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Encounters with Svanibor – a Meeting of Hearts and Minds

It all started on a chilly evening in late April of 1993. I was in Slovenia as a participant in the musicological conference Slovenian Music Days, hosted by Professor Primož Kuret of the Music Academy in Ljubljana. I had just presented the findings from a Norwegian research project named The Resonant Community indicating that inclusion and sharing of the cultural heritage of immigrants in the school curriculum for music and dance would lead to a considerable improvement of the social climate of participating schools with a significant reduction in ethnically related conflicts, when something happened that proved to open a new chapter in my life.

At the end of my presentation a young man rose from the back row and approached me. He presented himself thanking me for my talk and responding by telling about the research project that he had just completed in Kosovo, studying the mediating role of Kosovo Romani musicians in the conflict torn province. It was then my turn in course of the excited conversation that followed to tell Svanibor about my mission in coming to Ljubljana – that of seeking a candidate for a visiting professorship at my Department of Musicology of the University of Oslo funded by the Norwegian Research Council. The real challenge calling for immediate and urgent action lay in the application deadline expiring the next day. We immediately sat down and an application with the outline of a new research project soon came to life and was sent off to Oslo. This was the birth of our cooperative Azra project (1994) aiming at studying the role of music in promoting positive cultural interaction between refugees from the former Yugoslavia and the Norwegian population. It all resulted in Svanibor joining our colleagues at the Department of Musicology. An important learning outcome for me during the implementation of the Azra project resulted from discussing and deciding on research methodologies and studying his very effective way of parallel teaching.

After Svanibor had completed his assignment at the University of Oslo and returned to his research and teaching jobs in Zagreb and Ljubljana, our partnership continued to grow through mail exchanges and my participation at the international and regional conferences that he initiated on behalf of his department or the ICTM study groups. A peak experience for me was joining Svanibor for the first conference on Applied Ethnomusicology hosted by Professor Jeff Titon and his colleagues at Brown University in 2003.

Another opportunity for cooperation toward realizing our common goal of building wider international research bridges came with the invitation from the Vietnamese Institute for Musicology in Hanoi to host a joint conference of the ICTM Study groups on Music and Minorities and Applied Ethnomusicology in the summer of 2010, with Svanibor carrying the main responsibility for planning. An opportunity for widened cooperation with music departments at Asian Universities had by then already started through the signing of an MOU between the Department of Musicology of the University of Ljubljana with the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok that paved the way for a successful visit by students and professors from Bangkok and performances in select cities around Slovenia.

On the background of the central role played in enlivening city culture in Ljubljana beginning with the project and later followed up by the open concerts in city initiated and led by Lasanthi, his wife and her intercultural ensemble, Svanibor became the first to be nominated as member of the Editorial Board of the peer reviewed Journal of Urban Culture Research after my assuming duties in 2009 as Chief Editor of this official organ of the Urban Research Plaza of our Bangkok and Osaka faculties.

Following another decade of meetings of hearts and minds in planning for the culminating cooperative event of Chulalongkorn University hosting the 45th ICTM World Conference in 2019, we have now come full circle in times of looming crises of responding to a call for mobilizing the power of music in a renewed effort toward realizing the vision of a future world cooperating for peace among nations and peoples.

Thank you Svanibor!!!



Picture 5: Conclusion of the music and dance workshop at the University of Chiang Mai, Thailand, May 2009.