

# Sinfo 02

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The latest from Slovenia

## The new Government's main challenge is to bring Slovenia out of the crisis

- INTERVIEW: **Matjaž Vipotnik and Jože Snoj** • ART & CULTURE: **Prešeren awards 2012**
- OUR EXCELLENCE: **Krka** • SPORTS: **Rebirth of ski jumping**
- PEOPLE: **Marko Pavlinec** • SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **Gostilna Na gradu**





In focus



Interview



People



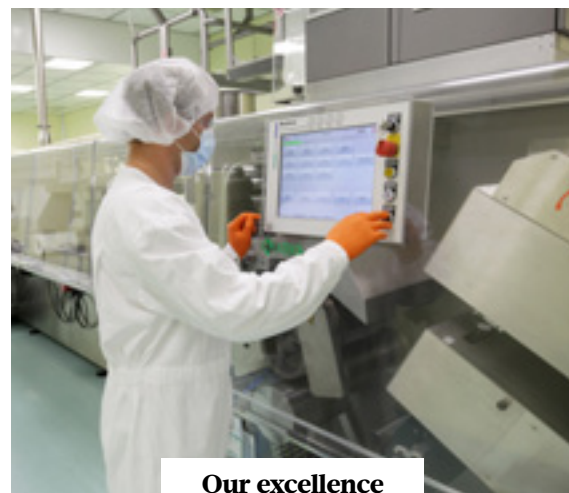
Green corner



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Society



Our excellence



Slovenian delights



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#### SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

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## editorial



Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

### The new Government's main challenge – to bring Slovenia out of the crisis

Slovenia now has its tenth Government, the second under Janez Janša. This is actually an anti-crisis government and team, the new Prime Minister, Janez Janša, explained at the appointment of the new Government. Certain issues, which would in other more normal times perhaps have been at the top of the agenda, will just have to wait, although we will make every effort to ensure that nothing is left forgotten. The Government will first deal with budget revision and fiscal consolidation, and then it will be the turn of structural reforms. This sequence is very important, said Mr Janša who emphasised that it would be of no help if the pension reform is adopted within the next three months – the effects of which will only show in the public finances much later – when no solutions are adopted for the interim.

The award ceremony of the highest national awards in the field of culture – the Prešeren Award and the Prešeren Fund Award – took place on the eve of the Slovenian Cultural Holiday. This year's recipients of the Prešeren Award were the writer, Jože Snoj, and the designer, Matjaž Vipotnik, who are introduced in more detail in our interview. The poet, writer, essayist, critic, journalist and editor, Jože Snoj, presents images from his poetic world in a unique language with original words, new word meanings and unfamiliar sentence structure. The designer, Matjaž Vipotnik, has made his distinctive and far-reaching influence felt on the development of graphic design in Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia since the 1970s. He has undoubtedly been instrumental in making the high standard of Slovenian design known throughout the world. Through his originality, he has influenced the then often stereotypical perception of the profession and set the standards for the expansion of visual communications in Slovenia.

We publish the memoirs of some Slovenian diplomats on Slovenia's international recognition on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary: International recognition brought great joy, relief and honour – That evening, after hearing about all the dead and injured, I realised that Yugoslavia – even as a loose federation – was no more. – There was no way back.

The opening day of the European Culture Capital 2012 in Maribor was marked by an ambitious staging of the opera Black Masks by the Slovenian composer, Marij Kogoj. Less than a week after the opera's premiere, which can be counted among the greatest projects undertaken by the Capital of Culture, the Slovenian theatre-going public was able to see a glamorous performance of a lesser known play by Brecht: The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui. The European Capital of Culture staged a daring performance, which holds a mirror to the face of Europe – to its increasingly arrogant capitalism on one side and its progressively helpless democracy on the other.

The London Olympic Games present a fantastic opportunity for the promotion of Slovenia's sport, landscape and location, politics, strategies, business and tourism. The Olympic Games are the biggest sports event in the world, bringing together practically all the countries of this planet in a city that feels close to us and in a country that is favourably inclined towards Slovenia. Slovenia simply had to seize this opportunity to present itself, not only through sport, but also through the Slovenia House. The Slovenia House will bring together athletes, members of Team Slovenia and sports enthusiasts. It will promote Slovenia in the field of sport, economy, tourism and culture under the following themes: Sports of Slovenia, Green Slovenia, Taste Slovenia, Culture of Slovenia, Business with Slovenia and Visit Slovenia.



## Janez Janša's second Government and the 10<sup>th</sup> Slovenian Government

On 10 February 2012, Janez Janša's second Government took the oath of office, with 50 votes cast in favour of its appointment.

Following his appointment, Janša said that Slovenia's political crisis had thus ended, while the first challenge would be the adoption of a supplementary budget. Public expenditure will have to be reduced by 10%. 'This cannot be done linearly, because there are no reserves in some places; we'll therefore have to cut deeper where the reserves exist', announced Janša.



The basis for the functioning of the new Government is the coalition agreement which may, if necessary, also be amended, provided that all five partners give their consent to this effect. 'For us, the coalition agreement is the law on which the Government stands or falls. However, it is not inflexible to the point that it cannot be re-shaped. There will be situations when certain things will need to be upgraded. When we reach that point, we'll do that by consensus', said Janša.

Former Prime Minister Borut Pahor transferred his duties to Janez Janša on the same day. 'As a citizen and as a political leader still active in Slovenian public and political life, I look to the future and see many questions. I am completely sure about one thing, however, and that is that together, we can succeed', said Pahor during the handover ceremony.

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE TO BE REDUCED BY 10% – STRUCTURAL REFORMS NEXT IN LINE

The new Government is counting on two things: fiscal consolidation and the start of a new economic cycle. 'The team you are deciding on today is faced with a great and difficult challenge. This is a term of office, at the beginning of which nothing spectacular can be expected, only hard work,' said Janša in assessing the situation of the new Government during the current crisis.

The main objective and measures envisaged by the Government to support this objective in implementing the coalition programme is to ensure that, from 2013 onwards, Slovenia will develop at a rate exceeding the EU average and raise employment, thereby improving the standard of living and welfare. Within this context, fiscal consolidation, the stimulation of economic

growth and the creation of new jobs are fundamental.

Fiscal consolidation means making adjustments, which is imperative if the country is to preserve the functioning of vital systems and sub-systems that provide for a normal life. According to Janša's prognosis, the adoption of this year's supplementary budget will have to involve a 10% reduction in public expenditure. While drafting a supplementary budget, the Government will also prepare a social agreement aimed at redistributing the burdens of the crisis. Moreover, it will offer a partnership for cooperation to both opposition parties. Structural reforms will be addressed later.

### MEASURES TO BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

Fiscal consolidation is only the first step to bring the country out of the crisis. According to the new Prime Minister, merely reducing expenditure will not be enough to overcome the crisis. Equally and possibly more important is the implementation of measures to boost economic growth. These measures include those intended to bring an end to the late payment culture, to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles to the site selection of various facilities, to shorten the duration of legal disputes for small and medium-sized enterprises, to reduce labour costs, to facilitate tax relief on investments, to ensure the progressive reduction of the corporate income tax rate and to bring an end to the credit crunch.

Janša went on to explain that we may expect 'a certain cut in our credit ratings' in the coming weeks. Moreover, putting an end to the political crisis did not in itself resolve the issue of practical measures for the recovery and consolidation of Slovenian public finances and for providing renewed impetus to

economic growth, which have not yet been implemented. 'This task still needs to be addressed', added Janša.

Because in the current situation, many things can only be achieved on the basis of good cooperation between various institutions, this aspect was a point of particular emphasis in the coalition agreement. Within its powers, the Government will do its utmost to ensure that co-operation between Slovenian institutions will be at the desired level and for the benefit of all. 'We have all taken an oath that we will work for the welfare of Slovenia, and our Government takes this commitment very seriously,' concluded Prime Minister Janša.

### CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION

Both opposition parties represented in the National Assembly, i.e. Positive Slovenia and the Social Democrats, have announced their stance of constructive opposition. The president of Positive Slovenia, Zoran Janković, said that the overall idea of the Government's programme seemed good, but nevertheless pointed out that austerity measures alone would not suffice to overcome the current crisis. They will, by all means, have to be accompanied by enhanced investments. According to Janković, his party intends to give its support to any proposal that will be for the benefit of our citizens.

In his address, the Slovenian President Danilo Türk highlighted the importance of the quality of the Government's work and mutual co-operation. In his view, the appointment of the new Government has taken place in a time that is more exacting than any other period of time in the recent past. This is a time that many people perceive as a period requiring serious and fundamental changes, added President Türk.

### JANEZ JANŠA'S NEW GOVERNMENT

**Vinko Gorenak**  
(Slovenian Democratic Party – SDS), Minister of the Interior

**Žiga Turk**  
(Slovenian Democratic Party – SDS), Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport

**Andrej Vizjak**  
(Slovenian Democratic Party – SDS), Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

**Zvonko Černač**  
(Slovenian Democratic Party – SDS), Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning

**Aleš Hojs**  
(New Slovenia – NSi), Minister of Defence

**Ljudmila Novak**  
(New Slovenia – NSi), Minister without Portfolio for Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the Autochthonous Slovenian National Community in Neighbouring Countries, and between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad

**Radovan Žerjav**  
(Slovenian People's Party – SLS), Minister of Economic Development and Technology

**Franc Bogovič**  
(Slovenian People's Party – SLS), Minister of Agriculture and the Environment

**Janez Šušteršič**  
(Gregor Virant Civic List – DLGV), Minister of Finance

**Senko Pličanič**  
(Gregor Virant Civic List – DLGV), Minister of Justice and Public Administration

**Karl Erjavec**  
(Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia – DeSUS), Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Tomaž Gantar**  
(Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia – DeSUS), Minister of Health



## SHOWCASING SLOVENIA

**Milano 2012**

Slovenia is being presented in Milan and Lombardy between 10 February and 1 April on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Slovenia and Italy. This cultural, tourist and economic/political presentation of Slovenia is being conducted under the slogan *I Feel Slovenia – Feel the Green*. The various events that have taken place began with a well-received exhibition of the work of Zoran Mušič in Legnano, which has been very well attended since its opening on 19 November.

The “green” thread of Slovenia’s promotion in Milan began with a presentation and the tasting of a selection of Slovenian protected and ecological agricultural products and exquisite wines, and a presentation of Slovenian tourist farms.

The opening of a street photography exhibition on beautiful green sites in Slovenia, *I Feel Slovenia*. *Cogli il verde* was also highlighted in green, and held at Corso Vittorio Emanuele in Milan, where some two million passers-by are expected to see

the show over a two-week period. Slovenian photographers have managed to capture some exceptional images of known and virtually unknown Slovenian places and regions, in which the natural light reveals them in a rather different, but

always exceptionally interesting way, rarely seen even by those who live there. Slovenia is therefore being presented in a new way, which emphasises the broad diversity it encapsulates within its rather small territory. However, all these



distinctions are united by green – the typical colour of the Slovenian landscape – which is also denoted in the Slovenian trademark, *I Feel Slovenia*.

**“SILENT REVOLUTIONS”**

The central event of Slovenia’s presentation in Milan was the opening of the *Silent Revolutions* exhibition at La Triennale Design Museum.

The exhibition features a selection of innovative products created in the first two decades of this young European country’s existence, and includes design as an important component in development and gaining a competitive advantage. The selection illustrates the innovative approaches, exceptional strategies, inspiring visions and new approaches adopted by designers, clients, manufacturers and companies who played a key role in producing the items on show. The wide spectrum of new products combined with historical and iconic objects reflects the

exceptional power, quality and specific character of modern design in Slovenia. The opening of the exhibition featured by a concert by the group, *Sounds of Slovenia*. During the course of the exhibition, there was also a round table on the theme of women in design. Slovenia was represented by Lara Bohinc and Nika Zupanc, two of Slovenia’s most successful designers abroad.

In addition to *Sounds of Slovenia*, Slovenian music was also represented by the Slovenian Chamber Choir, under the baton of Martina Batič, offering a rich programme of Slovenian and European choral music at the Auditorium di Milano. The *Slovenia in Us* exhibition on Lipizzaner horses by the photographer, Alenka Slavinec, served as the introduction to the concert at the Auditorium. The photographs of the Lipizzaner horses represent Slovenia’s twenty years of independence.

The Designing for the State exhibition is of special symbolic importance – it presents an

overview of Miljenko Licula’s work for the Slovenian state, as he designed most of the items which have had an important role in defining the visual image of Slovenia and co-creating its identity – currency, ID documents, official printed materials, images of institutions, etc.

**INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

The exhibition also serves as a back-drop for meetings between senior political and economic representatives from Slovenia and Lombardy. The political/economic presentation of Slovenia took place on 14 February. The Business Forum introduced the business and investment environment in Slovenia, surveyed economic cooperation with Italy, presented Slovenian investment projects, sectoral opportunities and fairs in Slovenia, and business opportunities in the Italian market. The Forum also anticipates many meetings between Slovenian and Italian businessmen.

Tourism is an important field for Slovenian-Italian economic cooperation. The Slovenian Tourist Board will mark this cooperation with a traditional Slovenian evening and by presenting awards to the journalists. The tourist presentation of Slovenia will also be promoted with a presentation of Slovenian tourism at Milan’s Borsa International Tourism Exchange (BIT) between 16 and 19 February.

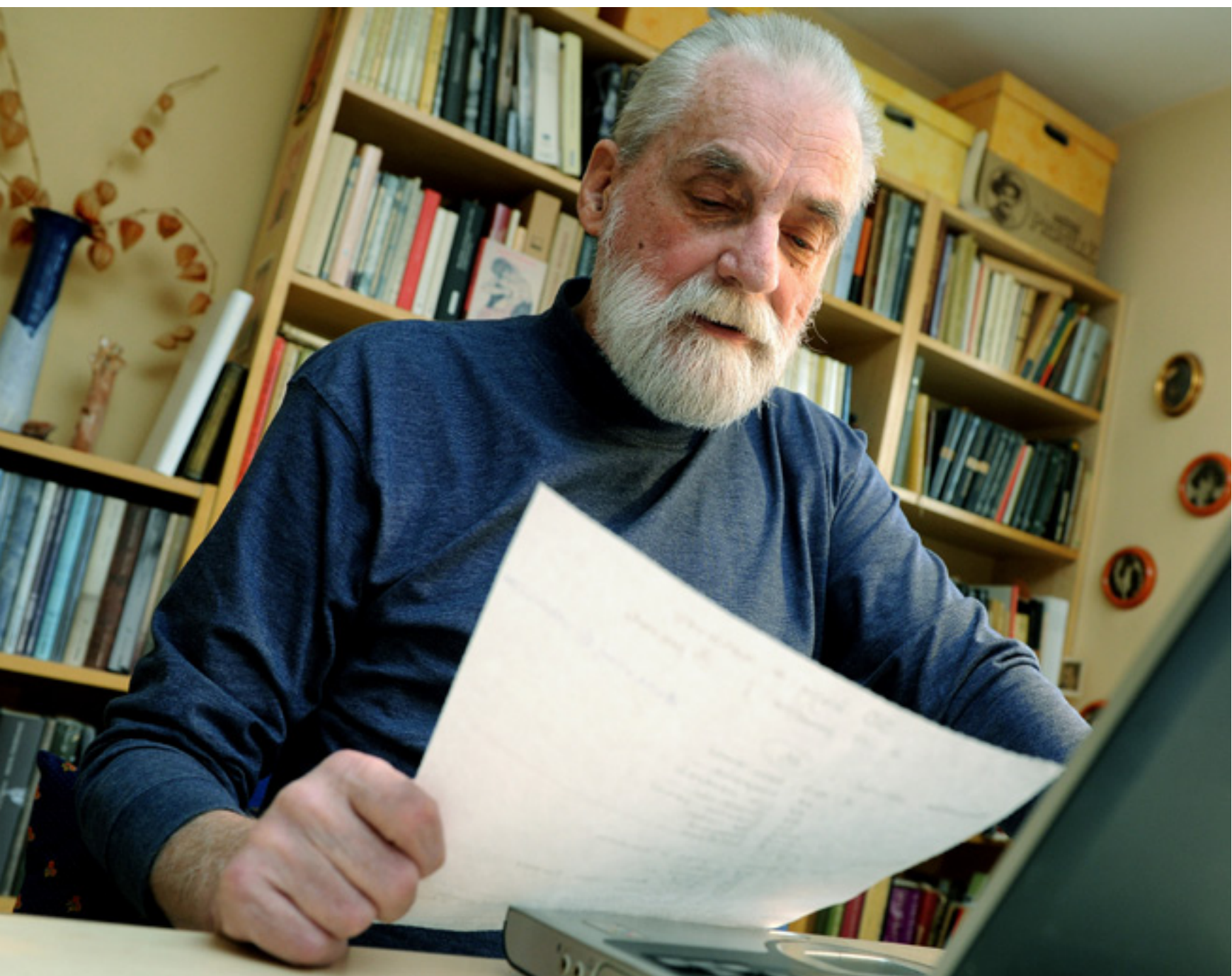
The coordinator of the project is the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments, the Slovenian Tourist Board, the Museum of Architecture and Design, the Municipality of Ljubljana and others, including many partners from Italy.



Hana Souček Morača  
Photo: STA

# JOŽE SNOJ:

**resistance to the violence of ideologies  
and the awakening of faith  
into the ethical power of words**



THE DESIGNER MATJAZH VIPOTNIK AND THE WRITER JOZE SNOJ  
ARE THIS YEAR'S PREŠEREN LAUREATES

Poet, writer, essayist, critic, journalist and editor Jože Snoj depicts his poetic and literary world in a unique language of original words, new meanings, and surprisingly constructed sentences. In his literary work, Snoj creates a multilayered image of the restless 20th century in the light of relations between the individual, the world and history. He combines aesthetic and ethical questions into an inseparable unity, thereby resisting the violence of ideologies and the suppression of humanity with his artistic language and recalling the

original secret of life. He graduated in Slavic studies and comparative literature from the Faculty of Arts. He worked as a journalist for the Delo newspaper and was an editor at the Državna založba Slovenije publishing house. Among other items, his bibliography includes more than ten collections of poems, several novels, and almost twenty works for children. He has received several awards for his work, including the Prešeren Fund Award, the Rožanc Award, the Jenko and Veronika Awards, and the Levstik Award twice.

**What does the award of the greatest Slovenian acknowledgement in culture mean to you?**

In receiving the award, the most significant thing is that what I strove for in life and literature is more widely and 'more publicly' confirmed. And I have tried – during the period of one-minded Communist rule – to recall to public conscience with a poetic word a person's spiritual essence, and the horror and consequences of our fratricidal struggle during the Second World War and after.

**The Second World War had an exceptional impact on your childhood. You have written a lot about the war and post-war period. Did your life as a refugee, after you fled from Maribor to the Dolenjsko region, and later from the Communists to Ljubljana, leave a particular mark on you?**

As a prematurely adult child, the war experiences of fighting, bombing, corpses, etc. undoubtedly left an indelible impression on my memory. It

served – and still serves – as a source of my most intimate understandings about life, including the philosophy of the absurd and its most sensible nonsense – Christ's death on the cross.

**What memories do you have of your teenage years, and then of your Slavic and comparative literature studies at the university?**

I was – luckily I managed to avoid prison – already a severe critic of the ruling ideology in high school. It proved fortunate for me later that with this loud antagonism I was seen as a 'western existentialist', and that I lost a position as assistant lecturer and a university career which would surely have hindered my literary work.

**In your work, we often find a word, one in lower case and one in upper case. With poetics and theology.**

The language of a man who long ago became self-aware is 'the house of Spirit' and the word is his harbinger. Poetry

and religion are combined in it like two faces of the 'Same' in upper case. The origin of my theological poetics or, vice versa, poetical theology, is in this conjunction.

**I read one of your self-descriptions which said you are a 'pagan Christian full of fleshly doubts and rational reservations'. What kind of person are you?**

I am a sensual and also a spiritual person, torn between biology and spirit, like all people – between the struggle of all against each for survival and the desire for something higher, nicer, better, and above all, sensible. And as such, I am therefore a pagan Christian or, vice versa, a Christian pagan.

**On receiving the first Josip Jurčič Fund Award, you said: 'It has never been easy for journalists to acquire autonomy. If they were severely monitored by politicians in the past, they are nowadays rather under the influence of the censorship of capital ...' How do you evaluate**

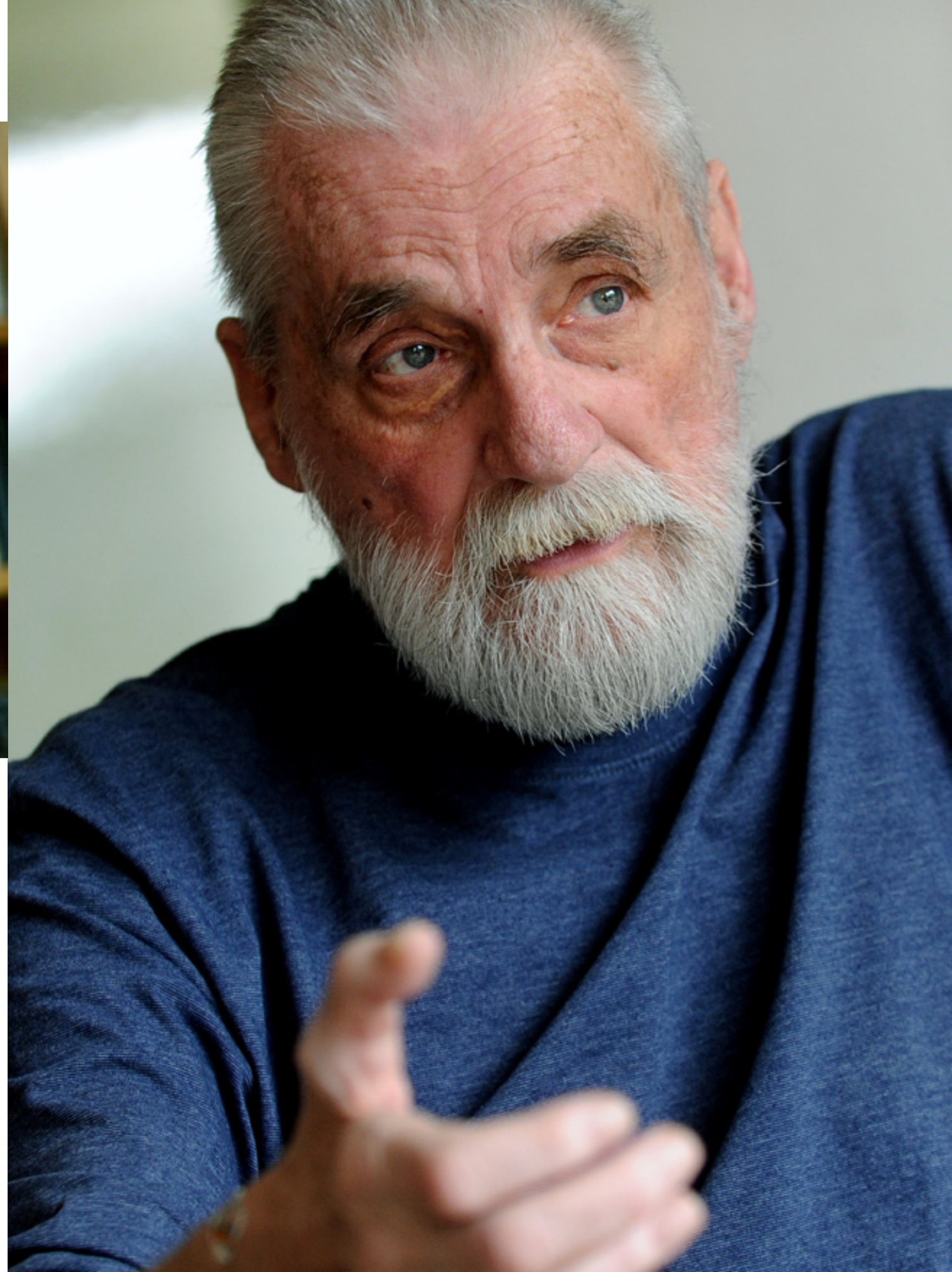
**the position of Slovenian literature up to the 1990s and what has changed today?**

Not only journalists, but also all us 'everyperson' have never been and will never be able to achieve full autonomy due to various pressures from society – no matter how 'ideal', it will never be perfect. True art was the herald of an upright human posture during Communist one-mindedness, but nowadays, it has lost its role. But it will – I am certain of it – regain it when the people under the mammon of capital have suffered enough.

**Your books for children and youth are variegated with regard to sound and rhythm and are based on word play. In the verses in the poem Stop za pesmico (Stop for a Little Poem), word play is depicted as a fragile creature, which can express laughter and cry. Can poetry educate?**

My texts for children are exactly how you describe them. All art enriches with its beauty, and in this sense it also educates.





**In 1988 and 1989, you and Spomenka Hribar were the editors of Nova revija, which published texts by Slovenian and other Yugoslav intellectuals. These texts were later incorporated into the foundations of the Slovenian constitution and the establishment of Demos, which took power after the first elections. You have written a lot about Slovenia's independence in the 1980s. How do you remember those times?**

Those were the most dangerous and most beautiful times of my life. As individuals

and as a nation, we achieved the most that could have been achieved. Our hopes were fulfilled - never mind if they have to be fulfilled again and cherished for the future.

**You also participated in the formation of the Slovenian national cultural programme, which Rudi Šeligo, a writer, sociologist and Minister of Culture, who died before his time, particularly strove for. Are the Slovenians a people of culture?**

All peoples are peoples of culture. Unfortunately, it has not helped others as much as it has

helped us. This was our great good fortune, which unfortunately many of us are not aware of. Rudi Šeligo was aware of it, and that made him what he was, and he will remain as such.

**Among other things, your uncle France Snoj was also a minister in one of the old Yugoslav royal governments, and he went into exile with it. During the last year of the war, he returned from London and joined the partisans 'to unite brothers in conflict'. What would you wish for Slovenia for its twentieth anniversary?**

My uncle Franc Snoj was a great idealist, and he paid for his idealism with harsh imprisonment and an early death after Kidrič had tactically welcomed him into the first Slovenian government. Neither the right nor the left ideologies or political factions consider him as their own, and he thus remains practically anonymous. I recall memories of him when I have the opportunity. All best wishes to Slovenia on its twentieth anniversary and a kiss - as is fitting for people who are close to our hearts and celebrating a jubilee.



Vesna Žarkovič  
Photo: STA

# MATJAŽ VIPOTNIK:

**the disease of hyper-capitalism and financial lobbies and the pursuit of profit have pushed the limits of good taste**



THE DESIGNER MATJAŽ VIPOTNIK AND THE WRITER JOŽE SNOJ  
ARE THIS YEAR'S PREŠEREN LAUREATES

Matjaž Vipotnik has received many awards, the first in 1966 for book design and graphics; the Prešeren Fund Award for design in 1975; and most recently in 2010 for the most beautiful book. Last year, his BIO 6 poster was included in the Study Collection

at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has been awarded countless accolades for his painting, graphic, set design and design work, but the prestigious Prešeren Award he received this year is his greatest recognition yet – the crown of his work.

**The citation states that you received the Prešeren Award for achievements in graphic design because of your inimitable and decisive influence on the development of graphic design in Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia since the 1970s. Mr Matjaž Vipotnik, how do you remember starting out?**

Whilst I was at the Secondary School for Design in Ljubljana, I occasionally published vignettes in the cultural supplement of Delo newspaper and illustrated contributions in its supplement, Najdihojca. The school did not allow us to publish our art works – that is, prior to the publication of a piece, approval needed to be obtained by one of the professors. I did not seek approval. When a scandal broke and the school wanted to take disciplinary action, Professor Stane Dremelj took me under his wing. He simply told his colleagues in the staff room that he had approved publication.

When I was in the third year, Jože Brumen, an architectural engineer, came to lecture at the school. I think that was when things became serious. Professor Brumen had studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts, and architecture at the Faculty of Architecture, and was involved in graphic design. He was well-read and had a versatile mind. He taught us to work methodically, how to approach tasks in a conceptual manner, and the importance of analysis

and synthesis. We got on really well. Later, when I went to Italy to study and after my return to Ljubljana, Professor Brumen continued to keep a close eye on my development. We met frequently, drank coffee, and analysed my posters, which were then already on display in the urban environment. Upon the publication of Kosovel's Integrali '26, which was prepared for publication by Professor Anton Ocvirk and designed by Professor Brumen, our discussions lasted for hours. Artistic movements such as Futurism, Constructivism, Suprematism and Dadaism were unknown to us at the time, and there wasn't much in the way of expert literature. Apart from Professor Brumen and my father, I knew few people with whom I could discuss such matters; I knew only the writer, Jože Javoršek, the film director, France Kosmač, and, of course, Stane Bernik, who had just then started publishing the magazine Sinteza.

**The citation also states that it would be difficult to find such a prolific graphic designer and person who is so zealously dedicated to his profession. What made you so "dedicated"? From where do you draw, or have you drawn, your creativity and inspiration for such considerable achievements?**

Unlike the work of people on production lines, the work of a graphic designer is much more

exciting. It is both a profession and a hobby. This is the privilege for creators in culture.

**You have carried the reputation of quality Slovenian design into the world. With your original ideas, you influenced what had thus far often been a stereotypical understanding of the profession, and you set "standards" for the expansion of visual communications in Slovenia. Where did you get the idea for the Karl Marx on the Bicycle poster – a popular and globalised image – and how was it accepted then?**

Marx on the Bicycle was quite popular because everyone interpreted it in their own way, and it foresaw the changes that were to come. It signalled the imminent fall of the Communist nomenclatura and the end of a period which was known as a state of repressive tolerance. The philosopher, Karl Marx, had nothing to do with this; it was politicians who actually misused Marx's ideas. Socialist countries applied this in practice; in Yugoslavia, this reality and arbitrariness were the least painful. There is no comparison with the situation in the former Soviet Union and the regime that political scientists named "real socialism". But, in all fairness, I have to admit that there were great differences in Yugoslavia; the regime in Slovenia was less strict than in Yugoslavia's other republics. Some called it social-

ism with a human face... This can be confirmed solely by the fact that Marx on the Bicycle was actually printed. I have to say that it was the Marxist philosopher, Lev Kreft, who greatly contributed to this with his open point of view. Also later, when the Italian left faction adopted this motif and placed it at the centre of activities at the Festa de l'Unità demonstration, Marx won over the Italian media overnight. So, this was a hit at the right moment and in the right place.

**You actually predicted the future with these provocative ideas. Your posters were the subject of controversy, they were talked about, written about in newspapers; editions were even destroyed or confiscated. No other Slovenian graphic designer since has been allowed to address the public in such an expressive manner. Such behaviour was undoubtedly considered avant-garde in those days.**

It was a reflection of events in society, and a dangerous tightrope to walk. Similar tendencies were manifest in critical essay writing and literature at the time. Journalists and editors of periodicals were the most loyal to the regime back then. They spoke of some sort of self-censorship... The exception, naturally, was the magazine Mladina. In an interview for the Croatian magazine Danas, the managing editor himself cen-





sored me after I had rejected a correction he made to my interview in which I mentioned the “fascism of real socialism” in the Soviet Union. I have to say that he was a skilled journalist. He came up with the term “vis-à-vis”, and published the correction in the next issue, which stated: fascism – vis-à-vis real socialism. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, this person – how typical – ended up in the Croatian Democratic Union.

**With such comprehension, enlightenment and engagement, you held a mirror up to society and changed it. Did you have problems with the authorities or other institutions as a result?**

Yes. Publishing house directors rejected several of my book designs, which they deemed to be too expressive. A court in Zagreb confiscated and destroyed the entire edition of posters for the Prisoners of Freedom performance by Mladinsko Theatre. The Yugoslav federal state prosecutor requested that the badges I had designed be destroyed and not distributed, but the Slovenian state prosecutor always rejected these requests and stopped the criminal prosecution. That is what happened to the badge I designed for the convention held at Cankarjev dom on 28 February 1989. On the Star of David, it read: “Kosovo, my country”. I had several encounters with the Slovenian secret police, but there were never any criminal charges pressed or other consequences. I did not do any of this in order to upset the public; these ideas always sprang from internal tensions and the general climate in society. Nothing was ever undertaken without due reflection or consideration. I have never done these things just for the sake of effect. And I never disrupted the brotherhood and unity of Yugoslavia’s nations. On the contrary, I have always been aware of the climate of civil society; after all, I belong to it myself.

**If posters and the theatre serve as mirrors for society and how it should be reformed,**

**what are your views on posters and the theatre in Slovenia now – do they still change the world and provide material for discussion?**

They do. But today, our urban space is saturated with commercial billboards which overshadow the relatively small cultural posters on display and pollute our urban areas. Pollution can also be spiritual. The disease of hyper-capitalism and financial lobbies and the pursuit of profit have pushed the limits of good taste. Even when I am watching a film, the national television station forces me to watch loathsome commercials for toothpaste and Lekadol tablets.

**Your posters were major graphic and artistic achievements and served as the benchmark for visual messages. Is this the result of the broad knowledge you acquired during your studies abroad or internal inspiration?**

It is a combination of all those factors. In particular, it is the result of hard work, persistence and dedication, and also an appreciation of the times and the social momentum at play. It is a kind of susceptibility, a state of mind, which is easier for me to paint than to describe.

**Your greatest passion was for visual messages of a cultural nature, but you have also designed for companies and produced several corporate designs. What is your opinion of how art presents the Slovenian economy today?**

I have done only a few corporate designs – a few in Italy, one in Canada, two in Hungary, and several smaller ones in Slovenia. If you include publishing houses in the economy, then there is the Wieser publishing house in Austria and Sypress Forlag in Norway. The only large graphic system, which I undertook with Peter Skalar and Janez Suhadolc, was the corporate design for Ljubljanska banka, way back in the 1970s. Designing for culture attracted me. It’s like this – I much prefer to design books than washing pow-

der packaging. By taking this point of view, I certainly do not want to undermine the importance of design for commercial purposes, but this no longer interests me. I am rather annoyed by supermarket advertising. The slogans themselves speak of the spiritual level of advertising today. Their purpose is to extract money from the poor consumer’s pocket in the easiest way possible. Have you noticed how many commercials use the magic word “more”? For example, you get “more” at Obi’s, “more” car for your money, and “more” music, less talking. An American professor of design, Victor Papanek, wrote about this problem in the 1980s – on how design is integrated with agencies, wholesalers and capitalists. In short, on the disease that is the consumer society.

**The theatre also had an important role throughout your life, so set design was a logical continuation. What have your experiences been in this aspect of your work?**

I have a really close circle of designer friends: Oskar Kogoj, Jani Bavčer, Peter Skalar, Janez Suhadolc, Evita Lukež, Vesna Brekalo, and some of my former colleagues, whom I also taught. I was much more drawn to the company of theatre people and writers. This circle of friends is much wider and was more important for my own development. The fact is that I have never actually liked talking about graphic design. But with literature and theatre, it was quite the opposite. Socialising with directors, actors, stage managers, set designers and costume designers soon led to me designing for the theatre. The same happened with the writers I mingled with. Most of my friends are either poets, writers and playwrights. With them, there is never a dull moment.

**You have also devoted time to book design and you were involved in the historical development of books. What new things did you learn from this?**

When I became involved in book design, and later with

book production, I was naturally interested in the origins of books. I wrote several short essays on Gutenberg’s invention of movable type printing, on the beginning and historical development of books during the Renaissance, on calligraphers, typographers, bookbinders, publishers and printers. I undertook this theoretical research because I wanted to better understand the work of my predecessors, and also because I thought that this aspect of cultural/technical history had been neglected. I selected the most important masters from the many printers who worked on the European continent, and in England and America between the Renaissance and the 20th century; that is, those who could be considered innovators and who contributed to the development and image of the printed book. I have done the same for my many colleagues who acquired their designer degrees in my former studio. Today, many of them are very successful independent designers.

**Can you give us some names?**

Metka Sitar, Miran Mohar, Vesna Brekalo, Nives Čorak, Danjela Grgič...

**On Prešeren Day, the Slovenian Day of Culture, Dr Ernest Petrič expressed his belief that Prešeren – a free-thinking man with a European perspective, far surpassing the Slovenian provincial mentality, who did not crave money, was free-spirited, and possessed a broad knowledge, vision and humanism – would not feel be at ease in contemporary society.**

I think Dr Petrič hit the nail on the head with a single idea. Who among thinking people feels good in the conflicted and divided Slovenian society of today? We are divided ideologically, spiritually, mentally, regionally and as neighbours... Everything that Prešeren wrote in Zdravljica (A Toast) is natural, patriotic and human. In 1846, before the publication of the collection Poezije (Poems), the Viennese assistant censor, Franc Miklošič, in the censor-

ship-revision copy marked the third stanza of Zdravljica (“Let peace, glad conciliation...”) with a red line; this angered the poet so much, that he crossed out and eliminated the entire poem himself. In short, Prešeren did not allow an abridged poem to be printed. And that is why Zdravljica was not included in the first edition of Poezije, which was printed by the Ljubljana printer, Južef Blaznik, in 1847. I also believe that nothing can be taken away or added to Zdravljica – everything fundamental is already in it. Today’s society is a long way from attaining the

ideals which Zdravljica inspires. We are still provincial, narrow-minded, ambitious, quarrelsome and divided. I think that it was no accident that the poet began the poem with an address to his friends, because it was they – Čop, Smole and Kastelic – rare educated people, who helped him survive in what was then a spiritual wasteland.

**At the end of this year’s central cultural performance, entitled Culture? Yes, please!, there was a minute of silence, and the hostess, Blažka Müller Pograjc, ended the ceremony**

**with the words: “How quiet and dark it would be if culture were silenced!”**

Indeed, it would be as silent as the grave. I very much enjoyed Pograjc’s concept (director and screen-writer Matjaž Pograjc, interviewer’s note) of darkening. It was something I completely understood – in itself, it achieved the power of an artistic act. Of course, I understand the position of the Slovenian Government – which faces many budget crises – but I think that it made a political mistake by abolishing the independent Ministry of Culture. The irony of fate is that this

unfortunate measure also has a positive side. People who work in culture – those on the left and the right – were suddenly united. I joined them outside Cankarjev dom before the Prešeren Award ceremony and lit a candle. But I cannot happily join a crowd who were so boorish and vulgar upon the arrival of the new minister, Žiga Turk. Complete silence from the cultural workers assembled and a silent double row in the passage in front of the lower entrance to Cankarjev dom would have been a better way to make a statement. Perhaps there will be other opportunities to do so.







## ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development reduces growth in its autumn forecast

In view of the much deteriorated expectations for global economic activities, the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (IMAD) has forecast significantly reduced economic growth for Slovenia. Growth is expected to reach 0.2% this year and 2% in 2013. In its Autumn Forecast, the IMAD, headed by Boštjan

Vasle, predicted GDP growth of 2% in 2012 compared with 1.5% for last year. According to the IMAD's winter forecast of economic trends, which was presented to the Government today, GDP increased by 0.5% in 2011. This is one percentage point less than projected in the Institute's forecast last September.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### 100% Start:up – the biggest forum

In Ljubljana Technology Park, the Start:up Slovenia competition organised a forum called "100% Start:up" where the entrepreneurs of the most successful start-ups in Slovenia shared their interesting success stories and daring visions with the audience, as well as offered some helpful advice. The forum was attended by seasoned entrepreneurs, representatives from innovation-driven companies and investors who can support new entrepreneurs

with funds and activities. The participants agreed that every start-up needs a mentor with extensive personal experience in entrepreneurship and business success. Since experienced businessmen are well aware of how important it is to pass knowledge onto the younger generations who choose to embark on the difficult path of entrepreneurship, they give free advice through their informal platform – the "Silicon Gardens".



Maja Tomanič Vidovič, Director of Slovene Enterprise Fund

## MANAGEMENT

### Managers see innovation as a way out of the crisis

Some 300 members of the Managers' Association of Slovenia gathered at a meeting in Ljubljana to discuss the responsibilities of managers in companies and their commitment to help Slovenia become one of the 15 most developed EU member states by 2020. To achieve this objective, the mindset must change, and new values and innovation must be introduced in all areas. In the words of Peter Kraljič, a former director and partner at

McKinsey & Company, a consulting firm, we are in a completely new era of global development. The Director of the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, Boštjan Vasle, believes that developments in the markets of our major trade partners will be of great importance for Slovenia's economic development, along with fiscal consolidation, the financing of banks and companies, and competitiveness.



Peter Kraljič, a former director and partner at McKinsey & Company

## RATINGS

### Slovenia's rating downgraded

Standard & Poor's (S&P) has downgraded the credit ratings of nine European countries, including Slovenia. Slovenia's credit rating was lowered from AA- to A+ with the potential for further cuts due to projected negative trends. Owing to its open economy, Slovenia is more likely to be affected by external shifts, and the negative outlook for its trade partners will continue to impede Slovenia's growth, writes S&P. Slovenia is one of the five eurozone countries whose ratings were also downgraded by Fitch. This credit rating agency downgraded Slovenia's long-term debt in local and foreign

currency from AA- to A and cut the credit rating of short-term foreign exchange transactions by one notch from F1+ to F1. In Fitch's view, the long-term outlook for Slovenia required a downgrade by two notches due to the eurozone's impact on Slovenia and further deterioration in Slovenia's banking sector. In 2012 and 2013, S&P may continue to cut Slovenia's rating, unless the new government prepares and implements credible labour market and pension reforms which will provide growth at the level of the current GDP per capita or even higher.

## EU

### Fiscal compact agreed

The leaders of the EU member states reached an agreement on an intergovernmental fiscal treaty to be signed by all EU countries except the Czech Republic and the UK. Europe is stepping up its efforts and Slovenia should not lag behind, commented the Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, on the fact that the agreement was sealed so quickly. The bottom line of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union is a golden or fiscal rule that general government budgets must be "balanced or in

surplus". The annual structural deficit therefore should not exceed 0.5% of GDP. At the EU summit in Brussels, the leaders also adopted a statement on measures aimed at strengthening economic growth and increasing employment. The emphasis is placed on the following three immediate priorities: stimulating employment – especially for young people, completing the Single Market, and boosting the financing of the economy, in particular SMEs as the drivers of economic growth.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Horizon 2014–2020

The Strategic Council for Technology at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia welcomed the European Commission's new framework programme for research and innovation, Horizon 2014–2020. It highlighted the most important aspects of the Horizon: networking should support all stages in the innovation chain, ranging from research to mar-

kets; key technological and specialised fields should be at the forefront and investments in these fields increased; programmes for improving the efficiency of investment in development should be linked together and supplemented. Furthermore, the Horizon places special emphasis on innovation.

## CONSUMPTION

### Consumer confidence index falls in January 2012

The consumer confidence index recorded a decrease of six percentage points in January 2012 from December 2011 owing to consumers' pessimistic forecasts of household finances for the next 12 months. The

latter was 7 percentage points lower than for the previous month. In January 2012, the consumer confidence index fell by one percentage point compared with January 2011 or with the last year's average.

## TOURISM AND LEISURE

### Alpe-Adria Tourism and Leisure Show opens

The biggest fair dedicated to the promotion of tourism in the Alps-Adriatic region was underway at Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre from 26 to 29 January. Two countries from the region – Slovenia and Croatia – were presenting their tourism products at the fair along with Italy, Austria and Hungary as separate regions. Tourist destinations in

Spain, Tunisia, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, which are not in our immediate vicinity, are also represented. The honorary patron of the fair is the Slovenian Ministry of the Economy, which also organised the Alpe-Adria Meeting of Travel Professionals, Brand Managers and Media Representatives in Tourism.





Ministry of Foreign Affairs, photo: STA

# IT WAS A PIONEERING TIME

## MEMORIES OF SLOVENIAN DIPLOMATS ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

There is, unfortunately, not enough space in this column to include all the memories and so we published only fragments of the Slovenian diplomats' memoirs, which are available in full, together with the memoirs of other diplomats, on the webpage of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

[www.mzz.gov.si/si/20\\_obletnica\\_mednarodnega\\_priznanja\\_republike\\_slovenije/spomini\\_slovenskih\\_diplomatov/](http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/20_obletnica_mednarodnega_priznanja_republike_slovenije/spomini_slovenskih_diplomatov/)



### DR BORIS FRLEC:

"We worked enthusiastically and with drive.

It was a pioneering time."

possible to predict that East and West Germany would merge to become one. "I knew you'd come back!" said Minister Genscher, grinning characteristically. I was received with affinity, my colleagues in the diplomatic corps helped me to establish a diplomatic mission, find the facilities for the Embassy and the residence, and furnish them – all whilst maintaining normal diplomatic activity.

... In late January, after eagerly awaiting the appointment, I indeed returned to Bonn as an Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia, a country recognised by the EU on 15 January. Upon the presentation of my credentials, President Richard von Weizsäcker said to me that this was the first time in his career that he had received credentials from the same person for two different countries. I replied that we lived in a time of unusual historic trials. Just years earlier, it would have been im-

My wife, Darja, and I moved into Dahl Hotel. A notepad and a pencil were all the equipment I had back then. Zupanc had already put his skills to good use in Mehlem, Bad Godesberg, near Bonn. He had found the premises for the Embassy along the Rhine; we soon found a house, and my wife and I moved in on 26 February because staying in the hotel room had become insufferable and most impractic-

cal for diplomatic activities. The house in Niederbachem was not ideal in many ways, but the most burning issue was that the owner's apartment was in the same house. We purchased the office equipment and gradually established an operational embassy. Ljubljana started to send furniture for the residence, which was partly equipped with furniture that had been purchased locally. We did most of the physical work ourselves and my craftsmanship came in handy. We worked enthusiastically and with drive. It was a pioneering time. All the while, the work of the Embassy had to be carried out in parallel. As well as permanent contact with German politicians and colleagues in the diplomatic corps, I appeared in the media on many occasions, held lectures at various associations and maintained close con-

tact with our migrants. I often had to travel to different parts of Germany and even to Frankfurt, 135 kilometres away, to welcome or bid farewell to Slovenian politicians.

In mid-April, we received the paintings lent to us by the Ljubljana City Art Gallery. Its head, my close acquaintance, Aleksander Bassin, selected a number of works of modern Slovenian art and provided physical assistance in setting up the exhibition at the Embassy. We were pleased it would enliven the reception celebrating the opening. Ambitiously, but in hindsight rather tactlessly, we announced the opening for 28 April. Minister Rupel, who was travelling regularly at that time, was rather disappointed by this, because he had wanted to attend the reception. However, it was too late to postpone the date. On that day, the Slovenian flag fluttered in front of the Embassy, the reception was a success and the work in the new facilities commenced.



### DR BOŽO CERAR:

"Seeing the dead and the wounded, I realised that very evening that Yugoslavia, even as a loose federation, had ceased to exist. There was no way back."

noticed some members of the Slovenian Territorial Defence. I thought frantically about where I could make myself useful. The decision was not difficult. Baricades had been set up in the streets, but I managed to get to Ljubljana on an overcrowded train coming from Kamnik. At 7:30, I informed Minister Rupel and the Republic Committee for International Cooperation of my presence. Zvone Dragan, Ivo Vajgl, Mitja Štrukelj, Andrej Logar, my other colleagues from Belgrade, and I gathered in the office of Secretary-General Matjaž Kovačič. That morning, we became officially involved in the work of the Republic Committee

for International Cooperation. Dragan, Vajgl and I were ordered by the Slovenian presidency to try to get to Belgrade by car that same morning, and establish contact with foreign embassies on Slovenia's behalf. The situation worsened during the day and our mission was considered too dangerous. As a result, our trip to Belgrade was postponed. I remained at the Republic Committee for International Cooperation and tried to make myself as useful as possible: I phoned numerous foreign officials and journalists, and prepared information on the situation in Slovenia for the rest of the world.

for International Cooperation.

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There are certain events in one's life that stick out and, for me, this was the fighting that took place between the Slovenian Territorial Defence and the Yugoslav Army just a few metres from my house. I will never forget the deathly silence that followed the surrender of the Yugoslav Army troops. People could not believe we were fighting an army that, not long ago, had been the people's army, our army – but now it was sowing death in our streets and gardens. Seeing the dead and the wounded, I realised that very evening that Yugoslavia, even as a loose federation, had ceased to exist. There was no way back.

The next day, Minister Rupel sent a letter to the Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Budimir Lončar, informing him that Slovenia had withdrawn its people from the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.



### DR MILAN JAZBEC:

"International recognition brought great joy, relief and honour."

was safe to return. The consulate staff accepted that fact, for it was clear that Belgrade had forsaken us, politically speaking. The atmosphere was still tense, but I was under the impression that the worst was now over. In early December we received an encoded message that the Yugoslav government had adopted a decision to close several embassies in distant countries and some consulates, including the one in Klagenfurt. Klagenfurt probably found its way onto the list because it was Yugoslav property and they feared that Slovenia would occupy the premises after Slovenia's expected recognition. This possibility was actually considered at the time. Nevertheless, we decided to act in accordance with international law; as an emerging country, we had to show recognition of and respect for the rule of law. By the end of the month, a team came from Bel-

grade and took the documents and the archives somewhere; but I managed to destroy some of the documents. The consulate general building and the entire premises, including the large garden and courtyard were closed and sealed off. The keys were given to municipal authorities, which took over the maintenance and protection of the building. The Yugoslav Consul General from Graz, who attended the closing, invited me to join his service, saying he would make the necessary arrangements in Belgrade. I said I would think about it; I had to buy some time.

... International recognition brought great joy, relief and honour. Congratulations came from all sides, and the tune changed, if I may say so. I returned to work full-time: I made appearances as a representative of a newly formed country, although my status

was not clearly defined. While in Ljubljana, I discussed the issue of my legal status with Matjaž Jančar, Head of the Department for Neighbouring Countries. We had an embassy in Vienna and no consular post in Klagenfurt. After discussions with the German Vice-Consul in Klagenfurt and others, the Slovenian government opened a consulate general headed by Honorary Consul Karel Smolle. He was a Carinthian Slovenian and one of the first authorised Slovenian representatives abroad by the appointment of the DEMOS government. As the Vice-Consul and the only member of staff, I was in charge of everything. Following the appointment of the Consul General, I was promoted to Consul. In agreement with the Ministry, I began searching for premises for our future consulate general. I found rooms on the second floor of the building at Bahnhofstrasse 22A in the city centre. We officially moved there in June, before Statehood Day. We were enthusiastic, very busy and full of energy...





Mitja Čander, programme director of the ECC

## Maribor 2012 has the potential to emerge as a recognizable European Capital of Culture



Photo: STA

The idea of the European Capital of Culture (ECC) has undergone three different conceptual outlines in its nigh-on three decades of existence and development. Melina Mercouri, after whom the prize is still named, and the direct financial help of the project by the European Union, originally promoted the idea of a Europe that is inextricably linked to culture. The ECC was therefore initially a celebration of European optimism, which was markedly enhanced by the fall of the Berlin Wall on the one hand, and by cutting-edge art on the other. Even after the year 2000, the basic message remains the same: European spiritual heritage is still extremely important, especially in order to encourage a more tolerant society. The importance of cutting-edge art as the essence of the European spirit is also not diminished. Despite all this, the ECC project has gained additional dimensions in the new millennium. Creativity in the broader sense of the word has now come to the fore, and the participation of the Capital of Culture's inhabitants in the ECC's programmes is becoming increasingly important. The project is thus morphing from being predominantly festive to something more engaged, built around sustainable annual events. Nowadays, the centres of attention are not merely European metropolises with all their infrastructure and glamour, but instead smaller cities are becoming the key locations – industrial locations that need fresh impetus to help build new identities. This period of social and financial crisis probably represents a third phase in the development of the project, a period that features all the key parameters of its former phase even more dramatically. The ECC's attempt to revive the social environment through creativity is an opportunity in the midst of a state of general numbness and mistrust.

The concept of a city has been changing throughout European history, but we have always connected it to the spiritual and not just the pragmatic dimension of human existence. Today, the majority of European cities face the danger of becoming non-localities – places bereft of identity. The ECC project presents an opportunity to restore and maintain this shared identity. These endeavours are crucial, as only the revitalisation of the city as an organism of diverse functions can bring economic growth. In boom times, we relied on the benefits derived from tourism and other service industries; we were blithe with expected jobs, new investments, and the like. Eventoday, these are all very important aspects of the ECC. However, we should be aware that, in order to carry out all these endeavours, we must first take care of the spiritual revival of the city and not the other way around. A city is representative of its society – a metaphor for the broader situation. Maribor is experiencing a crisis of intense proportions; for the second time in twenty years its economy is on its knees, social pressures are increasing, and people with vision are scarce. Maribor is a city with an extremely high level of emigration in European terms. This city on the Drava River is accustomed to crises and changes to its identity; it has always been confronted with ethnic, cultural and social struggles. The ECC project can get the blood running through the city's veins once again. It can regain its self-esteem, but also a new identity in the eyes of others.

The ECC Maribor 2012 programme includes 412 projects and many more other events and processes. It focuses on four programme pillars. Terminal 12 provides cutting-edge art, with a special emphasis on new approaches, but also local creativity. The Keys to the City establishes a

dialogue between the city and the arts; the city's identity is expanding, as well as the search for new forms of creative existence through different events. The Urban Creases operate on the fringes of society – through research by activists on social and ecological topics, they not only highlight the importance of coexistence, but they also try to emphasize the ways towards a creative and tolerant society by providing effective practical examples. Living Touch is a multimedia venue for reflection, from the events of the ECC through the city and the region to the wider European context. Besides the four programme sets, we also decided on three programme entities we want to take a special role in the structure of the ECC. Among the international activities underway, this mainly includes cultural embassies, which will focus on different cultures in association with several European and non-European countries. The University of Maribor also has a special importance for the city, the region and the ECC, and represents its significant development potential. We also would like to pay special attention to volunteering and people with special needs. The ECC must be an opportunity for everyone.

Maribor 2012 has the potential to emerge as a recognizable European Capital of Culture. It has the opportunity to become a new model to follow in these times of crisis, even though we have drawn on the experience gained from other European capitals of culture, especially those just before Maribor. Enforcing high standards and ambitions, as well as addressing the whole society through creativity. The web of ECC cities – besides Maribor as the holder, also include Ptuj, Novo Mesto, Slovenj Gradec, Murska Sobota and Velenje – by consolidating a number of common and networking projects, we can set something in motion.

Bernarda Gradišnik, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Portugal

## The Guimarães ECC programme focuses on four main topics – the city, the community, thought and art



Photo: Izak Dimec

Years ago, Maribor in Slovenia and Guimarães in Portugal had practically only one thing in common: our former national team player, Zlatko Zahovič, began his Portuguese football career in Guimarães, a career that would peak at Benfica and Porto. Today, the two cities are now linked by their selection as European Capitals of Culture for 2012. As the Slovenian Ambassador to Portugal, I am delighted by this fact, because their simultaneous and, in many ways, intertwined cultural presentations have undoubtedly had a positive influence on improving Maribor's visibility in Europe and the rest of the world, as well as Slovenia's visibility in Portugal. Here, our country is still unintentionally confused, not only with Slovakia, but even more often with faraway Estonia (the reason simply being the visual similarity between the names of Estonia and Eslovénia, which is how Slovenia is spelled by the Portuguese).

But it is not just visibility that makes a difference. The reciprocity between the two countries' cultural initiatives and programmes has been designed so as to provide an opportunity to strike up new contacts and partnerships. However, promoting culture can also represent a platform for finding business opportunities and promoting our economy. Moreover, the broader social and economic aspects are also becoming increasingly important within the framework of the ECC. Portugal is not just an EU member state, but also, historically, one of the European windows to the world. Indeed, it has skilfully transformed the heritage of its colonial past into an economic stepping stone: its almost personal economic relations with Brazil, Angola, Mozambique and other fast growing lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) countries offer potential opportunities to other EU member states which today – when exporting within the EU only means transferring the deficit burden to the neighbour's doorstep – are in search of new trading routes to the Third World.

In this context, Portugal should not only represent a challenge, but also an opportunity for the Slovenian Tourist Board, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and other Slovenian institutions. The Slovenian Embassy in Lisbon is making every effort to promote our country and increase its visibility, and to establish a "network" of local acquaintances and stakeholders which could provide a link between supply and demand. Further contributions to the promotion of Slovenian culture and language are being made by the Slovenian lectureship at the Faculty of Arts in Lisbon. Allow me now to return once again to the sphere of culture.

Our Embassy and the aforementioned Slovenian lectureship, which cooperates with our diplomatic mission, invited the two representatives from the two capitals of culture to attend the Prešeren Day concert celebration on 8 February in Lisbon, and to present the relevant programmes and, in particular, joint projects.

These are primarily designed for young people. Young people from Slovenia will visit Portugal and their Portuguese peers will visit our country. While learning about the countries' cultures, languages and customs, they will join forces and take part in various projects. These activities will be supplemented by several workshops. One of the projects is entitled Letters from the World and is intended to connect young people through the medium of creative writing. Awards will be handed out for the ten best letters, and their authors will get the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the countries' attractions as they travel through them. Two anthologies of the work of twentieth-century Slovenian and Portuguese poets will also be published in both languages. But, because football plays a special role in the social life of the inhabitants of Maribor and Guimarães, some events will be dedicated to this. Football matches will be played between both countries' teams of artists – the co-creators of the projects –

and these events will culminate in a friendly match between the football clubs from the two cities. The Guimarães 2012 Foundation has even appointed Zlatko Zahovič its ambassador for their ECC!

I visited Guimarães, a city in northern Portugal, twice and I was captivated by it on both occasions. It is one of the most important Portuguese historical cities, the "birthplace of the Portuguese nation", a city where Afonso I (Dom Afonso Henriques, 1109–1185), the first ruler of Portugal, founded the kingdom. Distinguished by its tenth-century castle, the city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, Guimarães is the centre of the country's textile industry and also the seat of the local university, which is an important research and technology centre.

The Guimarães ECC programme focuses on four main topics – the city, the community, thought and art. Like Maribor, it wishes to attract as many of its inhabitants as possible to participate in the design and performance of cultural events, or to attend them. A comprehensive programme includes events covering music, film, photography, fine art, architecture, literature, theatre, dance and street art. The cultural activities, which will be taking place until the end of this year, were launched on 21 January with the official opening event entitled The Birth of the Nation – a homage to the city. This grand multi-media spectacle was attended by over 60,000 people, including many tourists. Organisers expect that the events will attract approximately 1.5 million visitors, which will certainly give renewed impetus to the Portuguese economy. (However, as a fan of all things Maribor, please allow me to add that, at least thus far, ECC Maribor has been attracting even greater interest from tourists, with this fact confirmed by the well-known TripAdvisor travel services website.) In short, this is an opportunity which is an award in itself. May it therefore bring both cities as much pleasure as possible.



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: STA

# Prešeren awards 2012

## PREŠEREN FUND AWARD WINNERS

**The award ceremony of the highest national awards in the field of culture – the Prešeren Award and the Prešeren Fund Award – took place on the eve of the Slovene cultural holiday. This year's recipients of the Prešeren Award are the writer Jože Snoj and the designer Matjaž Vipotnik, who are introduced in more detail in our interview. The winners of the Prešeren Fund Award are: Franc Kosem – trumpeter, Stojan Kuret – conductor, Ivica Buljan – stage director, Iztok Mlakar – actor and singer-songwriter, Andrej E. Skubic – writer, and Maruša Zorec – architect.**

The trumpeter Franc Kosem received the Prešeren Fund Award for his work in the field of music over the past two years. Kosem's trumpet playing attracts audiences both young and old. "His playing is distinguished by a beautiful tone, a marvellous technique and an expression that satisfy even the most demanding of listeners. In his interpretation, he demonstrates the qualities of a promising young musician with a developed sense of aesthetics, combined with a specific technical skill," wrote Alojz Ajdič in his statement of reasons for the award.

The conductor Stojan Kuret received the Prešeren Fund Award for his achievements as a choral music conductor over the past two years. "Kuret's work is characterised by a masterful performance in achieving a colourful choral resonance and rich musical creativity, which enables him to confidently dominate the recently composed baroque and modern music of his contemporaries," wrote Marko Vatovec, adding that Kuret's choral creations are classified as achievements which, on the one hand, set modern trends and, on the other hand, will go down in the history of Slovene musical creativity and interpretation.

The stage director Ivica Buljan won the award for directing the plays *Macbeth* after Shakespeare, *Sallinger*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Ma and Al*, *The Vampire*, *The Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria*, *The Cyclops*, *Werther*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. As Blaž Lukan wrote in his statement of reasons for the award, Buljan's theatre looks like a "theatre-cycle" due to the volume and exceptional character of his stage director's work over the past two years: on the one hand, it is carried across the scenes like a precisely differentiated performance wave by a clearly defined emotional and energetic stream, and on the other hand, it is like a uniform stage production magma that removes unnecessary stage illustrations and psychological and

symbolic "trash". His stage direction consists of well-considered and, at all times, intimately and almost unnoticeably executed collective theatrical acts in which the spectator occupies the key position next to the actor.

The actor and singer-songwriter Iztok Mlakar received the Prešeren Fund Award for his acting creations and interpretation of self-authored projects. Iztok Mlakar is a master of bringing character actor roles from classical dramatic literature to life as well as from the modern Slovenian and world drama. He is also known by his audience for his narrative songs and always new socially-engaged chansons performed at *Soirées* with Iztok Mlakar. According to Mojca Kreft, Iztok Mlakar is "a language perfectionist, an extraordinary connoisseur and interpreter of the Slovene language and its dialectal peculiarities. He is a noble Slovene theatre actor and singer, an artist who understands his fundamental acting mission as being a minstrel's majestic address to his audience."

The Prešeren Fund Board was also impressed by *Koliko si moja?* (How Much do You Love Me?), the fifth novel by Andrej E. Skubic. In this novel, Andrej E. Skubic describes a love relationship and the man's attitude to property. "The writer gives a persuasive account of the futility of insisting upon merely one's own truth, the uncertainty of possessing something or someone, and the importance of accepting one's partner for a successful relationship. In the alternative between "having and being", "having" shows to be an illusion, and "being" (loving) to bring a feeling of harmony," wrote Vlado Motnikar in his statement of reasons for the award.

One of this year's prize winners is also the architect, Maruša Zorec, who is the author and manager of the project of *Rebuilding and Restoration of Ormož Castle Outbuildings*. The principal message of this project is that "we are inseparably connected to the history of our living environment", which are the words written in the statement of reasons for the award. Maruša Zorec carried out this project in collaboration with the architect, Maša Živec, and the architecture graduation candidate, Žiga Ravnikar. According to Maja Tasič, the prize-winning architect undoubtedly ranks among Slovenia's top architects. Apart from her high-level modern religious and socially relevant architectural creations, she is particularly distinguished by the excellent and responsible way in which she has carried out renovation projects of historical buildings in Slovenia.



Andrej E. Skubic - writer



Franc Kosem - trumpeter



Ivica Buljan - stage director



Stojan Kuret - conductor



Maruša Zorec - architect



Iztok Mlakar - actor, singer, songwriter





Albert Kos, photo: STA

## Black masks

### THE OPENING OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2012 BEGINS IN MARIBOR WITH THE STAGING OF A LARGE-SCALE OPERA

The premiere of the opera, *Black Masks*, written by the Slovenian composer, Marij Kogoj, was one of the opening sequences in an extensive programme of cultural events for this year's European Capital of Culture, which took place in Maribor in mid-January. A large-scale opera project is a joint production between the Ljubljana and Maribor Opera and Ballet National Theatres and a co-production with the organisers of the European Capital of Culture.

The selection of the Kogoj opera, classified as one of the highlights of Slovenian musical creativity and among the most original Slovenian opera works, was no coincidence. Ever since it was composed, *Black Masks* has represented a major challenge to all those who decide to stage it. This is a piece of work with a reputation of being a heavy and obscure opera with its musical language, which combines an unusual mixture of late-Romanticism and atonal musical elements; Kogoj's musical expressionism was largely influenced by Franz Schreker and Arnold Schönberg, under whom Kogoj studied composition during the First World War.

#### MUSICAL AND DRAMATURGIC GENESIS OF BLACK MASKS

The composer, Marij Kogoj, born in Trieste in 1892, composed *Black Masks* on the basis of a story written by the Russian writer, Leonid Andreyev, using the dramatic text or its Slovenian translation as a libretto. *Black Masks* was penned between 1924 and 1927 and premiered two years later in the Ljubljana opera theatre. Even then, music connoisseurs and the more culturally sensitive public considered it the highlight of musical expressionism, with some comparing it to the more expressionist operas of Alban Berg – *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*. After the Second World War, *Black Masks*, as Kogoj's sole opera, was staged only twice and this year's staging in Maribor will be the fourth.

The theme of Kogoj's opera is a story about the increasingly mentally traumatised character, Duke Lorenzo di Spadaro, who organises a masquerade ball in his grand castle, where uninvited black masks appear which are attracted to the light. In his encounters with his masked guests, Lorenzo realises his dark past – that he is not a descendant of the late Duke di Spadaro, but instead the son of a horse stable-boy and the Duchess. It all ends with Lorenzo's insanity and his death, and the fire destroying his castle, which also serves as a metaphor for his mental disintegration. In the story of Lorenzo, we can identify a number of distinct autobiographical elements from his youth as an orphan, after his father's death and his abandonment by his mother, until his suspicion about his mental illness, as a result

of which he was admitted to a mental hospital shortly after staging *Black Masks*, where he remained until his death in 1956. One critic even questions whether the composer, by writing the opera, was running away from his own feelings about going insane, although the greatest mystery of his oeuvre remains how he could describe his madness while still compos mentis.

#### CREATORS STAGING THE KOGOJ OPERA IN MARIBOR

Yet, the Slovenian conductor, Uroš Lajovic, and the musical director of the current staging, who has been performing in Vienna for a number of years, rejects the hypothesis that Kogoj would have been able to compose such a demanding and complex music masterpiece in a state of unsound mind. The revision of Kogoj's 800 pages of sheet music took Lajovic as long as eight years in order to thoroughly prepare himself as the musical director and conductor for the performance in Maribor. The stage director was Janez Burger, thus far mainly known as a film director, while other members of the group of authors worth mentioning are the costume designer, Alan Hranitelj, the artist group, Numen, from Zagreb who also designed the set, the lighting designer, Pascal Mérat, and the stage movement designer Edward Clug.

The interpreter of the main character of Duke Lorenzo is the baritone Jože Vidic who, after the premiere, was admired for his commendable music perfection and psychological depth when displaying the protagonist's mental disorder, his delusions and paranoia. Several other major roles are taken in alternation with two singers, while the total number of solo roles performed by the singers of Ljubljana and Maribor opera ensembles amounts to as many as twenty-seven.

With the premiere and a few re-runs in Maribor, the performance of *Black Masks*, conducted by Uroš Lajovic and directed by Janez Burger, has just started its stage life. Its second premiere will be held in Cankarjev Dom's Gallus Hall in Ljubljana on 2 March this year, and four re-runs will follow from 3 to 6 March. Next year, *Black Masks* is expected to be staged at the Zagreb biennale and the ceremony marking Croatia's accession to the EU.

By writing this opera, the composer may well have been running away from his feelings about going insane, although the greatest mystery of his oeuvre remains how he could describe his madness whilst sound of mind (music critic, Marijan Zlobec).



Jože Osterman, photo: Peter Uhan

## The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui

### AN ACHIEVEMENT WORTHY OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Only a few days after the premiere of Marij Kogoj's opera, *Black Masks* – the opening event of the European Capital of Culture in Maribor on 13 January, and one of its highlights – the Slovenian theatre audience was able to enjoy *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, a lesser known play by Bertolt Brecht. Next to the co-production of Tomaž Pandur's *War and Peace*, staged for the first time by the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb last autumn, Brecht's masterpiece is one of the major events in Maribor. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* premiered in Cankarjev dom's Gallus Hall in Ljubljana. A magnificent performance, by Slovenian standards at least, has received very good reviews and Maribor can be justly proud of it.

In the mannerism of Brecht's theatre, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* is an almost didactic play about the rise of an overly ambitious man – albeit an average character or even a problematic and emotionally deprived man, judging from his human and mental dimensions – to power or the leadership of a big community or state. His ascendance does not stem from his personal qualifications of being, at first, an insignificant local gangster who, through his deeds, rapidly evolves into a dangerous institution beyond our control, but is facilitated mainly by deformed people and their environment. The background of this play is patently obvious: Brecht wrote it in the panic of flight from Hitler's advancing troops in 1941 as he waited in Finland for a visa to the United States. The characters clearing the way for Ui's rise through bribery and the commission of hideous criminal acts are strongly reminiscent of Goebbels, Göring, Himmler and the other Nazis whose careers ended either in bombed-out Berlin or at the Nuremberg trials, but the direc-

tor of this performance, Eduard Miller, went for a more universal concept where dictatorship and the demise of mankind are rooted in the characteristics of contemporary society: egotism, greed and the ensuing capitalism. The play matches the spirit of the current crisis when several political options unscrupulously flirt with authoritarian, undemocratic and even violent models of power that would have been unthought of not so long ago. The European Capital of Culture has staged a daring play – a mirror for Europe, its selfish capital and powerless democracy. The democratic world's frequent deviations observed today, even in the European Union countries which hypocritically advocate democracy as an axiom of their social development, reveal a big lie that has crept into the heart of the old continent.

The director and his team have used some excellent theatrical techniques in order to make this performance probably one of the greatest achievements in Slovenian theatre in recent years. Critics are agreed on two outstanding features: Jernej Šugman's brilliant portrayal of Arturo Ui; and the music by Boštjan Gombač who accompanies and comments on the proceedings on stage with the precision of a virtuoso. His music, along with the text, builds a new authentic narrative synthesis – the superb quality of Brecht's work. Slovenians who, in spite of the disputes surrounding the capital of culture, see this opportunity as a serious challenge for the entire Slovenian nation were, through this successful performance, filled with satisfaction and the hope of a happy ending for Maribor as the current European Capital of Culture.





Hana Souček Morača, photo: archive of the Prešeren Theatre Kranj

## 42<sup>nd</sup> tribute to Slovenian Drama

One of the oldest Slovenian theatre festivals, Week of Slovenian Drama, will take place in the second half of March in Kranj. For the forty-second time, this annual national festival will present an overview of theatre production based on Slovenian texts. This Slovenian drama festival has been running since 1970. There will be a change in the festival this year; from now on, it will always open on 27 March – World Theatre Day.

A decade ago, a competition programme was introduced and an award, named after playwright Rudi Šeligo, has since been delivered for the best performance. This year, a record number of theatre producers responded to the call for participation, and entered as many as 46 theatre plays which premiered in 2011. The festival programme consists of performances of varying genres selected by the theatre critic, Amelia Kraigher, who sees the increase in the number of entries as an encouraging indicator of the high regard enjoyed by the festival among Slovenian theatre people and proof that most artists would like to participate in it. More than half of the competition entrants are about Slovenian history; the selection also features four plays based on Slovenian poetry or biographies of Slovenian poets.

The international expert jury of the 42nd Week of Slovenian Drama comprises the dramatist, Tanja Ažman; the publicist, Tanja Leseničar Pučko; and the Croatian critic, Igor Ružič; they will be invited to select the best out of the eight competing performances. The plays up for the Šeligo Award are the following: *Life@anti* (Glej Theatre, Slovenian National Theatre Nova Gorica), *Revelations* (The Ljubljana City Theatre), a one-time-only theatre performance *The self Ljubljana* could be named after (Ljubljana's Mini

Theatre), *Scandal in the Valley of St Florian* (Mladinsko Theatre), *He who fares alone through the world till evening* (Slovenian National Theatre Nova Gorica), *Feast* (Imaginarni Institute), *Flowers in autumn* (Margareta Schwarzwald Institute) and *Who is next?* (Maska Institute).

The Week of Slovenian Drama is a festival primarily dedicated to drama writing, its attention is focused on dramatic texts. The Grum Award for the best new play promotes dramatic writing. It is the only award of its kind in Slovenia; this year, its recipient will be selected by a jury consisting of the stage managers, Diana Koloini, Martina Mrhar and Tomaž Toporišič; the actress, Vesna Pernarčič; and the director, Alen Jelen. The festival audience decides on the Audience Award; this year, a new award for the best young playwright will be conferred.

Along with the competition and accompanying programme, the festival will also feature workshops and round-table conferences involving international participants.

For some years now, the festival has ventured beyond Slovenia's borders by hosting international theatres staging Slovenian plays. As emphasized by Prešeren Theatre, these will contribute towards the successful promotion of Slovenian plays abroad and also provide opportunities for bigger international projects promoted by the European Union.

The Week of Slovenian Drama aspires to cooperate with similar festivals promoting the creation and staging of national drama works. It also presents theatre masterpieces, which often represent the latest in theatrical thought, and the stagings of Slovenian drama classics.



Gabi Matkovič, photo: Konstantyn G.

## ‘Slovenia: Masters and Architecture of the 20th Century’

### OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION

The Slovenian Embassy, together with Slovenian Consul Maya Martinenko, opened the exhibition entitled ‘Slovenia: Masters and Architecture of the 20th Century’. The exhibition, curated by Professor Luka Skansi, is displayed at the House of Metropolitan, the National Reserve ‘Sophia of Kyiv’, and will be on view from 9 to 29 February 2012.

At the opening ceremony, Nataša Prah, Chargé d’Affairs at the Slovenian Embassy, stressed that Slovenian architecture could leave a very special and indelible mark in the international arena and thus draw attention to the potential of new ‘marginā’ cultures that are finally stepping out of their local limits. She expressed hope that the exhibition will bring the visitors closer to Slovenian architecture and that they will enjoy it. On this occasion, she also congratulated all Slovenians on Slovenian Cultural Day.

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition features some eighty works of architecture that were carefully selected through the prism of history – which was demanding and difficult at times – in order to illustrate as best as possible the complexity, abundance and array of the Slovenian architecture of the 20th century.

The aim is not to trace the history of our twentieth-century architecture, but to show a piece of the extremely rich building

heritage, in which Slovenia, as a small country, takes great pride. It is a starting point enticing historians and architects to explore a new architectural culture.

The exhibition is divided into three parts according to historical and political circumstance that marked Slovenia in the 20th century: the first part thus covers the Interbellum – the period between 1918 and 1940 when Slovenia was part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; the second part is dedicated to the socialist Yugoslavia and illustrates the period from 1945 to 1991; the third part is an overview of the events following Slovenia’s independence tracing the period from 1991 to 2008.

The first part features Slovenia’s master architects, namely Jože Plečnik, Maks Fabiani and Edvard Ravnikar, who all had successful and prolific professional lives and left a lasting imprint on architecture outside Slovenia.

The second part is dedicated to the architects of the 1960s and 1970s, who contributed to our rich and diverse architecture drawing on the motives of their predecessors.

Featuring contemporary architecture, the third and final part presents the generation of architects who made their names only recently due to the 1980s economic crisis. The result is a rich and diverse contemporary architectural culture that can hardly fit into any mould of style.





## OUR EXCELLENCE

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Krka archives

# Krka ranks among the world's best companies

**LAST YEAR, KRKA GROUP SALES WERE WORTH EUR 1.076 BILLION AND THE COMPANY EXPECTS TO REPORT SIMILAR GROWTH THIS YEAR.**



### DEVELOPMENT, NEW INVESTMENT, BUSINESS EXPANSION, DIVIDENDS

The changes in the business environment have also affected the pharmaceutical industry. Their impact is reflected in the limited resources available, namely extended payment deadlines, and even more so in the downward pressure on drug prices. This presents a challenge for the industry, which according to them is under control. Given the current trends, the generic pharmaceutical industry will continue to grow; as a result, they are optimistic, their work is carried out even more efficiently, and they continue to invest in development, and sales and marketing activities.

In 2012, Krka Group is planning a 6% growth in sales, amounting to EUR 1,134 million. It will continue to focus its attention on the European and Central Asian markets, with more than 90% of its sales coming from outside Slovenia. In 2012, the company expects to increase its headcount, both in Slovenia and abroad, by 5%.

As was the case this year, next year will also be investment-driven. The Russian Federation, where one plant is already in place, will get a new production-distribution centre worth EUR 135 million – construction is envisaged to be completed in 2013, which will consolidate Krka's status as an important local producer on the Russian market, which currently generates 18% of the company's total sales. The preparatory works underway for the construction of another production facility at the company's Novo mesto headquarters began in autumn; the new plant, Notol 2, will produce solid oral dosage forms and have a target capacity of 4.5 billion end products per annum. The ongoing investment in the Krka subsidiary, Farma GRS, established together with its partners in a project strengthening the pharmaceutical industry, is worth EUR 45 million. Furthermore, the consents required for the construction of an API production plant, Sinteza 1, at a location in Krško have already been acquired. The company also plans to invest in some small projects to increase its production

capacities. This involves strategic investments, which will continue in 2012 and for which substantial resources will be allocated; the planned investment value for 2012 amounts to EUR 200 million.

What is the profit sharing strategy? It is the stable growth of dividends with the investments required to further enhance business operations, in accordance with the business strategy adopted.

Company sales have increased the most in the countries of Western Europe (23.6% share); the sales growth recorded in South-East Europe (13.6% share) was 6%, in Eastern Europe 8% and in the largest Russian market 2%, achieving a 26.5% sales share.

### EXPECTATIONS FROM THE STATE OR THE NEW GOVERNMENT: A STIMULATING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

“We anticipate a stimulating business environment, without administrative barriers, which would definitely contribute to economic growth. We expect the new government to operate within a realistic







budgetary framework, and, in particular, to simplify the administrative procedures relating to, for example, environmental and spatial issues, and to accelerate the acquisition of relevant documentation. We also expect the government to introduce the reforms and activities necessary to increase the competitiveness of the Slovenian economy, and to improve key areas of development in Slovenia in general,” said Jože Colarič, the President of the Management Board and Chief Executive of Krka d.d.

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FACILITY IN MOSCOW – KRKA'S LARGEST INVESTMENT THUS FAR**

Krka's largest investment abroad is the ongoing construction of a modern production and distribution centre in Russia, the Krka Rus 2. Its location is in the immediate vicinity of existing production capacities. The investment, which is

already in full swing, is worth EUR 135 million and includes the construction of a logistics centre and a new solid dosage forms production plant. The flexible and modular construction of its production facilities will progress in several phases, in accordance with the requirements imposed by the market. The plant's capacity, consolidating Krka's status as a domestic pharmaceutical producer, will be 1.8 billion tablets and capsules per year. The project is currently in the construction phase (e.g. the erection of steel structures and the installation of the façade). Production is planned to be underway in the new plant by 2013 and will provide jobs to over 100 people.

Russia is one of the BRIC economies, an emerging market group which is expected to continue its economic growth in the years to come. In terms of territory and operational methods, the Russian market is the closest of this group to Slovenia, and one of Krka's key markets.

Krka is familiar with this market and its customers are familiar with Krka and its wide range of products, which are modern, effective and safe. Owing to its long-term and successful business operations, Krka enjoys a considerable reputation. Its efficient marketing and sales network stretches from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad.

The existing Krka-Rus plant produces thirty percent of the products sold by the Krka Group to Russia. The new investment in the Krka Rus 2 plant will substantially increase production capacities. This decision was taken because of the development dynamics and continued growth in the Russian pharmaceutical market, and because of the strategic direction of the Russian government, which puts the pharmaceutical industry among its development priorities by 2020. The majority of products intended for the Russian market will be produced in Slovenia in the future.

**COMPARISON WITH LEK (NOW PART OF SANDOZ)**

Comparative table, taken from TOP 101: the largest business groups in 2010 (Finance, 7 October 2011):

In EUR million		
	Krka Group	Lek Group
Sales	1,010.0	701.1
EBITDA	293.2	71.7
Net profit	170.9	67.0
Capital	1,053.3	713.4
Funds	1,488.2	907.2
Employees (demand)	8328	2472

“In Krka, we are neither ashamed of our below the line results, nor do we try to hide them. It is of the utmost importance, since it provides for development, investment, business expansion, employment and, lastly, dividends.” (Jože Colarič)

Krka's share price has been relatively low recently and Krka certainly is an attractive takeover target. Are there any fears of a hostile takeover?

Jože Colarič: For the last seven years, I have been saying that Krka is one of the most desirable brides in the generic pharmaceutical business, but it is also true that there are almost no hostile takeovers in our industry. On the other hand, we need to bear in mind that the state owns over 27% of Krka, which is a very important detail relating to takeovers or the so-called “poison pill”. Admittedly, it is true that state owners are threatened by the withdrawal of voting rights, as a result of which we pay particular care of our methods of operation. Our strategy clearly states that Krka must maintain its independence. This is possible only by achieving good results, with proper organisation and development.

We expect that, in the forthcoming

period, there will be considerable pressure on our EBITDA margin, but each year we plan for a healthy increase in sales and below the line profit. Since the situation can change yearly, monthly, weekly, daily or even hourly, this strategy is not a fixed commitment; we are known for being quick and flexible. By being responsive, we will further increase our sales and penetrate new markets in the medium-term, and, consequently, provide for an appropriate result or net profit. It is difficult to predict how much today, but we have always met our targets in the past.

Krka started out with nine employees in 1954, but now employs a thousand times that number. The total number of employees, including those who work through agencies, amounts to over 9,600, half of whom work in Slovenia and half abroad. This year, we will increase our headcount by 5%.





Polona Prešeren, photo: Darinka Mladenovič and Polona Prešeren

# SEED LIBRARY



**The preservation of different plant varieties – especially native and traditional – is of vital importance in maintaining the biodiversity of cultivated plants. Seed libraries have proved to be a good practice to follow in preserving this diversity throughout the world; last year, we began following this practice within the framework of Maribor 2012 – the European Capital of Culture.**

According to some data, three-quarters of the world's cultivated plants have been lost to extinction during the last century as a consequence of industrial single-crop farming. Agriculture has been subjected to an ever increasing pressure to produce more and maximise profits, which has rendered old local varieties all but a memory – a time when the quality of food was the most important issue.

## WHAT IS A SEED LIBRARY?

A seed library is an alternative method of preserving the biodiversity of cultivated plants; it also strengthens local communities and returns seeds back into people's hands and nature. Its primary mission is to protect, preserve and promote the re-cultivation of old varieties intended for human consumption (native, traditional or domesticated plant varieties). Its attention is focused on finding and collecting rare or endangered species and vegetables, field crops, fruit plants, and vine varieties that are no longer available in commercial seed catalogues.

The seed library scheme is not well known in Slovenia. The Seed Guardians Association has established such a library within a programme section entitled Urban Furrows in the framework of Maribor 2012 – the European Capital of Culture; its aim is to protect the biodiversity of the old cultivated plant varieties adapted to local conditions and to promote their re-cultivation.

Anton Komat, the independent researcher and ecologist, says that there are native, traditional and adapted cultivated plant varieties. He holds that seed libraries have the following major tasks: to collect seeds (seeds are kept on the plants to show their statuses and habitus); to fill in a record questionnaire, draw sketches and take photographs of each variety; to describe and determine a plant variety and enter data into a virtual seed library and/or e-data collection. It is important to preserve the purity of the variety, to maintain the collection in the seed library, and to propagate, disseminate and exchange seeds.

The aim of the seed library is to ensure seed access to all Slovenia's inhabitants. "We will also establish links with other saviours of old plant varieties from Central Europe. It is essential to establish an efficient network of seed saviours," emphasised Komat. At present, there is no clear knowledge

of which indigenous varieties should be stored in the seed library as their collection and cataloguing have only just started. It is estimated that approximately 85 per cent of all varieties have become extinct; efforts should be made as a matter of urgency to preserve as many of those that remain as possible.

## METHOD OF OPERATION

The vision of the seed library is to facilitate the exchange of seeds and planting material between its members free of charge. It is based on the system of free of charge exchange of goods, which also contributes towards the strengthening of the seed guardian community. Any small contribution made by an individual guardian will add to the diversity of Slovenian varieties, and increase seed selection and accessibility. One basic rule must be followed: healthy and quality seeds are a precondition for the quality of next year's crops.

Seeds are lent out in a manner similar to that of a book library: you borrow ten and return twelve seeds. In this way, the library's collection increases.

The seed library has attracted a lot of attention and is expected to thrive in the future. This is also possibly because the Seed Guardians Association has dedicated its efforts to educating and raising awareness among school children, mainly those attending primary school senior classes. They are thrilled by the new knowledge and say that they would be happy to make use of it.

In his encyclopaedia *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689), Janez Vajkard Valvasor wrote about the wheat used by farmers to make starch, about buckwheat and its porridge, and on the subject of sorghum, bean and chickpea. He reported on the hundreds of apple varieties in Carniola, peaches, which the farmers dried, quinces used for making quince cheese, and different walnut varieties. People used plants to make food, clothes (flax, hemp) and tools (sorghum, hemp). Valvasor described the traditional varieties grown in the territory of the present-day Slovenia; it would be intriguing to see how many have endured until now. This concerns the issue of self-sufficient supply – losing a part of this biological heritage would result in partial loss of self-sufficiency. Unlike hybrid varieties, traditional varieties are adapted to the conditions in our regions.



Mateja Malnar Štembal, photo: Mateja J.Potočnik

# MARKO PAVLINEC

## AESTHETICS + FUNCTIONALITY



The young designer Marko Pavlinec says that he first started designing things in his garage at home (he still likes Lego) and that he is certain that many products we use every day are not user-friendly. When he comes upon such products, he sees that they could be improved, simplified and made more effective. And he also sees that they could be more attractive. He finds room for improvement in the most everyday items, which seem as if they cannot be improved at all.

Marko says he wishes to offer products at affordable prices – anyone can improve products with a huge financial investment, but to find a way of increasing the usability of a product with a smaller investment is a greater art. So far, he has designed many useful items, including a cup, a motorbike, taps, and a chair, amongst other things.

Marko, officially still a student at the Department of Industrial Design of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, does not like the word 'design'. He prefers the terms 'designing' or 'creating', which are connected to use and to usefulness. At the Rinz creative design studio that he founded with his brother, he tries to combine functional and aesthetic elements. He is responsible for designing and creating, while his brother covers marketing and sales.

He is mainly interested in people and the things around them. Marko says that an industrial product is a projection of our attitude to our social environment, and vice versa. His approach to graphic

or industrial design is very different from many other designers. He wants to improve the quality of people's lives, and believes that we should take the content and form of natural systems as models.

### PRODUCT CREATION

He regards the joy of creating a new product as his greatest reward. For him, a design award mainly incorporates a philosophy, a way of thinking. However, it is significant that he recently received the first jury award in a competition sponsored by Gorenjska Banka to design a bird house. In his design, Marko primarily wanted the bird house to be a pleasant home for birds and not a fashion item for people. With the warmth of spruce and oak wood, and designed for use in different seasons, the bird house serves as a feeder in autumn and winter and as a nest box in spring and summer. The jury felt that the bird house included just the right amount of design – it does not dominate its functionality. All the details

are thoroughly considered; all the effects on the bird house caused by exposure to demanding weather conditions are taken into account. It consists of two pentagonal modules fitted together, and its purpose can be changed by adjusting them.

On the creation of the feeder and nest, Marko says that he tried to design an interesting and useful bird house, but before that he had to do some research on birds to find out more about various species and their habits; only then was he able to realise his ideas.

### THE NAME ITSELF SAYS A LOT

The bird house is not the first design achievement that came from Marko's skilled fingers. He attracted special attention by designing an ergonomic shovel – called Efekt – for which he received the BIO Honourable Mention in 2008. It is a special multi-purpose ergonomic shovel, appropriate for all seasons and various agricultural, horticultural and domestic work, when a strong and efficient tool for





removal and loading is needed. But the shovel is primarily for clearing snow. The design considerably reduces the need for bending, which relieves the spine and back muscles; because of its innovative geometry, it does not swivel around the axis of the handle. As he says himself, many people have complimented him, saying that it makes dealing with snow a lot less stressful, the work is easier, and even fun. Because it is so interesting and different, it is a pleasure to look at, even if it is only leaning against a wall.

It is worth mentioning that Marko

based his shovel on the simplicity of a product that is otherwise not always practical. Marko has had the opportunity to toss around a lot of snow, so he understood the weaknesses of ordinary shovels quite well. But he did not think about existing shovels when he designed his own, and tried to create a more user-friendly tool. As he says himself, there is no big secret to design and implementation. Most of the solutions are in his mind; he only needs a strong enough desire. Marko wants the long-term meaning of industrial design or redesign to be understood

by Slovenian manufacturers as well, but at present it is still hard to persuade them to change production processes, tools and technology.

Marko's shovel also qualified for the selection of products for the exhibition *Designing the Republic: Architecture, Design and Photography in Slovenia 1991–2011*. The exhibition features products with innovative approaches, outstanding strategies, inspiring vision, and ideas for new designs that were made in the first two decades of this young European country.

#### THE FUTURE IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE

Marko is never short of challenges. He is creating an office chair for his diploma show which offers users additional comfort, because it follows the movements of the body and supports the parts of the body that are the most vulnerable. Marko is giving full consideration to this design and taking it very seriously (he also needs to study certain medical aspects). Marko's chair will constantly moni-

tor the user's position and thus adapt to every movement. Each element will be designed to enable complete freedom, simple functionality and efficiency.

The Slovenian design community acknowledges that Marko successfully combines his technical knowledge with knowledge of design and innovation. Nevertheless, he is sensitive to the needs of users, and is trying to have a positive

influence on society and the environment through his products.

Of course, innovation plays an important role alongside his knowledge of design. And Marko is not lacking in that. Because of his knowledge and feeling for fine art, he is one of the most promising designers in Slovenia, and many of his products will certainly make work easier for people and make their lives simpler.





# REBIRTH OF SKI JUMPING

Anže Lanišek – a new jumping star

**Fifteen-year-old Anže Lanišek from Mengeš has suddenly emerged from among the best ski jumpers as a new ski jumping sensation. If this year's results are to be believed, a star à la Primož Peterka is about to be born.**



Lanišek won at the Youth Olympic Games (for children aged up to 16) in Innsbruck, and he took fifth place in his first appearance at the Continental Cup. Only one day later, on the famous Paul Ausserleitner hill in Bischofshofen, he beat 73 competitors from 19 countries to take the Continental Cup title. Thus, at barely 15 years of age, he became the youngest winner of this contest. Anže will probably soon be given the opportunity to participate in the World Cup, as he has demonstrated remarkable composure, superb technique and behaved like a true champion. Interestingly, Primož Peterka, the best Slovenian ski jumper of all time, appeared at his first World Cup when he was just 16 years old, celebrating his first victory at Zakopane in Poland only a few days later. Will Anže Lanišek surpass these two outstanding achievements? Goran Janus, the head coach of the Slovenian ski jumping team, said the following about the young ski jumper from Mengeš: "Anže is a real pearl. He trains with an exceptional ease, he is a born jumper. His talent is remarkable, as much as Peterka's – maybe even more. I hope puberty will not affect his development. If he is able to withstand the rigors of training and competition, Slovenia has a ski jumping champion for the next 15 seasons. Maybe the door of opportunity will open for Lanišek to qualify for the World Cup as soon as this year, but this will depend on a number of circumstances. In any case, we need to take care of young Lanišek, since too many talents have faded away in the past because their coaches imposed too much responsibility and too many obligations on them."

The Planica valley is situated under Mount Ponca (2242 m) in the north-west of Slovenia and close to the borders with Italy and Austria. In 1936, the valley hosted its first ski jumps – the most interesting and attractive of all winter sports. Seventy-six years have passed since the first ski jump of 101 metres was achieved in 1936 by the legendary Austrian, Sepp Bradl; however, the jumps

have consistently increased in range, deserving utmost admiration. The hill record is as long as 239 metres, while the world ski jump record of 246.5 metres was set last year in Vikersund, Norway. From the "cradle" of Planica, ski jumping has spread throughout Slovenia. Ski jumping clubs can now be found in the majority of Slovenian regions, with over 1,000 boys and girls practising the sport.

This year, ski jumping in Slovenia has received fresh impetus. In all competitions, Slovenian jumpers are ranked among the world ski jumping elite. The flyer, Robert Kranjec, scored his victory at the Men's World Cup in Kulm, while the 18-year-old Peter Prevc landed right under the winners' podium in Zakopane in Poland, taking an outstanding fourth place. This year, Jurij Tepeš and Jernej Damjan were also among the ten best performers, with Jure Šinkovec and Dejan Judež following closely behind. By taking fourth place in the special total score of ski jumping teams, the Slovenian team is fast on the heels of the strongest countries – Austria, Norway and Germany.

This year, the first women's ski jumping World Cup is to be held. This competition has evolved from the Continental Ski Jumping Cup, and Maja Vtič, a young 23-year old ski jumper from Novo mesto who represents Skakalni klub Zabrdje (the Zabrdje Jumping Club), is currently ranked third in the World Cup total score. High placements for both young boys and girls are not unusual in the Continental Cup. An outstanding performance was delivered by 13-year-old Ema Klinec, who twice came third at the Zakopane ski jumping competitions.

Slovenian ski jumpers, together with the staff headquarters and all ski jumping fans, are expecting two major developments. The first is to be held from 24 – 26 February in Vikersund in Norway, which is to host the Ski Flying World Championships. Slovenia's champion, Robert Kranjec (232 m), currently in second place in the ski jumping World Cup, expects the most from this competition.

At last year's competition in Vikersund, Kranjec was one of the best performers but, regrettably, fell victim to a change in weather conditions. The Vikersund ski-flying hill is currently the largest in the world, since it can accommodate jumps of up to 250 metres. It was constructed by the Slovenian engineer, Janez Gorišek, who is also planning the reconstruction of our giant Planica ski jumping hill for next year. In addition to Kranjec, the members of the ski jumping team will also include Peter Prevc, Jurij Tepeš, Jure Šinkovec, and maybe someone else, hopefully combining to claim a team championship medal for Slovenia.

The second ski jumping development will be the World Cup Finals in Planica. This year, three World Cup competitions are envisaged to take place under Mount Ponca: one team and two individual competitions. Thus far, no Slovenian ski jumper has yet won a competition at the Planica ski jumping hill. Is the year of 2012 finally going to see the first Slovenian ski jumper win at Planica – the home of ski jumping and flying? Last year, Robert Kranjec came second, just behind Poland's Kamil Stoch. However, to rub salt into the wound, Kranjec's ski jump was 10 metres longer than Stoch's, but new rules on wind assistance meant Stoch took the victory. Planica will once again be too small for ski jumping fans. As is the case every year, a four-day competition (three competitions and a qualifications day) will be viewed by over 60,000 people. Planica is the Slovenian sports event and last week of the year when all Slovenians are totally united. The credit for this goes to ski jumping and our Planica.

## SKI JUMPING SCHEDULE FOR PLANICA 2012

15 March: qualifications  
 16 March: individual competition  
 17 March: team competition  
 18 March: World Cup finals – individual competition





Polona Prešeren, photo: Iztok Dimc

# Na gradu

## THE RESTAURANT WHERE THE AROMA OF HOMEMADE CHICKEN SOUP FILLS THE AIR

When you arrive in the courtyard of Ljubljana Castle, you are welcomed by a pleasant aroma of home-cooked food filling the air within the safe confines of the castle's walls. If you decide to visit the Na Gradu Restaurant at this time of year, your search for mushroom soup, asparagus or aubergine on the menu will be in vain. Instead, you will be offered seasonal, Slovenian and local delights, including fresh homemade chicken soup, which is on the menu every day and is made from the same recipe as that used by our mothers and grandmothers.

The restaurant mirrors the spirit and philosophy of its owners: Svetozar Raspopović-Pope, the owner of the As Restaurant, who will go down in history as the man who changed the tastes of Ljubljana diners forever, and Ana Roš and Valter Kramar from Hiša Franko, who are an inexhaustible source of gastronomic creativity. When such exceptional culinary talents join forces, the end result is nothing short of excellence.

### A RESTAURANT THAT LJUBLJANA NEEDED

It just so happened that Ljubljana needed a restaurant within the walls of the Ljubljana Castle. But not just any restaurant – the idea was to have a restaurant that would offer traditional Slovenian dishes, given that the castle was also where the castle's lords once had their taste buds pampered. This was precisely Svetozar Raspopović and Valter Kramar's line of thinking, and when the idea also garnered support from the Mayor of Ljubljana, the time was right to bring it to life. Owing to a variety of cultural influences, from Mediterranean, Alpine, Balkan to Hungarian, there were numerous possibilities for a modern take on traditional Slovenian cuisine.

“When I was learning the secrets of traditional dishes, I sensed the value and magnificence of these dishes. Just look at bograč (a stew made out of at least three types of meat), bujta repa (sour or pickled turnip hotpot with pork), kobariški štruklji (dumplings

with nut filling), and the like,” Mr Raspopović explains. “It was amazing to learn how the recipe for jota (bean and pickled turnip soup) used in the Vipava Valley differs from that used in the Karst Region, although the two regions are only several tens of kilometres apart.” In any event, the restaurant's owners swear by natural and local ingredients. The offer is based on dishes from Slovenia's culinary regions, and the restaurant's dedicated team strives to ensure maximum quality, while respecting tradition.

They offer simple dishes with a touch of modern cuisine, preserving and bringing out the natural flavour of the food they prepare. They always use local and seasonal ingredients of certified origin, which have a fuller taste. “Cooking offers endless possibilities and we are convinced that we will never get bored. Our cuisine is based on what we have learnt from our mothers and grandmothers,” adds Mr Raspopović. They understand how precious home-grown vegetables and fruit are (their ice cream is also made from local and seasonal fruit).

Valter Kramar adds that the idea to have this kind of a restaurant is not new, although they are all very proud to have put it into practice. “Typical Slovenian cuisine is rich and has a certain character. We do not want to change that. We accept and embrace all the influences that have shaped Slovenian traditional cuisine. You will find that it has been inspired by an extraordinary mixture of cultures – Balkan, Mediterranean, Alpine, and Pannonian. People here knew how to use the best of what their garden had to offer.”







### LOCAL AND SEASONAL

They aim to offer top quality dishes at a competitive price. Accordingly, they prepare and serve their food with great care. The restaurant chef, Damjan Fink, says that they swear by the use of exclusively Slovenian, preferably organic, produce. They buy food directly from farmers, taking care that the meat used is traceable and of certified origin.

One of the house specialties is a bowl of chicken soup. It is cooked slowly and requires time to prepare, explains Damjan Fink. "The soup must be homemade – 'the real thing'." Everything on the menu is based on seasonal, local produce. They do not offer dishes with ingredients that could only be bought in a supermarket. In an effort to preserve pure and natural flavours, they do not use additives or artificial flavours, or thicken their sauces with flour. They use low-fat cooking methods and let the fresh and high-quality ingredients used develop and release their full flavour.

The menu is changed regularly to reflect seasonal produce. They select their recipes carefully. Dishes are always served with as little added fat as possible. Instead of traditional roast crackling, you will be served crackling with apple slices, which is really incredible. I have tried it and I can assure you it is a real treat!

### WHAT ELSE CAN GUESTS LOOK FORWARD TO?

Excellent Slovenian fish, veal and lamb of certified origin, for sure. A dish very popular among guests is zabeljena polenta (corn porridge served with cottage cheese and bacon), which is somewhat surprising, explains the head of the restaurant, Leon Furman. He believes that the presentation of a dish plays a very important role in shaping guests' preferences.

Foreign visitors who decide to spice up their visit to Ljubljana Castle and tickle their taste buds with excellent cuisine are also among the restaurant's most frequent guests. They enjoy trying Slovenian food. But that does not mean that the restaurant is aimed primarily at foreign visitors. In fact, many Slovenians are very keen on traditional Slovenian cuisine prepared with the finest ingredients. Our culinary culture has leapt forward as more and more people tend to embrace the finest, top quality food of certified origin.

Fried chicken wings, Piran sea bass, and kranjska klobasa (Carniolan sausage) – the queen of sausages – are a permanent fixture on the menu. In order to offer their guests the very best kranjska klobasa, they prepare the dish with less fat and in a different way, enhancing its flavour. Since the sausage is much tastier if freshly cooked, they have decided to serve it in a cooper bowl. Such sophisticated approaches allow the restaurant to always be one step ahead of the competition. They also have a range of delicious desserts on offer, with the castle cream cake and the delicious grandma's apple pie, made with home-grown apples, everyday items on the menu.

Having received very positive feedback from their guests, they will continue to strive for excellence. They still have plenty of ideas. "We are wedded to tradition, and there are still so many recipes we want to cook. We have taken this as a challenge and have the will to make it a reality," concludes Svetozar Raspopović.





Polona Prešeren, photo: archives

# Carnival – a time for celebration and joy

According to Slovenian tradition, St. Valentine unlocks the roots of the crops, setting them free to grow, whereas winter is, ostensibly, chased away by the carnival. In the old days, this was a time marked by many customs and superstitions, and particularly a time that had to be celebrated by consuming plenty of food and drink. Therefore, it was followed by the obligatory Lent, forty days of fasting. Nowadays, strong and nutritious food is still a must, and on top of that, one or two doughnuts fried in oil or fat are also allowed.

This a time when traditional carnival parades are taking place in Slovenian towns, the most famous being the one in Ptuj, the home of the Kurents, and in Cerknica, where the carnival's emblem is a witch. As always, the carnival's rule is: laugh and have fun, eat and drink, and turn the world upside down! Once, it was indeed like that. Everyone was gripped by frenzy during the wild carnival days – in certain places and regions perhaps more than elsewhere. The masks, too, differed from region to region, meaning that the ones worn in rural areas might have not looked the same as the ones used in towns.

Now, however, the rural carnival is also undergoing noticeable changes. In Slovenia, at least one hundred and fifty traditional carnival masks have been preserved – quite a figure for a relatively small country. Among them, typical Mediterranean, Pannonian and Alpine masks prevail.

One of the most recognizable Slovenian carnival masks is certainly Kurent. A carnival figure, well-known all over the world, dwells in Ptujsko and Dravsko Polje, and in the Haloze Hills. Kurent is

a fearful figure, and so he should be, as he is supposed to chase away winter! He wears a white or black sheepskin garment adorned with big cowbells and handkerchiefs dangling from a leather belt or a chain. While these bells are inherited and transferred from generation to generation, Kurent gathers handkerchiefs from young women. He wears a furry cap with a finely embroidered red tongue. The cap is trimmed with two cattle horns and two thin sticks adorned with feather tufts. In his hand, Kurent usually carried a wooden club, wrapped up in hedgehog skin on one end. Tied around the club were handkerchiefs collected by the Kurents from girls. The most popular one had of course most handkerchiefs. If there had been any envy, the Kurents would eventually settle the problem among themselves.

In the past, the Kurent's costume was reserved only for men; later, this tradition was notably taken over by children. Like elsewhere, the original purpose of the carnival in Slovenia was people's wish to influence nature. Indeed, by jumping about to sound the bells and chains, the Kurents were chasing away winter.

The greatest disgrace that can befall a Kurent is the loss of his mask if it is taken off for any reason whatsoever. Traditionally, the Kurents are always accompanied by a devil dressed in a red costume made of rags. Because he can move more easily, he can be of great help to the Kurents. What he likes best is to scare children.

The present day Kurent stems from folk tradition. In the past, only unmarried men were allowed to put on the Kurent costume, while today anyone – married or single, young or old, male or female – can wear it. The main role that Kurents have today is the preservation of carnival cultural heritage and tradition. In the countryside, the arrival of the Kurent has always announced the beginning of the new life which comes with the springtime. People always respected this creature.

There are, however, also other carnival figures in Slovenia, some of them having been revived only recently. Such figures, for example, are laufarji and pustovi wearing wooden masks, and the Prekmurje pozvačin, inviting people to weddings and offering people drinks and sweets. Carnival was in fact also a time for weddings.



The Ptuj Carnival, called Kurentovanje, which is the largest carnival festival in Slovenia, has been held since 1960s. This year 50 000 people from all around visited the carnival.

The Ptuj event is designed to preserve the cultural heritage and ethnographic tradition of the Ptuj region as well as of Slovenia. Kurentovanje, which is one of the most important traditional events in Slovenia and Central Europe, stems from a hundred-year-old tradition of celebrating the Carnival in the areas of Dravsko and Ptujsko Polje, and always brings magical joy and good humour. Kurentovanje in Ptuj is not just another festival, but an experience one remembers forever.

Ptuj is the eighth largest city in Slovenia. It lies amidst wine growing hills in the Štajerska region in northern Slovenia. Being the oldest Slovenian city, it is particularly well-known for its history and tradition. Ptuj was founded at the intersection point of various cultures and roads, which connected east with west. Alongside Kurentovanje, the Water Tower, the castle above the city and the oldest wine cellar in Slovenia are Ptuj's main attractions.







#### THE SYMBOL OF THE CITY

The city's coat-of-arms, which features a green dragon sitting on top of the castle tower, under which the greenery of the castle hill can be seen, has made Ljubljana Castle a hard-to-miss symbol of the city and its most popular attraction. Both the castle and the dragon have an ancient tradition that goes back to the twelfth century, which is when the first references to the medieval town of Ljubljana were recorded. History tells us that, at that time, a small wooden fort was already located on the hill, which was then replaced by a stone building soon afterwards. However, the first explicit mention of the castle itself dates back to the thirteenth century. The location of the castle, on a steep hill right above the City Hall and the Ljubljanica River, was so prominent that ancient travellers referred to Ljubljana as "the town below the castle". The basis for the symbol used, now widely known, seemed obvious at the time.

The city symbols of at least two other famous European cities – Salzburg and Prague – have developed in a similar way. As with Ljubljana, their castles have always been sure points of reference and, of course, tourist attractions in their own right. However, for Ljubljana at least, the castle has not always been open for visits.

#### TURBULENT HISTORY

Ljubljana Castle, in contrast to the castles in Prague and Salzburg, was a military fortress from the outset. The structure and image of such buildings are rarely attractive, since their architecture is distinctly subordinate to their functionality and ongoing needs. The castle was a provincial governors' residence for only a short pe-

riod during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but even then it remained subordinate to the military's requirements; therefore, the influence of its privileged residents, who might have been interested in the finesse of the building's details, interior design and furnishing, and the layout of the castle's courtyard, never prevailed. The fortress thus remained a mixture of military warehouses, garrisons and almost bare courtyards. The castle's history has always been in harmony with the purpose of its function: the first relatively small fortress, whose owners were the Spanheims, a German family, was additionally fortified in the fourteenth century when a new tower was added; the fortress was almost completely torn down in the fifteenth century and replaced with

a larger castle. Throughout the following century, the castle was progressively furnished with the majority of the facilities we can admire today. These include a pentagonal tower, St Jurij's chapel, a duke's tower formerly known as Padav (now known as Šance), which is connected to the castle by a separate wall, and the rest of the buildings, of which the most attractive are the Estate Hall and the Palatium, the only premises which served as residences for the nobility. An even more bitter fate befell the castle after the seventeenth century: the fort was neglected and used to store large quantities of gunpowder, which posed a fatal risk to the town. In the eighteenth century, the castle was to be demolished but Napoleon, who had conquered Ljubljana, saved it from

#### HERITAGE

## THE CASTLE WHICH MARKS THE CITY



Jože Osterman, photo: Ljubljana Castle archives







doom. The castle was then converted into a penitentiary and the only improvement worthy of note during that time was the erection of the present day lookout tower, which was knocked down and replaced as part of the general renovation of the castle in 1980. After the Second World War, several socially disadvantaged families lived in the castle; the neglected grounds deteriorated even further until they became a major disgrace to the city. However, by 1960, this period came to a close when the city authorities decided to undertake a thorough reconstruction of the castle, largely financed by Ljubljana's inhabitants directly.

The way in which the castle was reconstructed has caused feelings to run high ever since. In light of the fact that the castle building had no great cultural value, a group of architects led by Miha Kerin carried out the reconstruction of the castle in line with the new purposes it was to serve. The castle's shell, with its mighty walls, preserves its authentic image as a

medieval fortress; its gaping entrance can be accessed by traversing the wide bridge that crosses the former defence moat, whereas the rest of the castle's facilities are only partially reminiscent of its history. There is another entrance that leads to the castle on the south side, which is quite rare for fortresses of this kind, but easy to understand in this case because Ljubljana's inhabitants have made around a hundred different paths to climb the hill to their beloved castle.

#### SOCIAL CENTRE

Needless to say, visitors are hugely impressed upon entering the castle. The wide paved castle courtyard, mostly surrounded by typical medieval features, is airy, often filled with sunshine and pleasant. Visitors are beckoned from all sides by a variety of exhibition premises, galleries and museum collections. Particularly in the summer, there are a wide variety of events going on, because the young team that has

been managing the castle since the middle of last year have succeeded in stepping up and enlivening the pace of castle life. For a decade before that, the events held at the castle were managed by the organiser of the Ljubljana Summer Festival. Today, the castle is a major cultural, social, tourist and catering hotspot, which strikes just the right note of exclusivity to attract business people and distinguished visitors who come to Ljubljana to attend important conferences and meetings, for all kinds of people interested in culture and, of course, a great many tourists for whom a visit to Ljubljana Castle is a must during their stay in Ljubljana. Particularly at the end of the week, the castle is visited by people from all parts of Slovenia and Ljubljana, who consider a walk to the castle to be a mandatory part of their leisure time. The Director, Mateja Avbelj Valentan, and the Head of Public Relations, Jasmina Pinoza, are rightly proud to say that the number of visitors expected by those carrying out the reconstruction works was

somewhere in the region of half a million visitors per year, but this figure has already been surpassed; last year, 260,000 tickets were sold for the collections and exhibitions. Twice as many visitors as tickets sold are thought to have been attracted by other interests to the castle. This means that the number of visitors today is close to 800,000 people! This increase has been largely boosted by the funicular, which has now been in operation for five years and has made visiting the castle possible for many who otherwise would have been unable to do so, either owing to a lack of time or for other reasons. Around half of the castle's visitors take the funicular, which has become a special attraction, especially for children. Given the ambitious programmes and energy of the castle's management team, the effects of which can be seen every step of the way, the two ladies have assured us with confidence that the figure of one million visitors is a realistic target and will soon be reached.

The range of services on offer at the castle is rich indeed. There is nowhere else in Ljubljana that offers so many cultural and other events in one place. The permanent exhibition of 310-million-year-old rocks, which contain fossils, and the permanent exhibition on Slovenian history are joined by a new virtual exhibition on the history of Ljubljana Castle; these exhibitions satisfy the wishes of visitors who might have expected to see the castle museum, and serve as the foundations of a programme that make it worth paying a visit to the castle at any time. Particularly during the summer, the above events are supplemented by at least two or three exhibitions featuring the artistic opuses of prominent cultural figures, frequent events taking place in the most exquisite part of the castle – the Estate Hall – not to mention the excellent catering service, which numbers probably two of Ljubljana's best restaurateurs amongst its staff. Saturdays in particular are reserved for weddings, which have become one of the

trademarks of the reconstructed castle. The two wedding halls have been used for over twenty years and the director is concerned about the autumn wedding rush, as this is when the wedding halls will require refurbishment after all these years of service.

It is in fact quite surprising how deeply the castle has become entrenched in Ljubljana and Slovenian daily life. This is very good indeed! Today, it is one of the most frequented tourist destinations in Slovenia, because it has become a must-see destination for many. Several events offering quick but informative insights into the history of the city have found their home at the castle. The very fact that we at Sinfo are writing about this famous attraction in Slovenia only now is indicative of how integral the castle has become to Ljubljana and its inhabitants. We should therefore conclude by saying that meticulous care should be taken of such treasures.









**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



Winter  
Photo: Borut Peterlin