



Under the honorary patronage of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts



Talks 2023

These Talks were created as part of efforts to connect artists' thoughts with visitors' questions even more within the framework of the Seviqc Brežice festival. They support our efforts to take a more comprehensive approach to understanding the art and development of the early music scene.

I would like to thank Stanka Dešnik (Krajski Park Goričko), Vesna Vovk (Radio Slovenija) and Marina Žlender (Revija Glasna), long-time observers of our festival and the artists of Seviqc Brežice 2023, who responded with their answers: Izidor Erazem Grafenauer, Mojca Jerman, Ana Julija Mlejnuk Železnik, Hiwote Tadesse, Lea Sušanj Lujo, Adriana Alcaide, Carles Blanch, Katarina Nagode, Martina Okoliš, Maruša Brezavšček, Fiona Kizzie Lee, Josetxu Obregón, Tadeja Pance, Boris Šinigoj, and Blažka Mraz.

Klemen Ramovš, October 2023

What your normal day looks like when you are not traveling?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: A normal day starts at seven, half past seven, with breakfast, around half past nine, nine, preparations for the planned projects begin. This means organizing rehearsals, composing, writing transcriptions and the like. The days I spend at home I use for independent practice, I devote time to maintaining the technique on the guitar, which is the basis for all the other instruments I play. I also pay special attention to some physical activity that helps to avoid injuries due to the forced posture of playing the instrument, as well as for mental health.

Mojca Jerman: A musician's schedule varies greatly, depending on whether you are in the middle of a project where you are away from home all day, or your work is in solitude where you spend all day preparing for projects. So that I would say that a normal day almost does not exist. If possible, I like to have a quiet morning, with a cup of coffee and a journal and then warm-up exercises and scales before the day is filled with chores.

Ana Julija Mlejnjk Železnik: As a freelance musician I tend to have a busy and varied schedule, so every day is a little bit different. I spend a considerable part of the day practicing the violin. My favourite (and most efficient) way to work is to divide practice into several shorter sets (about an hour each) with longer breaks. In the meantime, I take care of various correspondence, writing applications, requests, concert programs and the like. I often have rehearsals scheduled with the various chamber ensembles I'm involved with (sometimes several in one day), which can take up a good portion of the day. On Wednesdays, I teach at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. Regardless of my efforts, I always find myself working late at night - either at the computer (just one more text, just one more e-mail), or with the violin in my hands (yet another piece to check). I am very happy if I manage to go for a walk in nature during the day.

Adriana Alcaide: I meditate as soon as I get up in the morning, then I have a nice and healthy breakfast with my chickpeas bread and a wonderful Japanese green tea. Some days I do some gyms and other days I go for a walk. Then I have some hours practising the violin, baroque repertoire as well as improvisation. Before lunch I do a bit of office work. After lunch I like to put my feet on the fresh earth and feel the energy and pureness that comes from it. In the evening sometimes I teach, sometimes I keep on practising, or I meet some friend or family. Supper and some reading after that. Meditation again before going to bed and body consciousness.

Carles Blanch: I am in my village, Móra d'Ebre, enjoying the peace, the nature and working in my new projects as a soloist and a continuo player. I teach as well in the conservatory of Vila-seca (Tarragona).

Maruša Brezavšček: Normal days are rare, but I try to keep as much structure as possible with my varied commitments. A lot depends on when the rehearsals are scheduled, and if I have a "free" day in between, I preferably do administrative duties in the morning, then in the afternoon I focus on musical content (interpretation, practicing, practicing, researching) and in the evening I relax, rehearse, or make reeds for the bassoon, which I also play, but not in this ensemble.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: I am both a performer and a researcher – my normal day comprises both of research work and of performance-related activities. A few hours of effective morning PhD work – reading articles, writing text, etc. Then regular practice on multiple instruments. Also, administrative hours on conceptualizing and researching for concert programmes, replying to emails, and organizing rehearsals, as well as the actual rehearsals with my groups.

Josetxu Obregón: Normally I do office time and some practice in the morning and afternoon, while my kids are at school, and then I have (hopefully) some family time in the evening.

Tadeja Pance: The day begins primarily with care and obligations to my children, who need to be taken to school and kindergarten, then work obligations follow. Once I'm done with these, it's time for basic or more intensive singing exercises. Afternoons are also usually reserved for the children (and their possible responsibilities or just spending time together). The evenings can be free or full of musical practices (depending on the project I am currently working on).

Boris Šinigoj: Breakfast, then study of new historical sources and practice of the instrument, after lunch teaching, at evening family and night rest.



Izidor Erazem Grafenauer (SI), baroque guitar, early romantic guitar

Cuerdas al pasado, Brežice Castle, 12.8.2023

Photo: Vesna Zednik

What your work on the instrument looks like?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: I try to regularly maintain technical fitness, which is the basis for all the styles I perform on the guitar and related instruments. Since I deal with different periods of music, this also leads to different types of rehearsals, sometimes a more concentrated solo rehearsal is needed, sometimes more group rehearsals are needed.

Mojca Jerman: Working with an instrument is the work of constantly upgrading knowledge, technique, and approaches to practice. Once you fall into a routine and practice without thinking, there's a good chance you've stopped listening and progressing in your playing.

Hiwote Tadesse: Most of the days begin with a little warm-up session, followed by a rehearsal in the Zagreb philharmonic hall. The work of a section leader in orchestra is versatile – in addition to being responsible for the quality of the playing the group and playing solos, I write bowings, communicate with the conductor and other section leaders. So, what seems to be the obvious part – playing – is a result of all these activities going well. Every day I have a listening – practicing session, usually preparing for the next programme, finding interpretations, reading about the pieces and the composers. As years go by, I find it more important to listen and to read and to find inspiration then to practice hours on end. The technical practice will only get you so far, but inspiration and reflection are key to interpretation.

Adriana Alcaide: I like to practice very slowly and very conscious about my fingers, the musical phrases and body ease on each note I play. I combine difficult technique passages with my own improvisation on the violin and singing as well. I like to have a look on different kinds of hard technique, I use very often the metronome and I like to study chamber and orchestral pieces as well with the general part, understanding which is the whole sense of the piece, apart from my own part.

Carles Blanch: Since I play different instruments of plugged strings (theorbo, archlute, vihuela, and baroque guitar) I give time to each instrument. Depending on the different programmes I am working in

at each moment, I dedicate more time to one or another. My aim is to keep myself well-trained in technical aspects, elaborating my own and singular sound and develop my own creativity.

Katarina Nagode: I am currently trying to balance being a musician, pedagogue, and a mother, therefore my everyday practise consists of tone, intonation and technical exercises. The quantity of those is adjusted, according to my current needs. Mentioned exercises help me to maintain a stable condition on my flute. Before a project I study the concert programme from theoretical and musical point of view. Since I am a professional on baroque and classical flute, I do alternate my practice time between those two different instruments.

Martina Okoliš: I try to balance all other obligations with regular practice, which is crucial for maintaining condition and perfecting technique. I try to maintain my form in a disciplined manner with a selection of technical finger exercises daily. This is followed by the practice of a program that I am preparing with an ensemble or a solo composition. I spend a lot of time on interpretation. I search, experiment, and try to get close to the original idea to which I add a personal expression. Mental practice is also important to me, visualizing in my mind individual elements of the interpretation or the whole piece.

Maruša Brezavšek: For me, practicing is an opportunity to keep exploring my instrument, testing its limits, and finding different colours in it. In this way I also try out the interpretative possibilities of the music I am working on at the time. The recorder is a delicate instrument, affected by humidity, temperature and playing. So, when I am practising, I am learning to adapt to it, to listen and react flexibly, rather than fixating the way I play. For the projects with the Ensemble Pampinea, it's important to tune in and tune my ears to the Pythagorean intonation system, which is based on pure fifths, and works in the opposite way to the Renaissance system, which is based on pure thirds.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: I am a multi-instrumentalist who studied majors in both recorder and medieval/Renaissance keyboards. As there are still a lot of missing pieces from the information about performance practices and the constructions of the instruments, a large part of my work on the instruments includes my own research and my attempt to find out more about them. For example, my PhD work on organ tablatures from the 15th/16th centuries. It is also a privilege that I have when staging concert programmes – to be able to fabricate in variety of sounds into a concert by playing different instruments. For example, when we played at the London Early Music Young Ensemble Competition in November 2022, I played recorders, organetto and pipe and tabor within the 20-minute programme. One of the judges commented on how they are amazed at the high level of playing on multiple instruments. This “wow-factor” of instrumental variety certainly helped us, as one of the many factors, to win the competition.

Josetxu Obregón: Depends very much on the workload, sometimes I'm preparing a new piece or program, but other times I'm reading music for possible new projects, which is a fascinating process.

Tadeja Pance: I regularly perform breathing and relaxation exercises, as well as the singing exercises, which help me the most in maintaining my singing condition. I think it is essential that these exercises are performed properly and that they are consistent. This is followed by the research and study of individual necessary elements, style or text that appear in each project at a given moment. Also, additional education when necessary.

Blažka Mraz: When I prepare for a concert, I devote a lot of time to the way of musical interpretation of an individual composition, which includes thinking about dynamics, ornamentation, breathing, phrasing... while of course I try to get as close as possible to authentic performance practices and at the same time introduce my own interpretation into the composition. I devote a lot of time to the color of the sound or tone that I can create with the recorder, which is also one of the main reasons I chose this instrument.

Even though the recorder has some limitations in terms of volume and dynamic capabilities, its gentle, but at the same time full, soft and rounded sound is what convinces with its subtlety and simplicity.

Boris Šinigoj: Tuning, introductory warm-up improvisation, study of the repertoire.



Ana Julija Mlejnik Železnik (SI), violin

Cuerdas al pasado, Brežice Castle, 12.8.2023

What your work with young people looks like and how you perceive their attitude towards music, how you convey it to them?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: I think that music is an extremely important art for all generations, from the youngest to the oldest. Of course, each generation understands it in its own way, but I think the most important thing is to think about music as much as possible and understand it in a deeper sense, not only as, for example, ambient music in the car and the like. As a teacher, I am always interested in how pupils and students understand music, and many times at the beginning they do not even know how to answer it. So the first goal is for them to start thinking about it.

Ana Julija Mlejnik Železnik: I have the closest contact with young people at the Academy of Music, where I have been teaching since this year. I see my mission as helping young violinists find their own artistic expression - when musicians get closer to their inner artistic truth, it is much easier to overcome technical and mental obstacles. In addition, I encourage students to find good, effective solutions to problems (I think that the days of "headless practice" are over, practice should be approached tactically).

Mojca Jerman: Young people are an extremely important part of the audience, and it is always a very special experience to share serious music with them. Mainly because their reactions are not calculated or influenced by society - what is appropriate and what is not. You get that real reaction from them that tells you if you're doing a good job yourself. I have contact with them mainly through various concerts that are performed in elementary schools and private concerts for my nephews; but it always motivates me even more when I see children and teenagers in the audience to give even more of myself.

Adriana Alcaide: I can feel that young people are quite different as our old generation. I try to understand their way of living and feeling to be able to go into them. I focus on a way of communication that is common to all of us: body resistances, emotional needs, personality, fears, and personal complexes. My great key is deep listening, not only to words but also to reactions, body language and non-said things.

Carles Blanch: I try to approach them into the early music repertoire in a fresh, creative, and funny way, to see everything that this music gives to them.

Katarina Nagode: Since I am also a flute teacher, I try to include early music in my lessons by introducing my students to: interesting facts about baroque period, to traverso and its sound and to video and audio recordings with the music from that time. Some of the pupils showed some reservation towards early music at the beginning, but once they were familiarized with its sound and characteristics, they grow to love and appreciate it. Furthermore, they perform it with greater pleasure and understanding.

Martina Okoliš: I teach at three different levels of music education: lower, middle, academic. Each level requires a different approach. The youngest are very relaxed and sincere, but at the same time very receptive to music. You need to constantly encourage and motivate them in a playful and unobtrusive way to follow the learning process. At the secondary level, students are more motivated. The very fact that they hardly know early music catches their interest. They accept new knowledge about the period, stylistics, old sources, records. They slowly conquer and understand the harpsichord playing technique. By interacting with other art industries, I try to catch their attention, interest and exploring. I have similar experiences at the academic level. Young people get excited about early music. They can also be inspired by their own experience of participating in chamber groups, a choir or an orchestra. In recent years, we have experienced in Slovenia quite a few student performances of complex baroque works.

Maruša Brezavšček: In June, we performed a children's version of Fortuna with the Ensemble Pampinea in a kindergarten in Potsdam. We didn't just play the programme for them, we told them the story of Fortuna, which they then painted, and they had the opportunity to draw lots to see which song we would play next - like the way it will be done with the dice and the (mostly) adult audience in Soteska. We were delighted that the children were happy to listen and even wanted a repeat of one of the songs. It seems to me important to offer quality music in educational institutions and kindergartens and I hope that this is one of the ways to maintain and cultivate the public's interest in music as effectively as possible.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: Recently I have had the opportunity to give talks and guest lectures on early music to young people, ranging from kids (toddlers to early teenage years) to university students. I often find young people less biased about early music; they haven't received enough musical education to consider early music outside the normal music curriculum and would just regard it as an integral part of music.

Josetxu Obregón: I try to motivate them towards the listening and appreciation of music, and how important it is for the humanity.

Boris Šinigoj: Introductory relaxation, encouragement, and inspired performance.



Mojca Jerman (SI), violin

Cuerdas al pasado, Brežice Castle, 12.8.2023
Ensemble Tacet (SI), Bogenšperk Castle,
16.8.2023

How you plan the programming concept?

Ana Julija Mlejnuk Železnik: New ideas for various projects come to me daily. Some of them then persist in my mind and eventually begin to take on a concrete form. When the right opportunity (or demand) arises, I devote myself to the concept in a more organized way and consider all possible variables.

Mojca Jerman: It all depends on what kind of concert it is. Sometimes the emphasis is on songs that you have wanted to play for a long time - that present a certain challenge to you, and then you build a program around that that matches thematically, stylistically, or just atmospherically with the chosen song. Sometimes you first have a solid concept and then you look for songs that fit that concept. Sometimes you focus on a period or a style and that is the common thread of the program. I believe that this is one of the most important creative aspects of our profession and - at least for me - still has a lot of room for growth and exploration.

Adriana Alcaide: Listening to the needs of each festival or programmer, I conceive an idea of what do I want to express or bring to the audience, the main aim of that moment for me to communicate with people; this depends on the personal moment I am living with. Then I think which kind of formation, which programme, which composer, and finally which pieces that express my main idea of what I want to offer to people.

Maruša Brezavšček: Fiona and I sometimes get together at her house and think out loud about what topics from the Middle Ages appeal to us. On one such visit to her house we discussed how we could involve the audience in the theme of Fortune. The idea of the cube was born half in jest, but it finally came to fruition, and I'm very happy about that, because my colleague Lene Lekše has turned it into an attractive and stylish piece of art.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: There were many recurring and important themes in the music from the medieval times. For example, a big portion of music at the time depict religious topics, courtly love, death, but also a huge theme concerns with Fortune. We also must consider the different types of performances and the audience expectations. This year Ensemble Pampinea performed in Potsdam, Germany; and will be performing also in Utrecht in August and in London in November. As we understand that our audience can be from all ages and backgrounds, we try to tailor our programmes to be approachable, with some beautiful melodies, intriguing polyphony but also some dances and straightforward rhythmic grooves juxtaposing one another.

Josetxu Obregón: It depends very much on if it's a monographic or what's the idea behind, in the case of CelloEvolution I worked very hard in creating a sort of "huge suite" that holds the whole concert.

Boris Šinigoj: Research and study of the historical sources.



Hiwote Tadesse (HR), viola

Cuerdas al pasado, Brežice Castle, 12.8.2023

Where and how you capture ideas for designing a concert programme and what obstacles you face?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: Sometimes I adapt the concert programmes to the audience, but sometimes it is my personal programme that I want to share. If it's an early music festival, of course I'm looking for ideas in the music of a certain period, but I still want to add my own personal touch. This is also the case with this year's program, with which I want to make a connection with early music, which is the basis for the later development of flamenco, that is, an art that is particularly close to me.

Ana Julija Mlejnik Železnik: I usually approach the design of a concert program from one of two different angles. I often want to work with specific musicians, which means that I build the program "around the ensemble", that is, I look for compositions written for certain instruments and only then try to connect them into a whole. Another option is fascination and the desire to perform a specific piece, which means that I then set up a program around this piece.

Mojca Jerman: Ideas ripen everywhere if you are open to them. They can arise from everyday life, when you read historical sources, when you visit various galleries and museums, foreign countries, they can be born in the compositions themselves, when you are looking for inspiration in one composition to perform another. Obstacles appear when it is difficult to access musical literature, but otherwise they are mainly time-related, as there is always not enough time to realize all ideas and concepts.

Adriana Alcaide: Sometimes I find that the main idea that I want to share, includes pieces from slightly different styles or historical periods. Then either I sacrifice some piece to cover only one style, or I find the common sense between the differences, and I go beyond the historical periods. Sometimes there is a specific repertoire that I want to share with the audience and other times my trigger is a genuine feeling about what I am living in my personal life in that moment and try to find de repertoire that fits with that personal feeling that I want to express.

Carles Blanch: At home, in my peacefulness of my everyday practice. Sometimes one piece brings me to another. Or maybe reading or listening to music or watching a film or a theatre work. Many of the ideas come once and again, and they are part of my personal way of seeing and feeling the music, and other ideas the appear suddenly. My biggest obstacle is time, because many times I cannot dedicate the time I would like to create new proposals, working with different groups and proposals doesn't allow me to have more time for myself.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: We often get inspirations from the Arts in the medieval times. The manuscripts written then, certain paintings, history (story) of individuals, the depiction of nature at the time – all these can inspire us in designing concert programmes. One obstacle we often encounter is time constraint – for example, as Semi-finalists of the Utrecht International Van Wassenaer Competition, upcoming August 30th, we have a chance to perform a 15-minute programme there. It is a challenge to shorten an original 45-minute programme to 15 and still hope to provide the narratives necessary and attract the audience attention in very short time.

Josetxu Obregón: It's always a work in progress, and it's important to keep a clear idea that the program must be interesting from the musicologist point of view but also entertaining for the audience.

Boris Šinigoj: The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to: ideas arise from Eastern and Western musical traditions without barriers.



Lea Sušanj Lujo (HR), cello

Cuerdas al pasado, Brežice Castle, 12.8.2023

How you design a concert programme?

Adriana Alcaide: Once I decided what I want to express I look up for the pieces and as well for the tonalities of each one. I imagine the trip I want to cause on people's mind/heart, and I order them, taking care of intensity, contrasts, surprises, and aliveness.

Carles Blanch: I look for a concept, idea or a common thread that allows me to communicate something important to the audience. When I get it, I look for the best repertoire to share this idea and I try to select pieces that are interesting for me in a musical way and pieces that I can shape in my own way.

Martina Okoliš: I try to design the concert program thoughtfully, so that the compositions follow each other in a meaningful way and form a logical whole. Sometimes it is designed thematically, but also with a chronological sequence of songs or a selection of characteristically similar songs, etc. We have many options and ideas. It all depends on the type of concert. Based on this we decide on the final form and program of the concert together with the other members of the ensemble.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: Sometimes we begin with a particular repertoire we are interested in; sometimes a composer; a topic. When the criterion is decided, then we set about to look for pieces which we love, but also those that contrast with ones another, to create a dynamic programme. Opening and closing pieces are the hardest to pick, and then we try to match the order of the pieces to the overall storyline/ atmosphere we want to create.

Josetxu Obregón: In the case of CelloEvolution, I worked in the connections between tonalities, and characters of every piece, so it all makes sense together.

Boris Šinigoj: In cooperation with all members of the ensemble.



Adriana Alcaide (ES): violin

Bach Collegium Barcelona Duo (ES), Brežice Castle, 13.8.2023

How you meet other artists, how you get involved in other ensembles and what it looks like when you put together your own ensemble?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: I really enjoy playing with other musicians, and different musicians. Of course, I think that a good musicological and technical background is necessary, but at the same time I think that as artists we also need to add some of our own ego and thinking to every music we make. In this way, there are interactions and mutual influence that can produce extraordinary results. When putting together my ensemble, I look for people who think broadly and are also interested in their own development as artists.

Mojca Jerman: I meet other artists mainly at various orchestra academies, orchestras, chamber concerts, as well as through social networks, which have become a convenient medium for establishing and maintaining professional contacts. After that, connections tend to happen organically. If you feel with someone, you will find a way and time to create something together. But these things cannot be forced, at least I don't approach creation with achievements and productivity in mind, but I try to intuitively follow the energies that dictate to me which people I connect with and which ones I don't.

Hiwote Tadesse: The meeting of other artists usually comes by naturally on different concerts or rehearsals. In person does it for me, I am old-fashioned when it comes to social media. Involvement in other ensembles also comes naturally if people are pleased with your playing and your way of communicating. I love working with respectful, kind, and well-rounded musicians. Those traits will get you places. It brings me such joy and hope in the mankind to see a "world superstar" musician being humble. That is also what I look for in my ensembles, e.g. Ensemble Illyrica. In our core we are a group of friends who have the amazing blessing that they sound great together. Having my own ensemble boosts my creativity in the programming sense – I am freer to pick music that I find important and deliver it to audiences.

Adriana Alcaide: Being a free-lance musician means working with many different ensembles around the world and I can say that I am lucky to find musicians with whom I have a common approach to music. So, during so many years of traveling and playing around I have a big list of collaborators, that depending on the style of the music or the formation I need, I can choose the right ones for each occasion. Having my own ensembles, it means accepting my musical personality, find the people that go well with that and getting the compromise of making it develop and grow, even learning how to work better and better with people, most of all in the personal level, because working intensely brings sometimes big personal challenges.

Carles Blanch: The early music circuit is relatively small and most of the times we know each other through close friends and musicians. I always look for a personal connection and someone that sees the music in a similar way as me.

Katarina Nagode: I would like to focus on my experience with creating an ensemble. The main reason that I have decided to do that is conductor Hans Christoph Rademann, with whom I've discussed current situation on the field of baroque music in Slovenia. He encouraged me with the following words: »Why don't you establish your own ensemble?«. Those word and his faith in me gave me the needed motivation to contact Martina and Mojca and later we founded our Ensemble Tacet. First, I encountered other musicians in that field through my studies and master classes, however, later those contacts were made mostly through different projects. I usually join other ensembles because of my acquaintances, recommendations, and auditions.

Maruša Brezavšček: I've met a lot of musicians during my studies, like Fiona and Vojtěch. In addition, I meet musicians through projects and at festivals, masterclasses, competitions, symposiums, etc. Mostly I play bassoon in other ensembles. Sometimes I am invited to projects by the organisers after a concert they liked, or by friends and colleagues with whom we have played together in our studies or elsewhere. Sometimes we get together with some friends and try out what it would be like to collaborate through playing and socialising, thinking together... My ensembles (Pampinea, Bastion, Duo Decima) were formed after we had positive experiences with a group of musicians during the preparation for a performance and on stage, and we talked about our wish to collaborate even more intensively.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: When I hear nice performances from musicians I don't yet know, I reach out to them and sometimes invite them to play with me in smaller performances to get to know them. When putting together an ensemble, the characters of people and the dynamic are very important. I love to play with nice people whom I can imagine being friends with; this has become the most important criterion for me.

Josetxu Obregón: I was lucky to play in many ensembles from the moment I specialized in historical performance, from EUBO to l'Arpeggiata & Christina Pluhar or Le Concert des Nations & Jordi Savall.

Tadeja Pance: Since I also work in some other fields - especially the revival of folk heritage, I am lucky to be able to meet and connect with other artists and experts in this field. All this (I hope) offers me a slightly broader view of the activities in our ensemble (NSL) and, although I would not think, influence my perception and the performance.
I don't put together my own ensembles.

Boris Šinigoj: In a democratic way, but at the same time aristocratic: we choose the best.



Carles Blanch (ES): theorbo

Bach Collegium Barcelona Duo (ES), Brežice Castle, 13.8.2023

How you approach and research archives?

Adriana Alcaide: I always go to the source, trying to understand the spirit of each composer and why he/she wrote that piece. Manuscripts are really important if I can find them, and always I try to find the urtext edition if I cannot find the manuscript.

Carles Blanch: Normally through internet, because the repertoire for my instrument I can find it digitally in international libraries, most of the manuscripts are digital loaded.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: For medieval manuscripts, DIAMM is a database that provides facsimiles for a lot of them; but also, information such as inventory, bibliography, and other research information. It is very helpful as an online, free database that allows us to get into a lot of research information just through the computer.

Josetxu Obregón: It depends very much on the country. It was very interesting, for this program, some of the music that is in Naples, the best way was to visit Naples and take photos. With every country is different.

Boris Šinigoj: Via internet.



Katarina Nagode (SI), traverso

Ensemble Tacet (SI), Bogenšperk Castle,
16.8.2023

How you are received by the institutions that care for this cultural heritage, and what problems you face in the phase when you are looking for and choosing works for the programme?

Ana Julija Mlejn Železnik: Cultural institutions accept "external creators" very diversely. I think that the approach depends entirely on the attitude towards art of the individuals working there. Sometimes we forget how much good (or bad) a single person in a leadership position can do when they make a certain decision, rule or operating system. In the productions of cultural institutions, I sometimes miss a little more self-initiative on the part of the organizers. Most institutions choose a program only based on the offers received. So, we musicians have no choice but to sit at the computer for hours and hours in search of productions that might be willing to include us, and afterwards to write shining offers and CVs to send them. When it comes to private production of concerts, in my home environment, unfortunately, I notice an increasingly common trend of charging extremely high rents for the use of concert halls. This presents a problem during the preparation phase of a specific program, as it is impossible to predict what number of visitors will decide to attend the concert and whether it will be possible to pay off the debt for the use of the hall with the tickets sold. High rents also eat up the already modest fee funds for artists.

Lea Sušanj Lujo: The conditions of the tender of the Ministry of Culture in Croatia oblige performers to also perform works by Croatian authors, which I personally think is very good. This "forces" performers to research Croatian cultural heritage and connect with cultural institutions, cultural institutions are aware of this, so there are generally no problems with cooperation. Sometimes a problem arises when there is no concrete material for a band, then we must be creative, which in practice means that we have to arrange some other song for the band in question. In any case, the connection with other institutions is a very positive experience.

Adriana Alcaide: Unfortunately, art and culture is becoming less and less priority in our society. The system is really capitalistic and most of the things are thought in money level or materialistic efficiency. That's why is being quite forgotten the value of the non-material things in our life. Institutions forget about the importance of the wellbeing in a spiritual level, and they have as a priority the productive things instead of the soul health and emotional wellbeing, which for me are the core of a happy and healthy society. Especially in my country it's difficult for me to find conscious programmers and festivals that look for this approach in music, and not in materialistic and productive terms.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: Unfortunately, for most institutions that concern with musical heritage, medieval music is still the very last one on their list. Even within medieval music itself, some institutions favour vocal groups, or other agendas they have. One must always be ready to be flexible but also be eloquent to explain one's artistic choices. Familiarizing oneself with a large range of repertoires helps.

Josetxu Obregón: Normally we are very well received! The problem normally is to find funding for this kind of project, but we are quite lucky in Spain, since we have support from many institutions, at a National level like INAEM, AC/E, AECID, and at local level from the Madrid and Basque administrations.

Boris Šinigoj: Kindly, no problems.



Martina Okoliš (SI), harpsichord

Ensemble Tacet (SI), Bogenšperk Castle,
16.8.2023

How can music and any other art contribute to a better society?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: Music is an extremely important thing in nowadays society. Mostly people are not even aware of this, because a lot of people listen to music only passively. In any case, the basis of changes is possible in education already in elementary school, where the arts (fine art, music ...) occupy a small or secondary role. Art is too big to be able to describe in a few words what value it has, but I think one of the most important things in today's time is that it teaches people to listen and accept the opinions and ideas of others.

Ana Julija Mlejnjk Železnik: Art is vital. It helps us understand ourselves and the complexity of this world by looking at life from a different perspective. Art fills us with hope and makes us feel alive. We turn to her in times of our worst hardships and in our happiest moments. Art is the part of life that gives us the impetus to make everything else happen. As the German painter Gerhard Richter wrote in 1982 in the text of the catalogue for the Documenta 7 exhibition: Art is the highest form of hope.

Mojca Jerman: I believe that music changes, builds the individual, supports, and connects communities and thus contributes to a more alive, connected and above all alert society.

Adriana Alcaide: I am a real searcher of freedom and I feel that art in general and music especially is one of the freest languages that creates infinite brain connections, it gives us images, it offers us the possibility of imagining new realities, new dimensions, the power of the unknown. At the same time, it allows to flow in all our huge fan of emotions, it cures our suffering, it brings freshness and joy, it gives us power to go on and get our dreams, it makes us spiritual beings, going beyond the material things and even beyond finite life. When a human being smells the freedom, he/she spreads it through his/her environment, other people get »infected« by this feeling, they remember that they are free, that they can look for their peace and happiness without the need of buying things, getting objects, following comparative ambition or being »more« than someone else. Freedom gives us the compromise of building our lives in our own way, without becoming victims or making the others responsible of our life. Art and music contribute to make a more conscious society, in an individual level and as well it gives us the sense of community, collaboration and the importance of personal mission in our environment.

Carles Blanch: Among many other things, I believe that music can create community feelings and it helps us to connect with each other, with our emotions and other people's emotions.

Maruša Brezavšček: I believe that music, like other arts, connects science with life experience. Thus, engaging with the arts is a cognitive, sensory, and emotional activity through which we learn about the world and about ourselves. In this way, cultural heritage connects us all and provides a space to experience it from a personal perspective. As Fiona has already mentioned, people connect through art – for example, through the shared emotional experience of musical interpretation; and of course, also through chatting during a break in the concert.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: By bringing people together; by teaching the next generation the importance of art and culture.

Josetxu Obregón: Music and other forms of art play a crucial role in fostering a better society. They promote cultural understanding, empathy, and unity, transcending language barriers to connect people. Art stimulates critical thinking and creativity, fostering innovation and problem-solving skills.

Tadeja Pance: Art should always remind the society of its imperfections as well as its good things. And it should constantly encourage individual to reevaluate its own values.

Blažka Mraz: Art relaxes, calms, and opens the way to creativity, so I think it is an integral part of society. Although art belongs to the higher needs of society, to the needs of personal growth, it is also born when a person finds himself in extremely difficult situations. In every society there are possibilities of conflicts, disagreements, and disputes, so we need ways to resolve them and connect people. Music is certainly one of those that unites and does not need the tool of language for people to communicate effectively with each other. This is the whole charm of music as well as other arts.

Boris Šinigoj: It ennobles the soul and awakens the spirit of truth.



Maruša Brezavšek (SI): medieval recorder

Ensemble Pampinea (CH), Devil's Tower in
Soteska, 22.8.2023

Photo: Tone Stojko

What is the impact of music on the well-being and health of people, listeners, and creators?

Ana Julija Mlejnjk Železnik: It is known that music has an extremely strong influence on our well-being, and it can also have healing effects. Healing with music and different frequencies is actually not a new concept at all. Throughout history, various forms of music healing have emerged in many cultures. Ancient philosophers already mention music as medicine for the soul, its healing effects were also promoted by Aristotle in his infamous work *De Anima* (323 – 373 BC). Pythagoras treated both physical and psychological ailments with different rhythms and musical lines. Each of them had a different purpose, the most important of which were to treat fatigue, grief, anger, and apathy. In recent decades, frequency therapy has been gaining attention in scientific circles again. Research shows that music (both rhythms and melodies) can significantly affect the functioning of our body. It reduces the level of stress and high blood pressure, and effectively treats conditions of depression and anxiety. It has a beneficial effect on our nervous system and helps restore balance in the body. Let me add that it does matter what kind of music we choose to listen to - different frequency spectrums can have completely different effects. I believe that it is best to rely on oneself and one's inner response: When we feel brighter, more fresh, and lighter after listening to certain music, we most certainly made a good choice.

Mojca Jerman: It's hard for me to talk about facts, but from my own experience and observations, I would say that music helps to revive that part of us that has no place to live in everyday life. For both the performer and the listener, the concert opens a space for emotion, daydreaming, listening, but at the same time calm presence in the moment. If you are open to such a perception, music has a therapeutic effect. It soothes, gives a sense of belonging and acceptance of our common humanity.

Adriana Alcaide: Music looks for and provides harmony, beauty, and balance. It's the human searching for the perfection of nature, the main reference of balance, health, and life itself. When sounds are made with this consciousness, the listener connects with all these qualities and remembers them mentally, emotionally, and physically. Cells have memory and they also look for balance, which comes straight from the music. It's a source of creativity, inspiration and reminds all human beings the capability of creating our own reality, apart from all our environment, it makes us strong, self-confident, and fulfilled by abundance and love, the main source for all kinds of health.

Carles Blanch: I think that music, among many other qualities, helps us to connect with our emotions and to modify our states of mood. As an artist it also represents for me a specific lifestyle, it helps me to communicate, to focus and to go deeper into my own universe.

Martina Okoliš: Music has a significant effect on our mood. The one we don't like puts us in a bad mood, the one we like relaxes us. So, music can also help regulate mood and emotions. Research has shown that music has a healing effect. It reduces stress, increases happiness, improves sleep, reduces depression, and consequently improves general health. All these effects and influences can be seen both in listeners and in performers. I can say from my own experience that playing music has improved my motor skills, concentration, memory, and patience.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: The impact of music on the well-being and health is particularly felt by me as a practitioner and listener during the Covid lockdown period. My friend and I were left at home with no work and no ambition. We subsequently created an early music series online on YouTube and regularly release video recordings with early music fun facts. It got us through the difficult period, gave us inspiration but also a lot of our audiences told us how much the project has helped them too, feeling in touch with the world and having music to smooth everyone's nerves.

Josetxu Obregón: It influences emotions, reduces stress, and contributes to an improved quality of life.

Tadeja Pance: For me, music is one of the most beautiful means of expression, which can easily find its way to the other side. It can be beneficial for the performer at the same time, but on the other hand (if the performer allows himself to do so), it can repeatedly push him out of his comfort zone, which I take as positive personal growth.

Blažka Mraz: Every art allows both the community and the individual to reconnect with themselves. Music allows you to be present in the "here and now" moment, not to deal with other things, but to "just" create and experience, calm down in that moment and lose yourself in time. Music helps you to feel, experience, understand, maybe even those things that we can't grasp with our mind. I think that in today's fast-paced world, full of too many stimuli and mental pressures, we all still need that. As they say: bread is food for the body, and art is food for the soul.

Boris Šinigoj: Good, maintains mental and physical health.



Fiona Kizzie Lee (HK): medieval recorder, pipe and tabor, organetto, double recorder

Ensemble Pampinea (CH), Devil's Tower in Soteska, 22.8.2023

Photo: Anat Nazarathy

What is the impact of art on the challenges of politics and environmental protection?

Lea Sušanj Lujo: Unfortunately, there is no magic wand that can be used to fix uncomfortable situations in different countries with our art. Nevertheless, the goal of music can at least be to represent that there is beauty, that it is worth fighting for. Here, old music plays an important role, as it is mostly listenable, extremely beautiful, and melodic music. I think it would be good to present the mentioned music in alternative situations as well, not only in concert halls, where many people never go in their lives, either they don't have access, or they weren't brought up that way.

Adriana Alcaide: Political aim should be, on my opinion, to educate the youngest ones with respectful values, promoting the community activities, that put people together, not that separate us to fight continuously for who will be the most powerful, sacrificing others, to get our goals. If politics would follow a way of education to make people ask their own questions and find their own answers, if there was less manipulation, less laziness, and more commitment with the community, thinking the best for everybody, including more than excluding, creating new ways where we wouldn't need money and we could exchange knowledges, talents, and virtues. Respecting environment and promoting the art/culture/music of proximity, helping, and giving tools to the artists and teachers to offer the best they can do for society.

Carles Blanch: I think that art has a great potential and capacity to communicate complex ideas in an easy and simple way. Everything that means developing the creativity and the sensitivity can help to build a better world.

Maruša Brezavšček: Through the arts, different cultures and countries are brought together as musicians and artists promote their home countries abroad. Unfortunately, as far as the music profession is concerned, there is a lot of travelling, which is, of course, not very good for the environment. However, the practice of music and listening also provide a space for reflection and self-reflection, and in this way can influence individuals to be more responsible towards nature.

Josetxu Obregón: It raises awareness, I think, but regarding environmental protection we artists should take more trains and less planes when touring!!

Boris Šinigoj: Only God could know that.



Josetxu Obregón (ES), cello

Brežice Castle, 23.8.2023

Photo: Pablo Rocés Albalá

How art can defy state violence against freedom of expression, what are your experiences?

Adriana Alcaide: Music makes us search for beauty, freedom, and peace. So, if we could all have a musical experience in schools, musical ceremonies and go back to the celebration of life, as indigenous did, we wouldn't be thinking in wars, violence, separation, and power of personal ambition.

Carles Blanch: I believe that main function of art is to communicate. There it should be possible to be able to communicate any idea. Luckily, I never had a bad experience in that.

Josetxu Obregón: Art has the power of offering alternative narratives, inspiring resistance, and documenting human rights abuses. It serves as a powerful force for social transformation.

Boris Šinigoj: Music is above all politics, if necessary, it works in the underground.



Tadeja Pance (SI), soprano

Nova Schola Labacensis (SI), Snežnik Castle,
25.8.2023

Photo: Jure Osredkar

How you see the future of art and what its role is in shaping society in the coming centuries?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: Art has played an indispensable role since the beginning of civilization, and as long as humanity exists, it will continue to play that role. It is clear, however, that the perception of what art is changes in different periods and cultures. Sometimes we classical artists look at art very conservatively, sometimes alternative artists look at art very liberally, but all this leads to useful debates about what art brings us and what its potentials are.

Mojca Jerman: It is difficult to know where society will go in the next centuries in such a rapidly changing world, but I can write how I imagine myself or better what are my wishes for the future. I would like society to recognize the value of art (again), so that education in the field of culture would be one of the values that help build a more aware and compassionate society.

Adriana Alcaide: I see that music as a medicine and a free way of express oneself is growing in our society, but not yet seen for institutions or politics. Individually, consciousness is growing but it will take some time to make it more extensive and general in our community. Values need to be transformed and we need to change priorities in our social structure.

Carles Blanch: I think that artists should contribute to the well-being of the community, through our works, and help to bring consciousness to the people about all the challenges that we have as humankind.

Maruša Brezavšček: I imagine that, as the world undergoes major societal changes, the capabilities of artificial intelligence are growing at an unprecedented rate. I imagine that people will be able to have more time to engage with the arts and to listen to music. On the other hand, people have a much smaller concentration span today than they had in the past, before the boom of short videos on Instagram and TikTok... I fear that the young audience for music is diminishing, but I remain optimistic that platforms where "classical" music is more accessible to young people will help shift the situation. Last year I performed as a soloist with the Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra at the Tel Aviv rock venue. I was surprised that the hall was packed and that the young "hipsters" were very enthusiastic to listen and actively follow the concert.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: For me, a society that values culture and the arts makes it a more humane society, in which future generations are raised in love and philanthropy. The status of Art is very different among countries and political systems, but we must all contribute to ensuring Art is on the agenda of our governments and artists being supported and valued.

Josetxu Obregón: Difficult to tell but I hope it keeps accompanying society!!

Tadeja Pance: Art will always find a way. But I wish that the artists of future generations will also influence society with a good, unifying and at the same time critical eye (and that they would be able to learn better from history).

Blažka Mraz: I believe that art will find its time and place in all eras, because man has this inner need and desire to create. Art, as a tool of creativity and expression, plays an irreplaceable role in this.

Boris Šinigoj: Music will exist even if the world collapses (Schopenhauer)!



Blažka Mraz (SI), recorder

Nova Schola Labacensis (SI), Snežnik Castle,
25.8.2023

Photo: Mare Lakovič

How you see the development of the field we call early music in the coming decades?

Ana Julija Mlejnjk Železnik: I think we can expect a complete flourishing of early music in the coming decades. I think that a wider circle of interest in this area will also be formed in our country, including the expansion of the audience and demand. Then it's only a matter of time when old music will get a completely equal status in university circles (as it already has in some other countries). Today's fast-paced lifestyle forces people to find ways to stop and calm down, and old music is a direct reflection of a time when people lived more spontaneously, calmly and in connection with nature. In my opinion, this is one of the most important reasons that old music will gain popularity in the coming decades.

Mojca Jerman: I believe that the boundaries between genres will blur more and more, as is already happening, both in popular and serious music. Where there is a long tradition of performing old music, new, increasingly modern perspectives on performance practice, connection with social issues and, in general, the times in which we live, are opening. This also seems right to me, because art is supposed to speak and live here and now. In our country, we are a little behind in the whole early music movement, but even here, the offers of concerts and the lives of artists who deal with early music are getting richer year by year.

Lea Sušanjk Lujok: I think we artists are underappreciated now, given the high level of education we have. Unfortunately, I often hear comments that we do art out of love, and that this should be enough, but unfortunately love does not feed us. I'm not sure that the people in politics responsible for the cultural scene are even aware of what we do and how much time and energy we devoted to the education and level we have today. That's why I think that a change is needed in society, that musicians and artists will be more appreciated and that they will have a bigger role in society.

Adriana Alcaide: At this present moment early music is suffering a transformation, searching for cross-over and blending opposite musical styles. But maybe in some time, society will miss a bit the pureness of old times and will look again for the sources and specific languages of different historical periods.

Carles Blanch: We should offer new ways of performing the early repertoire, and in this way, make it more accessible to everyone.

Katarina Nagode: I believe that early music movement in Slovenia is only at its beginning. I sincerely hope that we, especially those of us who represent early music in this area, will be able to cooperate with each other and that we will elevate the quality of the movement in Slovenia further. That way we will soon be able to walk hand in hand with best European and other early music performers. My personal wish is to be able to hear Bach's big orchestral works performed in Slovenia more frequently and by Slovenian musicians, additionally, I would love to be an active part of such projects.

Martina Okoliš: I hope that in the next decades we will 'catch' the development of early music in Slovenia, which was initiated by other countries with a long tradition. They interpret early music in a personal, individual way. There is more and more experimentation, research and unique interpretations are welcome but still considering the basic baroque ideas and rules. In Slovenia, we have every opportunity to approach these practices. We need knowledge and experience. International festivals, symposia, competitions, etc., would certainly contribute to development.

Maruša Brezavšček: I think that interest in early music is spreading all over the world; in some places it is still in its infancy, while in the Netherlands, or in Basel for example, early music is quite developed. Living in Basel, a bubble of early music, I wonder if performance practice will change a lot in the future, as research is constantly ongoing, e.g., on instruments and ensembles, but also on different aspects of unwritten rules of historical performance. As is already evident today, it seems to me that there is more and more collaboration between the worlds of so-called classical music and early music, as the

boundaries between them are no longer iron-clad. So, I have the feeling that the popularity of early music is growing, and I hope that maybe the people I meet on my travels will understand the term 'early music' in the future.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: There is a growing strength in the practitioners of early music, while unfortunately in some places the audience is shrinking. Early music needs a strong comeback, maybe with a bit of different energy, goals, and inspirations. As there are generations of enthusiastic practitioners this should not be hard to achieve.

Josetxu Obregón: It's already evolving fast, the artistic quality is higher every time, and it will also continue to evolve in response to changing cultural, artistic, and scholarly contexts. The more we investigate the more it will change.

Blažka Mraz: It is difficult to predict how and what the field of early music will develop in our country in the future. I am happy to hear that more and more young musicians are choosing to study the recorder here in Slovenia. I hope that the interest in early music, historical musical instruments and former performance practices will continue to be maintained and that we, musicians who deal with early music, will only further stimulate, and expand this interest with our activities and concerts.

Boris Šinigoj: It will get younger and younger: old music is always young!



Boris Šinigoj (SI), Romantic guitar

Nova Schola Labacensis (SI), Snežnik Castle,
25.8.2023

Photo: Mare Lakovič

What would be your recommendation to the presidents of countries, their prime ministers and ministers of culture and members of parliament?

Izidor Erazem Grafenauer: Respect art and artists. Respect their time and work. Although many times the work of an artist is difficult to evaluate, difficult to statistically calculate, difficult to verify the results, it is a work that holds water in the long run and that educates, complements our lives, and gives salt and pepper to all existence.

Ana Julija Mlejnjk Železnik: First of all, I would tell presidents of states, prime ministers, ministers of culture and other leaders in key positions that they should give art an important place in their personal and professional lives - I would invite them to attend cultural events as often as possible because through them it will be easier to stay in authentic contact with a part of the population that forms the healthy core and driving force of society. At the same time, with the help and support of culture, they will be more in touch with themselves and in this way will reach their full potential. Culture is the art of being, the art of living; it constantly returns us to the origin and re-establishes contact within us, with our essence, with the truth that resides in each of us. Furthermore, I would promote the awareness that to achieve this noble goal culture needs top (professional) artists who can fully devote themselves to art without constant existential pains. A culture that is at the mercy of current fads sooner or later degenerates into pop culture. Culture and art are extremely unifying elements and to achieve their purpose they need the financial and moral support of society and all individuals who assume leading positions on its behalf.

Mojca Jerman: That their work should be, above all, the work of open ears and hearts. To focus on actions and less on words.

Adriana Alcaide: Equal education to all the people, rich and poor. High quality of public education. More importance to artistic knowledges in the schools. Promoting artistic events in the normal everyday life of the schools and educational plans. Artists collaborating in schools, in difficult neighbourhoods, in prisons, shelters, hospitals. Allowing more activities of celebration with acoustic music, dance, visual arts... Promoting the young groups of the country to be the guides of the coming generations.

Carles Blanch: I would like that they could appreciate culture as a basic way to guarantee the well-being of the people and as a really important tool for our life together as a community.

Fiona Kizzie Lee: Even if they don't bring obvious and immediate financial rewards, it is important for society to cultivate culture, which helps bringing people together.

Josetxu Obregón: That we must fight daily for the perseverance of art in all its forms, it's very worrying how we're losing sometimes audiences to activities such as television, social networks, it's important to keep quality of arts and to educate from a young age.

Boris Šinigoj: Listen to the harmony of the universe and act according to it!

Thanks



Under the honorary patronage of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

AC/E
ACCIÓN CULTURAL
ESPAÑOLA

