



INTERVIEW conducted on 20.09.2019

by

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INTERVIEW with ZDRAVKO ODORČIĆ
FOR DIOGEN PRO MAGAZINE BY ROKIAH HASHIM

Zdravko Odorčić was born in Osijek. He works and lives in Zagreb, Croatia. He is a theatre activist, a writer and a poet. He published over 150 literary works including 9 plays, 1 novel, 7 poetry books and 1 children book. He is founder of Kultura Snova and online Radio Snova. He is a playwright who directs his own scripts on stage. He was the founder and Director of TV Osijek Plus during the Patriotic War. He leads Zagreb Poetry evenings weekly. Kultura Snova has 250 members and followers all over the world who collaborated and work with him. He is some kind of cultural ambassador connecting people from various races, cultures and religions spreading tolerance, peace and bridging people from all over the world through his artistic activities. Recently he started caravans of poets called Na Dlanu or On The Palm of The Hand producing anthology from each poem festivals he organizes from various towns in the Balkans.

Question: Tell me more about your childhood background, schooling and university education

My parents moved to Osijek immediately after the 2nd World War and I was born there.

As a child, I spent more time in the village than in Osijek; my grandparents stayed there. They raised me and I have learnt many things from them what helped me a lot later in life. First of all, they have taught me how to love the nature and how to get from it what it gives to us. They have taught me to be honest and to respect other people and love was present there within each part of my life.

When I had to go to primary school it was really very hard to me go off from them and I went back every free moment. They are still alive for me in my heart.

After I graduated from high school I wanted to enroll to study direction at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb but my parents could not afford my schooling. I tried to enroll the study of literature, but due to that ancient system I didn't manage. I was enrolled in the Pedagogical Academy where I graduated physical education and became physical education teacher.

At the same Academy I optionally enrolled the study of acting: I wanted to learn more about the actors so that I would be able to write dramas the best I could. I have never graduated acting since my aim was not to become the actor but to become good drama writer and director.

Soon after my graduation I got a job and worked with the children with special needs.

Since the writing and the theatre were always in my nature, along with my work I was writing and also actively participating in many off theatre writing and directing the same dramas.

I was learning from the others by watching them how they were doing all that, I was reading a lot. Ultimately, I have learnt a lot about the theatre and the writing.

Question: After completing your education, what did you do? Tell me more about your early career and how did you get involved in the art and poetry

During the mornings I was working at school, in the evenings I was working in the theatres putting on plays and during the nights I was writing. I have the restless spirit and nothing was difficult to me. I joined the work of the Students' Theatre in Osijek and I have made many plays with them. I also participated in many other events related to the Students' Cultural Centre as the theatre editor .

I founded the off theatres since I wanted to work outside the institutions and to create a different theatre. There I had much more freedom although it was much harder work which the society didn't recognise. Nevertheless, I was very satisfied since the performances had a good echo in the audience.

At that time I was not writing the poetry. I knew the poets only superficially, except the classics.

After 15 years of the work with children, I had to make my decision whether to work as a culture professional or as a teacher. At the very beginning of the war in Osijek in the year 1990, I decided to work in the culture; the school children were kept away in other towns and other countries and I began organizing various humanitarian cultural programmes that were the light in the tunnel at that time of the war devastation in Osijek. During that war and post-war period I organized around 200 different events such as concerts, plays for children and adults, war exhibitons and poetry evenings.

Question: How was the development of your art career from the beginning until now?

What does a career in these this region really mean? I was working continuously as an alternative artist, that is the one who is not within the state system, as such I have been with no career. I have been making my career only with my independent work and by tilting at windmills.

I have persevered by persistence. The love for this job has been leading me. Today I am still this enthusiast who believes that culture can save this world by encouraging people to look at the life differently.

Question: What are your favorite themes in your drama scripts, novels and poetry? And how did you get to write them? What inspired you in all these genres?

The themes in my writings are different. My first printed book is a novel in which I have tried to describe how politics and various other political events can affect the love of two young people who are totally above that. My second book is a book of five dramas in which I deal with the intimacy of the individuals. They have been written for the actors to express their acting skills.

The themes of my writings vary from love and social issues to the criticism of the state.

Many actors who were working with me are now well-known and acclaimed actors in Croatia and this makes me happy.

My inspiration are people, ordinary events that can change people's lives.

I am very happy when after each programme I can see the positive effect on the faces in the audience. That's what keeps me doing all this. If these smiles disappear, I will not deal with culture any more. This is the acknowledgement for my work and my effort. This is the success of my career.

Question: Tell me more about your publications from beginning until now

I have already mentioned novel and drama, Besides them, my six books of poetry collections have been published. Poetry came into my life quite accidentally, but in fact, as people say-nothing is accidental.!

In my poems I celebrate love as the departure point for better humanity, I boost emotion as the freedom; nobody can take this freedom away from you. I love to point out woman as a being in the poetry and I think women are better part of the humanity. Globalism makes them become what they are. I can see them differently, I feel their soul and so I know they are stronger than men are.

Question: What are the challenges faced in being an artist in Croatia? And how are you coping with them?

In Osijek the disintegration of post-war culture just happened. Instead of creating and dealing with the new cultural challenges, it seems that the time has come back into the previous century, due to our politicians who came to power politically illiterate and have pushed culture together with the education down to the bottom of the social ladder. I haven't neither stopped fighting nor I felt tired, I just felt that I had no space there and decided to move to Zagreb where the culture was still

happening. Neither in Zagreb is brilliant situation but there is more creative space with places and the people appreciate your work. The Newspapers are full of bad politicians instead of artistic creators. Consequently, many creative people leave the country and go there where they will be treated with respect and above all, will be paid a decent wage for their work.

Question: What about financing of your arts projects- drama, poem festivals etc. ?

Unfortunately, funding is a great problem in Croatia. We are a small country and in the majority of cases the funds are being obtained along political lines or by various lobbies and not in compliance with the value of the product. If you want to do something by yourself, you have to manage somehow by yourself or to invest in your own projects. In Croatia people can't live on cultural work. You can write hit novel, make a hit play, but you can't live on this.

Question: Your Poetry on the Palm Series of Festivals (Na Dlanu), when did you start it? Where the Festivals have been held since the beginning?

The project „On the Palm“ happened quite accidentally eight years ago when I was a guest writer on „The Ship of the Culture“ that was visiting Croatian islands. I proposed the organizers to make the International Poetry Festival „More na dlanu“ (eng. „Sea on the Palm“) in Pula and Rovinj as a part of this event. They agreed and this was the first Festival. This year it will be the 8th International Festival „More na dlanu“ (engl. „Sea on the Palm“) in Pula and Rovinj. One year I conceived International Poets Caravan in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, it came upon my mind that we could expand this event to other towns and that, like the poets nomads, we organize Festivals „Slavonija na dlanu“ (engl. „Slavonia on the Palm“), „Dubrovnik na dlanu“ („Dubrovnik on the Palm“), „Zagreb na dlanu“ (engl. „Zagreb on the Palm“). I am specially glad that this year we have made „Sarajevo na dlanu“ („Sarajevo on the Palm“).

If you ask me, why „on the palm“, that's why we offer the poetry also to the common people and destroy the myth that the poetry is only for the selected ones. At these festivals the artists meet each other, the friendship spreads and with all this the culture between people spreads also. Around 80-100 artists come to this festivals, sometimes even more. This is one special energy of goodness that connects the people.

Question: What is Kultura Snova or Culture of Dreams? And why that name?

„Kultura snova“ or „Culture of Dreams“ is a cultural association that gathers poets and other artists from the whole world.

The poets are dreamers and it somehow suited me to use the word „dreams“. I founded it in the year 2011 in Zagreb, not thinking about how it will expand. We started with the Zagreb Poetry Evenings, now they have reached the number of 190.

Today we have more than 250 members from all over the world and, I believe, the same number of supporters.

The Culture of Dreams has its own online „Radio snova“ (engl. Radio of Dreams“) but we also deal with the theatre performances and publishing books. So far, as Culture of Dreams we have published more than 180 titles of various books, including poetry, dramas, novels and picture books. We print and issue high-quality books and are very proud of it.

Question: What about the reception of fellow artists, poets etc to all these programmes?

Our projects are open to all the people of goodwill. All the artist and those who are not are gladly accepted as our members if they respect several things such as: love between the people, tolerance and fight against all the types of violence, if they respect other religions and generally people with no matter what religion, nationality or skin colour they are.

The poets must react to all the world injustices and fight against all the possible wars. They must be that force that will use their voice and their poems to fight against globalism that destroys nations and the people. This is why I have been organizing international festivals to show that different people can be one great love of friendship.

Although among the participants there are well-known writers and *great stars*, in our projects we all are the same since we all make one and the same synergy by which we promote love and art as the most sacred thing in the world.

Question: Current and coming projects?

Let's stick now to the the projects we already have and to publishing new books with new authors.

We are going to continue encouraging the young authors, but also all other talented authors that will join us in our projects.

Question: What are your hopes and dreams?

I have more dreams than hopes!

I believe that one day state institutions and media will recognize our work and its importance in the wheel of culture creation and that then it will be even greater chance for the culture to be even stronger bridge that connects people.

You know how beautiful is to see the smiling and happy faces during our programmes and how a great prize is the friendly hug and meeting of the new people who all breathe the same and who want the world to be different from the one we have been living in now.

These are my dreams!

Question: Geo-political and economic situations in the world can see more and more artists, especially the poets involved in the issues that concern and move the masses toward the world piece and environmental issues. What do you think of this?

This world is restless, combative and brings a lot of sufferings to the small nations. Great powers and globalism destroy small countries, specially those who are rich in any kind of resources. These are always banal reasons and most often are carried out in the name of democracy, but these great powers first do not respect it. Their aim is the profit and they are capable of dispersing the whole nations or to imprison them into the ghetto just to earn money and rule.

Nothing that happens in the world is accidental. Everything is planned and in their plans there are the people who get hurt. To them the people are just numbers. The modern Holocaust is being repeated.

On the other hand, there are more and more people and less and less resources. The water and food even less. The leaders of the global world have polluted the planet and they are now producing artificial food. They pollute the Earth additionally.

The time will come when this will also disappear. The future wars will be fought for water and waste as the source of energy.

This planet was created by the union of nature and man; in such a chaos like this one nowadays and with the the behaviour of the great countries, not only the small nations will be lost but also the mankind.

Thank you very much for this exclusive interview for DIOGEN pro culture magazine, respectable Zdravko Odorčić.

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