

IGOR POMYKALO ANNIVERSARY 2022

This year marks four anniversaries, two happy and two sad. Let's start with the sad ones first: ten years ago, in the summer of 2012, my dear colleague and friend Mr. Tibor Kuti died, with whom I played and hung out for many years in the USZ and F. Grisogono ensembles, and at the beginning of December, my brother-in-law, my oldest sister's husband Vere and the father of my dear nieces Cristina and Giuliana, Mr. Giulio Gerini.

The first of the beautiful anniversaries is the 80th birthday of another friend and colleague of mine, Mr. Mladen Deni Kodrić from Split (originally from Hvar), and the third, which is directly related to the second, is the 60th anniversary of our/that is, my beginning of public speaking, which in some way it continues even today... Namely, in 1962, after only two years of learning the piano (and at least 5-6 years of "sawing" the main but at that time unloved instrument, the violin...) I decided that with two colleagues with whom I went to the first grade VII. gymnasium (in Križanićeva street) and with the younger brother of one of them we founded our own "band". I still have a photo, taken somewhere in the spring or summer, and really far back in 1962, of us "playing" guitars with Vojko Sabolović (the younger brother of our colleague Duška), then the only available "Spanish" guitars known to us. The name of that first boyhood dream was "Coyotes"...

I admit that I no longer remember how it went on and from which moment things became concrete and everything started "for seriousness", but I am sure (unlike Gic's later colleague, Darko Zidar) that both names, under which we became relatively known in Zagreb and included in the professional literature on Croatian rock (see S. Škarica: When rock was young) given by me; first, "Pirates" after the pirates of Neret, and when the Socialist Youth Association started attacking us, "Uskoci", after the Uskoci from Senj. They not only impressed me because of their rude but effective fight against the Venetian occupiers of our Dalmatia and the Primorje, but I also owned a book (which I still have today) by Bara Poparić "History of Senjski Uskok". According to an urban legend (which, unfortunately, was invented by I don't know whose credit, it was included in the interview that my otherwise virtuous and dear former colleagues Gic and Vojko gave to Walter Nena Neugebauer in 1996 and was then taken over by S. Škarica in his already mentioned book from 2005) it was about a completely unexpected attack of inspiration by Viki Glowacki, the presenter of Zagreb's "Varijete", who announced our band "Pirati" as "Uskoke" without prior agreement and at the moment of going on stage... As if his role as promoter at that time of a new phenomenon and fashion trend (let's not forget, certainly pro-Western and therefore very hated by numerous party members, party apparatchiks, Udba informants and other sycophants...) but by itself it was not enough to remain in our fond memories forever!

I'm sure that the key moment was the meeting with Deni (Kodrić and not Kordić as it can be read in Škarica) whom Gic and I found at the music school "V. Lisinski" (Gundulićeva 4) and persuaded him to join us. Another important moment was that almost from the very beginning until the end (at least for me) of the band's activities, we had a constant flow. If I'm not mistaken, it was made possible by Gic's father, who trained wrestling in the "Dverce" hall.

The original line-up of the band began to emerge somewhat; on bass Zlatko Miksić Miksa (later known under the nickname Fuma), on drums, relatively briefly, Duško Sekulić Brada, as many as three guitars (also quite briefly); brothers Sabolović and Gic and me on the piano - when there was one, which was not always the case...

Soon, we are joined by an outstanding saxophonist, Mladen Deni Kodrić from Split (originally from Hvar) from Zagreb (only by birth...).

Rehearsals were regularly held in a one-room apartment at Medvedgradska 40, where I lived in those years with my mother, a respected teacher of solo singing, Nada Pirnat-Pomykalo. Then it was self-explanatory, and today I can freely say; kudos to her for allowing us to make noise in the (then) only room and destroy her old Petrof piano. On warmer days, we tried it with the open windows of our ground-floor apartment to the general delight of neighbors and passers-by, who would sometimes stop, listen to "what the hell are the kids doing" and even applaud us.

We also came up with our repertoire quite spontaneously; apart from the inevitable Shadows, the then extremely popular twist (Chubby Checker and others) due to the luck of having an excellent saxophonist Deni, we soon started playing the repertoire of American bands "Johnny & The Hurricanes", The Champs, etc. but also - as the absolute FIRST in Zagreb, Croatia and the former Yugoslavia - started experimenting with rock covers of Croatian, Bosnian and Slovenian folklore... Our audience (regardless of whether in Variete or at our regular "čags" (dancers) in the Dverce hall was always happy to listen to our covers of the songs "Ja sem Varaždinec", "Čiribiribela Mare moja", "Na planincah" - even a partisan one like "Bilećanka"...

There is not a single preserved recording of all this. Just below Tito's picture (which adorns the title page of Škarica's book - Comrade Tito is very serious and without the obligatory cigar...) we recorded a series of compositions from our current repertoire and handed them to Peri Gotovac, the then director of the former Jugoton. He allegedly lost them, but as it happens in the so-called show-business (where people steal and make things up everywhere and all at 16) our cover of the just mentioned Dalmatian song "Čiribiribela Mare moja" was later recorded by "Zlatni akordi" - in which former "Uskok" Fuma Miksić played, from us called simply Miksa.

In addition to the just mentioned arrangements of primarily Croatian (Dalmatian and Zagorje) folklore, the next feature of "Uskok" was the French repertoire. Although in Zagreb at that time some people had heard of singers like (the late) Johnny Hallyday and of course our own Matt Collins or the late Karl Metikoš about some French bands like Les Fantomes or Les Chaussettes Noires by E. Mitchell, nobody had a clue.

As my first and then strongest foreign language was precisely French, I happened to come across these two and some other French bands and soloists like Richard Anthonni and decided that all of this could be very interesting for our "Pirate-Usko" repertoire.

And the last originality or peculiarity of our repertoire; we were one of the first (perhaps the only ones apart from the then extremely popular and successful "Bijeli Strijela") in Zagreb, Croatia and the former South to start playing things from the repertoire of the "Beatles", who at that time were relatively unknown and were starting their way to the top of their later world career ...

A word about the way of working: at that time in the former Yugoslavia it was extremely difficult to get instruments, amplifiers and records - not to mention sheet music. The main source of information and the possibility of "downloading" new hits was the then very

popular Radio Luxembourg. I will never forget being on the old radio set "Kosmaj" (which my late father left with us

Ferdo) was trying to find the right place for a good reception, which would usually disappear in the middle of the song or turn into noise... As with RL, we removed everything possible (solo, accompaniment, i.e. "harmony", bass, rhythm, even lyrics...) had to repeat listening and downloading due to poor reception a number of times... A colleague from the eight-year school in Mesićeva Street, Toni A., who shortly before that had moved with his parents to West Germany, was extremely helpful and sent me a number of singles since then of the most popular American and English bands. My uncle Braco (Josip) Pomykalo brought me several singles from the French band Les Fantomes from the tour of the Zagreb Philharmonic in France, and my other uncle, cellist Zvonko, from the tour of the Zagreb Soloists ensemble in the USA, singles from our most important role models - Johnny and the Hurricanes.

The band "Pirati"/"Uskoci" had to fight several problems in its short history. One was my instrument, the piano, which was simply not there in some of the halls where we performed (or the instruments were in an unusable condition)... As the time of folk-rock had yet to come, it never occurred to me or my colleagues that instead of (or alternatively with it) of the piano, I try to include the violin, which I certainly played much better than the piano at the time.

Another problem was the amplifier/amplifiers. In Zagreb, there were several technicians who made quite a good living by "ripping off" us with the rental of these devices, and so the quality of our performances partly depended on the quality of the amplifiers that we could rent. That changed when we borrowed money from a moneylender in Tkalčićeva (where Gic lived with his parents in the house where the Tomato cafe has long been located) which we paid back with performances in Dverac, and with that we were able to buy a Framus amplifier. In that relatively small and not too powerful amplifier, they would include 2 guitars, a bass and a microphone from Gic's tape recorder - which alternatively amplified Deni's sax, the singer or my "tusk"...

Looking at the collection of instruments, amplifiers, microphones, effects and the like that I have today in my home sound studio, I remember what a huge and often unattainable problem for our Western colleagues at the time, for all of us "rockers" in the former Yugoslavia in those years. ..

The third problem (which first prompted me to give up, and later led to the definitive termination of the band's existence) was the constant change of one part (ie half) of the members; except for Deni, Gic and me, all the others were either "mercenaries" who would fly in for one or two performances or those for whom we were just a springboard for something "better". For illustration here are the names of those I can think of; after Miksa (Fuma), bass was played for a while by Rudi Zec (called "Red Rudi" in the aforementioned interview and book by S. Škarica), later bassist of the Zagreb band Kennedy Boys. On the drums were partly well-known stars of the Zagreb rock scene, such as Predrag Drezga Dodo and Mario Braco Škrinjarić, and partly also some lesser-known musicians, whose names I don't remember. After Vojko's departure, the solo guitar was played by Igor Lepčin, the former guitarist of the band "Sjene", Vlado Cipetić Cico and others. As a singer (with the exception of one brawler from Šestin who would sing relatively correctly only one thing at every chaga, "Hello Josephine" by Fats Domino, and for that we could be sure that when there was a fight at the chaga or "shore", which happened every so much, we can count on his

protection!), for a while Miljenko Kodžić sang with us (stage name Mike Hammer, later in "Mladim lavovi"), occasionally Emir Altić (known for his very successful rendition of Celentan's 24,000 Kisses) would sing with us, and very young and newly arrived in Zagreb Ibrica Jusić...

I fondly remember those times, despite all the problems, quarrels, tensions, unwanted interventions by parents (except for Deni, who was born in 1942, all the rest of us, at least in the beginning, were minors...) later by some self-styled "managers" (of whom we one "set fire" to a nice collection of singles) and various dubious organizers. Considering that I grew up with a single mother, without my father's presence (after all, like Deni...), that band was also a strange substitute for my father, the first true friendships and - very important for my later development - the first real and full-blooded contact with WITH MUSIC and performing in front of an audience, which was not always easy to delight or satisfy...

So, in a way, there is still something left of all that. I met Deni in 1980 when I worked as an advisor to maestro Nikša Bareza during the production of C. Monteverdi's opera "Orpheus", and again in 1988 during a summer vacation in the town of Hvar. Then we lost the relationship, only to renew it again a few years ago (2018) and now we exchange messages or emails relatively often. I met Gica in Zagreb at the beginning of the millennium, he invited me home and introduced me to his son Mario, an outstanding guitarist (later a member of the groups Film, Prljavo kazalište, Vulkan, etc.). I lost contact with him in the meantime, but the two of them (Deni and Gic) remained quite close all those years.

My short but very intense rock "career" left in me not only an unbroken interest in this music (and related types, such as blues, folk and jazz) but also something that I cannot explain in words, but only play - in any style from traditional folklore, through early to the so-called "world" of music or metal...

Frankly speaking (especially compared to what I later did and achieved in my early musical career), my role in that short but unforgettable rock adventure was musically modest, but even then one could glimpse some of my abilities as a giver of original ideas, arrangements and organizations.

And in the end, I am convinced that if it hadn't been for rock and that year-long "knock-on" on the piano (only sometimes recorded with a poor tape microphone, otherwise mostly without recording...) I would have taken one of the several paths that I could have realistically taken, given my natural talents. : painting, languages, general history, history of art or literature, writing while music would remain in the best hands (as it was the case with literally all other relatives of my generation) exclusively as a nice but ephemeral hobby.

Although I officially stopped playing rock in the middle of 1963, he, that is, the so-called "easy notes" (ie blues, folk, pop and the like) remain close to me, I listen to them, follow them so that in what they could call "medieval rock" and later the so-called "world music" and "free improvisation" my rocker soul, my rocker identity definitely "came out". Coincidentally or not, my late father, Ferdo Pomykalo, made an exceptional career and "invented" not only the fun music of the former South, but also introduced extremely important musical forms of the 20th century, such as musicals. So, as in many other cases, it can be said that "blood is not water" and "the apple does not fall far from the tree"...

In the fall of 2002, during the celebration of my 40th anniversary of public performance, for the first time (through an interview, a CD and a concert in a closed, family, circle in Italy) I decided to commemorate it in some way. Some of my colleagues, who had been good until then, even resented me for it - I never understood why, but I guess because it was for the so-called It is a shame for "serious" musicians to deal with something as miserable as blues, rock - and for some with even more extreme views - even jazz!

I don't know how it struck me then, and it is especially unimportant to me today, at the age of 76.

ADDITIONAL AND MAYBE COMPLETELY UNIMPORTANT MEMORIES:

As from the very beginning we wanted to have a wind instrument in addition to guitars, piano and drums, I once invited my colleague from the music school "P. Markovac", trumpeter Marinko Getaldić, to our rehearsal in Medvegradska. Although he played well, the time of Rhythm and Blues was not yet in sight and we actually wanted to find a saxophonist - among other things, because we liked the sound of our slightly older colleagues from the band "Bezimeni".

The famous Italian singer-songwriter Peppino di Capri once visited Zagreb and held a concert at Šalata. As the tickets were too expensive for us, one of the team thought that they could try to listen to the concert for free and watch it from the upper side next to the fence, and that's how it was. We were enjoying the music until in an instant two udbas came running and we ran away, and in the process two of us hit the thicker wire of a wooden post, the so-called. "Bandere" - I, being a little taller, got a lip at the height of the mouth, and the deceased Miksa at the height of the forehead...

It was more harmless when, one summer evening, we were amazed (of course by the music, but also by the beautiful guitars...) listening to the concert of some older colleagues from the band "Bijeke strjele", on the terrace of the Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb.