

Budva, Theatre City

The Theatre City of Budva is not a gratuitous cultural fact of either Montenegro or the town of Budva.

That a festival of this kind should be founded in 1987, several historical, cultural and other circumstances were requisite.

The very name of the festival suggests the identification of the town with the festival. It is as though into every dramatic performance and festivity given by actors, musicians, poets and painters was built a stone from the ancient city, which according to historical records dates from the first century after the birth of Christ on even older foundations going back to the fifth century B.C. when it was called Butua. By the great Sophocles it was called "city of the Illyrians".

Also conveyed by the name of the festival is the fact that Budva, the whole town, is a large theatre, that in the summer months during the festival it places itself at the disposal of artists invited to speak to the inhabitants of the town, to all visitors who in modern times are called tourists and to one another, as if it had been created so that artists could become acquainted with one another and demonstrate the results of their art.

In other words, everything that the hands of builders erected in this pearl of the Montenegrin coast is left to the imagination of artists who find places amid the stones of the old city, one big stage, whether under the skies, on the highest parts of the citadel, on a sandy beach washed by the sea, on squares enclosed by ancient habitats, in the portal of a small church or inside venerable buildings dedicated to the spirituality of this city which has existed for centuries.

It is by no means an accident that events at the festival, founded in 1987, stealthily, from the shaded portal of the Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity seem to be observed by the stone bust of Stefan Mitrov Ljubisa or himself personally, this son of Budva, wise and witty, warmly humane and versed in the pithy words of this region. Without words there would be no poetry or sermons or theatre, nor even music as the sublimation of the potential rhythms of man's power of speech, everything that makes this festival unique on the territory of present-day Yugoslavia.

When, stone by stone, Budva rose from the ruins after the earthquake of 1979, the energy and persistence that rebuilt the city was directed toward reconstruction. One of the most important undertakings was founding the festival - the Theatre City of Budva.

In any undertaking of this sort the subjective factor always plays a role. In this case the pioneers of the Theatre City festival. The idea of founding the festival came from a well-known citizen of Budva Svetozar-Sveta Marovic.

The first years the art director was Ljubisa Ristic, an energetic, imaginative director, founder and participant in so many other festivals in this country and abroad, including the YU-fest project. This was in 1987. Already then Budva's potential as an open-air festival had been realized. The next two years the festival was directed by Velibor Zolak. Until 1990 the festival was part of the activities of the Budva Cultural Centre. Performed then were productions of the Bolero Theatre City, directed by D.Z. Frej, Medea directed by Rahim Burhan, Alef directed by Branko Brezovic, Hamlet in Mrdusa Donja directed by Branimir Micunovic (Zvezdara Theatre) and the guest performance of Claustrophobic Comedy (Zvezdara Theatre). In 1990 when the Theatre City became an independent institution, Branislava Lijesevic was named director and with her competence and energy for five years she managed to give a more distinctive profile to the Budva festival. During this new period the basic characteristic of the festival was supreme quality in the domain of the theatre, music and other manifestations of art. Besides presenting this country's best productions, adapted to open-air performance, the festival endeavours to create its own ambitious productions with such finetirectors as Dejan Mijac and Vida Ognjenovic. It can be said that these two directors have left a singular mark on the Budva Theatre City festival. Vida Ognjenovic with the productions Kanjos Macedonovic and Shock and Tremor, both based on works by Stefan Mitrov Ljubisa, and Dejan Mijac with the Budva premieres of Yugoslav Drama Theatre productions Fraudulent Prince Scepan the Small by Njegos and Troilus and Cressida by William Shakespeare.

The Budva outdoor stages have accommodated many of the finest productions of the Yugoslav theatre, most ideally adapted to natural, open-air stages, such as Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, directed by Egon Savin (National Theatre, Belgrade), Becket's Waiting for Godot in two versions, one directed by Haris Pasovic (Belgrade Drama Theatre) and the other directed by Bora Draskovic (Art Faculty, Novi Sad), Lucrecia or Alfredo, directed by Jago Markovic (T. Theatre, Belgrade), Merchants by Goldoni and Emanuel Jankovic directed by Vida Ognjenovic (Yugoslav Drama Theatre, Belgrade), Princess Xenia of Montenegro (Montenegrin Royal Theatre, Zetski Centre, Cetinje), Professional directed by the author Dusan Kovacevic, Jedupka (Pralipe Theatre, Skoplje), Bernard Alba's Home directed by Dejan Pajovic (Bitef Theatre), Bloody Wedding directed by Rahim Burham (Theatre a.d. Rur), Macbeth Seeking Macbeth choreography by Dejan Pajovic, Crazy with Love (Yugoslav Drama Theatre), Antigone directed by Ljubisa Ristic (National Theatre), My Name is Mitar directed by B. Durovic (Montenegrin National Theatre, Podgorica), Kir Janja directed by B. Majer (Serbian National Theatre, Novi Sad), Medea directed by Ivana Vujic (Bitef Theatre), King Lear directed by Karen Johnson (Novi Sad Summer Festival) and others. In eight seasons the Theatre City became Yu- §

Yugoslavia's leading open-air festival. Owing to the fact that today the Dubrovnik, Split and Ohrid festivals are outside the borders of Yugoslavia, the Budva Theatre City has gained significance for Yugoslavia in its present borders, although it is not the only festival taking place on outdoor stages. This is a festival which invites the most important theatre events on the territory of the third Yugoslavia, a kind of synthesis of these events. In the family of Yugoslav festivals it has a distinctive physiognomy. While Bitez takes place only partly outdoors, it invites primarily foreign troupes. YU-fest in Subotica has the auteur's mark of a specific theatre and the exceptional creative personality of Ljubisa Ristic. The other outdoor festivals are less ambitious or geared to children. The Budva Theatre City is already registered on the densely populated map of European festivals as a specific open-air festival primarily thanks to its distinctive profile. Were it not for the embargo, there would have been more foreign troupes, a few participating in the Budva festival despite the cultural embargo. These were young experimental ensembles from Russia (Coleso and Derevo), Georgia, Poland (Mandala, Hvilova), and New York (Donald Bird).

No less significant at the Budva festival are its music events characterized by the high criteria displayed in the choice of repertoire.

Excellent artists, orchestras, ensembles and soloists have participated: Radmila Bakocevic, Jadranka Jovanovic, Dunja Simic, Rita Kinka, Kemal Gekic, Ilija Grubert, Aleksandar Serdar, Aleksandar Madar, Istvan Varga, the Sophia soloists with Ljubisa Jovanovic (flute), Moscow Madrigalists, Leningrad Soloists with Mi-hailo Gantvarg (violin), Russian Chamber Orchestra, Belgrade and Macedonian Philharmonics, Novi Sad Opera, Camerata academica, and also the young Stefan Milenkovic, Ilija Marinkovic, Nenad Lecic, Vujadin Krivokapic and Vladimir Do-mazetovic. Secondary festival events in the domain of the fine arts are part of the Budva concept of lasting artistic values, such as the exhibitions of Voja Stanic, Milos Sobajic, Cvetko Lainovic, Branko Miljus, Voja Tatar, Slobodan Slovinic, Cile Marinkovic, Stanko Zecevic, Nikola Gvozdenovic-Gvozdo, as well as Ratko Vulcanovic's sculpture in open-air settings. Poets' Square will be discussed separately, but it represents an organic part of the Budva Theatre City. The festival and Poets' Square complement one another since the poets and other literary personalities are joined by the actors, festival guests, many actors going straight from Poets' Square to their dressing rooms to make up and concentrate on their performance.

This poet-actor collaboration symbolizes the connection between poetry and drama, collaboration which began in Europe in the open-air over twenty five years ago and continues today.

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