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SPOROČILO ZA JAVNOST

Fotografska razstava / Photo Exhibition

Oliver Belopeta: Zaradi jazza / Because of Jazz

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Zaradi jazza

Anekdata, ki je dala ime razstavi fotografij Oliverja Belopete, gre nekako takole. Mladi privrženec jazza in glasbeni novinar iz Skopja je v sedemdesetih letih redno prihajal na ljubljanski Jazz festival. Ravno zaradi jazza v Ljubljani je nabavil prvi fotografski aparat in začel fotografirati. Negative je razvijal sam kot tedaj večina glasbenih novinarjev, ki so pridno dokumentirali glasbene dogodke, o katerih so poročali. Sproti so se učili skrivnosti in tudi posebnosti glasbene fotografije.

Geografska razdalja med Ljubljano in Skopjem ni ravno majhna. Ta razdalja je bila kljub poudarjenemu občutku bližine v socialistični Jugoslaviji vseeno tudi socialna in kulturna. Tako je, denimo, Jazz festival v markantnih Križankah v sedemdesetih letih užival ugled ene redkih velikih mednarodnih glasbenih prireditev tedanje skupne države, na katere so po svoj stik s svetom ali posebno jazzovsko doživetje redno prihajali privrženci od drugod, podobno kot smo se – vedno žejni jazzu in nasploh nove muzike – tudi iz teh krajev redno odpravljali na podobne prireditve v tujino.

Ob številnih trajnih vezeh s Slovenijo je bil ravno jazz Belopetova najbolj srčna glasbena vez. Spomnimo na krasno izjavo zgodovinarja Erica Hobsbawma, tudi izvrstnega pisca o jazzu, da

mu je ravno privrženost jazzu v svetu, zlasti v ZDA, svoje dni odpirala vrata, ob poslušanju jazz pa je sklepal resnična prijateljstva.

Slovenska javnost in tukajšnje jazzovsko občestvo sta za Oliverja Belopeto prvič slišala leta 2000, ko je postal umetniški vodja ravno tistega glasbenega festivala, na katerem je začel fotografirati jazzovske glasbenike. Ta vloga ob prislovično nezaupljivi domačijski mentaliteti, lokalnih zdrahah in igrah moči okrog razumevanja jazza in pomena festivala v Ljubljani, za nekoga »od zunaj« ni bila ravno lahka. Festival je programsko taval, tonil je v povprečnost, negoval je pretirano željo po ugajanju, nemirni jazz in udobna predvidljivost pa nikoli nista šla preveč dobro skupaj. Toda Belopeta programskega vodenja ljubljanskega jazza ni dobil kot nekdo, ki je v Ljubljani spoznaval svet in domovino. V mestu, ki ga je dobro poznal in cenil zaradi sposobnosti oblikovanja drugačnih, izzivalnih kulturnih scen, ga je prevzel kot dolgoletni umetniški vodja Jazz festivala v Skopju, ki ga je postavil na noge z lastno iznajdljivostjo, prizadenvostjo ter dobrim poznavanjem glasbenega dogajanja in festivalskih ustrojev v svetu. Pod njegovim vodenjem se je skopski Jazz festival razvil v odlično, referenčno mednarodno prireditev, zaradi katere je v Skopju in mladi makedonski državi s številnimi težavami redno pihal drugačen glasbeni veter. Tam so Jazz festival, njegova obširna založniška dejavnost ter pozneje ustanovljeni Off fest (z obronki glasbe sveta in drugih godb) delovali kot posebno svetovljansko kulturno poživilo za skopski vsakdan, kot nekakšna živa glasbena vest ob vseh nesmiselnih rabotah v prestolnici makedonske države.

Ravno zato opozorimo na Belopetov javni nastop v Križankah poleti 2000, ki je v spominu tukajnjega jazzovskega občestva verjetno že zbledel, podobno kot sčasoma obledijo podobe na polaroidnih fotografijah, kakršne rada slika v njegov objektiv ujeta rockerska pesnica Patti Smith. Danes, za nazaj, velja presplošna ocena, da je Belopeta v začetku tega tisočletja v program ljubljanskega Jazz festivala ponovno vnesel »avantgardni jazz«, kar v lokalnem umevanju ljubiteljev jazza in godb, ki so z njim v dialogu, največkrat sproži nelagodje, če ne kar odkrit odpor. Nanj je naletel tudi na prvem ljubljanskem festivalu, ki ga je pripravljjal. Med drugimi je povabil ameriškega črnskega skladatelja in saksofonista Anthonyja Braxtona, ki je bil na svoji izjemni ustvarjalni poti deležen vseh mogočih očitkov, tudi tako nezaslišanih, da je izdal jazzovsko tradicijo. Oliver Belopeta se je kot umetniški vodja festivala v odločnem kratkem nagovoru v slovenskem jeziku jasno postavil za svoj izbor, ki jazz razume kot glasbo presenečenja, vznemirljiv spoj intelektualnega in telesnega, komponiranega in improviziranega, kolektivnega in individualnega, navsezadnje kot živo demokratično glasbeno prakso, kakršno si moderno, socialno in kulturno nemirno mesto, kot je (bila) Ljubljana, zaslubi. To je bila ena najmočnejših javnih intervencij pripravljavcev Jazz festivala in sploh glasbenih prireditev v Ljubljani.

Jazz velja za inkluzivno godbo. Zato je ostajal vitalen in se razširjal iz svojega domicila v severnoameriških mestih. Glasba je v 20. stoletju ponovno podelila moč glasbenikovemu muziciranju, njegovemu oblikovanju zvena in glasbenim odločitvam. Po zaslugi jazza in njegovih glasbenikov smo na Zahodu začeli spoznavati druge glasbe sveta, njihove

posebnosti in tudi podobnosti z njim. Zaradi jazza v glasbenem svetu ni bilo vnaprej dano in znano.

Kratek sprehod po izboru fotografij Oliverja Belopete, ki jih je naredil na številnih mednarodnih odrih, nam kaže ravno to krasno glasbeno pestrost in nepredvidljivost, kakršno ceni sam in jo navsezadnje predstavlja na prireditvah. V glavnem že uveljavljeni glasbeniki vseh generacij z vsega sveta so osredotočeni in razposajeni, igrivi in kontemplativni, hkrati tako izjemni in tako vsakdanji, na odrui in zunaj njega. In vendar je videti, da so pripravljeni na naslednji korak – novemu zvoku, glasbeni gesti naproti.

Ičo Vidmar

Because of Jazz

The anecdote that lent its name to the exhibition of photographs by Oliver Belopeta goes something like this: in the 1970s, the young jazz aficionado and music journalist from Skopje regularly attended the Ljubljana Jazz Festival. It was because of jazz that in Ljubljana Belopeta bought his first camera and started taking pictures. He developed the negatives himself, which at the time was a common practice among most music journalists who diligently documented the music events they covered. At the same time, they penetrated the mysteries of photography in general, and music photography in particular.

There's a considerable geographical distance between Ljubljana and Skopje. Despite a distinct sense of closeness felt in the socialistic republic of Yugoslavia, this distance nevertheless also entailed a social and cultural divide. Thus, for example, in the 1970s the Ljubljana Jazz Festival, held in the imposing Križanke open-air theatre, enjoyed the reputation of one of the few relevant international music events in the then federal republic of Yugoslavia that continued to attract foreign music buffs eager to keep abreast of the latest developments in international jazz or have a memorable jazz experience, just as we, the natives, – always hungry for jazz and new music in general – regularly attended similar events abroad.

It was precisely jazz, along with the countless lasting ties that bind him to Slovenia, that was Belopeta's strongest and most ardent musical bond. Here, we should recall the compelling statement by historian Eric Hobsbawm, also an excellent jazz critic, that it was his devotion to jazz that opened doors onto international arenas for him, especially in the States, and who had made some true friends while enjoying live jazz.

The Slovenian public and the local jazz community first heard about Oliver Belopeta in 2000, when he was appointed Artistic Director of the very music festival that inspired him to start photographing jazz musicians. This was no easy task for an 'outsider,' given the axiomatically distrustful native mentality, local discords and power struggles related to the perception of jazz and the role of the Ljubljana festival. The Festival's ill-defined programme was off course, sinking into mediocrity and overly eager to please; and restless jazz and self-complacent predictability make odd bedfellows.

However, Belopeta was not named the Ljubljana Jazz Festival's selector as someone who had gained knowledge about the world and his homeland in Ljubljana. In the city he knew well and whose ability to generate different, provocative cultural scenes he greatly appreciated, Belopeta took up this post as a long-standing Artistic Director of the Skopje Jazz Festival, an event he launched through his own ingenuity, assiduity, comprehensive knowledge about the global music scene and insight into the functioning and texture of international festivals. Under his guidance, the Skopje Jazz Festival developed into an excellent, referential international showcase that breathed new musical life into Skopje and Macedonia, a young state facing numerous problems. The jazz festival, its extensive music publishing and the subsequently established Off Fest (with offshoots of 'world music' and other

music genres), served as a special cosmopolitan stimulant to the cultural life of Skopje, a sort of fresh, revitalising musical breeze sweeping through the capital of Macedonian state, occupied in all kinds of daily drudgery.

That is why attention should be drawn to Belopeta's public appearance in Križanke in the summer of 2000 that must have slipped from the memory of the local jazz community, gradually fading just like Polaroid photographs, images of rock poetess Patti Smith as seen through Oliver's camera lens.

Today, an over-generalised view is held, in hindsight, that Belopeta reintroduced 'avant-garde jazz' into the Ljubljana festival at the beginning of the millennium, which tends to cause discomfort, if not manifest disapproval, in the regional public with its widely held perception of jazz and of other cross-impregnated music genres. He also met with opposition as the selector of his first Ljubljana festival. Among other artists Belopeta programmed Anthony Braxton, an African-American composer and sax player with an impressive track record who was repeatedly criticised, and outrageously accused of supposedly breaking with jazz tradition. As the Festival's Artistic Director, Oliver Belopeta shortly addressed the audience in Slovenian and resolutely put forward arguments in favour of his choice and, basically, the selection that sees jazz as a musical surprise, a thrilling blend of the intellectual and the physical, composed and improvised music, the collective and the individual, and – ultimately – a living democratic music practice worthy of Ljubljana, a modern, socially and culturally burgeoning city. This was one of the most forceful public interventions of a jazz festival selector, or concert promoter, that Ljubljana had ever witnessed.

Jazz music is deemed to be inclusive. This characteristic has supplied it with continued vitality and encouraged its global spread from the urban areas of North America – its place of origin. Jazz is the music that in the twentieth century re-empowered the musicians, giving free rein to their experimentation with sound and music choices. On account of jazz and jazz artists the West was able to sample tremendous variety of world music, exploring both the specifics of music of various ethnic origins and its similarities with jazz. It was because of jazz that the music scene could push the envelope and challenge the established conceptions.

A brief glance at the photographs that Oliver Belopeta has snapped at a number of international venues reveals precisely this splendid diversity and unpredictability of music practices, the heterogeneity of talent that he fully appreciates, and promotes at his concerts. The photographs mostly feature renowned international artists, young and old, concentrated and unrestrained, playful and contemplative, quite extraordinary and yet so ordinary at the same time, as stage personas or private individuals. And yet their readiness to take the next step is apparent – their eagerness to create new sound, to venture into new music domains.

Ičo Vidmar

Življenjepis avtorja

Oliver Belopeta je bil rojen v Skopju, Makedonija, leta 1952. Makedonske narodnosti.

V sedemdesetih in osemdesetih prejšnjega stoletja je deloval kot glasbeni novinar in radijski voditelj. Je poslovni direktor nepridobitne, nevladne kulturne ustanove Skopje Jazz Festival, ki jo je ustanovil leta 1996, in umetniški vodja Skopje Jazz Festivala od njegovega začetka v letu 1982. Kulturna ustanova Skopje jazz festival organizira dva festivala, Skopje jazz festival (35 let) in festival Off-fest, osredinjen na glasbo sveta (15 let), ter deluje kot producent in založnik albumov pretežno makedonskih jazzovskih in etno glasbenikov. Član vodilnih evropskih organizacij, Evropske jazz mreže (EJN) in Evropskega foruma svetovnih glasbenih festivalov (EFWMF). Med letoma 2001 in 2005 je bil umetniški vodja Ljubljana jazz festivala.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Oliver Belopeta. Born in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, in 1952. Macedonian nationality. In the seventies and eighties worked a lot as a music journalist and radio announcer. From 1996 he is an owner and director of non-profit, non-governmental cultural institution "Skopje Jazz Festival". An Artistic Director of Skopje Jazz Festival from its start in 1982. The Cultural Institution "Skopje Jazz Festival" organises two festivals, Skopje Jazz Festival (for 35 years), the more world-music oriented festival Off-fest (for 15 years), and producing and releasing CDs mainly by Macedonian jazz and ethno artists. A member of the important European organizations, European Jazz Network (EJN) and of the European Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals (EFWMF). Between 2001 and 2005 he was an Artistic Director of the Jazz Festival Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Razstavni program CD

Ljubljana, 20. junij 2017

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Sreča za vse

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