



creative, inspiring, colorful

Culture in Slovenia

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

THE STORY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN SLOVENIA



The share of employees in cultural activities in Slovenia is 2% of the total number of employed persons (which is 10th out of 33 countries included in the Eurostat survey).

The story of culture and arts in Slovenia has been marked by a diverse and rich natural and cultural tradition that has always given rise to the creativity of writers and other artists. We Slovenians take arts and culture as our basic element. Culture and arts are the pride and heart of our national identity. They have a special place in Slovenian history, too, as they helped Slovenia compensate for the absence of national political and state institutions in the past.

The attitude of Slovenians to their national culture is truly intense, and Slovenia boasts a well-developed network of cultural institutions, organisations and associations comparable to most developed European countries. There is a rich cultural life not only in the biggest towns, but in almost every corner of Slovenia.

The cultural market of Slovenia is small. About a fifth of the two-million-strong population regularly attends cultural events. The funds

of culture in Slovenia come for this reason to a great extent (as much as two thirds of all resources earmarked for culture) from the government. The state fully finances the national network of institutions and also covers most programmes, activities and projects in the field of international cultural cooperation, a considerable share of publishing, the cultural activity of the Italian and Hungarian minorities in Slovenia, as well as of the Slovenians living abroad (about a fourth of Slovenians live out-

side their homeland). Local communities are responsible for libraries, some other cultural institutions (local museums, art galleries and cultural centres) and cultural associations.

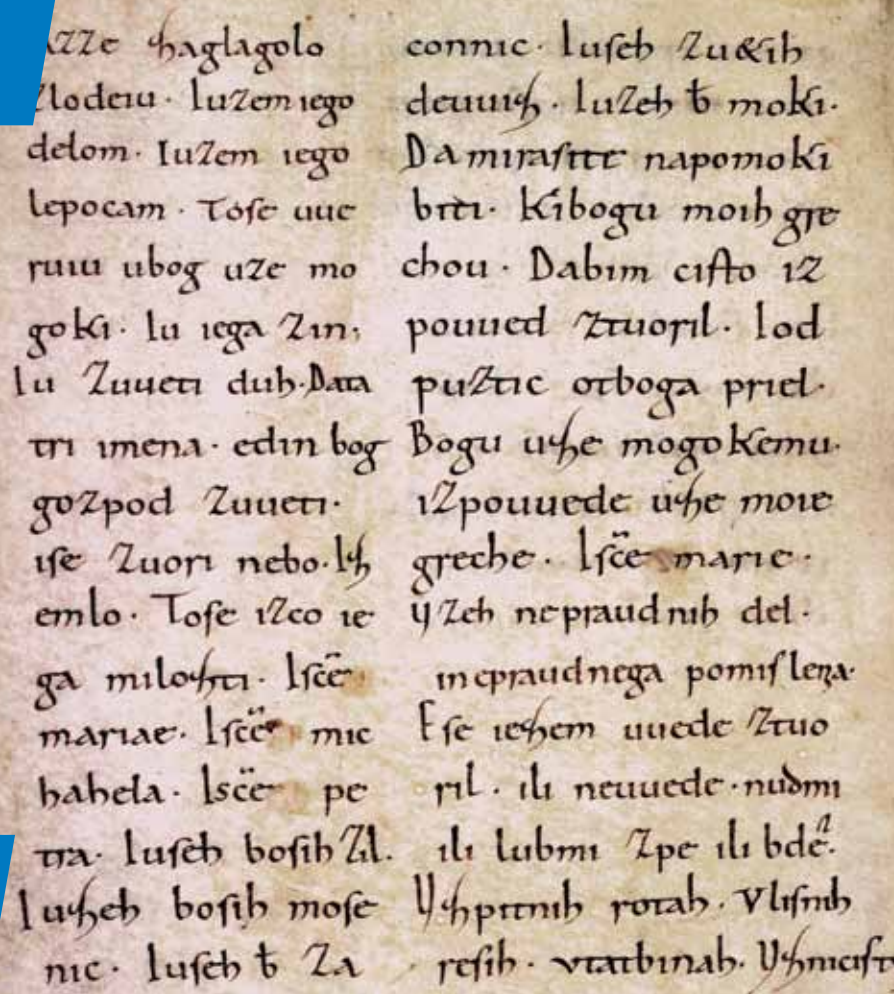
Market mechanisms, however, rule the entire entertainment industry, including rock, jazz and other music genres that are also important forms of creativity and that play a significant role in culture and society.

CULTURE IS A VALUE

But let's begin at the beginning. Nations are not only defined by their geostrategic position or by the demonstration of different forms of power. The basis can be much more philosophical, perhaps even esoteric, and inspiring, for example culture and cultural excellence. This is why Slovenia also builds its identity on an extremely rich cultural heritage, and if we are to understand this, we have to know the heritage well.

One of the most important landmarks in the development of Slovenian language and culture were the Freising Manuscripts. These are the oldest records in Slovenian, created between 972 and 1039, probably before 1000. They are an important element of the identification of Slovenians with achievements in the field of culture and art. The manuscripts are kept at the Bavarian State Library in Munich, Germany.

We have to mention the poet France Prešeren, who became the pride of Slovenian poetry, and who is also the author of the Slovenian national anthem Zdravljica (A Toast). This poem calls for the co-existence of nations and is a toast to all people of good will.



Uze haglagolo
Moderu. luzemiego
delom. luzemiego
lepocam. Tose uue
ruu ubog uze mo
goki. luiega zin,
lu zuueti duh. Data
tri imena. edin bog
gozpod zuueti.
ise zuori nebo. ih
emlo. Tose izco ie
ga milosti. Isce
mariae. Isce mic
habela. Isce pe
tra. luseh bosih Al.
luseh bosih mose
nic. luseh b Za
connic. luseh zu&ih
deuuih. luseh b moki.
Da mirasite napomoki
biti. kibogu moih gre
chou. Dabim cisto iz
pouued zuoril. lod
puztic orboga priel.
Bogu uhe mogokemu.
izpouuede uhe more
greche. Isce marie.
yZeh nepraudnih del.
inpraudnega pomislena
Isce ieshem uuede zuo
ril. ili neuuede. nudmi
ili lubmi Zpe ili bde.
Uhpitnih rotah. Vlisnih
resih. vtabinab. Uhmist

SLOVENIANS AND CULTURE

The story of arts and culture in Slovenia is an individual one: almost every Slovenian is a poet, painter, cook, dancer, winemaker, musician, director, actor, blogger, or carver. From all that we love, we can make art. As well as artists working in different handicrafts and trades which have been transferred from generation to generation down through the centuries, Slovenians are successful in many contemporary arts accessible to all generations. We respect cultural and artistic creation and everything to which we add a personal touch. Cultural activities in Slovenia have numerous faces and one could say that art is the field in which Slovenians make their wishes come true. We leave a part of us in everything we do.

Slovenia has a very extensive, high-quality and internationally recognisable amateur culture. Some 4900 amateur cultural associations with almost 100,000 members are active in Slovenia.

Cultural events are well attended; various festivals (especially during the summer) impress visitors who come from near and far. Theatre and concerts are also very popular, and we love to read and are proud of our cultural tradition.

LANGUAGE

The official language in Slovenia is Slovenian, as determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which also guarantees the Italian and Hungarian minorities the right to use their respective languages and develop their cultures in the areas in which they live.

Although Slovenian is part of the South Slavic language group, it also shares many features with the West Slavic branch. Slovenian has been also influenced by the Roman, Germanic and Finno-Ugric worlds.

About 2.4 million people around the world speak Slovenian as their mother tongue. It is a special language: the most notable is the use of dual form, the grammatical number used for two people or things in all the inflected parts of speech, which is nowadays a very rare phenomenon in linguistics. Despite the relatively small area in which Slovenian is spoken and the small number of speakers, linguists have identified forty-six clearly established dialects.

Slava Vojvodine Kranjske (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola, 1689), an encyclopaedic work by ethnographer and historian Janez Vajkard Valvasor. The book is the first systematic outline of Slovenia's history, territory and way of life. His treatise on Lake Cerknica earned Valvasor membership of the Royal Society in 1687.



LITERATURE AND BOOKS

Slovenians feel literature; it has helped build our identity, and it has kept its prominent role until today. When Primož Trubar, a Protestant priest, published the first Slovenian printed books – Catechism and Abecedarium – in 1550, he put the Slovenian language and nation on the map of European nations in the spirit of the time of the Reformation. Trubar smuggled the first Slovenian books in barrels from the Tübingen, Germany, printing house, which is not a legend, but a proven historical fact. Even the great man himself could probably not have imagined that this would lay the foundations for the Slovenian literary language on which artists of future generations would build, and the rich repertoire of creativity that would follow his work.

Ever since, the literature and language have been closely intertwined with national consciousness, which was best expressed by France Prešeren, the greatest Slovenian poet and a known personality of European Romanticism. His poetry was also one of the foundations of the first important national political programme, which served as a basis for the development of a clearly defined national identity. Prešeren is the author of Zdravljica (*The Toast*), the national anthem of Slovenia, written at the time of the Spring of Nations in the first half of the 19th

century. Zdravljica calls for harmony among the nations, toasts to all good people and exclaims “that all men free no more shall foes but neighbours be”. Ever since it was written, Zdravljica has been an important aspect of Slovenians’ struggle for independence and a foundation of the national identity.

Perhaps this is why Slovenian writer Ivan Cankar wrote that Slovenia is a piece of heaven under Mt. Triglav. This representative of the Slovenian modernism, and one of the most prominent authors, was among those who linked literary creation with political activism. This is further evidence of how creativity and (international) political activity go hand in hand. Today, these authors are succeeded by numerous writers and poets, including Boris Pahor, Drago Jančar, Tomaž Šalamun, Aleš Debeljak and Brina Svit, whose works have been translated into several foreign languages, proving that a language spoken by a mere two million can have priceless treasures, too.

Slovenia holds global records for the number of new book titles issued per capita. Most of these titles are literary works, with a high share of Slovenian literary titles and translations of contemporary foreign literature.

A lively book market requires an appropriate organisation of authors, publishers and booksellers. Most authors are members of the Slovene Writers’ Association, whose unwavering intellectual commitment makes it one of the most respected associations. The role of the Association was especially important in the democratisation of the society in the 1980s. The Slovenian section of PEN International enables Slovenian authors to participate in activities at the international level and meet foreign writers. Their efforts focus on human rights, demands for peace and the freedom of the written word.



Name to remember: Slavoj Žižek, philosopher and lecturer. Catch him in one of his lectures in different parts of the world.

Every fourth citizen of Slovenia is a member of a general library, and every member visits a library about twenty times a year. Twelve books borrowed annually per capita (2012) place Slovenia among the top-ranking countries in Europe.



Slovenia now has thirty-four professional theatres in all important regional centres, two opera and ballet houses and two professional puppet theatres. The Academy of Theatre at the University of Ljubljana was established in 1945.

THEATRE

The first plays in the territory of present-day Slovenia were staged in the 16th century by seminarians of different religious schools (especially the Jesuits); the oldest preserved example is Škofjeloški pasijon (Processio locopolitana; The Škofja Loka Passion), a model example of Baroque theatre at the time. Capuchin monk Romuald Marušič, who lived in Škofja Loka Monastery, wrote the first draft in 1715 and completed the final version in 1727. The passion play is a procession that stops at certain points in Škofja Loka.

The origins of Slovenian theatre go back to 1789, when Anton Tomaž Linhart first staged his comedy *Županova Micka* (Micka, the Mayor's Daughter) at the then German Estate The-

atre. After a relatively long hiatus, theatre activities increased towards the end of the 19th century with the founding of the Drama Association. The first professional theatre, SNG Drama in Ljubljana, was established before the First World War and has been the home of the best Slovenian theatre artists until today.

As well as institutional theatres, Slovenia has several active experimental theatre companies whose achievements significantly shape the sphere of the performing arts. Theatre is the area of Slovenian culture that has achieved outstanding success and acquired a reputation confirmed by international media in the last three decades.

FILM

While the first Slovenian documentary was made only shortly after the invention of the film camera by Karol Grossman in 1905, only a few isolated films and short silent documentaries were produced before the Second World War. However, the European scene was strongly marked by Ita Rina, a Slovenian-born silent film star.

Film production came to life after the Second World War. The first Slovenian talkie full-length film, *Na svoji zemlji* (On Our Own Land), directed by France Štiglic, transcended the stereotype of socialist-realism in film with its emotional power and sincerity. Most other Slovenian films from the period depicted the war and social topics in a surprisingly intimate, emotional way that differed from the ideological matrix of the immediate post-war years. This was also the beginning of the era of quality children's films, many of which (e.g. *Kekec* by Jože Gale or *Dolina miru* by France Štiglic) also won awards in Western Europe; they

were followed by modernist films by Matjaž Klopčič and Boštjan Hladnik, who drew inspiration from French and Scandinavian production. Slovenian production also includes numerous films based on Slovenian literary works.

The 1980s marked the beginnings of critical, socially committed films problematising the established historical outlook. After Slovenia's independence, an entirely new generation of directors appeared and film production strengthened considerably in the new millennium. Although most films still focus on the social issues of marginalised groups, the number of comedies, romances and examples of other genres is not small.

An important role is played by public television, which regularly undertakes joint projects with film producers, thus helping to create the current feature programme. This is, after all, one of the foundations and principal tasks of Slovene public television.



MUSIC

Music is a widespread art form among Slovenians. We like music of all kinds: classical, pop, popular folk music... We like to sing, in choirs or only by ourselves. The most popular genre is popular folk, followed by pop music, classical music, rock, jazz and ethno.

The first secular songs date from the 9th century. The Reformation played an important role in music, too, as it produced songbooks written by Primož Trubar and Adam Bohorič. The great composers of the time include Jurij Slatkonja, the first Bishop of Vienna, and Jacobus Gallus Carniolus. In the 19th century, music, too, was influenced by the elements of national awakening.

The Slovenian National Theatres of Ljubljana and Maribor each has an opera orchestra, and there are two symphony orchestras: the Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra and the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra. The Slovene Philharmonic orchestra has a large and loyal audience, and often hosts famous musical names (including Ana Netrebko, Elton John and Sting).



A Neanderthal flute, which is at least 45,000 years old and which was found in Slovenia, is the oldest musical instrument in the world.



In addition to fifteen professional orchestras, Slovenia has numerous musical institutions, associations and choral. There are thousands of active choirs that unite lovers of song and musical culture of all generations.

VISUAL ARTS

The visual arts comprise an artistic field with a strong tradition in Slovenia. Although excellent church painters were active as early as in the 12th and 13th centuries, painting developed relatively slowly and gained visibility only after the Romantic period.

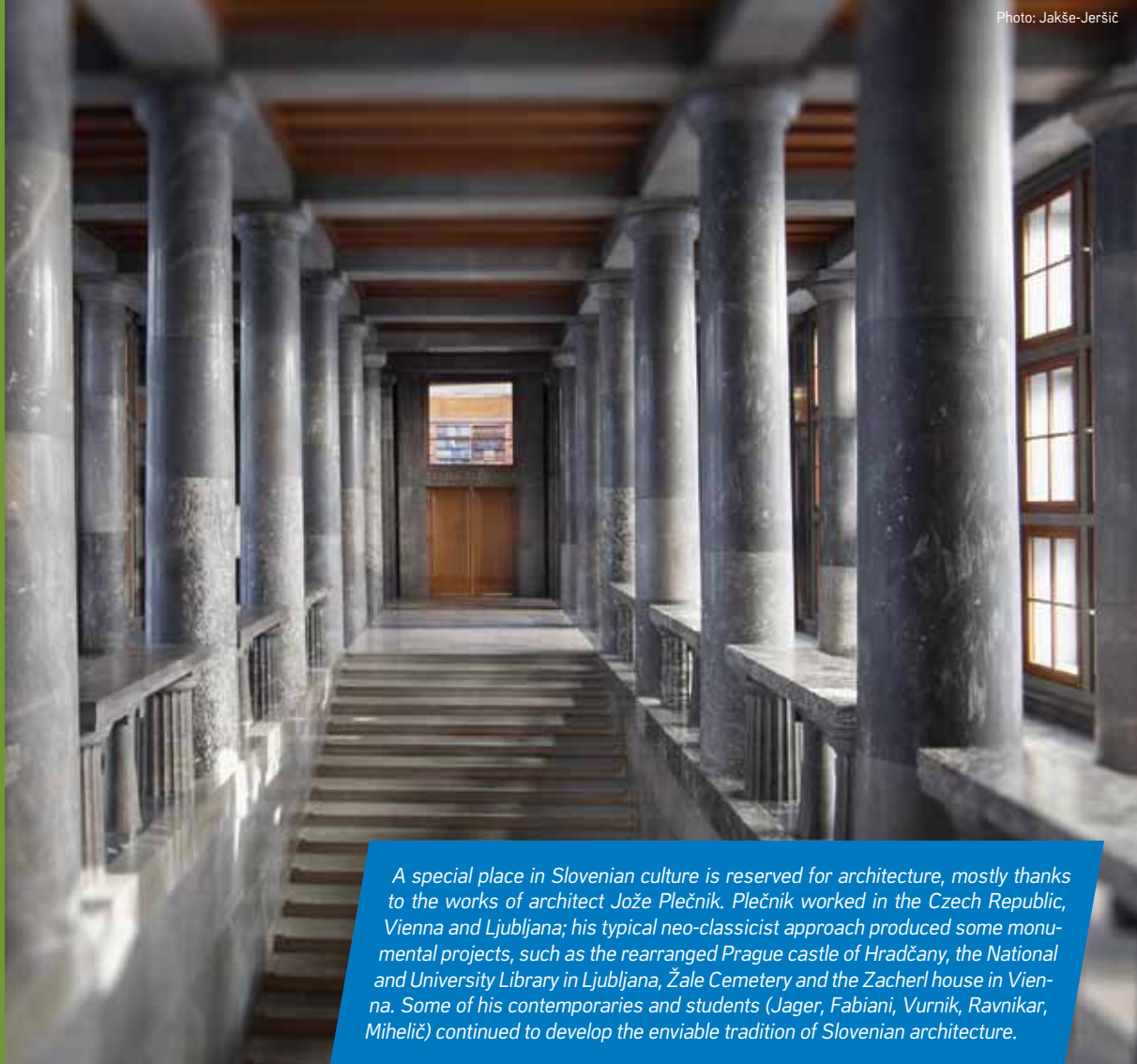
Representatives of Slovenian Impressionism in the first half of the 20th century produced outstanding works. After realist Anton Ažbe, who was active mostly in the German cultural sphere, Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama, Matej Sternen and Rihard Jakopič reached the peak of Slovenian painting. The first visual arts academy was opened after the Second World War, which increased the number of artists.

After 1960, when the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts was launched, the graphic art school of Ljubljana also won wide recognition.

Zoran Mušič, the most acclaimed Slovenian modernist painter, worked in Venice and Paris from 1945 to 2005.

Slovenians view innovation and design as important competitive advantages. Designers made many important breakthroughs, especially in the field of industrial design. Slovenia systematically developed this with the well-known Biennial of Industrial Design, which became an important regional centre of the activity already in the 1970s. An industrial design department was established at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Ljubljana very soon after the Academy opened.

The field of visual arts has a relatively diversified system of professional institutions: the National and Modern Galleries are the central museums, while the Architecture Museum and the International Centre of Graphic Arts are the core establishments. The results may be viewed in several hundred art galleries and museums open across the country.



A special place in Slovenian culture is reserved for architecture, mostly thanks to the works of architect Jože Plečnik. Plečnik worked in the Czech Republic, Vienna and Ljubljana; his typical neo-classicist approach produced some monumental projects, such as the rearranged Prague castle of Hradčany, the National and University Library in Ljubljana, Žale Cemetery and the Zacherl house in Vienna. Some of his contemporaries and students (Jager, Fabiani, Vurnik, Ravnikar, Mihelič) continued to develop the enviable tradition of Slovenian architecture.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Because Slovenia had no metropolis and its central national institutions were established only at the end of the 20th century, there are few monumental buildings in the country. There is, however, an all the more interesting ethnographic and ethnological heritage. Rural architecture, original solutions for planning small settlements and houses, *kozolci* (hayracks) as an original rural "tool" for making hay, and quaint town centres that radiate the organised modesty of former townspeople are the most visible features of the cultural heritage.

Beautifully preserved old town centres (such as Ptuj, Piran, Škofja Loka, Kranj, Ljubljana) display the central European heritage of Gothic and Baroque architecture. The same applies to the majority of churches that constitute the greatest share of the cultural heritage. The best-known examples of religious heritage are the church at Sveta gora near Ptuj, and the Stična, Žiče and Pleterje monasteries. The town of Idrija, with a disused mercury mining complex, is a well-preserved cultural monument of the early industrial era.

Movable cultural heritage is promoted by about sixty museums and by many more museum collections. The biggest museums are the national general museums in Ljubljana: the National Museum of Slovenia and the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, specialised museums (ethnographic, technical, natural science museum) and regional museums in all regions of Slovenia. The most interesting include Kobarid museum, which won the best European museum prize.



Slovenia is also interesting for its many small castles, which were used by the aristocracy as holiday homes and hunting lodges. The best-known castles are those in Ljubljana, Bled, Ptuj, Podstreda, Predjama, Otočec, Mokrice and Snežnik, all popular tourist spots.

SPECIFIC FEATURES

The oldest wheel with an axle in the world was found in the Ljubljansko barje area. The estimated age of the wooden wheel is 5200 years. The find also indicates the outstanding value of the pile-dwelling – villages dating back to the era from the 5th to 2nd millennia B.C., i.e. to the time of the first farmers. The importance of protecting and preserving such sites was also recognised by UNESCO, which in 2011 confirmed the group nomination of Alpine countries (Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland) and added the pile-dwellings to the World Heritage Site List.

Slovenia is among the rare languages that still has dual forms.

Maribor, the second biggest city in Slovenia, was the European Capital of Culture in 2012.

Painted beehive panels are a unique reflection of folk creativity and rural art in the Alpine region of Slovenia, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries and depicting everyday life and religious scenes.

Kurent is one of the original carnival characters from Ptujsko polje that is supposed to chase winter away.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EVENTS

Slovenia annually hosts many events that enjoy recognition beyond its national borders. Among the most notable are the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (which has gained a reputation as one of the greatest European visual art events), the annual Ljubljana Summer Festival, Festival Lent in Maribor, the Liffe film festival, the Exodos festival of dance arts in Ljubljana, the Ana Desetnica street theatre gathering, the PEN writers' meeting in Bled, the Vilenica writers' meeting in Sežana, and the Biennial of Industrial Design. Especially important in this respect is the Carskarjev dom cultural and congress centre in Ljubljana, a member of the network of the most prominent global cultural festivals, which is Slovenia's window on the world in the field of exchange and cooperation of Slovenian and foreign artists.

I feel enthusiastic.