

40 YEARS OF LIVING ABROAD, 1983 - 2023

In October of this year, exactly in these days, there will be forty years since my second wife, the singer Mira Valenta from Split, and I left our homeland forever and moved to Vienna, the capital of Austria.

Although there were various reasons, the most important one was the opportunity to perform with one of the best European and world early music ensemble, the "Clemencic Consort" from Vienna, whose founder and artistic director was Dr. René Clemencic.¹

The opportunity to play with and learn from several outstanding experts, (instead of playing the role of a "pioneer" in the revival of early music in Croatia and the former Yugoslavia, certainly important but very tiring and often completely ungrateful role) and to understand whether we were only "the best in the village" (without irony or insults to anyone) or we are able to deal with them on the same level.

Today, after 40 years, remembering those and later years, the question arises as to whether we succeeded in that or whether that decision cost us more than the results we undoubtedly achieved. Anyone who, for any reason, decides to go to the "big world" abroad knows all the problems and the price of being a foreigner all her or his life (regardless of dual citizenship or similar), a part of you forever remaining at "home", which after so many years it's not anymore...

Despite and precisely because of the price that must be paid, I have never regretted my, our, decision. On the one hand, we both fought a battle for daily survival in a new and not always friendly environment (even more so a huge thank to all those dear people who helped us in those first, most difficult years), but on the other hand, what we came here for not only came true but exceeded all our expectations many times. First I (for 21 years) and later Mira on a number of occasions, performed all over Europe with the already mentioned "Clemencic Consort". In addition, initially as "Duo Pomykalo" and later as "Ensemble LYRA Wien", we performed in Austria and most European countries and recorded three CDs with "Lyra". In addition, I have recorded a series of CDs with "Clemencic Consort" and some other colleagues, and Mira records an extraordinary CD under the name "Symphonia Angelica".

A special chapter presents my many years of dealing with Lira da braccio and Lira da gamba (Lirone), for which from 1996 to 2001 I worked at the University of Music in Vienna on my own scientific project Lira and gave a series of lectures and concerts at various European universities, museums of early musical instruments and festivals and early music seminars. There were also collaborations with the Italian ensemble "Micrologus" (CD "Villanelle Napolitane") and the Swiss "Daedalus" and finally my solo activity where I sang and accompanied myself on medieval and Renaissance bowed instruments.

I have never suffered from false modesty, and I am aware of what Mira and I² gave to our homeland Croatia³ and later to several leading European musicians.

¹ In the original, his surname was Klemenčić, his father was born in our Split.

² I am not forgetting several dear colleagues from Croatia and various European countries who sang and played spiritual and traditional folk music from Croatia or Croatian minorities in Austria, Italy, and Hungary with us.

countries such as Austria, France and Italy - in the multiple roles of performer, musicologist - practitioner and publicist. I am also happy that with our visionary activity, combining performances of Croatian religious music with our traditional folk music, we have opened completely new paths and thereby inspired the younger generations of Croatian musicologists - practitioners and performers of early music.

I look back on these unforgettable and valuable 40 years with pride and joy, and I hope that in the coming years I will be able to add something to it that, as before, could be interesting or helpful to someone.

Igor Pomykalo, Birkfeld - Tombolo

³ Until 1983 and later, until today, popularizing Croatian musical and cultural heritage through numerous concerts, recordings, lectures, and articles.