

The Center for Culture of the Public Open University marked Samobor City Day with a concert at the Samobor Museum on July 28th. In addition to piano accompanying professor Davor Lahnit of the Samobor School of Music, renowned 'cellist, ethnomusicologist and pianist Janice Foy, performed.

IN SEARCH OF MUSIC INFATUATION

Featured in Samoborske Novine Newspaper-Kolovoza

(August 11, 2000)

This versatile musician works as a lecturer and teacher and performs as a soloist in several orchestras and smaller bands. Janice Foy has also been doing a lot of music-related research. She appeared in the well-known TV series Friends and Seinfeld, and collaborated with the "ER" team as a music advisor. It is interesting that Janice, on her mother's side, is of Croatian origin from a family in the Gorski Kotar region named Bečki. But what's even more interesting is that her cousin moved to Samobor and, studying folk music of north-western Croatia, Janice was in Samobor for the first time eighteen years ago. Janice will never forget her first arrival in Croatia.

Root Research

When I was in Romania I decided to visit third-generation cousin Nikola Bečki. My Croatian is still weak, just as it was then. I thought, "How's he gonna know who I am?" When I arrived at the railway station in Zagreb, I was very worried. That's when the speaker in English announced, "Janice, your cousin is waiting for you," which completely surprised me. That's how I first got to see him in Samobor. Afterwards, I wrote a dissertation on "The Croatian Sacred Musical Tradition in Los Angeles" and how immigrants brought music from various villages and places in northern and southern Croatia to Los Angeles. It all grew out of that first job when I wasn't even sure why I came here, except out of curiosity, investigating my roots from my mother's side. It's interesting how I haven't explored the origins of my father's side, which has its roots in Canada. I was intrigued by these parts, especially musical styles, so free and similar to gypsy music.

Janice's cousin Nikola Bečki briefly explained their relationship. Our grandfathers are brothers, and they come from Gorski Kotar, Bosiljevo. Her grandparents moved to the United States before World War II. All their children were born in Gorski Kotar, except Janice's mother Frances or as we call her, Franca. She was born in Montana. Janice now lives in a small town outside of

Los Angeles. We've known each other for over ten years. On several occasions, Janice returned to Croatia and this is her fifth time in our country. However, this stay in Croatia is different from the others. I came here for some kind of vacation. Up until now, I've always traveled with the goal of research for the thesis. I've been gathering information, hunting data in libraries, and this comes to me as a relaxation. I wanted this to be a visit of goodwill. I want to find out what people have been through in wartime Croatia. Reading about events in Croatia in newspapers cannot be measured with information that can be gathered on spot. In the media, the information was often distorted depending on which side wanted to be better, so now I want to summarize the truth firsthand. Also, I want to know if anything has changed and how people here see their future. If I'm going to be able to understand this objectively, I'd like to share my knowledge with other people. I want to create a real picture of these parts since we're not very educated in our part of the world. If I can emphasize even a little with the people here, it will be easier for me to share it with the people back home.

The Gift of Music

I will be in Croatia probably until August 22nd. I started my journey in Samobor. People from the Croatian heritage foundation invited me to Novi Vinodolski. There's a children's program where they thought it would be interesting for me to speak and play. After that, the Croatian Embassy allowed me to visit Vodice and Sibenik. Where am I going? I'm not sure yet. I've also made contacts with some composers and conductors, and other people. In fact, I want to achieve a lot with this visit. Also, I want to rejuvenate, because in Croatia I will celebrate one very special birthday, but I won't tell you which one.

I've decided I should go back. For me, who has never personally experienced war, it is hard to believe that on the entrance of the new millennium people had to go through such hell, which few people understand and want to help. By absorbing the situation in Croatia, I hope that I will be able to show people in the West that it was necessary for us to achieve independence, and that we should have understood this faster. I think people are only realizing this now, and I want to do something outside the music program itself. I want to do good for people with music, and I'd like to visit some children's hospitals and give them music. In California, I often played in hospitals and participated in various children's programs. There are musicians who only play concerts. There are those who cross that line and try to see what music can do to the body, for reason, and to the soul.

In America, I often go through walls to organize concerts, and it's interesting who comes to them and why. What's really going on? Musicians first ask me how much they'll be paid. If that's the main reason for doing music, then we shouldn't

do it. I'm trying to show you how music can heal, and it can rejuvenate people. I'm sorry to say that in America, as in many parts of the world, music is poorly appreciated. That's why I hope that by playing in Croatia I will get positive feedback from the audience, which will encourage me to continue working in music education in the USA. In addition to performing, Janice has been doing a lot of music-related research. She was a visiting researcher at the Zagreb Institute for Sacred Music, and also participated in the highly elaborate project "Chicken Soup for the Ears - the Mozart Effect."

Music for the Better of Society

I first heard about the Mozart effect on the radio. It was about the research of a former 'cellist who became a neuroscientist, and she's one of my good friends. Her team came out with research results that were done to show that Mozart's music can't make you a genius, but can inspire in you the best - realization of what you already possess. Several subaverage studies were tested, which were subsequently played by Mozart's two D Major Piano Sonatas. Later, they improved their scores by 7 to 8 points. However, the effect lasted only 10 minutes. After that, the study was done on mice. This time the music of various composers was played before the mice hatched. It was a prenatal exposure to classical music over a few weeks. When these exposed mice were compared to other mice, they had much better results. This effect lasted for several weeks. If it worked on mice, I believe it would have been the same for humans. But the media inflated that effect, and so it formed the idea that everyone would become smarter if they listened to Mozart. Everything became extreme, so albums appeared on the market with recommendations: "diet with Beethoven," "diet with Mozart," "eat with this music," "exercise with this . . ." But if you're of average intelligence, you won't become a genius by listening to Mozart. What this research has actually proved is the fact that Mozart's music can have a positive and stimulating effect on nerve tissue. His music yielded better results than others due to symmetrical, almost mathematically correctly constructed musical phrases. Before that, it was known that music can influence one's mood, but that's something completely different.

Mozart's music can stimulate brain activity, while the rest of the music has effect only on mood changes. That is the key difference. It is also proven that learning to play piano at the age of 5 or 6 years old can also be useful for brain development. The research was conducted in elementary schools in California, together with the research about the effect of computer games. It has been found that using a computer is not enough. Something else needs to develop brain cells, and the solution is found in music. Piano as an instrument is suitable

because of the way the keys are placed. Children can visually experience the regularities of music, which is important for this age.

The only thing I still don't understand is the constant emphasizing on how music and math go together. If you're learning piano, you should be more talented at math. But that didn't work in my case, even though I was still learning to play the 'cello with the piano, which, according to another research, would need to further develop my brain. Therefore, I consider myself merely an exception that confirms the rule. But it has been proven that Baroque music can speed up the learning of foreign languages. Music can also help with behavioral disorders. So if you know how to use it, music can contribute to society in many ways, and I read once how some store owners in the U.S. managed to drive off robbers by playing classical music. I think it was some kind of opera. So good music, which the robbers didn't like, saved the store.

The Program for Everybody

How it's a musician's wish for concerts to become more socializing between musicians and viewers, the concert in Samobor had a very casual tone of continuous communication between Janice and the audience. There's an opinion that you need to be educated to perform or enjoy music. If I could, I'd change it right away. An interesting thing happened to me when I came to Croatia. The trip was very confusing. The plane was late. I don't know if it had anything to do with the plane crash in France, but I was late for further connections so I had to arrive in Croatia. In a new arrangement, I sat next to a young German businessman with whom I started talking about music. At the end of the conversation, he told me, "You know, this is unbelievable. I'm a technical expert and I'm not musically educated. I never thought I could have such a nice conversation with a professional musician. I couldn't do it before." And I said, "It's interesting that you noticed, because I couldn't do it either." We musicians often complain about the dying of our art, when in fact we're the ones who kill it. We're more concerned with what we like to play than what will attract the common person to come to the concert.

I try to be honest in what I do. The program, which was composed in just two days, consisted of the works of great national composers such as Bartok, Monti, Dvorak, Ginastera, Cassado, de Falla, Wilkomirski and others. Since the 250th anniversary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach was for that Friday, the concert began with his "Adagio from Toccata in C Major" for organ. After the program, Janice also played Gershwin's "Summertime," ***"Flamenco Fire" of the Spanish composer Ferrara, and "Ave Maria" which she dedicated to the Croatian

people with a desire for peace. I compiled the program to satisfy the different tastes.

I take into account the diversity of cultures and play music for the people. I often make concerts fun, so sometimes I ask the audience what they'd like to hear. After the originally selected pianist cancelled her appearance at Janice Foy's concert in Samobor (allegedly because she didn't practice enough), Davor Lahnit, piano professor at the Samobor Music School, took her place at the last minute. In just two days, Davor and Janice were able to put together and rehearse an almost two-hour program. A short collaboration resulted in a dear friendship, so Janice was full of praise at Davor's expense. Collaboration with Davor was great. He's very open and free, just like a child. I get that in a lot of people around here. That's what gives the charm to these spaces. Since in her work Janice is always open to different types of cooperation, it is not surprising that in her biography you can find the fact that she appeared in popular TV shows, like Friends, Seinfeld and ER.

Underpaid Musicians

First of all, it was because I live near Hollywood. If I lived in Samobor, I'd hardly be invited to work for Friends. On different paths of life I met a man who had me on the right list. It happened that they needed certain people's appropriate appearance and a certain day off. As for "ER" it was an interesting collaboration, because I advised the team on music in an episode about a 'cellist that ended up in the hospital. The compositions they chose were far from the 'cello repertoire. So they were looking for an expert in this field who was available for cooperation.

I arrived with all my repertoire. I played for them for two and a half hours, so they could finally pick out a Bach Suite. If they'd told me they wanted something like that right away, we could have been done in five minutes. But that's how I met the production centers and the crew, and they got two and a half hours of concert music from me. In the end, they didn't use me in the frame, because I guess I was too young for them, but they took my advice about music, which is actually more important, and when it comes to paying fees, that's another story. I collaborated with the Friends' team on the wedding scene between two lesbians. That's why they needed female musicians, and I said yes. I thought it might be interesting. We couldn't choose something non-religious, so the repertoire was chosen. We first recorded the music in the studio, but in the end the people in charge decided to play live. So on the set, we were tangled in different microphones and wires, and one man was circling around us the whole time with the receiver for their wireless microphones. We've

been over it like 20 times. Every time an actor got in the wrong place, we'd start over - all under the hot lights and heavy makeup.

It also reminded me of shooting a commercial for ice tea. That story is interesting purely because of the payment scale. We filmed in direct sunlight for two days for about ten hours. But consider how hot the California sun is, much more than here in Croatia. I had my makeup girl do my hair and everything. We were the backup. We ended up playing rock 'n' roll because the classical music we played in the studio was given to another. If they'd told us right away, we wouldn't have bothered. But the point is, there were two models with us on the set, one of which recently appeared on the cover of two magazines. They were paid \$50,000 a day, while we were paid a total of \$700. We had a lot to learn and practice to become recognized musicians and they just walked along the pool and drank some ice tea and earned 50 grand. It only shows how musicians are underpaid.

Classical Music is Appreciated Here

In the United States, Janice Foy works as a lecturer and teacher, and performs as a soloist. She is the first 'cellist in the West LA Symphony Orchestra and the Santa Cecilia Opera Orchestra, and the second 'cellist in the Glendale Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Sidney Weiss. In 1997, she received a special award from the Los Angeles City Council for her musical contributions to society. She is already preparing two of her concerts for 2001, as well as a pre-production of a 'cello concerto, written for her by five-time Emmy winner Lee Holdridge.

When asked what she liked to do in her spare time, Janice had no doubts. I like to shop. My cousin is very well aware of that because he has to take me to clothing stores all the time. But I actually like sports like swimming and hiking. I love art - I love to paint and draw. I like to meet with other musicians and go through music sheets. I just recently recorded a CD with a gypsy orchestra in California. It's about to go into world distribution. If anyone wants a special \$10 CD, I'll be happy to mail them. If you have a computer, you can also visit my website www.bravo-la.com, from which you can also order a CD. In it I also talk about my travels through Croatia. I had an interesting visit, while Boris Papandopulo was alive, in his city of Tribunj. I was honored to perform his work. I also have an original Papandopulo work written and dedicated to me. I'd like to open with it at the Dubrovnik Festival one day, which I keep my fingers crossed for. I plan to come to Croatia again next summer and play - maybe even in Split during the summer. I want to open up some possibilities for next year

already, because I like to come back here where the tradition of classical music is still rich.

Kristina Vraneković

August 11th 2000

I want to thank my 3rd cousin Nikola's daughter Ana Miloš for her help in translating the article In "Search of Music Infatuation" 2000. Unfortunately Nikola died in 2023. He is dearly missed by all of his family and friends.

****Note:** In the Croatian article, it mentioned "Flamenco Fire" by the Spanish composer Ferrara. He is Italian and not Spanish. Actually I learned later on that the piece was called "Echo Serenade" and was written by Argentinian composer Ennio Bolognini. I wrote an article about Bolognini which is also on my website called, "My Tribute to 'Cellist Ennio Bolognini - Renaissance Man.'" It explains a lot about how I got the piece, etc.