsman's knowledge of its properties and ways in which it can be refined, are vital.

**Each of his instruments functions as a whole unit, and Milan feels that it is very important for the craftsman to respect the nature of the material in everything he makes.**

"For me, the wood represents an element with a soul that needs special attention, engagement, time, and so on, and gives a great feeling of warmth. I am somehow able to feel the wood", he explained. Oreški thus developed his very own way of making violins, applying some procedures which date back several centuries.

Each piece of wood used in the instrument-making process must be of appropriate quality. To achieve this, Milan Oreški carefully inspects every piece, especially its growth rings. "They must be dense, straight and not pivoted to the left or right. I also knock on the wood because I am interested in its tonal responsiveness. The first grip of the wood gives me a sense of its mass. Wood must be neither too light nor too heavy."

Milan's instruments are bought by music enthusiasts both young and old. Some of them have already established themselves as professional musicians, while others are only just making their way to the musical stage. They come to him with a desire for something better, different, and special. They come from near and far, including the United States and further afield, although the main markets are in Germany and Austria. Milan Oreški learned how to make violins on his own, and so developed a set of original violin-making procedures that represent a significant and brave step in the manufacturing of musical instruments. He is not interested in mass producing his violins, as it is the sound of each instrument that he considers to be his primary goal, and such an exceptional sound can only be obtained by adopting a singular and respectful approach to the wood.





# Sevnica

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

View of the town from Sevnica Castle

The town of Sevnica gives its name to the 12th largest Slovenian municipality, which has approximately 17,500 residents, the town itself being home to about 5,000 of these. The vast landscape of this municipality spreads along the Sava Valley, extending from both banks of Slovenia's longest river and dotted with beautiful small towns. It is known for its well-maintained public infrastructure, and a high level of public services.

Sevnica is home to many beautiful things – swimwear and lingerie, elegant and classic period furniture, and high-quality and comfortable footwear. Agriculture is also an important economic activity, and the landscape is like a mosaic of arable fields, pastures, orchards, and vineyards.

## THE FAIRY-TALE SEVNICA CASTLE

Slovenia boasts many castles, and one of its jewels is Sevnica Castle. This mighty structure, which dominates the old town centre, sits on a hill and has a panoramic view of the surroundings, including the River Sava. It is the cultural and social heart of the municipality – the pride of the area and a venue for the most beautiful weddings. It serves as the location of various exhibitions, hosts an annual Summer Festival, medieval-style tournaments, numerous musical and cultural events, an open-air cinema, and family-friendly tours conducted by guides in medieval costume. There are also tastings at the winery, and a vineyard on the castle hill.

The structure itself is one of the best preserved in Slovenia, and one of the country's most significant medieval castles. It was first mentioned in the Salzburg Rent-Roll for Brežice and Sevnica in 1309 as the Lichtenwald castellum. All castles stir our imaginations, and Sevnica's is no exception. It is linked to a legend about a hidden passage that was supposedly used by the residents to hide from the Turks, but there are many other stories hidden within its walls, as well as in the local area.

According to one, the Sevnica Stream divides the woods of Podgorica and Zabukovje. Legend has it that two giants built their houses in Rudnik and Travniki. When they were thirsty, they simply bent down and drank from the stream and walked from one hilltop to another. Today it's possible to visit the Giant's House (Ajdovska hiša), as this is the name given to a very large set of ruins that were found near Lončarjev Dol. Many statues, ornaments, a sarcophagus, mosaic floor, and well were excavated, and a golden horse is said to be buried under its walls. The story goes

# LISCA

Lisca logo, Lisca Archives



The footwear company Kopitar  
Sevnica is proud to have been  
around for over 130 years.  
Photo: Rasto Božič/STA



Lovrenc  
Photo: Vinko Seško

that people could once see it spinning at the top of the hill, the sun reflecting off it to bathe the area in a golden light. However, whenever anyone tried to find this buried treasure it always eluded them, sinking ever deeper into the earth. Perhaps one day it will rise again and spin on the hill from time to time, colouring the entire town of Sevnica in gold. According to folk tradition, this will be a magnificent sight to behold.

Until then the area still holds many other attractions, such as the Lutheran Cellar under Sevnica Castle, the Loka Manor, numerous churches, town centres, monuments and memorials, as well as the house that was home to the blessed Alojzij Grozde.

## PICTURESQUE NATURE

Wonderful day trips and picnics can be taken all around the municipality. Hiking, biking, and horseback trails are maintained, and there are very interesting walking, themed, and educational trails. Mt. Lisca is the most well-known day-trip and hiking destination, and one beloved by hikers, bikers, and paragliders, as well as those who simply want to try the delicious local specialties on offer at the Tončkov Dom Mountain Hut. Some of the most beautiful fishing trails in Europe can also be found along the river dam reservoirs in this region.

**As part of the Natura 2000 area, the Municipality of Sevnica is a true paradise for nature lovers, and especially botanists.**

Sevnica is enlivened by the Clusius' gentian, Thora buttercup, and Carniolan lily. Clusius' gentian is an old Alpine plant that has been preserved as a glacial remnant in some foothills, including the Zasavje region. This flower turns fields blue at the end of April. The Trieste spring gentian (*Gentiana verna ssp. tergestina*) blooms before this, and the Thora buttercup (*Ranunculus thora*), an endemic plant of the Zasavje Hills, blooms after. Other protected species also grow here, such as the Carniolan lily (*Lilium carniolicum*) and multiple varieties of orchids – including the green-winged orchid and the three-toothed orchid (*Orchis morio*, *O. tridentata*). In order to protect such treasures, the habitat of the Clusius' gentian in Lovrenc has been a botanical natural monument since 1994.

The other natural attractions of Sevnica include the Ajdovska Peč Cave under the village of Hudo Brezje, the remnants of a former castle tree nursery under the Novo-Čagoš hamlet, as well as the Blanščica, Čanjski Potok, and Žirovski Potok streams and the Stopnik Waterfall. Also notable is the thickest beech in the area, a beauty at more than a hundred years old, measuring 487 cm in circumference and 155 cm in diameter.

## PULSE OF LIFE

Throughout the year traditional events, such as the annual Salamiada and the Blaufränkisch Festival, the Summer Festival at Sevnica Castle, the student Vejšde party, and the traditional Kitariada, bring even greater vitality to the town and the municipality as a whole. Numerous societies also contribute to the variety of events on offer, in which the spirit of volunteering and creativity go hand in hand to create truly memorable occasions.

The accommodation available to visitors is very inviting, including tourist farms and vineyard cottages (*zidanice*). Increasing the appeal are the many unique wines that are made from the grapes grown in local vineyards, from light and fresh red and white wines, to the blended Cviček, Blaufränkisch, and even sparkling wines. The restaurants and tourist farms in the area offer world-class culinary experiences for all palates, and there are many pubs and coffee shops in which to rest, relax, and have a good drink.

You are kindly invited to Sevnica, a treasure chest of experiences for you to enjoy. More information is available at [www.doziviljaj.si](http://www.doziviljaj.si), the website of the Sevnica Tourist Information Centre, where it is also possible to arrange guided tours of the area.

With the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States, Melania Trump (born Melanija Knavs), a Slovenian woman with American citizenship, who spent her childhood and young adult life in Sevnica, became the First Lady-Elect of the United States.



The goal of the Salamiada Festival is to improve the quality of cured meat delights.  
Photo: Municipality of Sevnica archives



Melania Trump during her husband Donald Trump's US presidential campaign.  
Photo: Robi Poredoš/STA

# ALENKA FAJFAR GNEZDA AND BERNARDA AVSENIK

## Raising children in cooperation with young people

ALENKA FAJFAR GNEZDA, TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: BERNARDA AVSENIK



His and Her Royal Highness the King and Queen of Puri Negara, Jembrana, conferring Bernarda Avsenik the Royal Certificate as an Esteemed Member of the Royal Kingdom Family in the palace.

Alenka Fajfar Gnezda and Bernarda Avsenik have found their place in working with young people. Their work is exceptional and selfless, whether it be volunteering, offering educational programmes about multiculturalism and human rights, or encouraging children to express their creativity. In the last few years, they have also been providing film education and encouraging children to create films on the subject of global learning. Gnezda and Avsenik are the directors and screenwriters of two documentaries, while numerous short films were also made by the students under their tutelage.

**Alenka Fajfar Gnezda** is a school counsellor at the Bičevje primary school in Ljubljana. She has been a volunteer in different non-governmental organisations, working on related projects for a number of years. She has organised many workshops and lectures on multicultural topics, although most of her work has been dedicated to helping children and teaching them about human rights, tolerance and mutual respect.

**Bernarda Avsenik** is an English language teacher at the Bičevje primary school in Ljubljana. Besides teaching, she has also been actively involved in different Slovenian and international programmes on multiculturalism and human rights. As a member of the working group for the European project Ja-Ling Comenius – Janua Linguarum – Vrata v Jezike, coordinated by the Faculty of Education, she was awarded a European Language Label for her use of innovative approaches in language teaching and raising intercultural awareness. She is the co-author of various children's textbooks and didactic materials for teaching English, and is an active practitioner of global learning.

**Besides the work that you do, you are both active in raising awareness among students and the general public about the importance of values in society. Which values do you think are most important?**

**Bernarda:** We are raising awareness among students and the general public about the importance of sustainable development – especially more efficient energy use, environmental protection, and the rights of children and others. We focus on questions such as how to develop society and avoid the dangers caused by focusing on material development alone, and thus exhausting natural resources and polluting the environment, as it is vital that we don't compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. How to preserve biological diversity and encourage each person's development without harming anyone, and so helping each other to create a more tolerant, multicultural society.

**Alenka:** We encourage children to pursue various different values – those that are linked to their personal fulfilment and spiritual growth, as well as moral and social values. They learn that in or-

der to establish certain personal and social values it is sometimes necessary to forego certain things. Children form an opinion about what is right, what is wrong, and what is worth pursuing. We encourage their originality and creativity, and the adoption of a more critical approach, while emphasising justice, respect, tolerance, personal and social responsibility, and improving cooperation, solidarity and active participation. Our role is to encourage and support young people in their efforts to change the world for the better.

**That's an ambitious task. How are you working to achieve it?**

**Alenka:** Raising children with values is a long-term process and a goal we can only achieve in collaboration with parents and other young people, whose everyday presence influences children the most. We try to fulfil our mission by showing good examples in everyday situations. We are both volunteers, and organise many global learning workshops for students, both in school and outside of it.



**Bernarda:** We try to find opportunities in everyday situations to contribute to sustainable development and the improvement of the wider community. As co-authors, we have collaborated in preparing a handbook on global learning for working with young people, and introduced the concept of sustainable development in some of the primary school textbooks, which were also included in general lectures for students and introduced at Warsaw University, as well as other places.

**Alenka:** Since 2013, we have made numerous short films on the aforementioned topics, alone or as mentors to students at our school, the purpose of which is to raise the awareness of young people and the general public, both here and abroad, about the goals of sustainable development. The films are close to the children, and at the same time enable them to make their voices heard and to carry out positive changes in society. They warn of human rights violations, encourage multicultural societies and environmental protection, and call for more active citizenship.

**How far have the voices of your students and joint messages reached, and have they been heard?**

**Alenka:** Our voices have reached the wider society through film festivals, as reflected in the numerous national and international awards we have won. This has further spread the films' messages. At the Vienna International Human Rights Film Festival in 2013, which was operated under the auspices of the United Nations Information Service Vienna (UNIS Vienna) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR Austria), and was organised by This Human World, the first prize was awarded to a short film on children's rights titled *We All Make the World Beautiful*. Later, this also won the Amnesty International Slovenia Award for the best short film on tolerance at the Ljubljana International Documentary Film Festival in 2014.

**Bernarda:** These awards and the publicity they generate with regard to audiences, the Slovenian media and governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, surprised and encouraged us to keep creating films and spread children's messages through festivals. Some of our films are also used as didactic tools by NGOs and certain ministries to raise awareness of the aims of sustainable development. They are screened at different national and international events and conferences, and film festivals around the world. We believe that such films represent our contribution to encouraging more proactive behaviours among individuals who will change the world for the better.

**There is still much more that is not listed here, but is worth mentioning. What would you highlight from your past work?**

**Bernarda:** Our work has one thing in common – respect. By that, I mean mutual respect for people and a respectful and caring attitude towards nature. Regardless of the specifics, all the activities performed in cooperation with young people are aimed at raising the importance of values that promote mutually tolerant societies and long-term co-operation, as well as preserving, spreading and observing such values.

**You work mostly with young people. Are they willing to participate in such projects?**

**Alenka:** Our projects offer the opportunity for children to express their ideas. This way, they feel more engaged in the learning process, which is sometimes lacking in regular classes. It means a lot to them to be able to contribute to solving important issues around the world, since it is often forgotten that the majority of questions concern them too. This way of working requires cooperation, respect, and consideration of different opinions. Students learn a lot through enjoyable methods of work. They are relaxed, acquire many competences, and so are motivated and willing to invest their time in such activities.

**Bernarda:** For us as mentors such work poses a unique challenge in both the creative and professional areas, since global topics require constant learning and setting a good example. Students are honoured that the films they help to create are being shown to the public. The participation at festivals and the awards further motivate them, and confirm the meaningfulness of their engagement.

**What is the message of the film *A Small Step for a Man, a Giant Smile for Mankind* which you filmed together with a group of students from the Bičevje Primary School in Ljubljana?**

**Alenka:** The film presents students thinking about the contributions of individuals to a better world. They chose a few adults from their immediate environments whose actions, in the eyes of the children, serve as examples for their own views and actions. The film's message is that adults, their views and activities, are an example for young people, who learn from such behaviour and build their own values, while also actively responding to the situation in society. Of course, this means that adults carry a huge responsibility. Throughout the film, the children send a message that everyone can contribute to changing the world for the better, and that even the smallest action counts.

**The film has already received some awards, including the one it won in Indonesia in November 2016.**

**Bernarda:** That's true. In November the film won the Best Foreign Documentary Award at the Toronto Film Festival, and at the end of the same month it received the International Award of Excellence at the International Festival for Documentary Film in Indonesia. In December it won the Filmmaker of the Year Gold Award in the same country and played a number of times to large Indonesian audiences. It was also nominated for the Best Humanitarian Award in London, and in January 2017 it received the World Tolerance Gold Award and the Human Rights Gold Award in Jakarta.

**It wasn't just film awards in Indonesia, you also received the honorary title of Esteemed Members of the Royal Kingdom Family. What can you tell us about that?**

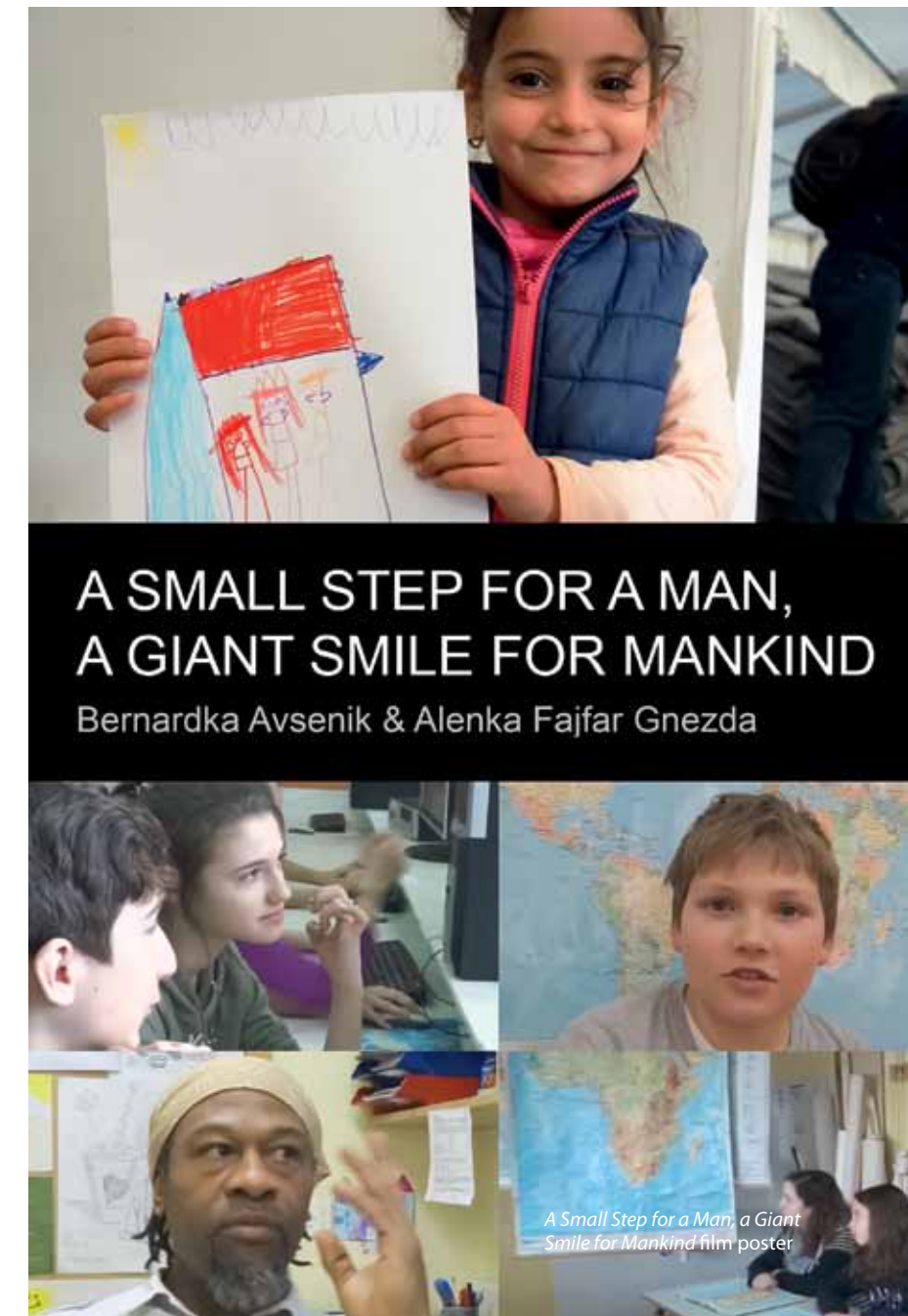
**Alenka:** On that occasion, His and Her Royal Highness the King and Queen of Puri Negara, Jembrana awarded us the Royal World High Distinction Prize for our achievements in the fields of culture and art, and our contribution to humanity. As a special honour, we were also awarded the Royal Certificate as Esteemed Members of the Royal Kingdom Family. This was given for our efforts in promoting love and our care towards culture, humanity, social care and tourism.

**Where can we see your films?**

**Bernarda:** Some of our short films can be seen on our school's website. Two are available as teaching materials on the Amnesty International Slovenia website, while others will shortly be available on the UNICEF Slovenia websites. Our latest film will be available to the public in 2017, with this delay being due to our obligations to international festivals.

**What are your plans for the near future?**

**Bernarda:** We will continue working with young people. We will attend Slovenian film festivals, and we would like the film to be as successful in Slovenia as it has been abroad, and hope that it can actively encourage local audiences to think and act about the issues raised. We would also like to take advantage of the great success of our most recent film to personally promote and introduce it abroad, if we have the opportunity to do so.





## DAŠA BAHOR

# A letter to a girl named Daša

NATAŠA GERKEŠ, TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Last year, Daša Bahor participated in the Universal Postal Union's International Letter-Writing Competition. Daša won third prize with her letter, in which she is writing to herself – a young girl called Daša in 2047. She writes about the life she wants in the future, and intertwines her thoughts with an imaginary experience of meeting a refugee.

Almost a hundred thousand children and young people from 64 countries took part in the competition, and wrote letters to their future selves in 2047. Daša decided to write about a refugee and their shared fates. She chose this theme together with her mentor, Nataša Podhostnik.

She begins her letter to the future Daša with the question "How is life in 2047?", providing the answer right away as she first reminds readers of our indifference to the everyday struggles of others. The letter is forceful and often relentless: "A war can continue, or it can stop. There are no other options." Despite her young age, Daša is aware that world peace cannot be built on hatred:

**"Only when it is all over do we realise that we cannot destroy hate with hate, just as we cannot overcome darkness with darkness."**

Daša accepts human imperfections, but wishes there was a greater desire and more will from all of us to achieve better understanding: "But of course we will never be able to get rid of all the bad things: even when the sun is shining, shadows remain."

### SHE AND THE BOY WISH FOR A COMPASSIONATE WORLD

Daša's story begins simply enough. "It was a beautiful sunny day, and I was taking some old clothes to a nearby charity organisation that was involved in distributing them to war refugees." There she meets a boy of her age who is dirty, scared and unhappy. The boy offers to help when he sees that Daša does not know her way around the overcrowded refugee camp, showing her the clothing collection centre. Although they are initially separated by their differences and natural restraint, they soon begin to talk.

Daša listens to the boy attentively and respectfully. He tells her the story of how he and his family fled from their homeland because of war, how they had to travel a long way and hide from the police so they would not be separated. He also tells her that he still encounters hatred in this country, even though he has already arrived at the destination he desired. After listening to the boy's story, Daša concludes: "Even now, when he was on the way to becoming a fully entitled citizen, just like me, he encountered nasty looks and abuse wherever he went. Every time he turned on the television in his rented flat, he would witness the same scene. Irrational fear of people like him, simply because they came from the same direction as the enemy."

Daša would like to live in a new, more beautiful world that will tolerate differences and not try to push all people into one ideal version of being human.

**She wishes for an environment where everyone will feel safe.**

Somewhere there is no room for the stereotypes and prejudices that make it impossible for us to live alongside each other in peace and instead force us apart, each of us living among our own, until all the hatred comes into the open. "A world where I will be able to say to my children that when I was thirteen years old I lived among people who were willing to help the needy, and unite to form a solid whole that no evil could separate."

Daša concludes her award-winning letter as follows: "As I write this letter I am full of conflicting feelings, since reason tells me that my hopes for the future are too beautiful to be realistic. Deep inside me I feel that all my wishes for peace in the world cannot be fulfilled." She says goodbye with: "Yours hopefully, Daša, 13 years." Let us hope her wishes come true.

### HER ACHIEVEMENT WAS CELEBRATED BY MANY SLOVENIANS

After receiving the award, which was brought to the school by Director of the International Mail Division at the Post of Slovenia, Marjan Osvald, Daša's story circulated in the media and listeners of the Val 202 radio station chose her as the focus of the regular Name of the Week feature. The Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Maja Makovec Brenčič, also congratulated Daša, and the Ministry published her letter on its website.

### SHE IS ALSO THINKING ABOUT THE NEAR FUTURE

As well as 2047, this ninth-grader is also thinking about her near future. After finishing elementary school she will enrol in the Črnomelj high school. At the present she does not know what subject she will choose at the university level, although "definitely something in the field of natural sciences," she said. And what does Daša do in her free time? She likes to read and dance in the Dragatuš youth folklore group.

Like most other young people, Daša does not usually write letters; however, she likes to write postcards and greeting cards, and wrote a lot of them during the festive month of December, mainly to her relatives. Moreover, this year her greeting cards had special value, since they were sent by a student who had written the third best letter in the world.

# ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

## Slovenian sporting heroes of the year

POLONA PREŠEREN  
PHOTO: DŠNS ARCHIVES



From left: Veselka Pevec, Vasilij Žbogar, Nik Zupančič, Nik Pem, Janja Garnbret, Anamari Velenšek, Peter Prevc, Tim Gajser, Tina Trstenjak.

Slovenians have a close connection with sport, and thus our story is also a sports story, as exercise fills us with vigour, and gives us the energy needed to meet our recreational and professional goals. Indeed, we often excel at sports even if the conditions are not always in our favour. Sport is thus an important part of the Slovenian identity, and it is in our nature to be active and aim to achieve the best results in everything we do.

In general, Slovenia is a nation of recreational athletes, and we cannot imagine a balanced life without physical activity. Rich geographic diversity and numerous year-round recreational sporting events also provide great opportunities for recreationists and other enthusiasts to enjoy themselves.

**At the professional level it seems incredible that a nation of just two million could achieve such success in sports.**

We are probably the only country this small that has qualified for the highest-level competitions in team sports (football, hockey, basketball, handball, and volleyball), and whose exceptional individual athletes have achieved such outstanding results (judo, skiing, cross-country skiing, and ski jumping).

### **PETER PREVC, TINA TRSTENJAK AND THE NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY TEAM ARE THE BEST**

The Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists selected the Slovenian Athletes of the Year for 2016. The male athlete of the year was Peter Prevc, the female athlete of the year was Tina Trstenjak, while the men's national ice hockey team took victory in the team category. Peter Prevc won this honour for the fourth time, Tina Trstenjak for the first, and the national ice hockey team for the fifth.

**Peter Prevc** has been named the Slovenian Athlete of the Year for four consecutive years, and 2016 was another an incredible season for the ski jumping champion, with 15 victories, 22 podiums and 2,303 points in total. As he said in an interview after the end of the season, he has now set records that will be difficult for anyone to break, even himself. At the Ski Jumping World Cup finale at Planica his season was crowned when he celebrated overall victory and received the small crystal globe, to the delight of many of his fans.



Peter Prevc, Slovenian Athlete of the Year.



Iztok Čop, former professional rower, and Tina Trstenjak, Slovenian Athlete of the Year.

**Tina Trstenjak** won the judo gold medal in the women's 63 kg category at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. A European and world champion, she was a favourite for an Olympic gold, and her victory was perhaps taken for granted by her fans. Moreover, she herself noted that she came to Rio in good psychological and physical condition, that nothing was able to catch her off balance, and so she kept her mind focused on the competition.

**The men's national ice hockey team** won the team of the year award for the fifth time. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the team has already qualified for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, a remarkable achievement when we consider that Slovenia has only around 100 professional ice hockey players, one professional ice hockey club, one semi-professional ice hockey club, and seven ice hockey arenas. In Pyeongchang, the Lynx will defend the seventh place they won at the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi.

As the Slovenian national team selector, Nik Zupančič, himself once one of the key players on the national team, noted after the ceremony: "This award, particularly since we have won it several times in recent years, is a testament to our hard work. First and foremost, that of the guys themselves, as they are the ones who are on the ice, and also that of the coaches. I am happy for them."

The Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists also presented the Young Athlete of the Year Award. This year that was won by **Janja Garnbret**, a 17-year old sport climber who will certainly remember the year 2016. It was the year she really made her mark on the world of international sport climbing. She became world champion, won the World Cup competition and became junior champion in lead and bouldering. She is looking forward to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, where sport climbing will be included for the first time as an official discipline.

Another undisputed hero and outstanding athlete is Veselka Pevec, who won a gold medal in the air rifle competition at the Paralympics in Rio, beating her teammate Franček Gorazd Tiršek in a dramatic finale. Veselka has a difficult story behind her, but managed to overcome the hard times with her amazing energy and positive attitude to life. She is an athlete who inspires us all, showing that everything is possible. She went to Rio without much fanfare, but then proved to the whole world the strength of her big heart.



This year's winners: Slovenian Ice-hockey Team (player Nik Pem and national team selector Nik Zupančič), Tina Trstenjak and Peter Prevc.

## GOLDEN FOX

# The best Slovenian skier, Tina Maze, bids a fond farewell

TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: STA



Tina Maze after her farewell race at the Golden Fox meet.

The Golden Fox competition, held this year on 7 January, continued to thrill spectators, and was especially notable as it marked the farewell from the queen of the slopes, Tina Maze. This local hero and world-class athlete skied her last run down the slopes of Pohorje eighteen years after her first race there.

However, Maze did not run her last race to win it, but instead wanted to say goodbye and thank-you to the spectators and fans at the place where she skied her first World Cup race in 1999.

Maze chose the Golden Fox event because it is among her favourite competitions. It was here that she stepped onto the winners' podium for the first time in 2002, coming in second in the giant slalom, and later took three victories (in 2005 and 2009 in the giant slalom, and in 2013 in the slalom). The site of the Golden Fox event, in Maribor, has not always proved to be so favourable to Maze – and her attempt to win the overall title in the 2014/15 season foundered when she failed to win any points from the giant slalom or slalom there.

Still, such disappointments are minor issues in such a long and successful career. Maze has won four Olympic medals, including two golds, nine World Championship medals, of which four were gold, and stepped onto the World Cup winners' podium a total of 81 times, with 26 on the top step, won races in all alpine ski disciplines, and became the world record holder in the 2012/13 season, when she scored an incredible 2,414 World Cup points. The figures speak for themselves – Tina Maze is the best Slovenian athlete of all time. In addition, and most importantly for her future, she never suffered a serious injury in her career.

**A crowd of at least 15,000 people gathered in Maribor to say goodbye to Maze, while countless others watched on television, and many shed a tear at her run down the slopes.**

Maze concluded her sporting life in her own way, echoing her song My Way Is My Decision. She did not run down the slope to compete with the other skiers, but instead came down as a thank-you to her own Team aMaze and the audience. Here she showed her distinctive style for the last time, stopping before the finish line, taking off her skies, and crossing on foot.

For the time being, however, Tina Maze remains in the world of sport, as she has her whole life. She can imagine no other way.



Ladies Slalom World Cup race (Golden Fox, Maribor, 23 January 2013). Tina Maze, the Golden Fox slalom race and overall winner.



Skier Tina Maze's team boss Andrea Massi, Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar, Tina Maze, Slovenian Sport Minister Maja Makovec Brenčič and Slovenian Economy Minister Zdravko Počivalšek at the Golden Fox World Cup race.

Tina Maze believes that the most important results in her career were as follows: her last victory in Maribor, 26 January 2013; her first place at the Olympic Games in Sochi; the gold medal in Super-G; the silver medals in super combined and giant slalom; the big crystal globe she won and the numerous records she broke in 2013; the two silver medals at the Olympic Games in Vancouver; the golden medal she won in giant slalom and the silver medal in super combined at the World Championship in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 2011; and her victory at the Alpine Ski World Cup race in Söldn in 2005, where she also won her first World Cup race in the 2002/03 season.

### EMOTIONAL FAREWELL

"It was very difficult, emotionally," Maze said after the event. "A lot of people came to salute me, and I appreciate it very much. I had many beautiful as well as difficult moments in alpine skiing, and I am very grateful for all I have experienced."

Some of her former rivals also spoke about Maze and her career. For example, Lara Gut said "Tina is an amazing athlete, and will be much missed. We resemble each other in a way, as we both achieved success with an independent team. Her song My Way Is My Decision revealed quite a lot about Tina."

Soffia Goggia, another skier, added "I burst into tears when Tina began her last race. I cried like a baby. She has always fascinated me, as she put maximum effort into every race. I copy her methods. Thank you Tina, for everything you have given me." While Tessa Worley noted, "I am glad to have seen Tina at work again. I enjoyed her farewell performance. She deserves an unforgettable goodbye."

The Slovenian President Borut Pahor also thanked Maze, the world champion so many times, for all the beautiful moments she had given to Slovenia, and gave her a laurel wreath to mark the occasion. The Prime Minister Miro Cerar also said that Tina Maze can serve as an example to young Slovenians who aim follow her lead in sport. Numerous other figures from the world of politics, as well as the highest-ranking representatives of the Ski Association of Slovenia, and her closest associates throughout her sporting life, all paid tribute to Maze and her achievements. After having announced the end of her sports career last October in Söldn, Tina has finally experienced the farewell she wanted and deserved.

Mikaela Shiffrin won the 53rd Golden Fox slalom race. The American also won a trophy for the best combined time, coming in fourth in the giant slalom and first in the slalom. This year's event, held on Maribor's Pohorje, also saw a new local success, as two Slovenian skiers were among the top ten, namely Ana Bucik in seventh place and Ilka Štuhec in tenth.

Slovenian Tina Maze fans, who stood by her even in the coldest of winter.

