



Sinfo

September-October

Images from Slovenia

IN FOCUS

Music as light, bread and life

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

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**“WITHOUT MUSIC, LIFE
WOULD BE A MISTAKE ...”**

... as philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said. For many, music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy together – a touch of something unutterable, holy, and divine. Without it, and without art, society would be a barbarian one, of ignorant, superstitious and easily steerable limited people. It expands horizons and supports a different perspective. Music has set countless lives on to the right path, has helped preserve life itself, and has spread light wherever it is heard. Ever since humans exist, music exists too. It's like photography – it captures moments of eternity, something of importance, something that is born inside and wants to come out. With it, we are all connected, anybody can create it, and anybody can admire it.

By thinking of the importance of music, we want to revive the memory of the recently deceased Slavko Avsenik, who certainly invented our feeling of joy toward life and love for the homeland in a musical sense. Avsenik's tunes are adopted by many Europeans as their own. His melodies are undoubtedly a cultural heritage of Slovenia, Europe, and the whole world. They scent like our country and express our essence. Brothers Avsenik, Slavko and Vilko, are considered the most played and best-selling authors of folk music in Europe. We can easily write down, that Avsenik brothers are that real authentic, genuine and unique thing we have in Slovenia. Only a few nations have a polka king.

Our thoughts on music in this edition of Sinfo, of course, also cover other music genres: folk music, opera, classical music, choral singing, popular music, rock, rap, chanson.... united by a number of unprecedented world-famous, successful and recognized artists. As well as the realization that nature holds nothing more beautiful or perfect than music. Music directs a man to the depths of his soul. It can improve a human mind and move it, and thereby change habits and eliminate the grime of everyday life from our souls.

Vesna Žarkovič
Vesna Žarkovič, Executive Editor

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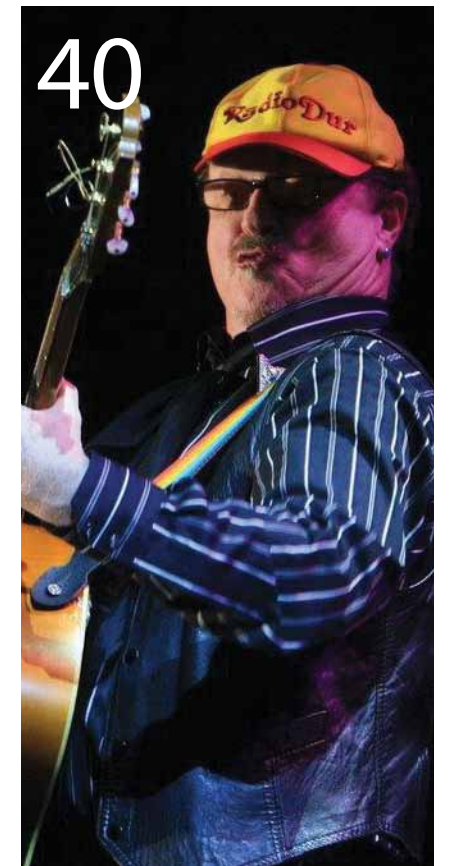
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MUSIC AS LIGHT, BREAD AND LIFE

It's the strongest and most lively of all the arts. Music faithfully accompanies man on his life's journey. Listen to the folk songs, telling of important events from birth to death, from morning till night, all doings, all desires, and all moods. Music defines humans and enriches them, makes them happy, developing their love not only for beautiful things but also for the community. Slovenians are known for their polyphonic singing, performed in numerous quartets, octets, and choirs. Only a few nations have so many singing enthusiasts as we do.



POPULAR FOLK MUSIC

**“Slovenija, od kod lepote tvoje ...”
(Slovenia, whence thy beauty ...)**

BRIGITA JUHART

Popular folk music is the music that attracts the largest crowds in Slovenia. This musical genre became so popular thanks to numerous Slovene ensembles, among which Avseniki and the Lojze Slak Ensemble stand out. Many of the Avsenik Brothers songs have already become folk tunes and reached the highest level of song.

AVSENIKI – POLKA KINGS

The melodies of Slavko Avsenik are undoubtedly the cultural heritage not only of Slovenia, but also of Europe and the whole world. The national anthem “Zdravljica” (composed in 1905) and Avsenik’s polka “Na Golici” (Trumpet echoes) can be considered as two sacred songs, two works of art representing our national character. The king of Slovene music has been giving away his great inner richness to his audience from his early days until his last breath, and has left a golden heritage to all Slovene musicians, on which they will be able to draw for centuries.

The brothers Avsenik, Slavko and Vilko, represent the most performed and the best sold authors of popular folk music in Europe. They wrote more than 1,000 songs, among which “Na Golici”, that has been reworked as many as 600 times and is the most played instrumental piece of music in Europe and also the most famous.

Avseniki took their music from the Gorenjska region to the most prestige and largest concert halls and as far as the Berlin Philharmonic. They can pride themselves with more than 10,000 imitators and 150 fan clubs of Avsenik music. The Avsenik Brothers Ensemble sold 36 million records, performed over 10,000 concerts and, in 40 years of their performance, received 31 gold, one platinum and one diamond record.

GENUINE AND UNIQUE

Avseniki and Begunje in the Gorenjska region are also interesting to those accidental tourists not familiar with popular folk music. The song “Na Golici” proved to be a universal hit every time. Avseniki are one real authentic, genuine and unique thing we have in Slovenia. Nobody else has a polka king.

The ensemble was formed in 1953 by the brothers Slavko, who played the accordion and wrote the music, and Vilko, who arranged the music for the ensemble. The band started as a trio which soon grew into a quartet and into the Gorenjski quintet in 1955, which was later renamed as the Avsenik Brothers Quintet. They produced music with an accordion, clarinet, trumpet, guitar, baritone and bass, while a full sound was added by a vocal duet or trio.

It is believed that Avseniki were the pioneers of a new music genre in Central Europe, while their quality in this field is indisputable.

They were very popular in Austria, Germany and basically everywhere else in the world; in the German speaking arena, the ensemble was known under the name of the Oberkrainer Quintett and, after numerous Slovene popular folk music groups presented themselves in this arena, as Slavko Avsenik und seine Original Oberkrainer.

MUSICIAN OF THE PEOPLE

As a composer, Slavko Avsenik knew how to look inside the heart and write those feelings into a melody. Although he did not have any formal musical education, nor could he read musical notes and so wrote down the melodies in his own way with lines and dots, he was an exceptional composer. In tandem with brother Vilko, who completed a musical conservatory education and also understood Slavko's writing, they were a unique musical team that knew how to touch joy, happiness, sadness, natural beauty, of the mountains and jewels of Slovenia with their music. At the same time, he paid attention to his listeners and, when they performed, made notes of the kind of impression their playing left. He has often mentioned that he was merely observing his audience and played to them that to which they had responded.

"The nation decides who is interesting and who is not. Once you are at the top, only one thing applies: you have to remain interesting, i.e. such that people will still want you. The motto of Avseniki was: to be honest, work, create, go on tours and listen to your listeners. I felt with the people. I was observing them and we only played what the listeners responded to. On my musical path I have always been adjusting to the taste of audience and, if I have managed to please the entire audience, I was also pleased with myself."

One of the biggest achievements of the Avsenik Ensemble is the song "Na Golici" (Trompeten-Echo in the German version) which was declared the most played instrumental piece of music in the world over the last century by the German royalty collection agency GEMA in 2003 .

Many other songs, written and played by the Avsenik brothers have already become folk tunes, while numerous other performers play their adaptations which are a part of their regular repertoire. At the sixtieth anniversary of the Avsenik Ensemble, their music was entered into the Slovene immaterial, i.e. spiritual cultural inheritance as a special phenomenon.

LOJZE SLAK ENSEMBLE

Lojze Slak created a new music genre with the folk instrument – the diatonic accordion – and is also the creator of the diatonic accordion that we know today. He perfected the accordion by adding the so called "Slak's button" and the sixth bass.

The ensemble started in 1964, when the accordionist Lojze Slak met the singing group "Fantje s Praprotna" (*Boys from Praprotno*) at one of his performances on Ljubljana Radio. He and singers from the Selška valley tried to play a few songs together and agreed to perform together. Thus was founded one of the best Slovene ensembles, with which Lojze Slak performed up to his death in 2011. In addition, they performed elsewhere in Europe, as well as in other states, such as the USA, Canada and Australia. The Lojze Slak Ensemble also contributed to Slovene popular folk music being known internationally.

TYPICAL DIATONIC ACCORDION

Slak was a folk musician and, as such, got under the skin and into the hearts of everyone who were learning the mysteries of the diatonic accordion.

Thanks to him, there are currently more than ten thousand educated, mainly young musicians playing the diatonic accordion, since the majority of music schools in Slovenia offer the studies of this type of accordion. The diatonic accordion also became the trademark of Slovenia abroad.

In the rich musical history of the Lojze Slak Ensemble, numerous popular hits, such as "Čebelar" (*Beekeeper*), "Ej prijatelj" (*Hey buddy*), "Mama prihajam domov" (*Mom, I'm coming home*), "Po dekle" (*For*

the girl), "Postojnska Jama" (*Postojna Cave*), "Spomini stare Ljubljane" (*Memories of old Ljubljana*), "Srečno mlada Slovenija" (*Best of luck, young Slovenia*) and "V dolini tihi" (*In the quiet valley*), which is considered as the greatest of Slak's hits, were born.

BREAKING THE MUSICAL BARRIERS

Traditionally, it was believed that rockers and folk singers are on opposite sides that cannot be crossed: what was still an unimaginable combination a decade ago, received a wave of excitement and a confirmation that some barriers in people's mind had to be moved. At the Viktor Awards (Viktor is a Slovene award for media achievements and accomplishments in popular culture), the Slovene rock band Big Foot Mama and the Lojze Slak Ensemble joined forces and played the rock song "Pomlad" (*Spring*) together. Following this the popular folk ensemble and rock group performed together on a several additional occasions.

PERPETUUM JAZZILE WITH AVSENIK MEDLEY

When selecting its repertoire, Perpetuum Jazzile is always reaching for top musical products. In the field of popular folk music, the tradition of the Avsenik family is undoubtedly the best that this music can offer. Thus, in agreement with the family, they prepared vocal adaptations of the polkas "Na avtocesti" and "Na Golici".

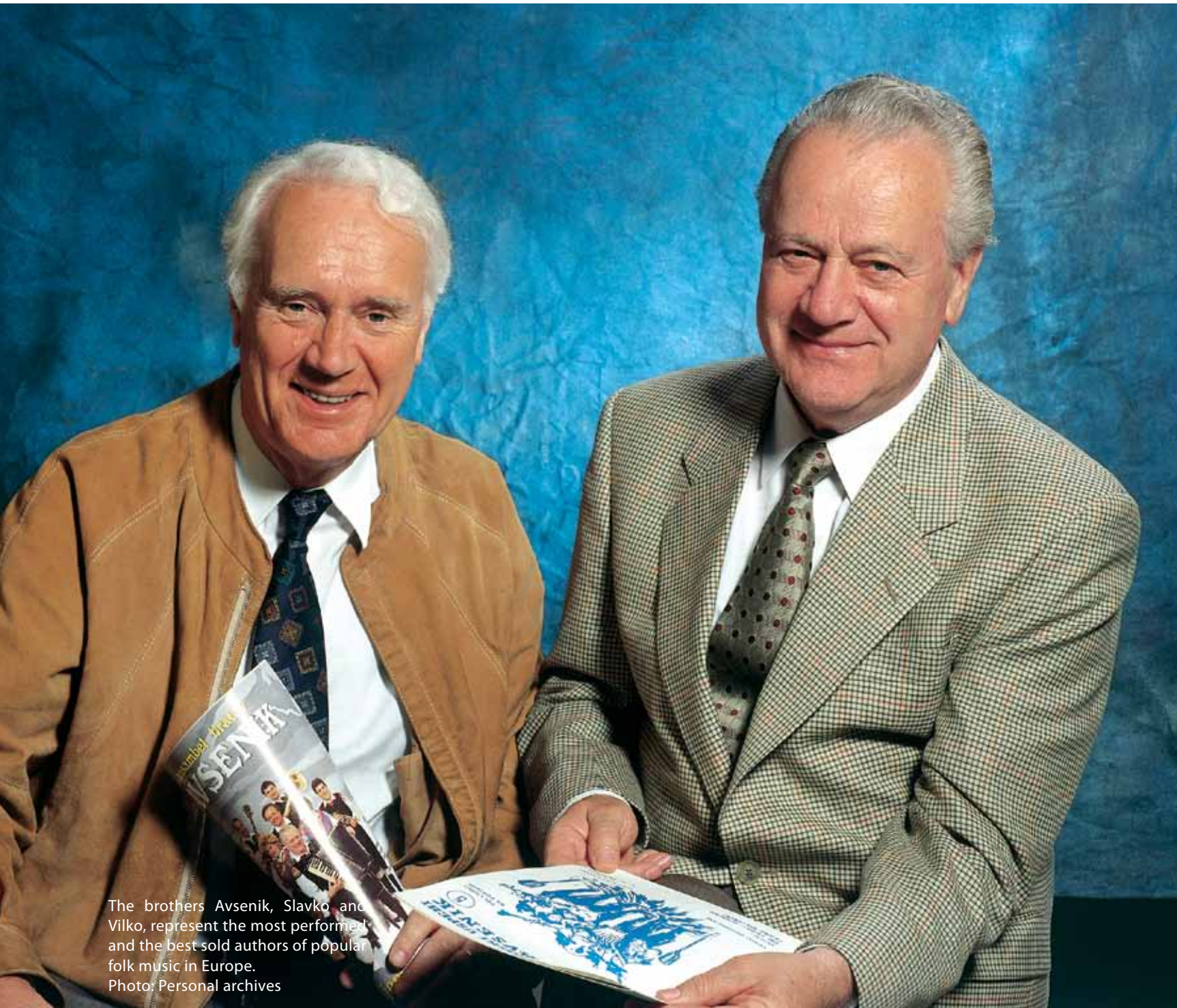
The hit entitled Avsenik Medley, that already has more than 5.7 million views on YouTube, was created.

ALSO INTERESTING TO THE YOUNG GENERATION

Popular folk music has, in addition to the generations born in the period from the sixties to the nineties of the previous century, also become popular with the generations that were born after Slovenia gained independence in 1991. In this period, the new and very popular younger ensembles, in particular Modrijani, Mladi Dolenjci and Spev became accomplished. In these ensembles, the polyphonic singing of boys and playing of the diatonic accordion prevail. Some quintets are also very popular in Alpine countries outside the Slovene borders, namely the Sašo Avsenik Ensemble, Okrogli muzikantje, the Ensemble Svetlin and Štirje kovači who have been playing together continuously since 1954.



Photo: Mospphotos



The brothers Avsenik, Slavko and Vilko, represent the most performed and the best sold authors of popular folk music in Europe.
Photo: Personal archives

Tomaž Kozlevčar, Perpetuum Jazzile: "I was trying to transform all known material into voices as truly as possible. The syllables and voices, used by the singers to demonstrate certain instruments, had to be delicately selected. I wanted the vocal version to be as close as possible to the original "drive" and sound of Avsenik popular folk music. Obviously, we have succeeded, since the responses at all concerts, at which the said polkas were performed, were excellent. We sing them with pride and we will continue to perform them around the world, wherever we are invited.

The main difference in the musical creation between the two ensembles was in the type of accordion. Avseniki played the piano accordion, while Slak used the diatonic one. They also differed in the composition of their members, since the Avsenik Ensemble also comprised instrumentalists, such as a trumpeter and clarinetist, but the same does not apply for the Lojze Slak Ensemble.

Avseniki were the only Slovenes who had as many as three performances in the Berlin Philharmonic, while their most massive concert took place in 1961, when no less than 80,000 people gathered in the Berlin Stadium. The visitors were given candle-light instead of tickets and, when the organisers darkened the venue, they played "Moj rodni kraj, moj rodni dom" (My birth place, my birth home); the sight of the lighted candles was moving. Avseniki also hold an unusual world record in non-interrupted playing for more than 300 evenings in a row.

Slavko Avsenik was entered into the lexicon publication Who's Who in 1979.

Avseniki performed in Basel on the same day as the Rolling Stones and slept in the same hotel as Mick Jagger and his band.

On the twentieth anniversary of Slovenia's independence, the editorial board of the Vikend TV guide prepared twenty most noticed Slovene hits of all time, those that had got under the skin of Slovenes and who know them by heart in the middle of the night. The song "V dolini tih" (In the quiet valley), composed by the Lojze Slak Ensemble in 1966, was also placed on the list. This song, which is based on the Slovene national motive, was adapted by the Lojze Slak Ensemble into its own version.

THE DIATONIC BUTTON ACCORDION

The most popular instrument in Slovenia

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA, DANILA MAŠIČ
Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



In Slovenia, the diatonic button accordion is present at almost every social event, especially in the rural areas. It is hard to imagine a wedding, birth celebration, birthday, anniversary, festival or any other kind of event without this instrument, which is often played spontaneously at various gatherings. Demand has dictated both the offer and manufacture of this instrument.

WHY DO SLOVENIANS ENJOY PUSHING AND PULLING THE ACCORDION BELLOWS SO MUCH?

The diatonic button accordion, locally known as frajtonerca, Štajerka, bellows etc., is the youngest folk instrument and the first in terms of popularity. In a mere hundred years, it has penetrated into all European countries and in some areas replaced many other folk instruments that were in use at the time. The accordion was invented by Jerry Ludwig Buschmann (1805–1864), who also invented the harmonica. Both instruments produce sound with free-swinging reeds, the difference being that playing the harmonica requires the direct blowing of air, whereas the accordion draws air into the bellows.

The diatonic button accordion is an extremely effective instrument since it combines the characteristics of two different instruments.

In addition to providing the melody, it also allows bass accompaniment. This creates a very rich sound image in a single instrument, which is usually very loud. The instrument is called diatonic because, when compressing the bellows, it produces one tone, and when expanding them, it generates a different one. It thus sounds three-voiced and is usually the leading instrument in a band or attracts attention as a solo instrument.

In Slovenia, it was mainly the folk music that contributed to the popularity of this musical instrument. The man who is given the most credit for this popularization is Lojze Slak, who began his career in folk music in the 1960s. The diatonic button accordion has witnessed its definitive boom in popularity in recent years through an outstanding popularization of folk music and various bands such as Modrijani.

We are probably getting close to the point where popularity of accordions and folk bands in Slovenia will reach its limits. One can hardly imagine frajtonarica to be more popular than it already is.

THAT IS WHY WE HAVE IMPROVED ITS MANUFACTURE

The diatonic accordion was introduced in Slovenia at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century. The three-row diatonic button accordion is the most widely used accordion in Slovenia.

Initially, diatonic button accordions were mostly the work of local masters and later also became an artisan and industrial product. The first well-known Slovenian manufacturers include Lubas, who produced them as early as 1913 in Slovenj Gradec, Ploner from Trieste, Murovec from Kranjska Gora and others, who all manufactured accordions by hand. Although the diatonic button accordion was considered a folk instrument, it was still very expensive, which was why many musicians made their accordions by themselves at home.

The end of the World War II brought a mass production and sale of diatonic button accordions. In 1972, the Melodija musical instrument factory from Mengeš also started to produce them. The company started out as a simple workshop, where a few masters from Ljubljana and the surrounding area were gathered. Until then, they had produced accordions individually, and only later started to work within the factory. Melodija made over 2,500 accordions per year and exported many of them.

Today, there are many other accordion manufacturers besides Melodija. The best-known among the high-quality brands are Rutar and Zupan.

Nejc Pačnik - the new world champion of diatonic accordion.



To produce a diatonic button accordion, one needs extensive experience and knowledge and a refined ear for music. Since the tone colour is extremely important, tuning is the most demanding and paramount factor that gives true meaning to the entire product. One handmade accordion requires about 1000 hours of work.

Over the recent years, manufacturers have improved the diatonic button accordion so that it enables the user to play more than just traditional folk tunes. In Slovenia, the improvement was contributed to by some of the best folk accordionists such as Lojze Slak, Franc Mihelič, Zoran Zorko and also Miha Debevec, who won the world's most prestigious competition in playing the diatonic button accordion twice. Debevec plays a Zupan's unique, patented 'Vanessa-bass extension' diatonic button accordion, which he developed together with the world-renowned manufacturer Valentin Zupan a few years ago.

The cooperation between manufacturers and accordionists, who are often also music teachers, brought the diatonic accordion alongside the classical instruments such as piano or flute, in which the musical elements such as melody, rhythm, harmony, tempo and dynamics are already completely clear.

MORE ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT

The diatonic button accordion is a member of the aerophone family or air musical instruments. It consists of three components, i.e. the treble section – which is the part on the right featuring more

buttons, the bellows, and the bass section which is where the trumpets are located. The wooden elements are made of resonant spruce wood, whereas the structural components are made of pear, walnut or maple wood. The vocal cords, which are built in the treble and bass section, have aluminium housing, and the play feather is made of Swedish spring steel. The bellows are made of cardboard which includes sheep leather on the joints.

HAVING A SOUL TO BECOME THE WORLD CHAMPION

The new world champion of the diatonic accordion is Nejc Pačnik. Nejc was inspired to play this instrument by his grandfather who showed him the basics of playing and started taking him to diatonic accordion lessons when he was five years old. As a child, he practised one hour per day and, over the years, the time he has spent with the accordion increased to up to eight hours of playing.

Nejc is the only Slovene who has won all competitions. In 2007, he became the European Absolute Champion, and in 2008 and 2009, he won the Golden Accordion Award of Ljubecna; in 2009, he also became the Junior World Champion and this year, he became the Absolute World Champion.

He has established his own musical school in which he teaches, but he also performs a lot. The diatonic accordion is an instrument, with which mainly popular folk music has been played, but now appears with people like Nejc, who due to their knowledge and experience see a lot of missed opportunities in it, not only in popular folk genre but also in other musical genres.

Did you know?

- Slovenians are proud to say that we are the first in the number of accordions per capita.
- At the Panonika harmonika festival, the musician Zoran Zorko set a record in playing the accordion for more than 35 consecutive hours.
- The Panonika harmonika festival also set a record in the highest number of performing accordionists. With 1137 players, they composed the largest orchestra in the world.

MUSIC IN THE SLOVENE NATION'S LIFE

A Short Walk through History

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA



Photo: Ukom Archives

THE WORLD'S OLDEST MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

An unusual musical instrument, neither a flute nor a whistle, was found embedded near the remains of a 50,000 – 60,000-year-old Neanderthal fire pit in the Divje Babe Archaeological Park (near Cerklje, Slovenia). It is made from the thighbone of a young cave bear into which the Neanderthal drilled three holes and made a sharpened rim for the mouthpiece using tools made of bone and stone. The natural shape of the chosen left thighbone and its size and artificial repurposing is ergonomically sound and adapted for a right-handed musician. Therefore, it cannot be random.

This incredible find is at least 10,000 years older and significantly more functional than all other previously known Palaeolithic flutes in Europe made from bird bones by the first anatomically modern humans.

That is why we can no longer simply speak of a flute, but rather of a musical instrument of a special kind, one that profoundly changed our views of the Neanderthal, who went extinct 30,000 years ago. This famous discovery was made during excavations in 1995.

THE FIRST RENOWNED SLOVENE COMPOSER

Jacobus Gallus Carniolus (1550-1591) was a late-Renaissance composer of Slovene ethnicity. He was born in Carniola, which at the time was one of the Habsburg lands in the Holy Roman Empire. Gallus represented the Counter-Reformation in Bohemia, where he lived, mixing the polyphonic style of the High Renaissance Franco-Flemish School with the style of the Venetian School. His output was both sacred and secular, and hugely prolific: over 500 works have been attributed to him.

His most notable work is the six-part Opus Musicum (1587), a collection of 374 motets that would eventually cover the liturgical needs of the entire ecclesiastical year.

His wide-ranging, eclectic style blended archaism and modernity. He enjoyed word painting in the style of the madrigal, yet he could write the simple *Ecce quomodo moritur justus* later used by George Frideric Handel in his funeral anthem *The Ways of Zion Do Mourn*.

PATRONS OF MUSIC

In the 16th century, Wolfgang Auersperg, Lord of Šumberk, was an important patron of music on Slovenian territory. He had at his home a quite new – for the time – keyboard instrument: a virginal. The instrument was popular in Europe during the late Renaissance





and early baroque periods. But Auersperg wrote his name into the history of music as an inspiration to one of the greatest composers, Cipriano de Rore. In 1556 he sent a letter from Ferrara to Lord of Šumberk along with a five-voice madrigal *Rex Asiae et Ponti* with music and words addressed to Auersperg.

The bishop of Ljubljana, Tomas Chrön (Tomaž Hren) was the most important figure in the development of music in Carniola in the first decades of the 17th century.

He was an enthusiastic supporter of church music and folk singing. Chrön made it possible for Johannes Tschandek (Janez Čandek or Čandik) to print the gospels and epistles in the Slovenian language and he edited the text himself. Chrön also supported liturgical music and during his life the reproduction of music in Gornji Grad reached the level of other important catholic chapels of nobility.

THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MUSIC

A group of like-minded men gathered at the home of the patrician Janez Bertold von Höffer and decided to establish the Ljubljana Academia Philharmonicorum, following the model of similar societies in nearby Italy.

Founded in 1701, the Philharmonic Academy is the oldest European association outside the Roman and Anglo-Saxon regions.

The Academy's motto: IT ENTERTAINS AND REVEALS ETERNAL THINGS TO THE MIND.

It was an aristocratic establishment and one of the annual duties of the members was to celebrate the feast day of St Cecilia. Its activities were twofold: closed sessions were held for members only and public performances were organised on special occasions.

The first public appearance of the Academia is said to have occurred at the Bishop's mansion on 13 December 1701. The activities of the Academia Philharmonicorum significantly enriched the musical life of Ljubljana and, above all, laid new foundations for its development. Musicians did not perform just foreign compositions, but also devoted special attention to the works of domestic composers. The institution influenced their style orientation and artistic development. Music became an aristocratic pastime, thus raising its reputation and status in the city.

ORIGINAL SLOVENIAN MUSIC CULTURE

The 19th century was particularly important in Slovenia for the consolidation of the national consciousness. Composers directed all their efforts towards the creation of music that stirred national emotions.

And even more important than the music were the texts, which were supposed to fill the listeners, particularly the numerous amateur singers, with national pride. Therefore, this period witnessed the blossoming of choral singing. At the turn of the century the Slovenian Music Society played an important role in the flourishing of Slovenian music. Established in 1872, it was largely responsible for the great energy in the Slovenian music of the time, and its activities included publishing Slovenian compositions, music education, and the staging of concerts.

The important composers of that period include Janez Krstnik Novak, a representative of Slovenian classicism, and the brothers Alojz, Gustav, and Benjamin Ipavec. A number of Czech composers working in Slovenia during this period also had a profound influence on Slovenian music history. Of particular note is Anton Foerster, who in 1780 wrote the first Slovenian national opera, a charming work entitled *The Nightingale of Gorenjska*.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS FOLK MUSIC

Folk songs – a sacred expression of a nation's soul – and an inspiration for the future

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Katalena Group
Photo: Ivian Kan Mujezinović

Contemporary Slovenian music has been able to draw from a rich fountain of musical traditions at home and abroad, and this has significantly changed the musical landscape over the last few decades. Music linked to agrarian communities has been preserved from oblivion by people who nurtured the songs and tunes in their homes, and also by folklorists who collected the same material “in the field” and created enviable archives in sound and words. These now constitute an important basis and source of inspiration for contemporary performers and participants in folk music revival.

Many of them, such as Mira Omerzel – Mirit (founder of groups Trutamora Slovenica, Truta and Vedun), Ljoba Jenče, Dario Marušič, Marino Kranjac, members of the group Trinajsto prase and Tolovaj Mataj, learned how to play the old instruments and sing the folk songs from older generations of folk singers and musicians.

Most renowned and successful intergenerational collaboration of this kind took place in the 90s between the rocker Vlado Kreslin and the group Beltiška banda from the lowlands of Prekmurje, which even outgrew the national framework. At the beginning of the 90s, Slovenia discovered Magnifico, who wearing a Dionysian garb on his debut album called *Od srca do srca* (From Heart To Heart), transformed simple folk songs to modern pop, substantiated with techno rhythms, rock guitar riffs and guttural vocals of the female vocal group Katice. The group soon became the leader of awakened traditional polyphonic singing, while Magnifico's international career came to life with his alter-ego or a metaphor of a “Balkan gigolo”.

Renewed interest in folk music, which contained both searching for more authentic forms of musical expression as well as a more cosmopolitan approach to musical heritage, coincided with the search for identity in the newly created country.

The attempt to breathe in new life to almost completely marginal folk tradition existed even before 1991. In the late 70s and early 80s a small group of musicians and avant-garde collectives took over the “western” idea of experimenting with traditional sounds. On the other hand, the first conscious move towards a more authentic sound stemmed from Istria. Group Istranova prompted a renewed interest for Istrian music in the early 80s and thus caused a local folk revival, whose main protagonists today are groups Vruja and Rudi Bučar.

EXPLORATION OF ETHNIC AND WORLD MUSIC LANDSCAPES

While folk revival protagonists were striving to preserve authentic forms of traditional Slovenian music, a new generation of traditional music admirers emerged in the early years of the new millennium with a more global attitude towards musical heritage. Those musicians shape their vision of folk music on the basis of multigenre and technological possibilities and collaborations, in accordance with their individual musical and aesthetic preferences, regardless whether it is about flirting of folk music with jazz (Maja Osojnik, Vasko Atanasovski), rock (Orlek) or global musical styles (Sagar, Vesna Zornik, Fake Orchestra). The latter was also the first domestic world music group, which was founded in 1997 by a jazz guitarist Igor Leonardi. Fake Orchestra soon proved that traditional African, Brazilian, Slovenian and jazz rhythms, melodies and harmonies can easily coexist under the same roof.

Probably the most well-established and internationally recognized representative of present-day use of traditional music is the group Terrafolk, who won a prestigious Audience Award at the BBC Radio 3 Awards in 2003 with their virtuosic and explosive mix of original songs and Balkan music.

Its former bassist and accordionist Janez Dovč later formed his own post folklorist band Jararaja and the record company Celinka, under the auspices of which a number of domestic ethnic and folk groups are working and releasing CDs. Group Brina has been gathering international recognition in the recent years and is appearing in major world music festivals abroad and on best-selling charts of world music records in Europe. Group Katalena is also extremely popular, and has won over audiences across Slovenia with its folk-rock atti-

tude and five influential albums and sparked a lot of interest in folk music, especially among young audiences, and gave quite successful concerts abroad.

During the last decade, from the periphery in particular, new folk bands are appearing that favor local dialects and build on the eclectic selection of local folk and global music aesthetics. Most recognized among them are Uršula Ramoveš and Fantje z Jazbecove grape. The rise of world and ethnic music has encouraged the interest in the music of the Roma (performed by groups Šukar, Langa and Imer Traja Brizani & Amala) and other music of the Balkan countries, such as sevdalinkas, traditional Bosnian love songs, evoked by the group Sedef.

LJOBA JENČE – COLLECTOR OF FOLK TRADITIONS

Slovenian poet Milan Dekleva said that memories tremble in the voice of this singer of folk ballads and other songs, the narrator of fairy tales, collector of folk traditions, leader of the School for Art of Storytelling, storytelling workshops at various places and folk singing vocal workshops.

“Folk songs are the simplest and most sacred expression of the power of a nation and its soul. They are love. The soul is the thing that is in touch with God. When you sing, you connect with the eternal.

It’s the food that helps you endure everyday troubles. To get in touch with your soul is not easy, and modern man, lost in materialism, is looking for his soul. Beauty and youth are venerated, but there is no room in this society for the old and the wise. They are familiar with worshipping the outward appearance – and it fades, sooner or later. When you sing, you live better. You connect with the flow, that bypasses the intellect, and you are feeling and experiencing the depths of life. When you inhale for singing, the entire song lasts in the exhale, stream of signing lasts on, without interruption. The role of art is therapy and healing. Everything is breathing together with you,” she explains.

Ljoba Jenče is concurrently exploring the development of natural human voice in relation to nature, advocates for the inclusion of folk music, stories and dialects in the school system. “Tradition still exists, but people are no longer aware of it. Unfortunately, we start to appreciate things only when we lose them. At the forefront is the

responsibility of people who are called to consciously influence the preservation of the educational process, museums, working groups of country women...

We Slovenians have a poetic soul, but today’s times are not kind to it. If you suppress who you really are, you can’t find yourself on the way forward. It is necessary to return to the roots, find the strength, believe in yourself and invent new careers out of it.”

It emphasises that the folk tradition gives us a contact with ourselves and integrity. Our identity lies in the local cultural heritage and distinguishes us among ourselves, and this is the wealth of Europe. Many people, especially younger generations, are aware that we have lost the touch with our roots and the heritage of our ancestors. We don’t know where we originate from, who we are. Everything is a vibration, a sound. Man expresses himself with a voice. I am trying to open up that voice to people in the simplest of ways with new techniques of awareness. Our voice is our self. This is not choral singing, not an opera, not pop rock, and neither just human voice, old and valuable – because it can be developed only with the help of tradition in the community, when people are spontaneously singing together for decades. E.g. only people from Prekmurje can sing in genuine Prekmurje-way. The natural voice is about genuine contact with yourself, it is about conscious singing, which appreciates a human as a whole being with body, soul and spirit. Anyone can sing. We are learning about each individual element, representing the quality of nature – fire, water, air, soil. Singing shouldn’t be an affectation, but a desire to sing for yourself under the stars, as it has always been. To be courageous. The natural way of singing folk songs has its own laws. Everything seems so simple, but it’s far from easy. Songs of Prekmurje are particularly beautiful. They are an invaluable heritage.

Music faithfully accompanies man on his life’s journey. Folk songs say so. The resulting songs are about important events from birth to death, from morning till night, all doings, all desires and all moods.



Ljoba Jenče – collector of folk traditions. She is concurrently exploring the development of natural human voice in relation to nature, advocates for the inclusion of folk music, stories and dialects in the school system. Photo: Personal Archives

SLOVENIAN PHILHARMONIC

Our pride

POLONA PREŠEREN

In a beautiful building in the centre of Ljubljana, in Congress Square with the Ljubljana castle in the background, the foundations of today's Slovenian Philharmonic were forged over many years.

This is the country's main musical institution, and the sign of the year 1701 on the building's façade bears witness to its long tradition. The orchestra has created magnificent musical moments for generations of Slovenian music lovers.

The Slovenian Philharmonic is one of the oldest orchestras in the world. Among the many distinguished artists who became honorary members of the Slovenian Philharmonic and its predecessor, the Philharmonic Society, were Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, Niccolò Paganini, Johannes Brahms, Carlos Kleiber, Uroš Krek, Primož Ramovš and many others.

YESTERDAY

More than 300 years have gone by since the first concert in the building (this was back in 1701), which houses the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra today. A further artistic boom, both in music and other areas, brought enlightenment and left its strong mark. It was then that the Philharmonic Society was founded, and quickly lured citizens, traders, teachers, priests, and others into its circles. This society, whose statute reads that its purpose is a refinement of emotions with a selection of the best songs and the formation of taste with good performances, spread rapidly and constituted the core of today's institution under the name The Slovenian Philharmonic.

The Philharmonic Society accepted everyone into its membership who it considered would help to advance its aims and objectives. Its honorary members were also foreign music lovers, who were beneficial to society with their brilliant musical talents and merits.

The significant rise of the Philharmonic Society started with the arrival of a Czech, Anthony Nedvĕd, in 1856. At first Nedvĕd became a choirmaster of the male choir and later director of the society. Important turning points also include the work of the young Gustav Mahler during the season 1881/82. It was not until 1808 that the orchestra was named the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and its leader at that time was Vaclav Tálích, who brought a breath of fresh air through his work and into Slovenian music. During its first season, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra performed 190 times. At the time, in the midst of the formation of Slovenian national identity, the establishment of the Slovenian Philharmonic signified a courageous act of the young Slovenian culture.

The Slovenian Philharmonic we know today was formed in 1948 on the initiative of the composer Marjan Kozina, conductor Samo Hubad and musicologist Vlado Golob, with Kozina becoming the first general manager and artistic director.

TODAY

Today's Slovenian Philharmonic is a musical institution of world renown. During recent years, the ensemble has collaborated with great and illustrious names from the music world. Its excellence was confirmed on numerous tours throughout Europe, the United States, Japan and at major international festivals.

According to the director of Slovenian Philharmonic, Damjan Damjanoviĉ, who has been the head of the institution for the last decade, "we would do injustice to everyone with whom we have collaborated if we did not highlight or mention them. However, I believe

that it is necessary to especially mention those who have brought some changes and freshness to the Slovenian Philharmonic.

They are chief conductors George Pehlivanian, Emmanuel Villaume, Keri-Lynn Wilson and of late Uroš Lajovic and Martina Batiĉ. Each contributed to the development of our institution and to collaborations with names such as Ricardo Muti, Anna Netrebko, Tan Dun, Sir Neville Marriner in their own way..."

Moreover, the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra collaborated with rock bands – the most notable collaboration was the one with the Slovenian group Siddharta and Sting.

TOMORROW

The Slovenian Philharmonic is entering a new era with big plans and grand concepts. They never run out of ideas in this institution. The repertoire, the orchestra and the Philharmonic building are symbols of the persistent efforts of high musical culture in Slovenia. According to Damjan Damjanoviĉ, their plans continue to focus on functioning in all circumstances in a way that they can continue to create and raise their quality and their own importance in the country. "We want to become a national pride of every citizen, just like the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic are in their countries."

The orchestra

Superior musical names are classified among the guests of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. Among the conductors: Carlos Kleiber, Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta, Kurt Sanderling, Leopold Hager, Theodor Guschlbauer, Yuri Simonov, Serge Baudo, Hartmut Haenchen, Heinz Holliger, Matthias Bamert, Kenneth Montgomery, Heinrich Schiff, Matthias Pintscher, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Sir Neville Marriner, Tan Dun.

Domestic and foreign soloists: Irena Grafenauer, Marjana Lipovšek, Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, Bernarda Fink, Sabina Cvilak, Janez Lotriĉ, Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, Sviatoslav Richter, Luciano Pavarotti, Gidon Kremer, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Vadim Repin, Arthur Rubinstein, Ivo Pogoreliĉ, Lazar Berman, Elisabeth Leonskaja, Shlomo Mintz, Till Fellner, Fazil Say, Mario Brunello, Håkan Hardenberger, David Garrett, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Eva Johansson, Ramón Vargas, Christian Tetzlaff, Gautier and Renaud Capuçon, Alisa Weilerstein, Leonidas Kavakos, Tasmin Little, Evelyn Glennie, Paul Meyer, Julian Rachlin, Sarah Chang, Emmanuel Pahud, Mischa Maisky, Bryn Terfel, Anna Netrebko...

The Big European Tour was among their greatest successes (11 concerts in renowned concert halls of Ljubljana, Stuttgart, Munich, Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Prague, Essen and Vienna) with a concert performance of the opera *Iolanta* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky with the famous soprano Anna Netrebko in the title role and an opera recording for Deutsche Grammophon.



OPERA AND BALLET

Relationship with the world

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ
Photo: SLOVENIAN OPERA HOUSE



Opera and ballet have not existed in Slovenia as long as in some other European countries – for historical reasons – but it has a proud and lively record. More than 90 years have gone by since the Ljubljana ballet ensemble, and soon after also the opera orchestra, started out as professional institutions. Today, a number of Slovenian conductors, singers and instrumentalists are known the world over.

Ballet became operational (with its own ensemble and director) with its first premieres of opera and operetta in the autumn season of 1918/1919, and in the spring of 1919 with its first solo ballet premiere of *Ugrabljena Evelina* (Kidnapped Evelina). Some famous classical ballet creations were staged in the very first years of its existence, and its repertoire was also enriched with recent Slovenian works. So far, Ljubljana's audience could see a number of different ballet performances of the classical repertoire, including much newer creations by Slovenian and foreign choreographers.

Slovenian opera and ballet have always been closely associated with the culture of the Slovenian nation in the broadest sense of the word. The Slovenian opera house has made connections with the world and world-renowned artists, and contributed a number of artists who have significantly marked the environment of top musicians, singers and ballet dancers.

The Slovenian opera has welcomed great composers, conductors, directors, choreographers and many others who have helped to shape the overall image of the opera and ballet in Slovenia. Opera and ballet were formed at a time when the whole of Europe was marked by great spiritual changes, when enlightened monarchs sought to make ambitious rearrangements of the state administration, when the self-confidence of the bourgeoisie grew rapidly, when science finally freed itself and when finding the joy of living in a current milieu became a priority. In that period, many theatre buildings were created in cities and noble residences throughout Europe.

CONDUCTOR MARKO LETONJA IS A GLOBAL INTERPRETER

Slovenians are proud of some extraordinary opera artists who enjoy the admiration and recognition of the whole world. Here are just a few.

One of the most successful Slovenian conductors, Marko Letonja, has been gaining recognition in the wider international music scene since 1991, both in the field of opera and of concert music.

He assumed the position of the chief conductor and artistic director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in 2012. He has performed in opera houses throughout Europe, Japan, the USA and Australia. Highlights of his illustrious career include concerts at the Vienna Festival with the local Symphony Orchestra, performances with the Orchestra of the Munich Philharmonics, the Symphony Orchestra Basel, as well as a production of the opera *The Queen of Spades* in the Geneva Grand Theatre, operas *Nabucco* at the Dresden opera house Semperoper, *Vec Makropulos* at La Scala in Milan and Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* in Lisbon and Strasbourg. He is becoming a global interpreter of a very demanding opera repertoire. As he had already established himself at the La Scala Milan and the Vienna State Opera, he took over the management of the highly complex musical opera *Medea* (from 1797) by the Italian composer Luigi Cherubini on the stage of the Grand Theatre in Geneva, Switzerland.

What Letonja means to the international opera scene can be seen from the record of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* project on the stage of the National Rhine Opera in Strasbourg. The author concludes the record by saying that Letonja is the "Wagner conductor to be reckoned with". Within this project, Marko Letonja received many awards for his performance of the *Twilight of the Gods* from the Music Critics Association in 2011. Therefore, Marko Letonja's debut at the Vienna State Opera in 2013 was actually something predictable, something that had to happen in his professional career sooner or later. A splendid introduction to the Viennese audience with *The Queen of Spades* opened doors for his engagement in the following seasons, including the new production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* by Jacques Offenbach.

As described by the website of the opera house, he has been a world famous concert and opera conductor since 1991. He is the first Slovenian who has conducted the Vienna State Opera.

On the question of whether music can change and improve the world, he responds: "Music, art, in general, must necessarily expand horizons and open and support a different view. But only the desire of people who are connected and focused on the community and its well-being can change it and improve it".

Art is, in his words, bound to the time in which it originates, and it somehow mirrors it.

MARJANA LIPOVŠEK – SUPERIOR MEZZO-SOPRANO SINGER

She was the first Slovenian to receive a gold medal in the Austrian capital for her contribution to cultural development and cultural image of the Land of Vienna. Although Austria has been her home for more than 40 years, she remains a conscious Slovenian and has always represented Slovenia around the world.

"In my heart I'm always Slovenian, but Austria is an ideal place for a musician to live and create in. They wanted to change my name several times, but I insisted. It is the name of my father, my family; it is a wonderful Slovenian name. Then the whole world has got used to my name".

The internationally renowned Slovenian concert and opera singer (mezzo-soprano and alto) comes from the well-known Slovenian musical family. Marjana Lipovšek regularly performs with major orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and collaborates with renowned conductors

such as C. Abbado, N. Harnoncourt, W. Sawallisch, G. Solti and others. Her first performance as Delilah in the opera *Samson and Delilah* at the Bregenz Festival was a spectacular success. She gained her first stage experiences as a member of the State Opera ensemble in Vienna, and she later acted as a member of the Hamburg and Bavarian State Opera. In 1993, she received the honorary title "Bavarian chamber singer", and in May 1996 she received the honorary and professional title "chamber singer" for outstanding artistic achievements in Vienna. She also received the highest Slovenian award for culture – the Prešeren Award for her achievements.

IRENA GRAFENAUER - ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED FLUTISTS IN THE WORLD

And the most internationally renowned Slovenian solo instrumentalist. She was awarded first prizes in international music competitions in Belgrade (1974), Geneva (1978) and Munich (1979). Between 1977 and 1987, she acted as the principal flutist for the famous Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under the artistic direction of Rafael Kubelik and Sir Colin Davis. In 2005, she received the highest Slovenian cultural award, the Prešeren Award for Life Achievement. Since 1987, she has been teaching at the Salzburg Mozarteum, one of the most prestigious music academies, to which she was invited by the then Minister of Education.

She established herself throughout the world by winning the most demanding international competitions during the seventies of the last century in Belgrade, Geneva (she received a special award for the pursuance of all time periods, which had not been granted to anyone for 35 years!), and Munich, and since then performed at hundreds of concerts throughout Europe, the USA, South America, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, all the way to Korea, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. Her last performance in Slovenia was in the autumn of 2003 in the Gallus Hall, where she played one of the most difficult concertos for her instrument in the Golden Season Series and World Music Days with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Jevtić's modernist Concerto No. 2 for Flute and String Orchestra.

At the time, critics wrote that her playing was so brilliant and pure, and her tone so clear, that it bordered on perfection.

BERNARDA FINK - ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SLOVENIAN VOCAL INTERPRETERS

As the daughter of Slovenian parents, she began her musical education in her native Buenos Aires, but her professional path took her to Europe in the mid-80s of the last century. Her extensive repertoire ranges from early music to works by contemporary composers. As a vocalist, she regularly collaborates with many European orchestras, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the National chapel in Dresden. She regularly performs in the major music centres, such as the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Wigmore Hall in London. She performed at the Royal Theatre in Brussels, Theatre of Champs-Élysées in Paris and Carnegie Hall in New York and many other concert halls around the world.

She recorded more than 50 CDs with the record house Harmonia Mundi and Hyperion Records and was nominated, along with her brother Marko Fink and pianist Carmen Piazzini, for a Grammy music award in the category of best classical vocal performance.

She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Austrian Honorary Order for Science and Art award in 2006 and in 2012 she was presented with the award of the Prešeren Fund.



2CELLOS

A star cello duo wins mass acclaim

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

A young Slovene-Croatian duo called the 2Cellos have won worldwide fame with cello music intertwining classical, rock and pop music. Luka Šulić and Stjepan Hauser have performed with Elton John in Ljubljana's Stožice stadium, and since then they have been taken under the wing of his manager.

Luka Šulić, born in Maribor, and Stjepan Hauser, born in Pula, both come from musical families. They have known each other for a long time, since they met in competitions for young cellists. They soon realised that they were soul mates, since they share the same vision, energy and joy regarding cello and music. Under the name 2Cellos, they have produced exceptional videos and three albums, given numerous large concerts and gone on tours.

Their fame skyrocketed after loading their first version of the song "Smooth Criminal" on the YouTube web portal two years ago. And then a month later, they signed a contract with the Sony Masterworks record label, while Elton John invited them to join him on his world tour.

In 2011, they issued their debut album "2Cellos" that was placed on the Billboard most popular albums chart in the USA, became a number one on the iTunes portal in Germany and the highest selling foreign album in Japan. The CD brings a variety of adaptations, among which the first single of American rockers Guns N' Roses "Welcome to the Jungle" was the most noticed, whilst it further contains adaptations of other groups, such as Coldplay, U2 and Nirvana. In creating their second album Šulić and Hauser, who established their reputation in classical music circles before the success of their performances on YouTube, also had the participation of musicians like Elton John, Zucchero, Steve Vai, Lang Lang and Naya Rivera.

According to Šulić, they chose this particular instrument because the tonal colour is closest to the human voice, thereby making it the easiest instrument with which to express emotion. At concerts, they prefer to use electric cellos, since they sound much better in large venues, while also enabling more effects than the classical ones.

They are both very pleased with their success and do not wish to determine their creative work in the future. "Many options are open and we do not wish to limit ourselves. For certain, we are currently doing what we have always wanted to do and, for now, we will continue with it. We can play in churches as well as in stadiums; being on stage is the most beautiful feeling," explained Hauser. They are both aware that they are not the only ones with adaptations of hits from classical music and believe that good luck and a set of coincidences contributed a lot to their success. "Previously, below-average musicians were choosing this path by making adaptations of classical music in a pop version. We are doing precisely the opposite, that is we select good pop and rock music and try to add a classical dimension to it by using cello and our emotions," said Šulić.

As classical musicians, trained at renowned academies abroad, they believe that even popular music can be of good-quality: "A song by U2 can have an equal or even greater emotional effect than numerous classical compositions."

As described on the Ljubljana Festival website, Šulić and Hauser have lately been returning to their roots, which were already evident in their first album, "2Cellos" (2011), and are now deepening them. According to the cellists, the third album, which was released this year and follows the album "In2ition" from 2013, is so far the most advanced in terms of arrangement and production as well as in terms of execution and sound.

Among other things, they are nostalgically returning to Michael Jackson with an adaptation of his song "They Don't Care About Us" and to Sting with an adaptation of "Shape Of My Heart". Again, as on their second album, they have provided a surprise – an original song "Celloverse" that flirts with dance rhythms.

Luka Šulić is the son of a Slovene mother from Izola and a Croatian father from Dubrovnik. He was born in Maribor in 1987 and then lived with his family in Dubrovnik. He completed his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. A year younger Stjepan Hauser was born in Pula and graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He does not see any similarities in what they do with Vanessa Mae, who became famous overnight, but whose fame also vanished overnight.

"We only use the cello as our voice and in our adaptations, we do not apply any "cheap" or, dare I say, unnecessary effects like techno beat, dance routines, a huge orchestra, brass section, etc."

In his opinion, they have actually chosen a more difficult path. "To create such an intensity and energy, including that of the sound, on a cello alone is very, very demanding both in terms of music and technique. We are exploring the possibilities of playing the cello to the limits of what is possible, and thereby progressing by the day. We also had many achievements and concerts in classical music," Šulić emphasised in conclusion.

CHORAL SINGING –
A PROUD SLOVENIAN TRADITION

Three Slovenians – a Choir

DANILA GOLOB

Academic choir of Maribor.
Photo: Franci Vranetič

Slovenians love singing together so much that there is a saying “Three Slovenians – a Choir”. Three singers are enough for the polyphonic singing so typical of Slovenians. Choral music is the most widespread amateur activity in Slovenia, involving 64,000 singers or more than 3% of the population.

Slovenian choral singing has a rich tradition and its roots date back to 1498 when Jurij Slatkonja, a Viennese bishop of Slovenian descent, as well as a conductor and composer, founded the chapel boys' choir, later known as the Vienna Boys' Choir. The first Slovenian songbook and book of the Catechism by protestant reformer Primož Trubar from 1550 is also important for Slovenian choral singing, as well as the creations of the Renaissance composer Jacobus Gallus Carniolus, author of numerous motets (polyphonic vocal music form with a religious text). His greatest work is the “Opus muzicum” – a collection of 374 motets, which is intended for everyday singing in churches.

The Spring of Nations made its mark as well, after which the first Slovenian choirs and beautiful choral songs arose, and which penetrated the international scene in the first half of the 20th century. Singing and socialising in singing groups has strengthened the Slovenian nation and provided the preservation of language and culture.

The period after World War II was also in favour of choral singing. Today, Slovenian choirs delight both at home and abroad, and achieve great success at international competitions.

CHORAL SINGING FESTIVALS

Quality choral competitions contribute to the growth of choral singing. Slovenia prides itself in the organization of the International Youth Choir Festival in Celje, which alternates every second year with the children's and youth's choir competition at the national level in Zagorje ob Savi, and the International Choral Competition Maribor, which alternates every second year with the competition of Slovenian choirs Naša pesem (Our song). Festival Sredi zvezd (Among the stars) has been held since 2003 and it is dedicated to singing groups of pop-jazz vocal music..

The Camp of Slovenian choirs in Šentvid near Stična, attended by choirs from all over Slovenia, as well as Slovenian minority choirs and choirs from abroad, has the longest tradition of mass choral singing.

The sounds of the Potujoča muzika (Travelling music) concert will be heard once more this year, as about 500 young singers from all Slovenian regions premiere new compositions by Slovenian composers.

SUCCESSFUL AT HOME AND ABROAD

At the annual choral competition European Grand Prix for Choral Singing (GPE), Slovenian choirs have repeatedly enthused and set milestones. Slovenia was the first country that had three representatives among the five finalists in the Bulgarian city of Varna in 2010, and it was then that the Slovenian choir Vocal Academy of Ljubljana – VAL won under the lead of conductor Stojan Kuret, the only conductor who has won the award twice and the only one who has won it with two distinct groups (in 2002, with APZ Tone Tomšič of the University of Ljubljana). Vocal Academy of Ljubljana, consisting of sixteen to twenty experienced choral singers from all over Slovenia, is also the first male choir in the history of the competition, which was awarded the Grand Prix of Europe. Vocal Academy of Ljubljana was awarded the prestigious Guidoneum Award 2011 for outstanding achievements and contributions to the development of worldwide choral music in September 2011 in Arezzo, Italy.

Slovenia shone in the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing competition in 2008, as APZ Tone Tomšič of the University of Ljubljana won the prize for the second time, then under the lead of conductor Urša Lah.

Since September 2014, the choir has again been led by Stojan Kuret. The choir brings together female and male students from all faculties of the University of Ljubljana, which share great love for singing and the desire for superior creations. The roots of the choir date back to 1926 and since its origin, the choir has been considered among the most important catalysts of Slovenian choral singing, not only from the performing-technical side, but also by its programming orientation, as the choir's particular attention is paid to contemporary choral literature. With the help of commissions and competitions, the choir encourages the formation of new compositions by young people as well as already established Slovenian composers and with their first performances increased the recognisability of Slovenian choral creativity at home and abroad. The choir confirms its excellence with resounding performances and prestigious awards at many festivals and in competitions at home and abroad. Academic choir APZ Tone Tomšič received the highest state decoration in 1996, the Golden Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia, for its achievements and merits at the state level.

SLOVENIAN CHAMBER CHOIR

A special place among the choirs is held by the Slovenian Chamber Choir, a professional choir of the Slovenian Philharmonic. It was founded in 1991 by Mirko Cuderman and is led today by Martina Batič. The 40-member choir has a season average of 35 concerts with just as many different programmes. Its focal task is the performance of a cappella songs from various musical periods, mostly in the Vocal season series. The choir collaborates with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra in performing vocal and instrumental works, just as with other domestic and foreign orchestras. The choir has recorded more than eighty records in the collections of Musica Sacra Slovenica and Slovenian choral music with an anthological selection of Slovenian choir music, both sacral and secular.

PRIMORSKA ACADEMIC CHOIR VINKO VODOPIVEC

The only academic male choir in Slovenia is Primorska Academic Choir Vinko Vodopivec, which was established in 1953 by former students from Primorska in Ljubljana. Members of the choir are very proud of their rich and successful his-

tory, which was co-created by a number of renowned conductors (Anton Nanut, Andraž Hauptman, Marko Munih and others).

The choir, which is now led by Iztok Kocen, regularly attends local and foreign competitions. Among recent successes worth mentioning are the gold awards at international competitions in Prague in 2006, Bratislava in 2008, Zadar in 2010 and Varna in 2011. The choir also regularly participates in the national competition Naša pesem (Our song) in Maribor. The choir was the most successful in 1999 when they won the gold plaque, and in 2010 they received a silver plaque and an award for the best male choir. PAZ Vinko Vodopivec wants to organise a cycle of concerts in Slovenia and neighbouring countries in the following season. The choir plans to tour abroad, participate in the choral competition, and start to record a new CD.

ACADEMIC CHOIR OF MARIBOR

More and more successes are stacking up for the Academic Choir of Maribor, which is especially proud of its last three seasons. In 2012, the group acquired a new artistic leader, Tadeja Vulc, who brought new methods and approaches to the choir, and especially the energy which connects singers every single moment of the season. "We are developing a close friendship, which gives the group a special energy on stage. It is the emotional connection between the singers that enables us to create music together with the conductor, the written kind, and the one which can be felt by every individual, both on stage and in the audience", say the members of the choir. This great choral group received a gold award at Naša pesem (Our Song) in 2014 in Maribor, where they were placed in absolute 2nd place and awarded the award for performance of a contemporary song (Epilogue, Tadeja Vulc) and with the recognition for the conductor, who received a special debutante award. At this year's International Choral Competition in Maribor they were placed 4th in the grand finale and received a special recognition from the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities for the best Slovenian group of the competition, a special award from the audience and a special recognition of Slovenian conductors for the most original concept and convincing performance at the opening concert. Their latest achievement was marked at the 54th International Choral Competition Seghizzi in Italy part of which was the 27th Grand Prix, Seghizzi, where they finished at the third place.



CARMINA SLOVENICA – ORIGINAL AND SUPERIOR

Among the most prominent Slovenian choirs is the Maribor girls' choir Carmina Slovenica, led by Karmina Šilec, an internationally renowned musical artist who has been developing the chorégie ("vocal theatre") for fifteen years, a new concept which includes music, movement, acting and other theatrical elements. **Carmina Slovenica brought freshness to vocal music, opening new areas for expression, persuasiveness, intensity of experience and communication.** Excellent productions of recent years are rewarded projects that enthused at important international competitions. Numerous first places in many choral competitions at home and abroad and other reputable local and international awards prove that the artistic concept of Carmina Slovenica is really original and superior at the global level. According to one of the most prominent musical experts, "the Carmina Slovenica choir masters the world stages from Berlin to San Francisco".

TROUBADOURS AND REBELS

Slovenia's singer-songwriters – protest and flower power

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Slovenian "Bob Dylan", Vlado Kreslin.

During the late sixties and early seventies of the last century people who played the guitar, sang, and sometimes played the harmonica and kazoo, were called singer-songwriters. These artists, who mostly wrote their own lyrics, became known as protest singers because they called attention in their songs to social anomalies. The most established artists abroad during the so-called "flower power" period were Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Donovan and Neil Young. And of course, the eternal Leonard Cohen, a timeless, versatile artist.

Jani Kovačič, Marko Brecelj and Tomaž Domicelj "reigned" in Slovenia, as did Andrej Šifrer and Marijan Smode a bit more commercially. The original singer-songwriters in our country belonged to the same "flower children" movement that developed in the world in the seventies as a response to American expansionism.

When it comes to Slovenian singer-songwriters, special attention goes to Fran Milčinski – Ježek. As an exceptional songwriter and follower of social happenings, he really managed to point to the nonsense and weaknesses of the system in an amusing way. In recent years, Iztok Mlakar and Adi Smolar have come really close to Ježek with their original lyrics. Lately, singing and song-writing have been re-emerging as a particular form of stage performance in Slovenia. We often encounter famous Slovenian music stars in this role, such as Vlado Kreslin and Zoran Predin, followed by the recent festival star Rudi Bučar.

Some of the not so famous singer-songwriters are performing just so they can tell their stories to the world – about the little people and big injustices, intimate experiences of fleeting beauty and the immortality of love. They do it to inspire their listeners, satisfy them and maybe encourage them to become active. Just as singer-songwriters once did.

FIRST SINGER-SONGWriters – REBELLIOUS POETRY

According to the unofficial data, the first singer-songwriter was Tomaž Domicelj. He recorded for Radio Ljubljana and appeared on

television along with Slovenian pop singers and soft hippies at the end of the 60s. In 1967, he made his own version of the song *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* by Pete Seeger (to *Kam so šle vse rožice*). He wrote *Dajte nam svet* (Give Us the World) and *Fant s kitaro* (Boy with a Guitar) in 1969. A year later he did a remake of Donovan's *Colours* named *Barve* and released his first small record for Belgrade's label RTB. Although the songs were a bit mellow, his image was obviously that of a protest singer.

The turning point for Slovenian singing and songwriting was 1977. When punk was all the rage in England, our largest label at RTVS decided to release three big records; the already mentioned Domicelj's *Tomaž v živo* (Tomaž Live), Mežek's *Kje so tiste stezice* (Where Are Those Paths) and at the beginning of the following year Šifrer's *Moj žulj* (My Blister).

Aleksander Mežek made his first recordings at the end of the 60s in a mobile studio brought to Zagreb by Cliff Richards' collaborators. "I knew three songs by Bob Dylan and the English were totally stunned to find a kid in Yugoslavia who knew how to play Dylan. They even said, come to London, if you want, and you will make a record." He went later and met Richards. "They took me to the art festival and set me up on stage, folks were impressed, and Cliff was sitting on the grass just below the microphone. I said to myself, I will either completely fail today, or I will do something, and so I played beautifully." He says that singer-songwriters were the ones who broke free from commercialism in Slovenia.

Adi Smolar made his first appearance in 1981 with a full repertoire of his own songs. He continued to perform for eight years before releasing his first tape *Naš svet se pa vrti* (Our World Keeps Spinning) in 1989.



“It was kind of a revolution,” says Mežek, with whom Andrej Šifrer initially worked a lot, and Mežek was a producer and arranger of Šifrer’s single *Zoboblues* (Teeth Blues).

Most of our well-known artists arose in the late 70s or early 80s. We can’t leave out Marjan Smode, native of Koroška (Carinthia), our most commercial singer-songwriter. A hippy look, a big peace sign on the guitar, and lots of hits... He outsold Avsenik’s single *Tam, kjer murke cveto* (Where Nigritellas Blossom) with the album *Jožica*.

Probably the most important artist to emerge in Slovenia in the 70s was Jani Kovačič. Rebel poetry, sharper guitar, hoarse vocals...

he flew on the wings of punk, and if you were recognised by punk rockers, then success was guaranteed.” His influences are surprising: Edith Piaf and Janis Joplin instead of Ian Dury, the most independent English punk rocker at that time. *“And in the process of composing the influence came from folk songs, chansons, beat poetry and – literature, from newspapers to monuments,”* says Kovačič, who started out in the mid-70s with the adaptation of the hit *Be Bop A Lula*. He finally settled down with *Jest grem gor na Škofljico* (I’m Going Up To Škofljica). At first he tackled social issues, *Otroci samohranilk so pokvarjeni* (Children of Single Mothers are Scumbags), *Žare lepotec* (Žare the Good-Looker), *Revolucija* (Revolution), *Delam kot zamorc* (Working Like a Negro)... and later he dedicated himself to a more accurate matching of music with lyrics and established some professional backup bands. Lately he has been working on feature projects and translating the songs of other artists to Slovenian. Kovačič has so far prepared 23 different projects (1980–2003). Some of his works became folk tunes.

MUSIC – GENERATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Just as most authors from the 60s and 70s left their rock bands or formed bands by themselves later, in the 80s, and even more in the 90s, Peter Lovšin (*Pankrti, Sokoli*), Vlado Kreslin (*Avantura, Horizont, Martin Krpan*) and Zoran Predin (*Lačni Franz*) started to perform independently and began to control their domestic regions and cities. Kreslin controls Prekmurje, Predin Maribor and Styria, Lovšin undoubtedly Ljubljana. Zoran Predin became a singer-songwriter when he realised that the guys with a guitar on the beach had a lot of success with girls; his role models were Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Randy Newman, then Pengov, Breclj, Kovačič and Mlakar. Why does he perform alone? *“The difference is in the way of performing. With a band, the music is at an advantage, so the concert runs by the rhythms of an internal ritual with the introduction, twist, climax, end and additions. Being alone with the guitar makes you much more agile, you can react to the reaction of the audience, change the repertoire, prolong the song and make the words come to life. Of course, more concentration is required and performance takes a lot more energy,”* notes Predin, who is, like Vlado Kreslin, very active, especially with his mega concerts.

Kreslin performs alone or with an ethno orchestra, has recorded a commercial or two, and is an additional member of the band *Siddharta*; he can be a pop rocker at a concert, and he can adjust to the intoxicated audience at the Cvičkarija festival. He even managed the impossible: he created new hits out of unpopular songs

from the period before Martin Krpan. *Črna kitara* (Black Guitar) is now sung in English by The Walkabouts, who declared: *“That Black Guitar: A nostalgic lament written by the Slovenian “Bob Dylan”, Vlado Kreslin.”*

And what do critics think about the Slovenian Zimmerman? They agree he became folksy. Without a doubt, he did more for the popularity of Prekmurje than writer Miško Kranjec and film director France Štiglic together.

The question is whether Kreslin is really a singer-songwriter. Music editor Zvone Tomac believes that he is still a rocker. Just like Peter Lovšin who disclosed his love for the Pistols, Clash and the Stones as long ago as the 70s. After the break up of group Pankrti, he tried playing with several bands, and then decided to perform alone. You can hear him at various events, from students’ drunken parties to mega rock’n’roll parties, mostly in rock apparel with sharp guitars, loud sound system and some ballads. Zvone Tomac therefore believes that the former punk rocker did not transform into a singer-songwriter, but into a rocker. He also considers Kreslin, Predin and Lovšin intellectuals, who know exactly how to work to make a living out of music.

Popularity among the masses currently holds Adi Smolar, a singer-songwriter who debuted in 1981 in Cerknica and twelve years later recorded and self-published his first cassette. He talks about life on stage: *“Performance is almost a show, a monodrama with the beginning, middle and end.”*

Jani Kovačič: “To my generation, music was extremely important. It meant a generational identification for us. Of course, the knowledge of the modern “serious” music was superficial, it was about mass culture, which was something new and fresh then. We were expressing ourselves most authentically with popular forms of urban music, but the rock music was dominant. Today, young people express themselves differently: with computers, cellphones and theatre.”



SINGER LADO LESKOVAR

**At the top of his profession
since the 1960s**

LIVIJA KOVAČ KOSTANTINOVICH, PHOTO: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA

There used to be beautiful women around us, even without the expensive cars, he says nostalgically. And we had higher-quality music, he is sure of it. He misses the good old Slovenian songs, which were created by real musicians and poets.

Not many musicians in Slovenia can boast more than 300 songs and chansons, and it is even rarer to find one with a musical career spanning over decades. I asked him to tell about his creative achievements.

I have been professionally on the music stage since 1963. I have also appeared in several films (1951 – Kekec, 1965 – Grajski biki (Stronghold of Toughs), 1966 – Kam po dežju (After the Rain Stops) / Serbia, Macedonia / 1967 – Isadora / USA – with Vanessa Redgrave /), and in the award-winning performances of the Slovenian Youth Theatre (Ljubljana) and Atelje 212 (Belgrade). Music was only the basis of my work on stage.

You won awards in many domestic and international festivals. It is difficult to highlight just one award, but still...

..authors win in festivals, we performers only help them. I'm most pleased about the award for the song Potraži me u predgrađu (Look For Me In The Suburbs) by authors Zdenko Runjić and Drago Britvić in 1964 at the biggest Yugoslav Festival in Opatija, where I performed as the first male singer from Slovenia at the invitation of Croatian television.

Your songs are known and sung by practically everyone in Slovenia, even the younger generations. Are you proud of it?

Not only in Slovenia, throughout the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. I don't know why I should be proud.

Lado Leskovar is not only a musician, he is a...

..good father, husband, housekeeper, friend...

Do you think that music can contribute to raising the pride of a certain nation?

I think intelligent and honest citizens contribute to pride the most.

You once said that "there used to be beautiful women around us even without the expensive cars". Do you miss the "old" times, and what did these "old" times mean for Slovenian music?

Time does not return, unfortunately, the music doesn't either. I miss the good old Slovenian songs, which were created by real musicians and poets.

What is the biggest difference that you notice between today's popular music and the popular music and chansons of the time when you started out in your musical career?

The difference is in the quality of writing, composing and performance. Of course, to the benefit of past times.

Music can contribute significantly to the recognisability of a country, its people, culture... Do you remember any events from your long career when your music especially pertained to Slovenia among the listeners?

Popular music is especially heavily influenced by the imperialism of American music. Everybody is singing in English. But why? The real connection with the homeland was always and everywhere the Avsenik brothers.

You are also the Slovenian ambassador for UNICEF. What does this title or role mean to you?

To be able to help children all the more and better.

Lado Leskovar, Slovenian folk music singer, chanson singer, actor and Slovenian ambassador for UNICEF. Born into a musical family – his father was a conductor of a military orchestra, his uncle a musician – he has been in close contact with music and film from an early age, and he performed in the children's film Kekec, still very popular today. Indispensable at many festivals of popular music and television shows, he represented Yugoslavia at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1967 in Vienna. Lado Leskovar is not only a musician, but has also acted in several films (Grajski biki, Isadora etc.) and works as a journalist.



VITA MAVRIČ

Chanson singer and much more

LIVIJA KOVAČ KOSTANTINVIČ
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

She's a singer, actress, programme director and producer of more than thirty shows, concerts, cabarets and literary evenings, and of the festival "La Vie en Rose". She's the founder and art director of Café Teater in the centre of Ljubljana, where she has hosted numerous music events -- and on top of that she is an ambassador of Unicef. That's Vita Mavrič.

Her mother is from Slovenia's Koroška region, her father from Primorska on the coast. She grew up in Celje in the centre and after primary school, continued her studies in Maribor and then Zagreb. Today she lives and creates in Ljubljana. Her musical path began when she had to choose between two of her loves: stage and music. She chose chanson which combines both.

Her musical career started on the stage of Ljubljana City Theatre 28 years ago in the musical "U slovenačkim gorama" (*In the Slovene Mountains*). That same year, she released her first album, and a year later, prepared her first solo concert after which she devoted her life to chanson. The musicals, music-theatre works and, of course, the music-theatre project of Ježek's chansons "Ne smejte se, umrl je klovn" (*Don't Laugh, a Clown Died*), a variety of chansons and even an opera "Sneguljčica" (*Snow White*) followed.

Following her opening of the theatre Café Teater in Ljubljana and managing

the festival of chansons "La Vie en Rose", her place among the stars of the Slovene chanson could never be forgotten.

In particular in the festival of chansons, she gave an opportunity to young, less famous Slovene singer-songwriters. As an actress, she established herself in the film *Bel epok* (*Belle époque*), a story about Sarajevo before the World War I. For her lead role she received an award at the Serbian Film Festival in 2007. For years, she and her team prepared the festival of chansons, a festival that finally said goodbye to its audience just this year in the Gallus Hall of Cankarjev Dom.

What pushes Vita to constantly create in so many different fields?

"The chansons and the theatre themselves, of course. Why does a man climb a mountain? Because it is there. It stands there and you go up," she said in one of the numerous interviews.

Composer Mojmir Sepe on Vita Mavrič:

"Vita Mavrič is different, and in our environment a unique artist – she is a singer, an actress, the program manager of her own theatre and more. As a singer she is dedicated to the chanson, however she does not deal with it just when editors or event managers want her to. Chanson is rather a forgotten and non-commercial music genre but for Vita this genre is perfect because it is the only medium in which she can show the two faces of her talent – being a singer and being an actress. That is why she carefully chooses her projects and her co-workers. She places a lot of importance on the texts she chooses which have to be highly poetic and convincing. She leaves an impression of a strong and determined person on stage as well as in her private life. She is hard working and completely dedicated to her profession. I have enjoyed working with her and I hope this collaboration will continue in the future."

Source: www.vitamavric.com



ROCK MUSIC BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

From Yugoslavia to Slovenia

DANIŁA MAŠIĆ
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Rock band Siddharta

When rock music was well established in the world at the turn of the seventies of the last century, Slovenia was still part of Yugoslavia, where a one-party socio-political system had been enforced since World War II. The Party set an example, exemplary citizens followed it, and the whole society was supposed to accept the same criteria about the right and wrong. Despite a closed economic market, Slovenians could still import world culture and it just so happens that one of them was rock music.

But there was a serious problem for rock performers in Yugoslavia: the suitability and social acceptability of certain music for record release had to be assessed by a commission.

It was easy for the author of the lyrics to be characterised as an internal enemy undermining the then social order.

There was still the possibility to make a record with avant-garde lyrics (which remain relevant today), but the authors had to forgo the payment of copyrights and the record got marked as PULP CULTURE. Records with that mark were all the more popular among young intellectuals.

NEW CENTURY, NEW COUNTRY, MORE LOVE

Thinking of the previous social order and Slovenia's independence from the former country we can set the dividing line between before and now, and between mainstream and alternative rock. Rock groups who marked the start of the transition the most were legends of Slovenian rock music: Buldožer, Lačni Franz, Pankrti, as one of the first Yugoslav punk bands, then Martin Krpan and Niet.

The lyrics of their songs are still relevant today. These musicians, due to the problems they faced with the previous political system, can easily be placed side by side with the members of art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (New Slovenian Art): Laibach, a musical group who made a name for themselves on the international music scene.

Group Buldožer celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. Their first record was called "Pljuni istini u oči" (Spit the Truth into Eyes), and it was released in Serbo-Croatian to reach a wider circle of Yugoslav listeners. They had to release it in Belgrade because no record company in Slovenia would accept them. The band was known for radically pushing the boundaries of artistic freedom. After three years of existence, they were awarded a golden arena for film music.

THEY KNOW WHAT GOD WAS DOING ON THE EIGHTH DAY

Pankrti are a punk group from Ljubljana. They were formed in 1977, and just like Buldožer, Niet and Lačni Franz they broke up, but also reunited. For their first performance, they debuted covers of songs by the Sex Pistols, the Clash, and the New York Dolls, but in their own way and under the influence of British punk. Group Pankrti was a Yugoslav punk guru throughout the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Their second record got an award for the best record of the year in Yugoslavia.

The world's most popular musicians purchased their records, with one of them being singer Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys; Johnny Štulić of Azra dedicated a chorus to Pankrti in his song Balkan.

One of their most popular songs is Osmi dan (The Eighth Day), where the chorus reveals that on the eighth day God created rock. Because of their extraordinary historical importance to Slovenia, the Slovenian Museum of Modern History dedicated a month-long photo exhibition to them in 2007.

THE TRANSITION INTO THE NEW CENTURY

Lačni Franz was a very popular rock band during the transition to the new century; the band was active during the years 1979–1997. After the breakup of Lačni Franz, its vocalist Zoran Predin continued his still very successful musical career.

Upon Slovenian independence, music financing moved away from public funds due to the substitution of the political system, the market became commercial, and poetic expression became more

relaxed. The poetic punch of rock lyrics became different. In the newly created environment and with the birth of the new country, new rock names emerged on the rock scene. The group Big Foot Mama was formed in 1990. The group's name was inspired by Eros Ramazzotti. The founder of the group was then a member of another band that performed at a festival together with Eros. Because they were too loud with their revelry in the hotel room, it bothered Eros, who knocked on the door and demanded that they settle down. An overweight band member was there too. She seized Eros in her arms, and he started to scream: "No, big mama, please, no!" And so the idea was born: "Big Foot Mama".

Big Foot Mama managed to bridge the generation gap, and also managed to overcome the differences between musical genres.

The band recorded the cover of a song Nekaj sladkega (Something sweet) with the folk music ensemble Lojze Slak, and then also the song Pomlad (Spring), and intertwined the two completely different musical genres.

MUSIC DOMINATES

When words are no longer so important, and when the music permeates every cell of the human body, then we are talking about Siddharta. Rock band Siddharta, one of the few bands in Slovenia that makes a living primarily out of music, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. For this anniversary, they decided to release a record with a song for each year of their existence. Because that many songs won't fit on one record, they are making two. They're called Infra and Ultra, and will be published at the end of this year. Siddharta, which is named after the eponymous novel by the German writer Herman Hesse, was proclaimed a promising group before the release of their first record.

The group set a new milestone in the history of Slovenian rock music when they played before a crowd of 30,000 with the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra at



Photo: Miro Majcen

Lačni Franz was a very popular rock band during the transition to the new century; the band was active during the years 1979–1997.

Bežigrad Stadium, Ljubljana in 2003. Siddharta's sound is pervasive because of the mixture of musical instruments: guitar, bass, vocals, drums, saxophone, and keyboards.

Metal music has its own scene in Slovenia. Metal Mania Open Air and Metal Camp festivals are very popular during the summer. Metaldays festival ensures "heavy metal holidays" with cocktails on the beach and swimming in the river.

And the rest of Slovenian rock bands? Mi2, Olivija, Dan D, Slon in Sadež, Gal in Galeristi, Hiša, Moveknowledge, Melodrom, oh, they are good! How good! Just let me be a DJ at one of your parties..... and I will show you.....

TOURING IN NORTH KOREA

Slovenia's Laibach becomes the first western rock band to perform there

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: LAIBACH ARCHIVES



The Slovenian band Laibach recently celebrated its 35th anniversary. They've had a reputation for controversy and the unusual ever since their formation, but this year they sprang an extra surprise. They became the first western rock band to perform in North Korea. News that this band with roots in Trbovlje, a mining town in Slovenia, was going to North Korea was revealed in July, and the announcement was picked up by world media such as the BBC, The Guardian, Washington Post and Süddeutsche Zeitung. Then in early in September they finally gave their performance there.

“There is no second chance to play in Pyongyang for the first time. Laibach has, since its very formation, been dealing with totalitarianism in all its manifestations; therefore visiting North Korea was absolutely a must-do,”

said the group's member Ivan Novak for the Rolling Stone magazine. Touring in Korea was organized by a Norwegian cultural activist Morten Traavik, who will be making a documentary film about this historic artistic event with the help of his team.

For this occasion, Laibach has arranged some songs from the musical The Sound of Music in its own style. Laibach has appraised touring as “an extremely valuable experience which confirms our old thesis that things aren't always as they seem – even if they look the same”.

WHO IS LAIBACH?

The group Laibach works within the framework of the Neue Slowenische Kunst and was formed on 1st June 1980. The group works collectively, according to quadruple anonymous membership EBER-SALIGER-KELLER-DACHAUER (pseudonyms), which conceal a random number of sub-objects. Laibach uses a retro-avant-garde method in their work.

The name Laibach is also the historic German name for the Slovenian capital Ljubljana. From the start, Laibach has developed a

“Gesamtkunstwerk” – multi-disciplinary art practice in all fields ranging from popular culture to art (collages, photo-copies, posters, graphics, paintings, videos, installations, concerts and performances).

But Laibach is more than “just” music. The band is famous for its uniqueness and provocative symbolic behaviour, which often brings to mind totalitarian states and which, especially at the beginning, caused many problems for the band.

Laibach is distinct for their theatrical performances on stage. But that is their distinction.

LAIBACH WOULDN'T BE WHAT IT IS IF IT WEREN'T FROM SLOVENIA

“It's quite simple, only in historical and cultural context of Slovenia could something like Laibach incur that builds its appearance and content on the organic eclecticism of all cultures and ideologies, which occurred at the intersection of Slovenian territory”, says Laibach.

“We were marked by Slovenia, through thick and thin, and we see it as such. Despite all of its downsides – in case that we are not talking about the upsides, as there are many – we still love to return here, and increasingly prefer to return even in spite of country’s weaknesses. In short, we even find the bad things about Slovenia inspirational, and they often provide a sufficient reason for a silent pleasure.”

Slovenia is marked by Laibach as well. But, how?

“Of course, it’s hard to evaluate that, but we imagine that we left our mark on Slovenia, which is in many respects indelible for this country.”

Good challenges never run out for Laibach, however, they do want some peace after all the excitements regarding the latest tour. We would like to dedicate ourselves to new projects, which await us.

Moreover, after last year’s record release, Laibach said that they actually outlived themselves with the outliving of Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Europe and NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst). And how does Laibach comment on this today? “We didn’t declare that, but others did, the ones that speak through us. If we really have outlived ourselves, then the only thing that still remains is to outlive everybody else.”



MUSIC AND IMAGES INVITE YOU TO SLOVENIA

World-renowned Slovenian singers make a new video spot

LIVIJA KOVAČ KOSTANTINOVIC
PHOTO: PERPETUUM JAZZILE ARCHIVES

Promotional video spots are indispensable for the presentation of a country and Slovenia is no exception. Presenting a country through images and music is important for television, but increasingly also for social networks which can communicate with the whole world.

A new spot commissioned by the Slovenian Tourist Board was developed in collaboration with Perpetuum Jazzile, a group of singers and instrumentalists incredibly popular around the world, especially on social networks.

WHY NA GOLICI AND WHY PERPETUUM JAZZILE?

The selection of the main song for the video and of the band was based on the traditional and internationally very popular song "Na Golici", which bears the signature of the Avsenik brothers, but in the modern version, popular among all target groups, including young people.

The Slovenian Tourist Board decided on collaboration with the music group Perpetuum Jazzile for the production of the video spot "Invitation to Slovenia from Perpetuum Jazzile" for several reasons. They are an internationally recognised Slovenian cappella musical group that is well known in Europe and beyond among a wide audience. It's about musicians who are performing traditional and contemporary songs with originality and enthusiasm and who enthral audiences of different ages.

They display a dynamic modernity and special energy in their performances; they transfer the Slovenian tradition to younger generations with modern versions of traditional Slovenian songs. An example

is the performance of the song **Na Golici**, which is the most common performed instrumental song of the 20th century in the world.

And more: the musicians from the group are the actors and extras in the video. Young singers not only sing about Slovenia, but also actively represent the country and its tourist offer. This way, musicians are more involved in the video spot on the one hand, and on the other, they transmit emotions and pleasure felt by tourists through extraordinary experience offered by Slovenia as a tourist destination.

Members of the music group Perpetuum Jazzile on recording of the promo video for Slovenia:

Tadej Premužič: "It was a unique experience and a special sense of national consciousness, as we were shooting in really beautiful plac-

es in Slovenia. There are so many such places that a trilogy of promotional feature films could be made. It was really a pleasure to show the world the beauty of Slovenia through music and our creativity."

Anja Koren: "To be living in a country that is as diverse in natural and social terms, and which boasts so many attractions that you can sightsee for a lifetime, is a real privilege. It is also a privilege to participate in a video that promotes this country worldwide. Places are shown that are really something special. Best of all is that Slovenia, because of its diversity, can satisfy visitors with different preferences and priorities. I am glad that I could participate in this video. It was interesting, eventful and joyful. If visitors experience just a bit of this energy, they will be pleased!"

Tomaž Cör: "Members of Perpetuum Jazzile are extremely proud of their country. That is why we were extremely honoured to be able to participate in the filming of promotional ads for Slovenia. We love being ambassadors for our beautiful country in the world."

The title of the video/series of videos:
 3 x video of Slovenian tourism – INVITATION TO SLOVENIA FROM PERPETUUM JAZZILE:
 INVITATION TO SLOVENIA FROM PERPETUUM JAZZILE (IMAGE FILM)
 INVITATION TO SLOVENIA FROM PERPETUUM JAZZILE – NATURAL SPAS
 INVITATION TO SLOVENIA FROM PERPETUUM JAZZILE – ACTIVE HOLIDAY
 Date of issue/publication/release of the video: May, 2015

The Slovenian Tourist Board practises the principle of co-branding, i.e. the connection of two brands with the aim of achieving greater visibility, recognisability and efficiency in their promotional activities for Slovenia and its tourist offer and the national brand "I feel Slovenia". Collaboration with the musicians of Perpetuum Jazzile is one of the most recent examples of this practice; they have previously recorded videos with the most successful skier in the world, Tina Maze.



SLOVENIAN POPULAR MUSIC ON RADIO AND TV

"One generation found itself"

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

"Among the stars, day and night, this world is turning," sang Majda Sepe, first with a small accompanying band, then with Nino Robič and an entertainment orchestra of RTV Ljubljana, and later with the conductor Jože Privšek in 1962 in the Festival Hall in Bled at the first Slovenian song festival "Bled '62". Poet Gregor Strniša wrote legendary verses which brought him an award for the best lyrics, while Mojmir Sepe got another for melody.

And the world has been turning for 53 years since the first festival. The Slovenian song festival grew into a proper international festival in the seventies, alternating domestic and eminent foreign artists sent to Ljubljana's Tivoli Hall by famous European radio stations such as the BBC and RAI, as well as the Polish, Czech, Swiss and Irish radios.

Much has changed over the decades. The organisers strove for a modern theme and fresh melodious expression in their lyrics, inviting old and new faces; however, the song festival made way for the pop workshop in the eighties and returned at the end of the nineties.

RTV Ljubljana was renamed RTV Slovenia. Its great music ensembles still record selected Slovenian songs in the radio studios and the legendary studios 14 and 26 every year. Among the big names and well-known artists from that time, we will limit ourselves to two.

JURE ROBEŽNIK – MASTER AND LEGEND OF SLOVENIAN MUSIC

The Slovenian pioneer of jazz, excellent composer, vibraphonist, former editor of the largest publisher ZKP RTV Ljubljana, great traveller and constant explorer. His many songs and compositions still delight audiences. His most famous songs include Pegasto dekle (Freckled girl), Maja z biseri (Maja with pearls), Ljubljančanke (Ljubljana girls), Orion, Nebotičnik (Skyscraper), Vrtiljak (Carousel) and many others. He turned 80 recently, and still remembers his youth with the following: "In addition to the records, we listened to a lot of radio. At that time, the Voice of America station was very important. The station had beautiful jazz shows. A little later radio Luxembourg joined in. With time, Yugoslavia began to open up. First American films with big bands arrived. These were films with the Woody Herman Orchestra, then the film *Bathing Beauty* came – it

was complete hysteria. People were up all night waiting for tickets and fighting each other to get them. Everyone has seen this film several times; I saw it at least five times. *Bathing Beauty* was a brilliant film with great music by the Harry James Orchestra. It was jazz, which was intended for commercial listening. Eventually, foreign musicians began visiting us. Louis Armstrong was the first to come. If I'm not mistaken, his visit was organised by the American embassy. In short, we managed."

At the radio station where he worked, he had a special task to develop Slovenian vocal popular music, which practically did not exist until then. It was a long process that has yielded good results. The first jazz festival in Bled, the first jazz record... he wrote the history.

"Even if we did write history, I don't think anyone was aware of it at that time. We loved this music, we had a nice time, we explored."

"At that time, the American film industry sang the praises of Europe: *An American in Paris* with Gene Kelly, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, etc. At the time, American films reflected the attraction and longing for the bohemian world of old Europe. And these films have also fuelled us to begin dreaming about Paris – the longing of every young person. You know, we were reading Hemingway, Fitzgerald... Do you know what Montmartre was like in the fifties? Real bohemians, painters, great musicians were there, and they played there every evening in the Django Reinhardt style. The outburst of creativity in Slovenia was the result of war and deprivation. As editors and creators, we somehow intuitively felt that the nation needed collective relief, that we wanted songs, Slovenian songs... The best things don't occur in excessive prosperity and abundance."

When composing, Robežnik collaborated with prominent Slovenian songwriters, from Elza Budau to Gregor Strniša, and in the musical sense he was closely associated with Mojmir Sepe, Ati Soss, and other composers. "*One generation found itself*," reflects this very fruitful period of Slovenian music in the seventies of the last century.



Mojmir Sepe – composer and conductor and Jure Robežnik – composer, vibraphonist and former editor of the largest publisher in Slovenia.

Slovenia has participated in the Eurovision Song Contest 21 times since its debut in 1993. Since then, the country has missed only two competitions, in 1994 and 2000. Slovenia's best result in the competition was seventh place, both in 1995 with Darja Švajger and 2001 with Nuša Derenda. The country's only other top ten result was a tenth-place finish for Tanja Ribič in 1997. Since the introduction of the semi-final round in 2004, Slovenia has made it to the finals in 2007, 2011, 2014 and 2015.

MOJMIR SEPE – COMPOSER AND CONDUCTOR

His opus comprises of over 500 songs and adaptations. Music took Mojmir Sepe to a number of countries – in the East and the West.

“We were mainly favoured in the Eastern Blok. They were a more closed society than we were. And then and there we were selling the spirit of the west in the east.”

And quite prospered,” he recalls of the days when he performed with his ensemble. But not just in Eastern countries. They also toured in Switzerland, Austria, Eastern Germany and Paris. “We played in Paris for NATO troops because it was impossible to get a Paris working visa to play for the Paris audience. For the Americans, this was not a problem. So we played there.”

More than a decade ago, he won the Viktor award for his life's work. And how does he feel today, when he comes before the full Galus Hall, compared to the beginnings? “At the beginning we played more in dance halls, at union celebrations. We organised concerts, which were mostly very tied to the singers. But this did not happen in such ‘prominent’ concert halls. Rarely, although I recall that one time we performed at the Philharmonics. Performances were called arrangers nights. Not much was filmed for the radio there, I do not know whether television even existed then. We played at ordinary parties in big halls. And with this, it began. Then, of course, the concert stages came into play and touring – from Russia to Poland.”

He fell very early under the influence of foreign music. He was touched by jazz, but the Beatles just past him by.

“Yes, incredible. We are from the era of swing. The Beatles are a much, much younger generation. Besides, very few professional musicians believed then that the Beatles would really be such a boom when they appeared. But as we get older, we see that we were wrong. This was one

amazing phenomenon. Musically, not only sociologically.”

Mojmir Sepe visibly marked the Slovenian song (Slovenska popevka) and its eponymous festival. He is the author of popular evergreen songs like Poletna noč (Summer Night), Zemlja pleše (Earth Dancing) and Med iskrenimi ljudmi (Among sincere people), and was still active a few years ago. In the 60s and 70s he was a regular conductor and author at the Slovenska popevka song festival. He has worked with prominent Slovenian poets such as Gregor Strniša, Branko Somen, Elza Budau, Miroslav Košuta, Ivan Minatti and Dušan Velkaverh. He collaborated closely with his life companion, Majda Sepe, one of the greatest Slovenian chanson singers, who died in 2006. As a conductor and author, he represented Yugoslavia twice in the Eurovision Song Contest: in 1966 in Luxembourg with a song Brez besed (Without Words) performed by Berta Ambrož and in 1970 in Amsterdam with the song Pridi, dala ti bom cvet (Come, I'll Give You a Flower) which was sung by Eva Sršen. His famous songs include Pismo za Mary Brown (Letter to Mary Brown), Ribič, ribič me je ujel (Fisherman, Fisherman Caught Me), Uspavanka za mrtve vagabunde (Lullaby for Dead Vagabonds), Zakaj? (Why?), Ljubi, ljubi, ljubi (Love, love, love), and Pesem o pomladi in prijateljstvu (Song of Spring and Friendship). Many of them have been awarded prizes at festivals. Among the other prizes he has received, the last one was the professional award of the Society of Slovene Composers – Kozina Award for lifetime achievement in 2010, as indicated on the website of the Association.

The 70s and 80s scene won over Slovenians like no other after 1990. The Slovenian song festival was in its golden days the strongest and best-promoted entertainment event there ever was.

“It had the full support of the media, and songs which got there became an instant success after being performed there. A lot has been invested, mainly in talent and logistics. And authors kept their best songs for the festival. There are many good songwriters today, but the scene is scattered; each medium has its own scene and there is no focus, so there are no huge hits. The best singer-songwriters today are – Iztok Mlakar, Jani Kovačič, Adi Smolar, Vlado Kreslin – unfortunately, there is an overwhelming turbo-techno direction in mainstream pop...”

THE STORY OF JAZZ IN SLOVENIA

Time to improvise

POLONA PREŠEREN

When composer and conductor Bojan Adamič founded the first Slovenian jazz ensemble in the thirties of the last century, he also introduced jazz to Slovenians. They were so thrilled that the jazz musicians of the time became legends of Slovenian music.

Bojan Adamič is definitely the most important name in those early days of jazz in Slovenia. Trumpet player, composer and conductor, he founded the Dance Orchestra of Radio Ljubljana in 1945, which still operates today as the RTV Slovenia Big Band.

During this time, several other orchestras were formed, and in addition to Bojan Adamič, the legendary Jože Privšek also helped popularise jazz music. As a conductor, composer and arranger, he took the Ljubljana Dance Orchestra to the top of jazz ensembles in Europe. There was a considerable increase of interest in jazz music in our country in the 60s, as the first Yugoslav jazz festival was held in Bled in 1960, and it still functions today as the Jazz Festival Ljubljana. During the eighties and nineties, groups emerged that combined pop and jazz.

The RTV Slovenia Big Band has always participated, and regularly recorded and performed with many of the names of Slovenian music. Percussionist and jazz drummer Drago Gajo has contributed exceptionally to the popularisation of jazz in Slovenia with his Jazz Club Gajo in the heart of the capital. Today, many clubs around the country are exemplary in preparing jazz programmes as well. More and more young musicians are involved with this music.

YOUNG HOPES OF SLOVENIAN JAZZ

An interesting documentary about the younger jazz generation was created by the author and film director Tina Lešničar and director Janez Stucin. "Čas za improvizacijo" (Time to improvise) is a documentary film that gives an insight into the lives of young

Slovenian jazz musicians, most of whom have performed or are gained musical experience abroad. The documentary has already been shown at numerous festivals around the world.

THE LOVE OF JAZZ IS SO STRONG THAT YOU WILL FOLLOW IT TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

You take your instrument and embark on a search for the Holy Grail. First, within the educational institutions, and then in search of freedom. And improvisation. This is how young jazz hopefuls embark on European and American stages in search of improvisation. Actually, improvisation is their way of life. The documentary gives a face to music and presents eight prominent young jazz musicians. It follows them to Vienna, Rotterdam and New York, follows their striving for perfection and the search for their place in the music.

And how did the author, Tina Lešničar, come up with the idea of showing the life of young Slovenian jazz musicians in a documentary film? "Jazz has followed me from an early age. My father, a doctor by profession, played piano as a hobby in the Greentown Jazz Band and I have been listening to stories of American tours and anecdotes from the lives of musicians since my childhood. I too have been learning to play the piano for nine years, and for the last two years I was playing mostly jazz with my professor. I've always been attracted to this sound, filled with surprises and a bit "dirty". I love the rough voices of the singers, the harrowing cry of the saxophone, the gentle melodies of the trumpet and the deep bass lines and complex rhythms of the drums. I find the contradictions in jazz interesting: rationality-spontaneity, structure-improvisation, physicality-spirituality... Everything is so overwhelming, which inspires me all over again when writing about jazz", said Tina Lešničar, a professional journalist.

The idea of making a film occurred when preparing a series of articles on Slovenia's new jazz generation which Tina Lešničar was writing for the newspaper Delo. The first articles were published in 2011, followed by video portraits for the Delo website.



“That’s when I realised how film-like jazz basically is and thought it would be – given that jazz rarely finds a place in Slovenian media, both printed and visual – good to make a film on the efforts of young people in music, which is quite marginal according to its reach and reception.”

Due to her experience with film production, she embarked on the venture. According to her, her film initiation was an exciting and busy one. Their team was small, without an outlined script and with merely a wish to catch as much authenticity and spontaneity as they could, both on and off stage.

AND WHAT DIFFERENTIATES YOUNG SLOVENIAN JAZZ MUSICIANS FROM OTHER JAZZ MUSICIANS IN THE WORLD?

“In terms of the passion and dedication to this music and the sense of accountability for work, they are the same as all musicians who cultivate a love of this music. They differ perhaps in the fact that Slovenia doesn’t have a Jazz Academy, where they could continue their studies after finishing the Conservatory for Music (KGBL – Conservatory for Music and Ballet in Ljubljana) and which would later open new job opportunities for them. That’s why they go abroad to pursue knowledge, and some of them stay. They pursue knowledge most commonly from the Academy of Music and the Conservatory in Graz, Linz, Vienna, Klagenfurt, as well as Berlin, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Groningen and, of course, New York and Boston”, Tina concludes. The Slovenian jazz scene is strongly influenced by the fact that we haven’t had a real jazz club for several years now, where musicians could perform every day of the week – introduce their own music, socialise and share musical ideas on-stage. This social part of jazz is very important for the development of a scene.

“Čas za improvizacijo” (Time to improvise) is definitely a good tribute to Slovenian jazz musicians, which shows their musical sensation, thanks to the plethora of imaging and audio material. This is a documentary film where music has the final say, so you can really feel the lives and improvisation of jazz musicians.



SLOVENIAN RAP SCENE

Rok Trkaj

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Hip hop and rap don't have a long tradition in Slovenia. Interestingly, skier Jure Košir was among the first to bring this musical genre to Slovenia in the nineties, after he became familiar with it in the USA. His song *Včasih smučam hit, včasih pa počas* (Sometimes I Ski Fast, Sometimes Slow) was the first contact with rap for large Slovenian audiences and became a huge success. The first major stars of Slovenian rap music appeared on the scene at the same time – Klemen Klemen and Ali En (later renamed to Dalaj Eegol).

Although the hip hop music scene in Slovenia was quite simple until 2000, it is thriving today and Rok Trkaj is among its protagonists. He is an interesting young man with versatile talents. He is a rapper, hip hop musician, journalist, lyricist, twice winner of the Slovenian freestyle battle – in which rap artists compete with each other – and also a theology graduate and tourist worker... He is definitely an inspiration to the younger generation and an encouragement to the older one with his versatility.

Rok Trkaj, a Ljubljana local, is better known under his stage name Trkaj. He became involved with rap when he was seventeen years old. Perhaps childhood in Savsko naselje (Sava river settlement) – residential blocks in Ljubljana helped steer him in this direction. According to Trkaj, blocks have a unique charm. "But not really blocks themselves as the people living there. People gathered from all over, of different nationalities and different backgrounds. This definitely brings a lot of laughter and interesting events.

Living in Savsko naselje has taught me to respect others, to be 'the little one', that not everything always goes your way; how to be a part of the team and that even the bad things bring some good. And also how to be resourceful."

RAPPING THEOLOGIAN

It seems that 2004 was a turning point for him. He released his first album and walked the famous pilgrimage route El Camino de Santiago in thirty days. There, as he noted at the time, he got to know himself. After he got home, he enrolled in the Theological Faculty in Ljubljana, which he completed successfully. "Of course, I find

the connection between rap music and studying theology very interesting. Maybe the connection is that the origin of the Master of Ceremonies – MC – comes from the ecclesiastical world. At the councils, this was a man who gathered all the people and led the whole thing", he explains.

"As for the field study, I went to study what interested me. It is interesting how many of the first Slovenian poets were priests and studied theology. Perhaps there is a connection, if we focus on our country."

Trkaj had released four of his own albums by 2014 and had written many lyrics for other performers. Some of these performers won awards at various festivals across Slovenia. And how does he see the Slovenian rap/hip hop scene? "The Slovenian hip hop is one of the rare living urban scenes in Slovenia. There are many songwriters and performers, concerts are happening, songs are released, but there are not enough places where young people could perform and no good infrastructure for young people to make connections and be successful. Slovenians received this music surprisingly well. The average Slovenian can certainly name some of the rap songs, and I think that we somehow won our spot on the map with patience and good songs, we exist, we are recognised, and this is part of our culture and accepted by our region."

Trkaj is a master of many trades. Currently most notable is his role as a musician and the founding leader of the Slovenian House Vida, which he runs together with friends. A Bed & breakfast house with 10 rooms and 24 beds, with an interesting wine cellar, which is very exciting for tourists and visitors (more info at <http://slovenian-house.com/>).

What inspires Trkaj in Slovenija?

"A lot of things – Slovenia is my home country. I am totally in love with it and mesmerised by it. I love the people, traditions, nature, mountains, literature, culture, legends and stories and it is a great honour for me to be born here, so I can represent the country and carry forward the torch of tradition established by our forefathers."

Papirnica Vevče Wind Orchestra.
Photo: Papirnica Vevče Wind
Orchestra archives



BRASS BANDS IN SLOVENIA

**A tradition going back 350
years – the oldest in Europe**

DANILO GOLOB

At dawn on the first day of May, International Labour and Workers Day, you can already hear the sound of marching music echoing through the streets of Slovenian towns. Slovenian brass bands are sounding the reveille, and it's one of the country's most significant events in brass music for the whole year.

Bands bringing together musicians playing woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, are widespread throughout Slovenia and have a long tradition. Most of the Slovenian brass bands marked their 150th, 100th or 50th anniversary in recent years. Some of them have already celebrated their 200th anniversary. Oldest of all is the Idrija Miners' Brass Band, which this year celebrates its 350th anniversary. It is, according to the WASBE (World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles), the oldest brass band in Europe.

A FIXTURE IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE SLOVENIAN CAPITAL

A brass band, as a sort of woodwind ensemble, was mentioned in the 14th and 15th century. Medieval whistlers and trumpeters were the forerunners of brass bands. Over the years, their role has significantly increased, and during the reformation reached its first peak. In the 17th century, woodwind ensembles were a fixture in the social life of the Slovenian capital. Today's form of brass banding has gradually evolved from military to civilian town bands. Their expansion began after the March Revolution of 1848. Bands initially arose under the baton of foreign conductors and industrial workers in Slovenia. However, later they were taken over by Slovenian musicians who wrote down many arrangements of Slovenian folk songs. Brass band culture, which had an important national awakening and cultural role, experienced a real boom after World War II. Bands began to integrate with a musical education, brass and woodwind orchestras were formed from small brass groups, combining up to 100 amateur or professional music lovers of different music styles. The first competitions were held. The Slovenian Wind Orchestras Society was founded and grew into an independent association, the Slovenian Brass Band Association (SBBA) in 1997. The Association unites Slovenian brass bands, drumming, majorette and other music groups. The SBBA, which has more than 100 members today, is also a member of the CISM (International Confederation of Music Societies) and of UNESCO too, due to the CISM membership.

More than 150 amateur society bands, school bands or wind orchestras are active today in Slovenia, bringing together over 10,000 Slovenians.

Slovenia has two professional wind orchestras as well, the Slovenian Police Wind Orchestra and the Slovenian Armed Forces Military Band.

THREE AND A HALF CENTURIES OF IDRİJA BRASS BAND

The oldest known mention of a brass band in Idrija originates from the Glory of the Duchy of Carniola by Johann Weikhard von Valvasor, which mentions the appearance of brass musicians on 15th September 1686, but it does not mention whether a brass band was then established. Idrija Miners' Brass Band, the oldest brass society at home and in Europe, was founded in 1665, as suggested by the late historian and museum person Janko Trošt in his study. Idrija brass band has always been closely connected with the operation of the Idrija mercury mine, where workers began to dig ore at the end of the 15th century. The miners were in need of music to cheer them up after a hard day's work in the mine. Domen Prezelj, artistic director of the Idrija brass band, suggests that the brass band existed in the first half of the 16th century, but there is no written evidence. In the first half of the 16th century, Idrija began to develop technologically, in 1530 castle Gewerkenegg was built, and with the development of the city intellectuals from Vienna arrived. Idrija became a strong economic centre, which influenced the cultural life of the citizens.

With the great support of the Idrija mercury mine, the Idrija brass band evolved and became known throughout Slovenia as well as abroad.



Idrija Miners' Brass Band celebrates its 350th anniversary this year, and it is, according to the WASBE (World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles), the oldest brass band in Europe. Photo: Robert Zabukovec

Today, in addition to traditional performances and participation in wind orchestra revues, they throw an annual event with at least two notable, highly visited musical-scenic projects. Idrija Miners' Brass Band collaborates with many established musicians and composers, organises guest appearances of other bands in Idrija and regularly performs abroad. Idrija brass band celebrated its 350 years of existence with a gala concert and enthralled everyone with their performance of the old songs, but they also premiered two songs by Slovenian composers.

FROM THE MAY REVELLES TO THE CONCERT PROGRAMME

Slovenian brass bands include musicians of all generations. Young and older professional musicians, as well as amateurs, and this very diversity gives the brass bands their special charm. Various competitions are organised in Slovenia for the brass bands' development, and young musicians have the possibility of joint training with world-class mentors and to compose at the traditional summer band camp Musica Creativa, organised by the Slovenian Brass Band Association.

The repertoire of bands has historically been mostly marches, but with the musical education of musicians, their repertoire has been enriched, as they raised the selection and level of performance of the compositions.

Many Slovenian bands can boast of many successes at competitions both at home and abroad, as they perform a high-quality concert programme.

Some of the successful bands that have received numerous awards at international competitions and festivals are the internationally recognised Trbovlje Workers' Band (Delavska godba Trbovlje), which consisted of the mine workers until World War II, then the Wind Orchestra of Maribor Post Office Cultural Society (Pihalni orkester KUD Pošta Maribor), which is going to the prestigious international festival of brass bands "Spasskaya Tower" in Moscow in September, Papirnica Vevče Wind Orchestra (Papirniški pihalni orkester Vevče), which aims to become the best amateur orchestra in Slovenia, Krka Wind Orchestra (Pihalni orkester Krka), which went to the international competition of the brass orchestras "Flicorno d'Oro" in Italy this year and won three awards as an absolute winner of the festival, and Logatec Wind Orchestra (Pihalni orkester Logatec), the recipient of many awards.

MUSIC IN THE POSTOJNA CAVE

A spectacle within the spectacle



KATJA BATAGELJ, PHOTO: KATJA BATAGELJ

Postojna Cave has always fascinated visitors with its mighty underground halls, and it wasn't long before somebody thought of enriching the tour of the cave with music and dance. Postojna is called the "cave without end" -- the Latin inscription above the entrance *Immensum ad antrum aditus* means "Enter, traveller, this endless cave". Inside it boasts a vast underground hall accommodating as many as 10,000 visitors at the same time.

The first dance music events were held at the Postojna Cave in the 1920s, as evidenced by numerous newspaper articles, and even the idea of a grandiose event was maturing. During the interwar period, the number of visitors on Pentecost, Nativity of our Lady and Assumption reached enviable heights, which encouraged managers to organise high-profile concerts in the Postojna underground.

Events, inside and in front of the Postojna Cave, were constantly on the offer, even in the years after the World War II, with many of them having a kind of primacy.

PENTECOSTAL CELEBRATIONS

The Pentecostal celebration is the oldest known event in the Postojna Cave and was an extremely popular one from the outset. Archival documents confirm that the first one was held in 1820. There was much merrymaking and rejoicing on that day in the Dance Hall, the cave was sumptuously illuminated, the entrance fee was reduced, and the locals even got free admission. The tradition of free admission on the day of Pentecost has been preserved for the locals to this day. International tourist guides wrote about the event, with one of them being Murray's Guide, describing how several military bands gathered in a large ballroom in 1867. Special trains drove to Postojna on that day during the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later as part of Italian, and since they offered big discounts for the ride there were always a lot of visitors.

W. A. MOZART, JR.

In 1820, Mozart's youngest son, Wolfgang Amadeus, Jr. visited Ljubljana. He held several concerts and his visit attracted a lot of public interest. As he was travelling from Ljubljana to Trieste, he stopped to see the Postojna Cave and was very impressed by it. A special reception was prepared for him in Postojna Cave, and he wrote the

following in his diary: "The gentlemen were so diligent that they let the light shine on this extremely beautiful, lofty natural wonder, and when we got to the river, we heard the march from the Magic Flute resounding from the wind instruments. The cave offers an impressive view and is very unusual in every respect. We went back and forth and we couldn't reach the end..."

PIETRO MASCAGNI AND THE TEATRO ALLA SCALA IN MILAN

The first half of the 20th century was marked by two major events which have further contributed to the renown of the majestic Postojna Cave across a considerable part of Europe. In 1929, Pietro Mascagni, author of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, directed the Orchestra Stabile of Trieste and had four concerts in the Postojna Cave. The programme featured the works of great composers such as Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Verdi, as well as Mascagni's works, and newspapers reported about the unstoppable energy of the conductor, who led the musicians for "four-five-six hours" in the underground.

The choir of the opera house Teatro alla Scala in Milan performed twice in Postojna Cave in September 1930, under the guidance of Vittorio Veneziani. Both events were widely covered by the newspapers, accompanied by words like "the spectacle in the spectacle", and the archives keep a few hundred pages of newspaper clippings.

MAY DAY CONCERTS

May Day concerts, which were held in the Concert Hall of the Postojna Cave, were typical of the 1980s. Between 1985 and 1986, the

RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra performed there under the baton of Samo Hubad. They invited the SNG Ljubljana ballet ensemble and soloist Tanja Baronik as guests to their first performance and played the works of Alojz Srebotnjak, Maurice Ravel and Alexander Borodin, and at their second performance they presented the opus of George Gershwin with the soloist Aci Bertonec on the piano. The concert was broadcast via Eurovision on 1st January, just before the Vienna New Year concert. In 1988, another concert was held in the Concert Hall of the Postojna Cave for music aficionados; it was a performance by American singer Joan Faulkner with the Dance Orchestra Ljubljana, led by Jože Privšek.

LIVE NATIVITY SCENE

The live nativity scene event at the Postojna Cave is the first event of its kind in Slo-

venia and the largest live demonstration of biblical scenes in the world. With its more than a quarter of a century-old tradition, it has become the biggest one in terms of the number of visitors and performers.

The event itself is based on a game of music and lights, so a tour of the Postojna Cave during Christmas and New Year holidays with a live nativity scene is certainly more intense and magical. Since singing traditionally accompanies Slovenian nativity scenes, the event at the Postojna Cave has always featured a large number of singers. Beside numerous choirs from Slovenia and abroad, famous Slovenian musicians have performed at the nativity scene as well: Elda Viler, Oto Pestner, Helena Blagne, Trio Eroika, Perpetuum Jazzile, Alenka Gotar, Jure Počkaj and others.



WORLD MUSIC DAYS

In September 2003, the World Music Days were held in Slovenia with Postojna Cave as one of the venues; it was filled with the sounds of bells and lots of bell-like objects by the British composer Hugh Davies, a concert by the Zagreb Saxophone Quartet and a musical installation by the Dutch artist Hans van Koolwijk.

COMPOSITIONS AND A BALLET DEDICATED TO THE POSTOJNA CAVE

Postojna Cave has inspired many artists, including many musicians.

Postojna Cave archive keeps a musical notation for the mazurka dance, entitled "Grotte di Postumia", which was published in Torino

in 1928; Italian composer Carlo Alberto Piccini was inspired by the cave and dedicated an instrumental piece to it in 1941. Songs dedicated to Postojna Cave, written by Slovenian composers Alojz Srebotnjak, Vilko and Slavko Avsenik, Lojze Slak and many others, are now performed by folk ensembles and symphony orchestras. Slovenski oktet (Slovenian octet) also performed in the cave, and motives of the Slovenian piece of the underground heaven adorned many vinyl record covers and, later, also compact discs. The underground beauty inspired the Slovenian ballet dancer Vojko Vidmar as well; he danced between the stalactites of the Postojna Cave to the composition Trobenta in vrag (The Trumpet and the Devil) by Alojz Srebotnjak and created unforgettable characters for the Vrag (Devil) video spot.



RR. GROTTI DI POSTUMIA

(TRIESTE)

50%

RIDUZIONE FERROVIARIA
DA TUTTE LE STAZIONI DEL REGNO



50%

RIDUZIONE SUL PREZZO
D'INGRESSO ALLE GROTTI

1° e 8 Settembre 1929-VII

GRANDI CONCERTI SINFONICI

DIRETTI DAL MAESTRO

PIETRO MASCAGNI

FILM MUSIC

A Slovenian in Hollywood – interview with Žiga Pirnat

UROŠ MAHKOVEC

Žiga Pirnat is a composer, songwriter, orchestrator and pianist who rubs shoulders with such great names of the global music industry as Josh Groban, Andrea Bocelli and even Rihanna. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in international relations, completing his studies in comparative Slavic and comparative Indo-European linguistics, obtaining a master's degree in economics, and after full-time employment at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he studied film scoring at the famous Berklee College of Music in Boston, USA. He also prides himself on a degree in contemporary writing & production and film scoring, all of which he obtained summa cum laude.

You have an impressive record of studies, and seem to have started at the end and finished with the beginning? Will you always do that?

(Laughs) Actually, I was doing most of these studies at the same time, not in such a specific order, so I almost never studied only one thing at once. At a certain point of time, I was even enrolled in three colleges simultaneously. Therefore, the answer to your question is no – there were no priorities, I was simply interested in many different fields and tried to gain as much knowledge as possible. Currently, I focus on music, but I am still constantly involved in other disciplines as well.

One part of film music made for Slovenian films relies either on the tradition of chanson or the tradition of jazz, which probably reflects the musical formation of key post-war composers of Slovenian film music. Which part do you favour more: the chanson part or the jazz part?

That's a tough question. First of all, I would refrain from classifying all of our film music into just these two categories. I think there are several other styles that are equally important, such as classical Hollywood scores and, through it, Late and Post-Romantic classical pieces. Film music has always been influenced by different genres and will probably always continue to be so. To answer your question regarding chanson vs. jazz, I enjoy both styles (with jazz probably having some slight advantage due to my Berklee-based education). That being said, in film music, it all depends on how each of them is used in a given scene/movie, and whether it has the desired effect.

Today's production of film music is probably light years away from that produced some decades ago?

Indeed. Originally, the first creators of film music used it to empha-

size what the camera was already showing on screen to make the scene as clear as possible to the audience. With the advent of technology, as well as with viewers becoming more familiar with the new motion picture narrative, this became unnecessary. Today, music adds another dimension to the film; it paints undertones that might not be visible on screen, it underlines specific characters, themes, emotions, etc. Also, there is much more music in films, most likely owing to our new lifestyle. Today, we are used to listening to music everywhere. When we drive our car, when we listen to the radio, walk or jog outside with our ear buds and an mp3 player: we basically score our lives with our own selection of music. And when we see a movie, we expect the same. From the stylistic point of view, we can see a gradual retreat of the classical orchestra: there are more and more scores produced entirely electronically, as well as songs and soundtracks replacing classical underscores. Even live orchestral cues see increasing use of percussion, ostinatos and hybrid fusion, making them sound more and more synth.

You have studied both at university in Slovenia and at a prestigious musical college in the USA. Are there any differences between the two academic environments?

There are several differences between the two systems. The first and most basic one is that college education in Slovenia is free and accessible to more or less everyone, while it is a great financial burden for an average American student. Generally, I found Slovenian colleges much harder, while my American college experience sometimes felt more like high school, with attendance, constant homework and guidance. On the other hand, students are given much more liberty in choosing their courses and teachers in America. Most of the time, they have a choice between many different options, from taking the



path of least resistance to studying with world experts/artists in their field. Also, the incredible multicultural experience of studying with students and professors from all around the world is something I could have never achieved in Slovenia.

You have entered the lion's den relatively quickly and early. Do you feel now, after having lived in Los Angeles for a year, that it might have been easier for you to succeed in Slovenia?

Very unlikely. The specific genre and industry I am involved in cannot support more than a handful of composers in the small Slovenian market. I continue to work in Slovenia on several projects, but they would definitely not suffice to sustain myself. Also, the working standards in the business, facilities, are totally different in the world's capital of the entertainment industry.

You are also the author and manager of the "One World" ("En svet" in Slovenian) song project aimed at raising awareness about the importance of international development cooperation. Isn't this a bit unusual for someone with ambitions to succeed in show business?

That depends on how you define show business. If you are referring to the infamous world of glamour, tabloids, money, and low-quality, empty entertainment, which usually remains firmly in the background, that is not something I have ever really been interested in. Also, a desperate desire for success and fame is usually a sign of an individual's psychological problems and can rarely lead to success.

Raising awareness about global topics as vital as collaboration on international development has always been something really close to me. And it is much more rewarding to know you reached hundreds of thousands of people with a positive message on development issues—as we have with the One World project—than having your photo on countless magazine covers. At least for me.

EUROPE'S POETS GATHER IN THE SLOVENIAN CITY OF PTUJ

Slovenian publishing house links poetry festivals in 11 European countries

TINA DEU, BELETRINA PUBLISHING HOUSE
PHOTO: BORIS B. VOGLAR



This year's Poetry and Wine festival hosted by the city of Ptuj in the last week of August was included in the Versopolis poetry platform for the first time. This unique literary poetry platform brings together eleven renowned European poetry festivals and is currently attended by 55 poets from 11 European countries. Its purpose is to create opportunities for prospective European poets, helping them to become known outside the boundaries of their home countries. It was created under the auspices and with the support of the European Commission. The initiator of the platform is the Beletrina publishing house, which organised the festival 'Days of Poetry and Wine' for the nineteenth time this year.

"Versopolis promotes mobility of prospective European poets from various countries, raises the number of their translated works and improves the accessibility of poetry in general and integrates the existing and new audiences into the creative process," says Ales Šteger, head of programming for the Days of Poetry and Wine festival.

PAN-EUROPEAN POETRY PLATFORM

Every language and every nation has its poets whose poetry has made them known in their home countries, but are still unknown in the wider European space despite their excellence. This is precisely what Versopolis aims to change – namely, its main goal is to create a pan-European poetry platform that gives young emerging poets, who are already known at home, an opportunity to establish themselves outside the boundaries of their homeland.

Participating in the project, apart from Slovenia, are Slovakia, Italy, Sweden, Poland, Great Britain, Macedonia, Lithuania, Belgium, Croatia and Austria; each of the participating countries has its own festival dedicated to poetry, in which selected poets are presented throughout the year.

Each of the countries has also selected five authors that are included in the network of 55 European poets who have been featured this year on literary festivals in the mentioned countries.

PROSPECTIVE AUTHORS OF VERSOPOLIS

This year, 65 events were organised within the Days of Poetry and Wine festival. Of these, 25 were poetry readings in which 28 poets read in 14 languages. As an addition, 18 winemakers presented themselves at the wine altar. There were also a series of events with five prospective authors of the Versopolis platform – Justyna Bargielska from Poland, Ivan Šamija from Croatia, Gjoko Zdaveski from Macedonia, Pär Hansson from Sweden and Vytautas Stankus from Lithuania. All five of them presented their poetry with great poetry readings on the main festival stage. Some of them also read their poems to the audience at more intimate private readings, which took place in courtyards, on terraces and in gardens around Ptuj, whose inhabitants have been enjoying the festival ever since 2010 when they warmly embraced it, filling to the brim every stage overtaken by poetry for four days.

FOCUS: POETRY IN DUTCH

This year, the main focus was given to contemporary poetry in Dutch, which was represented at the festival and the preceding translation workshop by four poets from Belgium and the Netherlands.

This year's guests of honour were Slovenian poet and writer Milan Dekleva and American poet C. D. Wright, the foreign guest of honour.

A STREET NAMED AFTER TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN WHO WAS THE FESTIVAL'S GUEST OF HONOUR IN 2011

One of the city streets near Vraz Square, where most of the festival takes place every year, was named after the late poet Tomaž Šalamun, an eminent honourable guest of the festival in 2011, who died last year and whose grandparents were from Ptuj. The first evening was dedicated to this event with the opening of an audio installation created by Stanka Vauda Benčević, who covered one of the houses in the newly-named street with colourful roof tiles characteristic of Ptuj roofs. From behind the wall resounds the voice of Tomaž Šalamun reading his poetry. The installation will remain in Ptuj.

Besides literary events, the festival also offered a few exhibitions and an evening music programme.



20th Jubilee festival Days of Poetry and Wine

Days of Poetry and Wine will again veil Ptuj in verses in the last week of August next year when new poets will visit the oldest city in Slovenia. Since this will be the 20th festival edition, we can expect an even richer programme and another unforgettable poetry experience.

PLEČNIK HOUSE IN LJUBLJANA RENOVATED

The legacy of Slovenia's visionary architect – open to the public again

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

Photo: MATEVŽ PATERNOSTER/MGML DOCUMENTATION



After two years of comprehensive renovation, the Plečnik House in Ljubljana was re-opened this month. Jože Plečnik, the greatest Slovene architect, lived there from 1921 until his death in 1957 and created many parts of it himself. The housing complex has been completed with a museum shop, an area for learning and events, a study centre for researchers, and premises for temporary exhibitions. The renovated house, in which Plečnik did much of his work, comprises a doorway, corridor, bedroom with bathroom, small reception room, circular staircase, studio on the first floor, study and a winter garden. During the renovation, a neighbouring house was acquired and joined to the complex, and there you can now visit an exhibition of his life and work in Ljubljana, Prague and Vienna. The legacy of one of Slovenia's leading cultural figures has thus been returned to the public from the hands of restorers, conservationists, architects, designers, landscapers and dozens of other experts.

EXCEPTIONAL CULTURAL VALUE

"His house is by itself of exceptional cultural value, since it is one of the rare so well-preserved and so originally designed and decorated houses of artists in the world," explained Peter Krečič, an art historian who is known to be one of the greatest authorities on Plečnik's architecture in Slovenia. The complex is composed of the two old houses along Karunova street and the cylindrical extension to the old suburban building on Karunova street 4 built by Plečnik for his three brothers and a sister in the period between 1923 and 1925. He also built the lobby and the covered entry in 1926, and after he has bought the neighbouring house with its garden, he built the winter garden on the south side of his house in around 1930. Following the renovation, the entire Plečnik house is thus open to the public for the first time. After the architect's death, his nephew, the priest Karel Matkovič, inherited the house, and also moved into its old part for a while. He preserved the new part with its extensions as it was left by Plečnik. He began to arrange the master's legacy and correspondence, whereby he also preserved the majority of the original items and the original ambience. He is responsible for ensuring that so many valuable items, such as the clay, plaster or wooden models of a variety of designs, Plečnik's personal library and his drawing tools were all preserved.

DEMANDING RENOVATION

The renovation of the house was extremely demanding since Plečnik himself

had already needed to constantly solve the problem of moisture on this marsh area, while at the same time, he liked to use simple materials inside the house, i.e. plenty of wood and reed, which represented another issue to be handled by the preservationists.

The renovation project was entrusted to the architect Maruša Zorec who has done a similar restoration project at the Castle manor house in Ormož, for which she received the Prešeren Fund Award in 2012.

As she pointed out, the key question was how to intervene in the original architecture in the light of modern requirements and conditions of the profession (static restoration, renovation of installations, fire safety, etc.). "With such interventions, the architect can tear down the fragile overall structure, such that house loses its original narrative, patina and smell with every restoration. You have to be careful that there are only as many interventions as are absolutely necessary. The premises, that were designed by Plečnik and in which he also lived, provided some insight in the intimacy of the architect's home during the renovation. They completely differ from his monumental architectural creations. These premises shall remain as they were even after the renovation. Our interventions were mostly directed at the other part of the house,



not intervened by Plečnik, and in which the other accompanying programmes of the museum will take place.”

Plečnik built and decorated the house extremely modestly – intentionally – as he wanted to say “this is good enough for me, but I can make you a palace.”

Some of Plečnik’s elderly students took off their hats, as they would have entering a church, when they stepped into his house. Plečnik’s House was opened to the public in 1974 (but not all of it), and then was passed into the management of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana in 2010. They were also faced with an exceptional interest of visitors, including from abroad, such as buses of students visiting from Austria, Italy and Switzerland, and television crews, including one from the Japan, that came over to film programmes about Plečnik’s work.

RESTORATION OF ITEMS

According to the renovation plan, the restorers were responsible for the joinery. “All items, details and placements in the house were photographed, documentation was drawn up and the inventory moved to conservation workshops, and then the building was closed down in September 2013,” said Ana Parok, the curator of the Plečnik collection in the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana. Afterwards, the work began in the restoration centres.

“Plečnik experimented a lot, for example he stuck photographs directly onto glass. We faced a problem of how to restore it at all,” she explained.

“He was a master of using unusual materials which he recycled and re-shaped. Among these are, for example, a statue with pedestal of Podpeč stone, a bronze eagle head with shiny stones, and between them a large ball. The geologists have studied the stones and discovered that the ball is made of a large, treated

topaz, although at first, it was believed that it was made of glass, and the stones on the eagle are coloured semi-precious stones,” she added.

During the renovation, all of these smaller items were restored in the museum conservation workshops Ščit, in which they cleaned a hat, drawing tools, and even a bag of tobacco and a lighter. Plečnik’s tiny inventory is composed of approximately 1,800 pieces plus the entire Plečnik’s library.

Large pieces (windows, doors, floors and panelling) were taken to the technological park of the museum. There, they have special bags made of gastight material, in which the wooden items were placed to be gassed with nitrogen. “Since there is no oxygen in the bag, there is also no life. An insect dies in any of its stages, even its eggs; while when using poison, the eggs can survive. Insects are very persistent. The eggs can last from 27 to 30 years,” explained the masters in the workshop. The items are kept in the nitrogen bag for six weeks. The nitrogen is produced by a separator that takes the nitrogen from the air and delivers it in a bag through a bottle which it is equipped to ensure the appropriate moisture. When this ecologically friendly procedure is finished, the nitrogen is released back into the air.

FACED WITH COLLAPSE

The remaining joinery was left in the house and was taken over by the restoration centre, while the renovation began under the watchful eye of Irena Vesel Kopač from the Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. Once they had started into the work, it became evident that the house was in a much poorer state than they had thought. “First, only the necessary maintenance works were planned,” said Irena Vesel Kopač. “But once we began intervening in the construction and removed the whitewash, we saw that the house had deteriorated and that this was really the last opportunity for a thorough renovation. The joinery was in such bad shape that all the wooden parts had to be gassed or soaked in and coated with insecticide.” Afterwards, we had to face difficulties with the plaster. Once the whitewash was removed, in certain places it literally collapsed onto the floor. “We realised that Plečnik was much occupied with

solving the problem of moisture in the house. He enclosed some of the external walls with bricks and made a space for ventilation, he coated the walls with bitumen and covered them with hard-board, on which he added plaster a few centimetres thick that contained almost no binder. The house appeared to be dry, but was actually rotten inside. Many plasters in the old part of the house had to be removed.”

There were also other surprises waiting for us. “All ceilings were plastered onto reed and thus they hung at certain places since they were too heavy. Another big dilemma was pertaining to the coloured finish of the joinery. It was composed of several white and brown layers. At first, Plečnik painted everything brown, but when there was too much wood in the ambient, he painted the interior joinery white (doors, windows and shutters).

PRESERVATION OF THE ORIGINAL CONDITION

The landscapers arranged a large garden behind the house under the professional supervision of the landscape architect Ana Kučan. They preserved the vegetable garden and beehive. “The women from Trnovo went there to pick up the lettuce seedlings and took care of the garden. The garden had been alive right up to the renovation. And it will remain so after the renovation. Our intention is that the house continues living as before.”

In Plečnik’s house, the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana will arrange several programme sets: in the newly obtained part, there will be a permanent exhibition on Plečnik, the museum shop, multi-purpose pedagogic room, study area for architects and researchers of Plečnik, where his original plans will be available, while a summer atrium for small concerts and lectures will also be set up.

The famous black hat and shoes, the drawing tools and accessories he had been using, glasses and models, as well as the majority of the unrealised designs, such as those for the Butchers’ bridge in

Ljubljana and the Parliament that in his vision should be placed next to the pond in Tivoli Park, will all be on display. For the first time, visitors will be able to see approximately 250 small clay models of different variations of pillars, made with Plečnik's own hands.

PLEČNIK – AN ICON OF THE CITY OF LJUBLJANA

As said by Peršin, “their intention is to establish Plečnik as an icon of the city of Ljubljana, as is Gaudí in Barcelona. We have many antique cities, but Plečnik is a one-off and is unique. He has marked our city and without him Ljubljana would not be the same.”

Although Jože Plečnik was not entrusted with any important architectural assignments after the war, and in the sixties and seventies was even overlooked at the Ljubljana School of Architecture, today you cannot find a single Slovene who is not familiar with his works. Time is a good appraiser, thus Plečnik's work is no longer estimated according to his belonging in terms of architecture, style or even world view, and the architect's legacy is no longer praised by enthusiastic individuals, but it is in general – in Slovenia and abroad – evaluated as the top of architectural creation. Perhaps Plečnik's heritage will be placed on Unesco's list; the Slovene and Czech experts and the Slovene Ministry of Culture are already preparing the documents for such a proposal.

PLEČNIK'S ESTEEMED STUDENTS

Plečnik's students were mainly rather ambitious and keen on launching themselves into the world. As many as seven of the fifty graduates perfected themselves in Paris with a guru of modern architecture and urbanism, Le Corbusier. Most of the architects from the whole world that were drawing in Le Corbusier's studio were Slovene, the exceptions being Swiss and French. The architectural historian, Dr Bogo Zupančič, who will publish a book on them in the middle of the year, says that so many of Plečnik's graduates

went to Le Corbusier to draw due to the fascination of professor Plečnik with the classicism in architecture, in particular in a time of modernisation, industrialisation of the architectural elements, the establishment of the Bauhaus school, CIAM congresses and technological changes all of which Plečnik rejected. They wanted to obtain what they could not get from their professor from the source of the functional architecture. From the first generation of Plečnik's students that graduated in the twenties, the first who left for Paris was architect Dušan Grabrijan, and the first who went to Le Corbusier was architect Miroslav Oražem. At that time, professor Plečnik was watching closely over the design orientations of his students, although it was him who encouraged them to perfect themselves abroad.

Le Corbusier was fascinated with the drawing skills of Plečnik's students. It was enough to mention that you were from Plečnik's school when you entered the studio to ensure that you already had a place there.

The respect and admiration prevailed among Plečnik's students, even though they also had to work hard on Saturdays and during the summer breaks; they learned that there is not just one architectural world or view but many different ones, and for this reason they strived for their own architectural expression. They respected variety, and helped renovate and modernise the post-war homeland with modernist ideas and experience gained at Le Corbusier. It is precisely Plečnik's school and the experience with Le Corbusier that prevented our architecture and urbanism from drowning in the inexpressive urban world that followed the World War II. The architectural circles of Ljubljana became one of the strongest and most influential in the former Yugoslavia, and they made their ideas known and accessible through their pedagogic work and publications. However, Zupančič believes through later uncritical reviews, problems occurred which have brought us to the present urban metastases.



PLEČNIK'S MOST FAMOUS WORKS

National and University Library, Triple Bridge, Shoemakers' Bridge, Bežigrad Stadium, the Ljubljanica river embankments and bridges and the promenade in Tivoli Park. Plečnik's heritage in Ljubljana was protected by decree in 2009. The Government declared more than fifty works of his heritage in Ljubljana as cultural monuments of national importance. The status of a monument was also given to some of Plečnik's works outside Ljubljana, namely in Begunje, Stična and Črna vas. Plečnik's collection is also protected as a monument. It is certain that Plečnik has turned a provincial Ljubljana into the Slovene capital.



The legacy of Slovenia's visionary architect – open to the public again.
Photo: Matevž Paternoster/MGML Documentation