

listen to slovenia

Pocket Music Guide



MUSIC
SLOVENIA



Listen To Slovenia: Pocket Music Guide

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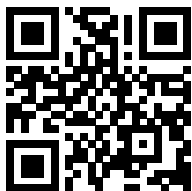
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Small Country, Big Music Scene

Formally operating within **SIGIC – the Slovenian Music Information Centre** – since 2025, the **Music Export Office** presents this publication featuring a selection of texts on contemporary Slovenian music and its performers across a wide range of styles, from the underground and experimental scenes, wind bands, *Oberkrainer* and choral music, to popular, classical and jazz genres. Its primary aim is to present Slovenian music abroad.

With a remarkably rich and diverse musical landscape, Slovenia – a nation of just two million people – boasts two national opera and ballet houses, a national philharmonic, a symphony orchestra, a choir, and a big band; more than 100 musical festivals; around 150 wind bands; over 1000 choirs; and countless musical groups and solo artists working across the many sub-genres of popular, artistic, experimental and traditional music.

The country maintains an excellent publicly accessible and regionally networked system of free music education. Collective management organisations responsible for collecting royalties and other indemnities perform above the European average, and public spending on culture is enviably high. Slovenian musicians can acquire official self-employed artist status, which includes state-covered social security contributions and health insurance. They can apply for public grants to realise cultural projects, perform in subsidised venues, and receive performance fees.

How about abroad? There are many notable international success stories. Alongside established names such as Avsenik, Laibach, Globokar, and Umek, a new generation of stylistically diverse artists is steadily making its mark on the international musical scene – among them Grammatik, Senidah, Luka Šulić (formerly of 2Cellos), Jure Pukl, Brina Knauss, Ksenija Filipič, Anže Rozman, Kaja Drakslar, Mak Grgić and many others. For a time, Joker Out were selling out concert halls across Europe. The neo-soul duo free-kind. have attracted attention not only for their musical creativity but also for their collaborations with leading K-pop producers. The trio Širom continues to push boundaries in the world music arena – and, at the time of writing, *The Guardian* has selected their new album as its Album of the Month (October 2025). In just over a decade, the younger and middle generation of composers, including Vito Žuraj, Nina Šenk, Petra Strahovnik, and Matej Bonin, have brought Slovenia to the very forefront of contemporary musical composition.

Considering the past and present achievements of Slovenian musicians, we can be confident that the best days of Slovenian music are still ahead. Our Music Export Office is building a stable support environment for Slovenian artists touring abroad, encouraging more of them to pursue international careers despite the favourable conditions at home. This is particularly true for the next generation, who will follow in the footsteps of their more established colleagues – not only to gain international recognition, but also to achieve lasting financial success.

Primož Kristan,
Secretary-General of SIGIC



The first violin from the exclusive Mother Violin string series, in which 6,500-year-old Čadrška fir is used as the resonant wood. According to carbon analysis, this ancient wood has been preserved for millennia in the embrace of pristine Slovenian nature, acquiring exceptional resonant properties. Master luthier Daniel Musek, trained in the Cremona school famed for its master string-instrument makers, has skilfully harnessed these remarkable properties to create a superb solo violin that is distinguished by the materials used, the craftsmanship involved, its striking appearance and its extraordinary sound.

Photo: Vito Debelak (Foto Vito).

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Updating Tradition

Classical Music and its New Considerations

Primož Trdan

Music is one of those domains in which Slovenian creative artists seem particularly able to transcend the limits of their national setting. Benefiting from a high-quality education system and open access to international experiences, interpreters of great classical works and composers of contemporary music engage fluently with established traditions while contributing their own perspectives.

Interpreters of the Future

Today's new generations of musicians continue to tread the path forged by violinist **Igor Ozim**, flautist **Irena Grafenauer**, pianist **Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak**, and mezzo-soprano **Marjana Lipovšek**—

names etched in the memories of musical connoisseurs and collectors of anthology recordings. Eminent interpreters such as **Marko Letonja**, the current chief conductor of the Bremen Philharmonic, and singers **Bernarda Fink** and **Sabina Cvilak**

Violinist Lana Trotovšek has appeared as a soloist with major orchestras under distinguished conductors, including Zubin Mehta. A recipient of the Prešeren Fund Award, she is renowned for her radiant tone and profound musical insight. Her acclaimed recordings of Beethoven and Brahms have earned international praise from BBC Music Magazine, Diapason, and Melómano. Photo: Marco Borggreve.



Five-Time Grammy Award Nominee



Mak Grgić is internationally recognised as a collaborative musician and champion of contemporary music, particularly the work of Slovenian composers. He has performed in major venues including Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall, the Musikverein in Vienna, and the Shanghai Grand Theatre, among others. His artistry is defined by close partnerships with composers such as Vito Žuraj, Nejc Kuhar, Peter Šavli, Leon Firšt, and Nina Šenk, whose works he has commissioned and premiered in concert halls worldwide.

His Grammy-nominated album *Entourer* (2024, Dissonance Records) stands as an all-Slovenian project, celebrating his country's vibrant contemporary musical voice through new chamber works and cross-genre experimentation. Most recently, as a guitar duo with Mateusz Kowalski, Grgić earned a Grammy nomination in the Chamber Music / Small Ensemble category (2025), for the album *Slavic Sessions*, reaffirming his dedication to bringing Slovenian music to international audiences. He earned his fifth nomination in the Best Album for Children category for his production and composition work on the album *Buddy's Magic Tree House* by rap artist Mega Ran.

A five-time Grammy Award nominee, Grgić's projects bridge borders between classical, folk, and avant-garde traditions, helping position Slovenian contemporary composition on the global stage. Through his collaborations, recordings, and advocacy, he continues to serve as one of the leading ambassadors of the evolving landscape of Slovenian music. Photo: Sami Rahim.

are joined by younger generations. Among them is **Alexander Gadjiev**, who, at the 18th Chopin Competition in Warsaw, took second place and the Krystian Zimerman Prize for the Best Performance of a Sonata. He has since consolidated his reputation as a probing musical intellect on some of the world's foremost stages.

He is followed by younger pianists **Nejc Kamplet** and **Urban Stanič**, who took second place at the 2014 Eurovision Young Musicians competition—previously won in 2010 by flautist **Eva Nina Kozmus**, an active soloist and sensitive chamber musician. Other notable soloists include **Tanja Sonc**, based

in Zürich, and London-based **Lana Trotovšek**, who has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra and released acclaimed recordings of Beethoven's sonatas. Following his crossover success as a member of the duo 2Cellos, cellist **Luka Šulić** has returned to exploring new challenges in interpreting classical pieces and in his own creative work.

Young performers today draw from a broad spectrum of styles. Guitarist **Mak Grgić**, a five-time Grammy nominee, has established himself in the United States, where he is equally at ease performing complex new scores and film music. Another stand-out interpreter of



Composer Nina Šenk, a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU), is one of Slovenia's most internationally renowned contemporary composers. Her works are performed by leading orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. In the 2025/26 season she is featured as a **Composer in Focus** with the Sinfonieorchester Aachen, further underscoring her international acclaim and artistic stature. Photo: Ciril Jazbec.

DSS A Key Catalyst to Slovenian Musical Creativity

The Society of Slovene Composers was founded in 1945 and has played an essential role in Slovenian musical life ever since. It currently has 125 members. Its main areas of activity are concert programming and publishing; its publishing department, Edicije DSS, issues sheet music and recordings of works by Slovenian composers. The Edicije DSS catalogue consists of approximately 2,700 works and 150 CDs, available for purchase. The Society's longest-running regular concert series is the *Concert Atelier of the Society of Slovene Composers*. Today, the Society also regularly holds concerts of contemporary Slovenian classical music dubbed the *Night of Slovene Composers*, concerts for younger audiences named *Slovenski skladatelji mladim* (Slovenian Composers to the Young), the *Unicum* international biannual festival of contemporary classical music, and a variety of other events.



in Zürich, and London-based **Lana Trotovšek**, who has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra and released acclaimed recordings of Beethoven's sonatas. Following his crossover success as a member of the duo 2Cellos, cellist **Luka Šulić** has returned to exploring new challenges in interpreting classical pieces and in his own creative work.

contemporary music, **Luka Juhart** stands among Europe's leading accordionists and is enjoying a growing reputation as a composer. The duo **Drumartica**—virtuosi **Simon Klavžar** and **Jože Bogolin**—are among Slovenia's most prominent percussionists.

The new generation of outstanding operatic and concert soloists includes baritone **Matjaž Robavs**, whose credits include Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* at the Salzburg Festival, sopranos **Bernarda Bobro** and **Nika Gorič**, and Frankfurt Opera member **Domen Križaj**.

Voices of Composers

Young Slovenian composers have embraced the tempo of the modern world, its rapid exchange of information, and the resulting closeness of the global community. **Vito Žuraj** captivates even the most traditional orchestral audiences with his stirring sonorities; his works are commissioned by the likes of the **Berlin Philharmonic**, the **Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra**, and **Frankfurt Opera**, for which he created the acclaimed opera *Blühen*.

Nina Šenk has likewise emerged as a prominent voice in symphonic and operatic composition. Her



Composer Matej Bonin, assistant professor at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, works at the intersection of music, theatre, and dance. His works are performed by renowned ensembles including Ensemble Modern, Norrbotten NEO, the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, and the Slovenian Philharmonic Chamber String Orchestra, and have been featured at festivals such as Musica Viva München, Warsaw Autumn, and Slowind. Photo: Darja Štravs Tisu.

virtuosic and sonically refined works include the *Concerto for Orchestra*, performed by, among others, the **Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam**. She has also been awarded the Johann-Joseph-Fux Prize, and, in 2024, the Erste Bank Kompositionspreis.

Matej Bonin is establishing a name for himself in symphonic music while simultaneously exploring new ways to shape gesture and musical flow in collaboration with performers. His series *Gymnastics of non/sense* brings these experiments into the realm of music theatre. Composer **Petra Strahovnik** channelled a decade of experimentation with unconventional instruments into *Pra-*

na, the orchestral work which won the 66th **International Rostrum of Composers** in 2019; she now continues to investigate performative musical practices.

A mentor to many daring young composers, **Uroš Rojko** continues to refine his socially and environmentally conscious artistic voice. **Larisa Vrhunc's** chamber and orchestral works are rich in tonal nuance, while **Milko Lazar** has developed a distinctive sensitivity in balancing minimalist rhythm and darker harmonies within the ballet genre, particularly in collaboration with choreographer **Edward Clug**.

Art Revitalisation Spaces

Ljubljana's musical life is sustained by two main symphony orchestras, both of which revitalise their tradition through the influence of international guests. Recently, the **Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra** has refreshed its repertoire, performing major contemporary works, commissioning new music, and striving for the perfect synthesis of historical knowledge and contemporary sound in collaboration with its chief conductor, the Georgian maestro **Kakhi Solomnishvili**.

Alongside its commitment to Slovenian music, the **RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra** reaches wide audiences across genres, through both crossover collaborations and a classical repertoire, under the dynamic leadership of its young chief conductor **Lio Kuokman**.

Opera in Slovenia is under the careful guardianship of two institutions: **the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana** and **the Slovene National Theatre Maribor**, each comprising an opera chorus, a ballet corps, and a symphony orchestra.

The summer **Festival Ljubljana**, a member of the European Festivals Association (EFA), attracts leading names in classical music while also providing a platform for innovative projects by Slovenian ensembles. Maribor, the second largest city, hosts the **Festival Maribor**, which focuses on building connections with its environment, blending

the standard repertoire with newer, more eclectic styles. **Festival Radovljica**, with its diverse and distinctive programmes, offers a panoramic view of early music. Its long-standing artistic director **Domen Marinčič** also serves as Professor of Historical Performance Practice at Mozarteum University. The older early music festival **Seviq**, a member of the European Early Music Network (REMA), stages events at cultural heritage sites across the country. The **New Music Forum** festival explores contemporary music in particular depth. Each autumn, it offers a conceptually broad framework and commissions new works from the composer at the centre of the programme. **The Biennale Koper** contemporary music festival follows developments in the domestic scene and invites international artists to participate.

Publishers, too, play a vital role in preserving and revitalising musical art. The national broadcaster's label **ZKP RTV Slovenija** distributes the finest recordings from its radio archive. In the past, music by Slovenian composers appeared on major international labels; today, composers can rely on releases of the **Society of Slovene Composers**, the agile label **Astrum**, or their own digital self-releases.

At Home and Abroad

The Paths of Slovenian Composers in the 20th Century

Gregor Pompe

The watershed year 1918 also turned out to be a turning point for Slovenian music. Joining a new state union enabled the final institutional emancipation of Slovenian music and, with it, its gradual professionalisation. The main Slovenian musical association, **Glasbena matica**, which oversaw all aspects of concert and music education life, was able to operate with even greater fervour than before the war. The Matica transformed its school into a **Conservatory** and expanded with the addition of the nationalised Philharmonic Society. In the 1930s, under the leadership of conductor **Mirko Polić**, the Ljubljana Opera House also reached one of its artistic peaks, staging works by Wagner, new Slovenian operas, and numerous contemporary European works.

The new political and national circumstances, however, also divided the Slovenian cultural environment. Many key representatives remained loyal to the nationalist ideology of the 19th century, while others sought stylistic paradigms detached from romantic and late-romantic notions. **Anton Lajovic** (1878–1960), composer of some of the most successful Slovenian lieder and choral works—musical forms that had already flourished in Slovenia in the 19th century—continued composing in the same vein as before the War. **Emil Adamič** (1877–1936) followed a similar path. Pianist-composer **Janko Ravnik** (1891–1981) produced his first great masterpieces for piano in the tradition of 19th-century virtuoso pianist-composers. **Risto Savin** (1858–1948) tackled the concept of a national opera. This group also includes the younger **Lucijan Marija**

Škerjanc (1900–1973), who undertook larger symphonic, concert, and vocal-instrumental genres.

In contrast, **Marij Kogoj** (1892–1956) and **Slavko Osterc** (1895–1941)—the pioneers of Slovenian musical modernism—took an entirely different path. Each approached *new music* in his own way: Kogoj embraced the subjectivism of expressionism, while Osterc favoured a more objectivist distance from the new reality. Kogoj studied in Vienna with the famous opera composer Franz Schreker and later sought the encouragement of Arnold Schönberg at his seminars. The Viennese milieu—the emotional modernism of Mahler and Richard Strauss to the expressionism of the Second Viennese school—is reflected in Kogoj's lieder, choral works, piano miniatures, and in his pivotal opera *Črne maske* [transl. Black Masks] (1929),

Marij Kogoj and Črne maske / Black Masks



Marij Kogoj was born in Trieste, in 1898 and named Julij; however, after the death of his younger brother Marij, his family started calling him by that name. He lost his father at the tender age of six, and only a year later, his mother left her children and disappeared. Under the law on orphans, Kogoj was sent to his father's hometown, Kanal ob Soči. In 1906 or 1907, an unknown woman arrived in Kanal claiming to be Julij's mother. She came in an opulently decorated carriage dressed in expensive clothes; afterwards, all trace of her vanished. These fleeting encounters and must have left the child with numerous questions and trauma. There were rumours that Kogoj's mother had gone to Egypt as a nursemaid, emigrated to America, or fallen into prostitution.

Given his biography, the strange twists of Andrejev's drama, which Kogoj poured into his opera, seem hauntingly evocative—especially the words uttered by the unknown voice at the end of the first act: "Did your mother tell you whose son you are?" Similarly, the conflict between the two Lorenzos can be seen as a reflection of Kogoj's own split between being Marij and Julij. In Kogoj's opera, Andrejev's symbolic drama—treating the battle between good and evil within the human psyche—becomes a reflection of the composer's own identity, his inner self, and even a foreshadowing of his mental illness. Andrejev's play, set in the context of literary symbolism, explores the questions of the soul, the psyche, and human identity. Kogoj clearly identified with several aspects and emphases of the drama. Musically, he expressed them through a musical drama that oscillates between the harmonic richness of modernism, recitative expressiveness, and sharp dissonances. On his path toward final redemption in flames, Kogoj achieved an exceptional fusion of music and language, creating the greatest achievement in Slovenian opera. Photo: © NUK.



Slavko Osterc fundamentally influenced the development of 20th-century Slovenian music and his international renown also enabled Slovenian music to become established within the wider international context. A large part of his works was performed during his short life, several of them on festival and concert stages abroad. Author: Saša Santel, © NUK.

an operatic rendition of the symbolist drama by Russian playwright Leonid Andreyev.

Osterc, educated at the Prague Conservatory, was most strongly influenced by Alois Hába, the pioneer of the quarter-tone scale. More than with quarter-tone music, Osterc was inspired by his mentor's principles and commitment to the constant search for the new. Equipped with numerous international contacts, Osterc returned to Ljubljana, where he began teaching at the Conservatory and soon transmitted his ideas to an entire generation of young composers. A member of the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM), Osterc composed in all genres. His "minute" operas, modelled on the examples of Darius Milhaud and Paul Hindemith, are particularly noteworthy, as are his many chamber works and shorter orchestral pieces (*Suita*, *Koncert za*

orkester, *Mouvement symphonique*, *Mati*). Osterc overcame the emotional dichotomy of late romanticism and thereby further consolidated the position of the *new music*. His personality, stronger than Kogoj's, whose career was cut short by mental illness in the late 1920s, secured his place as the central proponent of Slovenian *new music*, alongside the traditionalist Lucijan Marija Škerjanc.

After the Second World War, Slovenia entered a new political system, which at first had a profound effect on cultural life. Institutions identified with the old bourgeois or clerical ideologies were abolished while others gained new vitality (the establishment of the **Slovenian Philharmonic Society**, the transformation of the Conservatory into the **Academy of Music**). The modernist foundations laid by Kogoj and Osterc were largely forgotten due to their

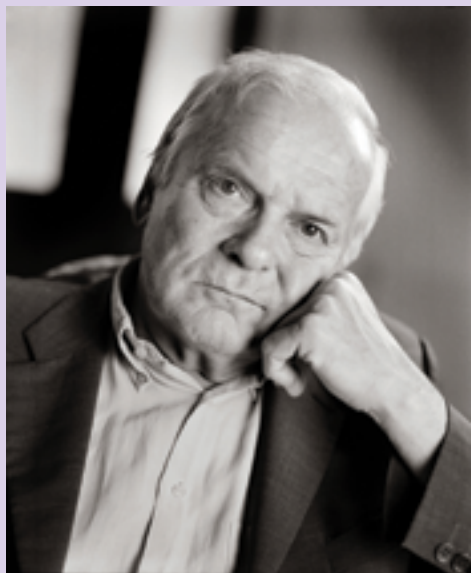


Janez Matičič (1926–2022) graduated in musical composition and conducting in Ljubljana. Before moving to Paris, his early compositions were influenced by traditional musical currents. Later, while studying composition under Nadia Boulanger, he moved into contemporary compositional directions. He first became engaged in electro-acoustic music in 1962, when he joined the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales* led by Pierre Schaeffer; he remained an active member until 1975. Photo: Janez Matičič's personal archive.

perceived ideological connotations. Authoritative positions at the Academy of Music were taken over by proponents of the late romantic, traditional expression. Other composers, particularly those who had followed Osterc before the war, turned to the seemingly ideologically neutral neoclassicism. This resulted in four Slovenian neo-classicist masterpieces—*Sinfonietta* by **Primož Ramovš**, *Simfonietta* by **Uroš Krek**, *Serenada za godala* / *Serenade for Strings* by **Dane Škerl**, and *Druuga suita za godala* / *Second Suite for Strings* by **Marijan Lipovšek**—through which the students surpassed their teachers, though they remained stylistically conservative compared with contemporary European developments. Those composers who went abroad followed a different path, among them the cosmopolitans **Vinko Globokar** and **Janez Matičič**; the latter developed a distinctive approach to new sound

materials during his tenure at the GRM music research group in Paris. The first political thaw also encouraged stronger international links. The new generation of composers encountered musical modernism mostly through the Warsaw Autumn festival. A group known as **Pro musica viva** (Darijan Božič, Kruno Cipci, Jakob Jež, Lojze Lebič, Ivo Petrič, Alojz Srebotnjak, Milan Stibilj, and Igor Štuhec) resisted the stifling local musical environment, forming their own performing ensemble, the **Slavko Osterc Chamber Ensemble**. At the time, the **Festival of Contemporary Chamber Music** was launched in Radenci. The 1960s thus marked the triumph of musical modernism, with Slovenian composers creating sound compositions that incorporated the principle of aleatoricism.

Vinko Globokar and Supra-Musical Inspiration



Vinko Globokar (b. 1934) was born in France to Slovenian emigrants. His family later moved to Yugoslavia, where he studied trombone; eight years later, he returned to France to study at the Paris Conservatory. His career subsequently took him to several cultural centres—Berlin, Buffalo (USA), Cologne (where he was professor of trombone at the Hochschule für Musik between 1967 and 1976), and again to Paris, where he headed the Department of Vocal and Instrumental Research at the newly established IRCAM centre in Fiesole near Florence, adapting easily to different linguistic and cultural settings. Globokar's dual national background is reflected in his broad choice of genres. He began his musical career as a jazz musician, later making his living in Paris as a freelance musician in symphony orchestras, jazz clubs, and variety music halls. His understanding of diverse musical worlds enabled him to move freely between them, creating music outside the confines of genre. In this respect, Globokar stands as a supra-national non-dogmatic musician, open to a variety of impulses. In Paris, he attended concerts of Pierre Boulez's Domaine musical society, where he was exposed to music he initially found incomprehensible, an experience that prompted him to seek instruction from René Leibowitz, a composition professor who was considered the greatest authority on the twelve-tone technique in France at the time. Globokar studied

composition privately with Leibowitz and through his teacher's milieu, met leading intellectuals such as philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, painter André Masson, and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, all of whom influenced his thinking.

After his studies with Leibowitz, Globokar became assistant and student of Luciano Berio in Berlin. During this period, he developed a distinctive aesthetics that, in many respects, transcends music itself. Seeking to give music back some of its meaning and its capacity to communicate, he looked for inspiration to compose beyond music, thereby, at least externally, distancing himself from the concept of pure absolute music as well as the artist's detachment from social life. At first, this idea of extra-musicality guided him in discovering new musical materials and techniques; later, it aimed to provoke reflection not on musical issues (materials, structure), but on life itself.

Photo: Žiga Koritnik.



Uroš Rojko is a composer, clarinetist, and university professor. After graduating in Slovenia, he continued his studies in Germany with Klaus Huber and György Ligeti, where he first became acquainted with contemporary musical developments. Although settled in Germany, he also teaches musical composition at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. His compositional style derives from the auditory examination of sound, and he favours composing for solo instruments by drawing directly on the practical experience of exploring the instrument at hand with the assistance of the instrumentalist. When composing for larger ensembles, his creativity is guided by inspiration as well as a desire to form a strong concept and convey a full message. Photo: Andrej Grilc.

Lojze Lebič and Archetypes



Academic Professor Lojze Lebič (b. 1934) ranks among the foremost Slovenian classical musicians of the second half of the 20th century. Together with his peers in the *Pro musica viva* group of composers, he sought his aesthetic foundations in modernism. Within this framework, he had the utmost appreciation

for the necessity of balancing rational compositional structure and a musical “grammar” that allows communication with the listener. In doing so, he developed a distinctive postmodern musical language that fuses modernist sound blocks with fragments of musical archetypes—traditional music and folk music to imaginary primordial sounds. This synthesis resonates in his major choral works (*Hvalnica svetu* [transl. *Eulogy to the World*], *Fauvel ’87*, *Ajdna – glasba v času* [transl. *Music about Time*]) and in his monumental orchestral compositions (*Queensland Music*, *Music for the Orchestra – Cantico*), wherein compositional refinement goes hand in hand with powerful emotional suggestibility. In these works, Lebič captures a particular national tone, perceptible in the very coexistence of the nostalgic and the new.

Photo: © DSS.

This division between composers was partly supported by the solid musical infrastructure—public musical education, two opera houses, two symphony orchestras (**Orkester Slovenske filharmonije**, **Simfonični orkester RTV Slovenija**) and, in 1982, the opening of **Cankarjev dom** cultural and congress centre, which soon hosted the world’s leading orchestras.

Slovenian Choral Music

Between Heritage, Quality, and Global Renown

Mihela Jagodic

The evolution of choral music in Slovenian space spans more than a millennium, yet its contemporary strength is rooted in the interplay of rich heritage, broad participation, and international acclaim. Supported by a strong education system, highly trained professionals, and a well-developed institutional network, Slovenia stands out as one of Europe’s most active choral nations.

A Brief Historical Overview

In the area of present-day Slovenia, art music has been sung for a thousand years. It evolved from mediaeval monophonic Gregorian chants, through the Protestant hymnals and the vocal-instrumental music of the 17th and 18th centuries—largely associated with monasteries, town churches, and schools—to the emergence of national singing societies (beginning in 1882).

Nineteenth-century composers viewed choral singing as a means of strengthening national consciousness. Since then, it has become an indispensable part of Slovenian cultural identity and a vital expression of collective spirit, strongly preserved in the country’s great amateur tradition to this day.

Today: Widespread and World-Class

Of Slovenia’s approximately 2.1 million inhabitants, around 60,000 sing in school and community choirs, with a further 25,000 participating in

church ensembles. A key factor behind this impressive scale is the systematic inclusion of choral activity in the school system: almost every primary school has both a monophonic and a polyphonic children’s choir.

The dedicated work of music educators ensures long-term choral singing experience and sustained artistic growth. Although participation dips somewhat during secondary school, many singers return to choirs during their university years.

A Unique System of Choral Reviews

The **Public Fund for Cultural Activities of the Republic of Slovenia (JSKD)** oversees a unique system of regional choral reviews, offering every choir an annual opportunity to perform. A hallmark of these showcases is the participation of esteemed conductors who evaluate performances and provide expert feedback.

In 2025, more than 200 regional reviews in 60 towns across

Slovenia featured 734 children's and youth choirs and 655 adult ensembles—over 40,000 performers in total. These reviews are far more than mere concerts: they are structural pillars of a system that sustains, develops, and continually raises the standard of Slovenian choral art.

Key International Milestones in Recent Years

Europa Cantat 2021: A Symbolic and Substantive Landmark

Held in Ljubljana from 17 to 24 July 2021, **Europa Cantat** was the largest international music event in Slovenia (and Europe) following the pandemic. One of the world's foremost choral festivals, it gathers some 5,000 singers, conductors, composers, and educators every three years.

As early as 1995, when Slovenia hosted a major choral event in Ljubljana, its high-calibre singers, organisers, and experts attracted international attention. Since then, its choral scene has evolved markedly, and despite COVID-19 restrictions, the 2021 edition of the **Europa Cantat** festival brought together 2,500 participants, both on site and online. Photo: Archive JSKD.



Despite restrictions, the Ljubljana edition drew 1,300 participants from over 30 countries. The festival ran in a hybrid format, and presented top-tier concerts by both domestic and international choirs (Tenebrae, Singer Pur, Ringmasters, Postyr, **Perpetuum Jazzile**, the **Girls' Choir of the Diocesan Classical Gymnasium Ljubljana**, **St. Nicholas Choir**, the **KG-BL Chamber Choir**, and the **Megaron Chamber Choir**), alongside an extensive online education programme broadcast by the festival's own EC TV—six hours daily of educational, artistic, and discussion content, all still available online.

The event went beyond the usual scope of a festival, symbolising the renewal of cultural life and affirming



The **Megaron Chamber Choir**, comprising predominantly former students of the **Diocesan Classical Gymnasium**, has grown into a top-tier ensemble. It tours and competes worldwide and is distinguished by its rich sound and vibrant interpretations of repertoire from a range of stylistic periods. Photo: Archive Megaron.

Slovenia's status as a significant destination on the global choral map.

Celje Youth Choir Festival and "Zborovski BUM" (Choral Boom)

The **Celje International Youth Choir Festival**, one of Europe's oldest events of its kind with an 80-year history, returned in 2024 in a renewed and ambitious format, reaffirming its place among Europe's most important biennial festivals.

Set in the historic city of Celje, the festival includes concert evenings, themed performances, and professional workshops led by renowned conductors. This year's edition featured **Zborovski BUM (Choral Boom)**—a magnificent national celebration of children's and youth singing. In 2025 it brought together as many as 5,400 children from 160

primary schools across Slovenia to sing as one.
www.mpf.si

Aegis Carminis: A New International Platform for Young Conductors

Launched just before the pandemic, the 4th **Aegis Carminis International Choral Festival** in October 2025 was a great success. Every year it hosts a competition for young choral conductors seeking artistic advancement, international experience, and recognition. With demonstration choirs and an international jury, the festival's competitive environment fosters artistic growth, networking, and professional development—all against the inspiring backdrop of Slovenia's coast.
www.aegiscarminis.si



The most recent, 2024 edition of the Choral Boom project, which has been continuously evolving since 2012, featured 5,400 young singers from 160 schools across Slovenia. This fun event is rooted in an important mission: to spark young people's interest in choral singing, raise the standard of multi-part vocal performance, and help preserve the Slovenian language and culture.

Photo: Archive National Education Institute Slovenia.

Inspiring International Collaborations of Slovenian Choirs and Conductors

- In 2023, the internationally acclaimed Taipei International Choir Festival invited the **KGBL Chamber Choir** (Conservatory of Music and Ballet Ljubljana, cond. **Ambrož Čopi**) to perform a concert series. In 2025, it invited the **Girls' Choir of the Diocesan Classical Gymnasium** (cond. **Helena Fojkar Zupančič**). Ambrož Čopi also composed a new *Psalms Cantata* for the Taipei Philharmonic Choir, premiered during their tour of Taiwan, Slovenia, Italy, and Austria.
- In their last two seasons, the Megaron Chamber Choir, in collaboration with Swedish conductor

Gary Graden, performed Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Mass in B minor*. In 2025 they won the Choir of the World title at Canada's Kathaumixw competition. The **Academic Choir Tone Tomšič**, University of Ljubljana, won the Baltic Sea Choral Competition and in doing so qualified for the 2026 European Grand Prix final.

- Slovenia's only professional choir, the **Slovenian Philharmonic Choir**, has begun a multi-year collaboration with its new Chief Conductor, Stephen Layton, one of the leading choral conductors of his generation.
- After leading the Radio France Choir, internationally acclaimed conductor **Martina Batič** be-

came Chief Conductor of the Danish National Vocal Ensemble in 2023, and, from 2025, of the Gulbenkian Choir (Portugal). She has also worked with the Bavarian Radio Chorus, the Norwegian Soloists' Choir, the Swedish Radio Choir, the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, the RIAS Chamber Choir, and the Netherlands Radio Choir.

- Many Slovenian conductors are sought-after guest conductors, lecturers, and jurors at major international choral events, including Ambrož Čopi, Helena Fojkar Zupančič, **Stojan Kuret, Karmina Šilec, Damijan Močnik, Martina Batič, Urša Lah, Petra Grassi, and Tadeja Vulc.**

The A Cappella Scene

In recent years, Slovenian a cappella music has flourished. The vocal ensemble Perpetuum Jazzile has achieved worldwide recognition, while **Jazzva** was a finalist at the Eurovision Choir of the Year 2019.

Today, Jazzva organises the Ljubljana Vocal Festival, while **Vox Arsana** (known for collaborations with New York Voices) stages the successful annual Vox Arsana Festival in Ptuj.

Socially Engaged Choirs

In recent years, the Slovenian choral scene has also witnessed a rise in unconventional, socially engaged choirs. This phenomenon is likely linked to greater international exchange, as Slovenian conductors

Vox Arsana ranks among Southeast Europe's leading vocal groups. It blends refined vocal technique, jazz swing rhythms, multi-part singing, and rich harmonies. Its role models include The Manhattan Transfer and New York Voices, with whom the group frequently collaborates and receives regular coaching.

Photo: pigac.si.



and singers frequently attend major global festivals, meetings, and symposia. For instance, this year a 20-strong Slovenian delegation attended the Leading Voices festival and symposium in Tallinn, returning with a wealth of new ideas and insights.

Examples of such “alternative” choirs include:

- **Kombinatke Women’s Choir** (est. 2008) – performing songs of resistance
- **FPZ Z’borke** (est. 2014) – a feminist choir with a clear political agenda
- **Zbor za vse** (est. 2020) – open to all, regardless of prior musical training, focusing on the joy of singing and stepping beyond one’s comfort zone
- **Tukan in zmaj** (est. 2022)– operating within the Society for the Development of Mindfulness, exploring human experience as an invitation to awareness, feeling, and a deeper understanding of the world through art
- **Crystal Queer Mixed Choir** (est. 2022) – creating a safe and inclusive space for all who enjoy multipart singing

Popularity of Compositions by Slovenian Composers Abroad

The international achievements of Slovenian choirs and conductors are

underpinned by the global presence of Slovenian choral composers. Their works are increasingly performed by choirs worldwide. Composers such as Damijan Močnik, **Andrej Makor**, Ambrož Čopi, **Nana Forte**, Tadeja Vulc, **Matej Kastelic**, **Tine Bec**, and **Samo Vovk** are widely published and performed. Their scores are available through Slovenia’s specialist publisher **Astrum** and leading international publishing houses, such as Carus, Sulasol, Schott Music, Ferri-montana, and GIA Publications.

Maribor 2026: European Grand Prix for Choral Singing

Through the membership of the **International Choral Competition Gallus – Maribor** in the European Grand Prix (EGP) Association, the EGP Final will return to Maribor on 18 April 2026, after eight years.

This prestigious event will bring the winners of the 2025 EGP cycle to Slovenia: in addition to the International Choral Competition Gallus – Maribor (Slovenia), these are the Concorso Polifonico Internazionale “Guido d’Arezzo” (Italy), the Béla Bartók International Choir Competition (Debrecen, Hungary), the Certamen Coral de Tolosa (Basque Country/Spain), the International May Choir Competition “Prof. Georgi Dimitrov” (Varna, Bulgaria), and the Baltic Sea Choir Competition (Jurmala, Latvia).

For choral music enthusiasts and participating singers, this promises to be an evening of superlatives.



Since 2008, the **Kombinat women’s choir**, under the direction of **Mateja Mauri**, has preserved and reinterpreted the tradition of protest songs from around the world in their original languages. Through their music, the choir highlights values such as solidarity, courage, and social justice, while drawing attention to current injustices. Photo: Elena Kecman.

Slovenia boasts an impressive track record:

- In 2010, three of the five finalists were from Slovenia.
- Stojan Kuret is one of only two conductors ever to have won the Grand Prix twice (Arezzo 2002 with APZ Tone Tomšič and Varna 2010 with the men’s choir **VAL – Ljubljana Vocal Academy**).
- VAL – Ljubljana Vocal Academy is the first men’s choir ever to have won the EGP.

15 Years of Choral Production by a Nation of Two Million People

Between 2010 and 2025, Slovenia’s choral scene produced an impres-

sive range publications across genres and levels of complexity. These included audio editions (mainly CDs), sheet music, and other types of publications related to choral or vocal music.

Looking Ahead

Slovenia’s choral scene today is marked by an exceptional density of ensembles, international achievements by conductors and composers, and high-quality music education. With sustained institutional support and growing global visibility, it is well positioned to remain a model for the successful intertwining of tradition and contemporary artistic vision.

In Tune with International Currents

In Several Directions at Once

Mario Batelić

The first Slovenian ensemble with “jazz” in its name, **Original Jazz Negode**, appeared as early as 1922, which means that 2022 marked the centenary of jazz in Slovenia. Nevertheless, the genre only really took off here after World War II. It wasn’t all smooth sailing, as the then dance-oriented American-born genre was initially unwanted and at times even banned in post-war communist Yugoslavia. The most credit for securing jazz its place at home goes to trumpeter, composer, and conductor **Bojan Adamič** (1912–1995); when he took up the issue of the style’s supposed unsuitability with Yugoslav President Tito, the latter replied: “Fight for your music.” As early as 1945, Adamič already founded the Dance Orchestra of Radio Ljubljana, the predecessor of the present-day **Big Band RTV Slovenija**.

Jazz gained broader acclaim at the turn of the 1950s into the 1960s. By the end of the 1950s, Slovenian jazz musicians had begun composing their own works, and in 1960, the first edition of the Yugoslav Jazz Festival took place in Bled. Under the new name Jazz Festival Ljubljana, it later relocated to the capital, where it celebrated its 65th anniversary last year. Today, multiple festivals run across the whole of Slovenia, such as **Jazz Cerkno**, **Jazz Ravne**, **Kreativna jazz klinika Velenje**, **Jazz kamp Kranj**, and **Jazzinty**, as do concert series that also notably shape the scene (Ljubljana’s cycles **Defonija** and **Cankarjevi torki**, Maribor’s **Jazz v Narodnem domu**, and others).

At the start of the 1960s, the helm of the national big band (celebrat-

ing its 80th anniversary in 2025) was taken over by **Jože Privšek** (1937–1998, also known internationally as Jeff Conway and Simon Gale), who studied at Berklee and spent time with Quincy Jones there. The period under Privšek (1961–1995) is considered the Big Band’s golden age. In the 1970s and 1980s, Slovenian jazz resounded with the sounds of fusion (Sončna pot, Tone Janša), that is, jazz mixed with rock, new wave, or traditional music (Begnagrad, Miladojka Youneed, Quatebriga, Lolita). After Slovenia’s independence from Yugoslavia, in the 1990s, Slovenian jazz musicians developed an ever more distinctive musical expression and began to gain recognition both at home and abroad.

The Oldest (Running) Jazz Festival in Europe

Jazz Festival Ljubljana began in 1960 as the Yugoslav Jazz Festival in Bled. From the outset it played a key role in showcasing and connecting Yugoslav jazz ensembles particularly big bands. It later became an indispensable annual platform for new domestic and international jazz trends. In recent years its concerts have taken place across a variety of venues, from small clubs to large halls, with the marvellous open-air summer auditorium at Križanke hosting the opening concert. Today the festival focuses on contemporary jazz expressions, with particular emphasis on performances by young Slovenian musicians.

Photo: Nina Pernat.



Just as Slovenian players can boast that jazz has been performed here for over a century, local enthusiasts can take pride in the fact that many of our jazz musicians studied and performed abroad and then passed their knowledge and experience on to younger musicians. Drummer and percussionist **Zlatko Kaučič** was among those who contributed the most to the advancement of original, increasingly notable Slovenian musical expression. In the 1990s, having returned to Slovenia after nearly 15 years playing abroad, he began recording albums with world-renowned musicians (Steve Lacy, Peter Brötzmann, Evan Parker, Joëlle Léandre).

From his school for young jazz players came the **Kombo** ensemble, or more precisely, a series of ensembles (the latest being Kombo D). Under his leadership, the extremely well-received multi-layered album *Objemi / Hugs* (2024) united fourteen musicians from Kombos A, B, and C. He is exceptionally skilled at the so-called *ground drums*, a percussion set with which he creates a colourful and highly unpredictable palette of melodies and rhythmic patterns. A prolific recording artist, he collaborates with top-tier international improvisers; on the album *Zlatko Kaučič @ 70 Inklings*, released in 2024 to mark his 70th birthday, he appears in the company of Rodrigo

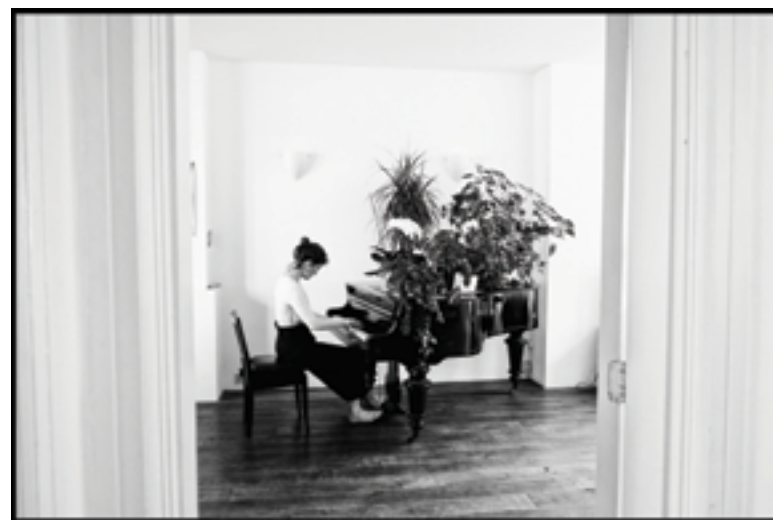
Amado, Agustí Fernández, and Barry Guy.

When mentioning notable jazz musicians who studied and then performed abroad, we cannot overlook saxophonists **Igor Lumpert** and **Jure Pukl** and pianist **Kaja Draksler**. Both reed players regularly collaborate with American and other prominent jazz artists. Lumpert heads *Innertextures*, a band characterised by a modern expression that masterfully navigates the waters between post-bop and classic ballads. Meanwhile, Pukl, who released the album *Analog AI* this year, increasingly experiments with form and sound. He occasionally uses electronics, while the short, sparkling, and direct compositions of his new album feature brilliant soprano

saxophone, alongside his usual tenor. Draksler, who impressed with her 2013 solo album *Lives of Many Others*, which deftly weaves jazz with classical music, leads multiple international ensembles (Kaja Draksler Octet, the trio Punkt.Vrt.Plastik, and others). As a pianist she moves nimbly between jazz improvisation, electronics, minimalism, and setting poetry to music (Pablo Neruda, Robert Frost).

Following in Draksler's footsteps, the younger pianist, composer, and intermedia artist **Mojca Zupančič** first commanded attention as the leader of the unconventional international collective **Tututu Orchestra**. Slovenian pianists generally possess highly distinct voices. **Sašo Vollmaier's** improvisations take their inspiration

Saxophonist, composer, producer, and Prešeren Fund Award recipient Jure Pukl performs worldwide and collaborates with leading musicians. Since 2015, he has directed the Creative Jazz Clinic Velenje, whose distinguished tutors include Kurt Rosenwinkel, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Han Bennink, Melissa Aldana, and Sara Serpa. These tutors enjoy returning to Velenje, where they inspire new generations of jazz musicians. Photo: Aljoša Videtič.



Internationally acclaimed composer and pianist Kaja Draksler blends composition with improvisation and explores a wide spectrum of musical styles and traditions. Her work generates international collaborations. She performs both solo and in numerous European projects, and leads the ensembles matter 100 and the Kaja Draksler Octet. Regularly appearing with Punkt.Vrt.Plastik, Czajka & Puchacz, Draksler/Santos Silva, Draksler/Bach/Masecki, and within various collectives and interdisciplinary projects. Photo: Sara Anke.

from the oeuvre of Laibach (a group he had previously collaborated with) and Ligeti, to name but two influences. Pianist **Drago Ivanuša's** film scores delve ever deeper into avant-garde jazz and unbridled improvisation. **Tine Grgurevič** aka **Bowrain** is dedicated to hypnotic piano minimalism, interspersed with electronics and visual art. **Jan Sever's** *Nordica* project combines contemporary classical music with jazz. Pianist **Marko Črnčec's** range stretches from classical post-bop to pop song re-imaginings. The **Mind Tree** trio's sound is also centred around piano, here played by Matic Štemberger, while rhythm is covered by brothers Peter and Žiga Smrdel (bass, drums), who are active in other ensembles.

Among his other bands, **Rok Zalokar** leads the multi-member collective **Zhlehtet**, whose expression explores the worlds of impressionism, minimalism, and spiritual jazz. Another key member of Zhlehtet, reedist **Lenart de Bock**, who released as many as nine albums (!) in five years, is also an active member of the international trio Soothsayer, and recently put out his debut original album. Drummer **Gal Furlan** released a series of solo albums and international collaborations while curating the programme of the somewhat geographically peripheral **Klub Štala**.

Guitarist **Samo Šalamon**, who has already recorded dozens of albums

with world-renowned musicians such as Michel Godard, Paul McCandless, Tim Berne, and Bob Moses, is one of the most productive Slovenian jazz artists. *Dolphyology*, the album of his arrangements of Eric Dolphy's music for solo guitar, garnered wide attention; he has also put together numerous ensembles (e.g. Freequestra) bringing in many international players. Where his earlier writing was more structured, recent years have seen him turn increasingly towards free improvisation. **Jani Moder**, meanwhile, has explored strikingly varied sonic settings, from the band Ecliptic (which includes a beatboxer in its line-up) to his solo acoustic album *Places and Traces*, which flirts with meditative folk-jazz. We also find meditation and ethereality in the mu-

sic of Moder's frequent collaborator, trumpeter **Igor Matković**. Reedist **Vasko Atanasovski** is Slovenia's leading proponent of blending Balkan music, classical, and jazz, while bassist **Robert Jukič**'s *In the Land Of...* is one of the year's more lyrical Slovenian jazz albums.

Slovenia's jazz-rock and fusion scene boasts quite a number of long-standing and distinctive bands, such as **džeZZva**, **Feedback**, and **Divje jezero**. On the other side of the current, a growing number of younger musicians are exploring the many undercurrents of contemporary (and sometimes also more traditional) jazz, for example saxophonist **Blaž Švagan** with his international formation **Sound In Time** or drummer and composer

The grassroots venue Klub Štala has been operating in the Vipava Valley since 2018, when it was founded by musician Gal Furlan and his family. The club was created in a former farm building – a stable (štala), which was the inspiration for the club's name. It is dedicated to contemporary improvised music, with its core purpose to provide a space for this often-overlooked art form. Photo: Igor Petaros.



Žan Tetičkovič (known in the USA as **Jean John**), who actively gigs abroad. Having appeared at major festivals, drummer **Gaj Bostič** and trumpeter **Maj Kavšek** also show considerable promise.

The jazz scene is likewise increasingly defined by genre-defying currents. The **Oholo!** septet, which was formed within Tomaž Grom's Zavod Sploh years ago, released their second album last year. This year, the **TiTiTi** ensemble (Jure Boršič, brothers Vid and Jošt Drašler, and Serbian pianist Marina Džukljević) also released its second album. The younger quartet **A.G.A.T.** combines live instruments with electronic devices and noise. Among notable line-ups that include vocals and flirt with other genres are **Lilamors**, **birds of unknown**, and singer **Mirna Bogdanovič**, who received the coveted *German Jazz Prize* this year. Pianists **Rebeka Rusjan Zajc** and **Miha Gantar**, double-bassist **Gašper Livk**, and percussionist **Domen Cizej** released five-album sets (!) with the respected

Clean Feed label, which regularly releases music by a number of Slovenian jazz artists.

An increasing number of musicians play non-standard jazz instruments, such as the cello (drummer/cellist **Kristijan Krajncan** with his DrummingCellist project, or **Gal Golob**, who is also a double-bassist) and violin (**Petra Onderuf**, **Peter Ugrin**). The vibraphone, on the other hand, which has long been a jazz staple, is rarely encountered on the Slovenian scene, with the notable exception of **Vid Jamnik** and his acclaimed performances at home and abroad.

All this attests to the exceptional diversity of the Slovenian jazz scene, which ceaselessly juxtaposes and blends old and new approaches, veterans and "greenhorns", the analogue and digital, the classic and the free-form. But what's more, musicians here never blindly imitate or uncritically adopt foreign influences without adding their personal original signature.

Big Bands in Slovenia

From Post-War Revival to Contemporary Excellence

Aleš Suša

A History

The history of Slovenian big bands begins with **Bojan Adamič**, who led his own sizeable orchestra even before World War II, the precursor to the radio orchestra founded after the war.

In 1945, the big band of **Radio Ljubljana** was established in the standard line-up of five saxophones, four trumpets, four trombones, piano, guitar, bass, and drums and named **Plesni orkester Radia Ljubljana**, or **PORL** for short (meaning the **Radio Ljubljana Dance Orchestra**). Adamič was its founder and driving force. The musicians were

employed by Radio Ljubljana as the orchestra served to fulfil its programme needs and help revive post-war cultural and social life.

It played stylistically varied music, ranging from dance music and popular swing numbers to original jazz instrumental compositions and even partisan marches. Big-

Big Band RTV Slovenija has been operating continuously since 1945 and is regarded as one of the world's oldest ensembles of its kind. It combines top-tier musicians and collaborates with internationally acclaimed jazz soloists and conductors including Maria Schneider, Bob Mintzer, Toots Thielemans, Diane Schuur, Paquito D'Rivera, and New York Voices. Its repertoire covers a wide array of musical styles—from jazz to film, dance, and popular music. Photo: Matej Grgič.



band music became widely popular because it embodied a spirit of freedom, modernity, and progress—qualities people associated with America. In the post-war period, the USA was regarded as an ally of the Slovenian partisans, who had emerged victorious in Slovenia during World War II.

A major leap in the radio orchestra's quality and intensity came in the 1960s, when pianist, vibraphonist, and composer Jože Privšek took over as band leader. This was also a time when Slovenia saw the first emergence of amateur big bands. The first of these, still active today, was the **Celje Dance Orchestra**

“Žabe”, founded in 1946. Since, at that time, scores and arrangements for big bands were not easily available, the orchestras of the era mostly developed their repertoires based on music obtained from the PORL music library.

Big-band music in Slovenia was therefore strongly shaped by the **Slovenska popevka Festival** (first held in 1962), organised by Radio Ljubljana and comprised of the radio orchestra performing compositions by composers, arrangers, and musicians, such as **Mario Rijavec**, **Janez Gregorc**, **Mojmir Sepe**, **Urban Koder**, **Jure Robežnik**, **Ati Soss**, and **Dečo Žgur**. Most of these

Big Band GverilLaz was founded in 2014 and comprises 18 professional musicians, pairing works by jazz giants with original compositions by its members. The name, derived from “guerrilla”, reflects the courage and free spirit that inform their innovative music. Under the leadership of jazz violinist and artistic director Peter Ugrin, the ensemble focuses above all on the music by Frank Zappa. In 2018, they gained international recognition by winning first prize in the Top Class category at the IBBC – International Big Band Competition in the Netherlands. Photo: T. Breskvar.



were, in one way or another, employed by Radio Ljubljana.

The winning songs of Slovenska popevka, which got extensive radio play, were of a very high standard. Their enduring popularity in Slovenia is due not only to the closed market of the time but above all to their strong melodies, rich harmonies, excellent Slovenian lyrics supplied by poets, and the orchestra's flawless execution. All the amateur orchestras that emerging in Slovenia at the time (over 30 in total) supplemented their repertoires with arrangements from Slovenska popevka.

The Contemporary Period: Main Big Bands, Festivals, Accolades, and Key Activities

Today Slovenia has one professional jazz big band: **Big Band RTV Slovenija**, which maintains the tradition framed 80 years ago by Bojan Adamič, continued by Jože Privšek, and later adopted in the 1990s by **Lojze Krajncan**. The orchestra today alternates between several conductors: in addition to Krajncan, repertoires are led by **Tadej Tomšič**, **Aleš Avbelj**, **Lenart Krečič**, **Tomaž Gajšt**, and international guests.

Another professional ensemble is the **Slovenian Armed Forces Big Band**, part of the professional **Armed Forces Orchestra**, led by trumpeter **Rudolf Strnad**. Their repertoire likewise draws on Privšek's legacy, expanded with arrangements now available on the in-

ternational market. In recent years, they have also started commissioning new charts—primarily with vocals—and writing their own.

A third Slovenian ensemble of high quality may be described as semi-professional: the jazz orchestra of the **Academy of Music of the University of Ljubljana, or ULAG Big Band, successfully headed by double bassist Matej Hotko**.

These three orchestras, thanks to their professional status, achieve the highest artistic standards and broad recognition.

In recent history, there was also a project orchestra comprised of professional musicians and students: **The Fool Cool Jazz Orchestra** (2001). During its brief existence at the turn of the 21st century, it left a mark on the burgeoning Slovenian big-band scene and inspired many other ensembles of this type. It was formed and led by trumpeter, composer, and conductor **Izidor Leitinger**.

Today, the segment of project-based bands is represented by the **Big Band GverilLaz** (2014). Though not performing regularly, it has earned international recognition for its high artistic level under the direction of violinist **Peter Ugrin**.

Amateur Big Bands

Below is a selection of the most active amateur big bands—those that have existed for more than five years, rehearse weekly, and perform around 10 concerts annually:

Big Band Cerknica (est. 2003) – conducted by **Primož Štefančič**; they have recorded two albums, the first under **Igor Matkovič**, the second under tubist **Goran Krmac**, who also composed six original pieces for tuba and big band. One of their more notable performances was with **Ana Bezjak** at Festival Lent 2023 (a tribute to Diane Schuur).

Big Band DOM (Dobropolje Youth Orchestra) (est. 2002) – led by saxophonist **Braco Doblekar**. They have played several excellent concerts and recorded multiple albums, the most notable with vocalist **Nina Strnad**, who also performed with the orchestra at their 2024 concert marking conductor Doblekar's 80th birthday. In February 2025, they appeared at Cankarjev Dom (Ljubljana's principal cultural centre) for the 30th anniversary of **Jazz Club Gajo**.

na's principal cultural centre) for the 30th anniversary of **Jazz Club Gajo**.

Big Band Grosuplje (est. 1997) – collaborates with various conductors and has performed numerous concerts both at home and abroad. The band has participated in the Slovenian Statehood Day celebration and the Athlete of the Year ceremony, and frequently collaborates with many well-known jazz musicians from Slovenia and abroad.

Big Band Krško (est. 1978) – in recent years they have worked with different conductors. Their two most prominent projects are an album of Depeche Mode covers and an album of original music by orchestra members, released to mark their 40th anniversary. This year, led

Big Band KK, initially known as Big Band Krško, was formally founded in 1994 under the direction of Aleš Suša. It performs different musical styles ranging from swing to jazz-rock and is considered one of the region's best amateur big bands. The band's 2013 album of Depeche Mode covers, "Depeched", earned an invitation to the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival. Photo: Amadeja Smrekar.



by **Aleš Suša**, the orchestra recorded *RockJazzRoll: A Little Look Back on Tomorrow* by Croatian composer Silvije Glojnarčić, released on vinyl under the Croatia Records label.

Big Band NOVA, Nova Gorica (est. 1995) – currently conducted by pianist, composer, and arranger **Blaž Pahor**. Their notable performances include a concert with American singer Gwen Hughes and several tours with Californian gospel singer Sherrita Duran. The orchestra has also performed at Ljubljana's Križanke open-air venue with the legendary Vlado Kreslin. After the devastating fires of 2022, they co-organised the benefit *Stopimo skupaj za Kras* ("Let's Come Together for Kras"), broadcast live on national TV SLO 2. They regularly collaborate with Slovene minorities abroad (Kulturni dom Gorica).

Bend-it! Orchestra (Marežige) (est. 2017) – led by trumpeter Primož Štefančič. Their short but dynamic history is crowned by their performance at the FIMU festival in France and several appearances at Marezi-Jazz, the big-band festival they organise themselves.

Big Band Radlje ob Dravi (est. 1994) – headed by German conductor Jordi Roviró. Under his direction, they combine original pieces, music from the Vienna Composers Big-Band repertoire, and classic large-ensemble works. They also co-organise Ars fest; at its 2025 edition, they presented a Latin set with singers Eva Moreno and Patri-

cia Lopez Menadier. Two years ago, they formed a youth section, **Youth Big Band Radlje**.

Big Band Radovljica (est. 1998) – led by saxophonist **Blaž Trček**. They tour abroad extensively, with themed concerts and bespoke arrangements. They frequently invite collaborations with notable Slovenian singers and instrumentalist soloists. Their most successful programme, *Let's Rock*, included arrangements by Trček and **Matjaž Mikuletič** and was performed across Slovenia.

Jazz Punt Big Band Tolmin (est. 2005) – led by trombonist **Matija Mlakar**. They have performed their *Tribute to The Beatles* several times at home and abroad and recorded their first album. For their 20th anniversary, they created their *Tminci za Tmince* ("Tolminians for Tolminians") project, featuring Tolmin folk songs and original works by local musicians.

Big Band Vrhnika (est. 1995) – led by guitarist **Gašper Kržmanc**. Their recent notable project *Woodstock* featured arrangements by their conductor. They marked their 30th anniversary this year with a gala concert and a recording of original songs.

These amateur big bands today have the ambition and skill to perform demanding repertoires—more so than ever before, as many members are now professionals or secondary- and academy-level students of jazz music.

Musical education in Slovenia is very well developed: the **Jazz & Popular Music Department** at the Lju-

bljana Secondary School of Music, opened in 1992 under double bassist **Matevž Smerkol**, laid the

The Largest Big Band Music Event in Europe

MareziJazz is the largest big band festival in Europe and the third largest in the world. It celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025. The festival showcases music performed by jazz orchestras (big bands) and promotes the exploration, preservation, and development of the jazz orchestral tradition. Although rooted in jazz, it does not limit itself in terms of genre; original repertoires of participating ensembles also flirt with other musical styles. Over the years MareziJazz has earned wide recognition; appearing at this festival is considered prestigious for Slovenian and international big bands alike, offering opportunities for collaboration and providing audiences with first-rate musical experiences. Photo: Damian Sterchi, Sebastjan Roj.



foundations for rapid growth in the jazz scene and the amateur big-band movement (The author of this chapter attended the first year of the then newly launched department). Secondary-level jazz/big bands are also active within the conservatoires in Ljubljana (big band activity initiated under tenor saxophonist **Dušan Veble** roughly five decades ago, now led by saxophonist **Jaka Kopač**) and Maribor (founded 1993 by trumpeter Edvard Holnthaner, now led by trumpeter **Janez Volk**). Starting this year, the formal jazz-education pathway is expanding to include junior music schools—a promising sign for the future.

Whereas decades ago Slovenian amateur big-band repertoires leaned heavily on Slovenska popevka arrangements by Privšek and Krajncan, today's bands perform contemporary large-ensemble material by top international composers and arrangers, record their own original music, craft their own arrangements, and frequently play new compositions by Slovenian jazz musicians such as **Lenart Krečič**, **Adam Klemm**, **Jure Pukl**, and Goran Krmac. Many now invite guest conductors from Slovenia (Izidor Leitinger, Tadej Tomšič, Blaž Trček, **Steve Klink**, **Klara Lavriša**, Tomaž Gajšt) and abroad.

Amateur orchestras mostly perform each in their own local communities, yet special programmes, often take them to major stages at home and abroad, including the **Montreux Jazz Festival**, **Jazz Festival**

Ljubljana, **Jazz HR** (Zagreb), **Zap-panale** (Germany), **Nišville** (Serbia), **Jazz Cerkno**, **Budapest Big-Band Festival**, **MareziJazz**, **Jazz-inty** (Novo mesto), **Jazz Kamp Kranj**, **Creative Jazz Clinic** (Velenje), **Jazz Ravne**, **Festival Lent** (Maribor), and **Venice Jazz**.

Their repertoires are growing in both volume and stylistic range—from swing, Latin, and straight-ahead jazz to funk, original covers and compositions by band members and Slovenian arrangers (in addition to those already mentioned: **Anže Vrabec**, **Aleš Avbelj**, **Igor Lunder**, **Matjaž Mikuletič**, **Jaka Pucihar**, **Leon Firšt**, **Sandi Štor**, and others).

Over the past three decades, Slovenia's amateur big-band scene has developed faster than other fields of orchestral creativity. The artistic level achieved by our amateur big bands today surpasses the European average. Bojan Adamič and Jože Privšek laid excellent foundations and would be pleasantly surprised by the state of affairs today.

Outward from Within: Thrilling Experimentation Across Communities

A Depiction of Creative Simmering in Slovenia's Experimental Music Scene

Luka T. Zagoričnik

While a successor of pre-war avant-gardisms and post-war modernisms, experimental music today is a far broader concept, extending to the edge of popular music and burrowing into numerous genres. It always operates from the margins, making its mark on numerous creative and production practices. Its search for resources also extends beyond music, into contemporary art, poetry and literature, artistic performance, audio-visual and intermedia arts, as well as contemporary electronic music. It draws on challenging or imitating domestic and foreign paradigms, and on artistic encounters and collaborations. The experimental scene is now thoroughly international, inhabiting prominent local hubs and expanding through cooperation and networking. It spans electro-acoustic music, musique concrète, and experimental contemporary classical music, all the way to free improvisation, experimental electronica, sound art, and related trends. This varied and extremely agile scene has built itself a solid infrastructure—including festivals, concert series, labels, international networks—existing in the space between self-organisation and DIY on the one hand, and institutional contexts—both domestic and international—on the other.

In its nascent stages, the scene was heralded by the best-known Slovenian contemporary composer and trombonist **Vinko Globokar**. Another branch evolved from the electronic and electro-acoustic music heritage of historical minimalism, John Cage's ideas, aleatory practices, and improvisation. The latter is represented by the enduring **Saeta** ensemble, while Globokar's style continues in perform-

ative works by **Matej Bonin**, conceptual compositions by **Petra Strahovnik**, the subtle blend of acoustic and electronic sonorities by composer and wind player **Tilen Lebar**, and vast graphic scores by composer, electronic musician, and flautist **Maja Osojnik**, who is also active in electro-acoustic music, radio art, and improvisation.

Inštitut.abeceda is a research nexus, examining old experimental sonic traditions and exploring new creative strategies for the next generation through its standing ensemble and a multitude of young composers and performers, under the guidance of composer and pedagogue **Dré A. Hočevár**. The core of this branch also includes **Bor Turel** and **Boštjan Perovšek**. Perovšek remains an active practitioner of contemporary field recording, integrating ambient

noises into compositions and improvisations where various quotidian sounds unfold into concrete yet imaginary soundscapes between humans and animals, and between urban and natural environments. He formed **Jata C** with like-minded artists, such as electro-acoustic composer **Bojana Šaljič Podešva**, creator of spatial sound studies **Ida Hiršenfelder**, and sound and auditory perception and poetic performance explorers **OR Poiesis** and

Simon Šerc and **Martina Testen** are audiovisual artists whose works have been featured at international festivals including the Miami New Media Festival, Ars Electronica, and ADAF, and covered by respected media outlets. Their sound projects—released on the Pharmafabrik and Ambientfabrik labels—have repeatedly been ranked among the best in field recording. Their audiovisual works have received awards at GAMFF (South Korea), AI.Motion (Italy), Magmart, the Intercontinental Biennial, and other festivals. Photo: biodukt.net.



Brane Zorman. Zorman, **Irena Pivka (Zavod Cona)**, and a wider circle of collaborators take us into unusual sonic realms where an ordinary walk becomes a lavish aural experience prompting us to re-evaluate our relationship with nature and our surroundings. This relationship is laid bare in internationally acclaimed field recordings of diverse “bioducts” by **Simon Šerc** and **Martina Testen**.

We are in the realm of sonic artistry, situated between music and contemporary art, where sounds are treated as materials that transcend strictly musical parameters. This is evident in multimedia installations and soundscapes by **Saša Spačal** and **Robertina Šebjanič** or the in-

tense synaesthesia of sound, image, digital visuals, and lasers by audio-visual artist **Tadej Droljc**. Meanwhile, the younger generation, unencumbered in its creativity, readily transfers and infuses these approaches into the softer multi-sensory experiences and immersive atmospheric environments of ambient music. Examples include poetic works by **Oka (Eva Mulej Vrabčič)**, electro-acoustic spatial musical experiences by **Karmen Ponikvar**, the interplay of the harp and electronica by multifaceted harpist **rouge-ah** (also a member of the duo **II/III**), and the darker shades of electro-acoustic music of **Sujevera**, with its subtle echoes of folklore, mystique, and superstition.

The Experiment of “Festivalling”

Festivals and concert cycles are among the most important drivers of experimental music, offering artists continuity, visibility, and the opportunity to develop new projects. They take place in a variety of settings, from concert venues to museums, galleries, and public spaces in city centres, local communities, as well as on the periphery. Long-running festivals include the stylistically varied and often transmedia events Sonica, Sound Explicit, Indigo Festival in Ljubljana, and Sajeta in the idyllic setting of the confluence of the Tolminka and Soča rivers. More recently they have been joined by the NiANSA Gathering, held in the enchanting setting of Rakov Škocjan. Two internationally recognised festivals stand out in the realm of improvised music: the Brda Contemporary Music Festival in Goriška Brda and Sound Disobedience in Ljubljana. A key role in the field of sound art and new forms of creation and listening practices is played by the TO)pot platform, which combines sonic pathways, concerts, and an international conference. There are also numerous equally important concert series, including Kamizdat Rentgen, Fri-Fru-Fra, FriForma, concerts at Klub Štala, and the concerts, festivals, and workshops organised by community of modular-synth freaks known as Clockwork Voltage.



Jaka Berger is one of the most active and inventive drummers, percussionists, composers, and improvisers on the Slovenian music scene. He records solo pieces on prepared drums, leads workshops in improvisation and percussion, and heads Clockwork Voltage, a modular synthesis community that brings together creators across diverse artistic fields.

Photo: Domen Dajčman.

All these approaches are intensified, solidified, radicalised, and sharpened in so-called noise-music. Radical sonic aesthetics took root in Slovenia in the 1980s, exemplified by the early industrial music of **Lai-bach** and works by the late Mario Marzidovšek. Today, its proponents are more active than ever, participating in international networks, festivals, and labels. The field is expanding, encompassing dark ambient, extreme raucous textures of raw harsh noise, electro-acoustic experiments, audio-visual narration, post techno, and club music. Among notable figures are the veteran of dark industrial atmospheric aesthetics **PureH**, the hard noise lines of **Sist**

En 343, the politically charged and humorous **Kikiriki**, the dark drone of **Cadlag** resounding from cathedrals and abandoned industrial buildings, the ineffable **Umdhlebi**, and the compressed post-techno and ambient industrial landscape of **Lifecutter**. In recent years, Lifecutter has explored modular sound synthesis, a fast-growing influence on the local scene, which integrates multi-genre approaches into related international currents with support from **Clockwork Voltage**. Other important creators include **Shekuza**, duo **Swai**, and the veteran of electronic music **Zergon**. Central to this realm is percussionist and electrophonist **Jaka Berger**.



Zlatko Kaučič and Tomaž Grom have been driving forces of improvised music in Slovenia for decades, as soloists, ensemble members, and founders of the Brda Contemporary Music Festival and Neposlušno / Sound Disobedience. Both Prešeren Fund Award recipients, they have played a pivotal role in advancing experimental music in Slovenia. Photo: Archive Zavod Sploh.

Berger is an improviser, composer, and publisher working across electronic and electro-acoustic music, abstract hip-hop, ambient, and free jazz improvisation, and creates in the interspace between abstract sound and poetry. Berger exemplifies a junction of different scenes and approaches.

Abandoning form altogether brings us to the world of free improvisation, which has grown over the past two decades into one of Slovenia's most active musical scenes. Pioneer percussionist **Zlatko Kaučič** and versatile double bassist **Tomaž Grom** are its central figures, performing solo, in standing ensembles, and in ad hoc collaborations. Their creativity and engagement support the creation of mechanisms and strategies that enhance the standing of freely improvised music both domestically and internationally. Their ex-

ample is followed by a multitude of improvisers, including **Samo Kutin**, with his modified hurdy-gurdy, in the piercing timbre of violins, sound devices, **Ana Kravanja**, in **Irena Z. Tomažin**, with striking vocal improvisations, **Gašper Piano's** guitar, which flows in concert, dance, or contemporary artistic settings, and many projects led by **Jošt Drašler** and drummer **Vid Drašler**.

All these frameworks and nuances in Slovenia's experimental music are based on intergenerational cooperation, where earlier experience intersects with new approaches that retroactively influence older sonic practices. This creates a rich, innovative, and vividly diverse musical kaleidoscope—perpetually fresh, pervasive, and exciting—confidently expanding from local communities to the international sphere.

Answering the Call of the Wilderness

Exploring Folk & Global Music in Slovenia

Katarina Juvančič

American author Vera Nazarian once mused: “If music is a place, then [...] folk is the wilderness”. In Slovenia, this journey into the wild began long ago, when folklorists set out to uncover and safeguard vernacular music. Starting in the 19th century, they built archives of field recordings and transcriptions. Initially mere research resources, these archives have since become a vital source of inspiration for modern folk artists.

Interest in traditional music saw a revival in the 1970s, when younger generations—shaped by the Anglo-American folk movement and contemporary experimental trends—began re-engaging with Slovenia’s own musical heritage. However, it wasn’t until the late 1980s and 1990s that a more focused and deliberate effort to preserve and promote authentic forms of Slovenian folk music truly took shape.

This was also when the **Cultural Ethnomusicological Society Folk Slovenia** was founded, and early efforts were made to popularise the emerging genre of global music. The inception of festivals such as **Druga Godba** (1984—and still going strong today) and the **Okarina Festival** in Bled (1991–2019) brought an enviable roster of leading global music artists to Slovenia, while also providing a stage for homegrown talent. Continuing this legacy, Nova Gorica’s **Glasbe sveta / Musiche dal mondo** festival, now in its 14th edition, brings local and interna-

tional global music acts to audiences on both sides of the Slovenian-Italian border.

The new millennium saw a surge of interest in folk and global music among younger generations, who began merging traditional sounds with jazz, rock, electronic, and other global popular styles—each according to their distinctive musical and aesthetic sensibilities. This millennial wave of performers and bands—including **Katalena**, **Brina**, **Janez Dovč**, **Rudi Bučar**, and the jazz-world luminary **Vasko Atanasovski**—remains a vibrant force in the scene today.

Katalena, an ensemble of 24-years’ standing, attracts attention with its distinctive blend of archival musical lore, original compositions, and self-penned lyrics, anchored in solid rock rhythms, edgy vocals, and soaring harmonies. They continually re-imagine rustic folk imagery, transforming it into a vibrant, contemporary urban sound. To date, they have

The Festival of Other Music

DRUGA GODBA

Druga godba is Slovenia’s foremost global music festival. Launched in 1985 as an alternative to existing Ljubljana’s festivals, it was the first Yugoslav festival to showcase popular music and other styles from the so-called Global South, including reggae and African music. Over time, the festival programme expanded to include other ethnic genres from across Europe and beyond. Held in late May in Ljubljana and other Slovenian

cities, the festival brings together established and emerging artists from diverse cultures. Since 1998 it has been organised by the Institute Druga Godba Ljubljana; its co-founder and head of the programme committee is Bogdan Benigar. The Institute also runs the DruGod record label and, since 2013, the Sogodbe concert series, dedicated to artists who push the boundaries of their musical traditions.

Photo: Martin Vogrič Dežman.



released eight critically acclaimed albums and maintain an active touring schedule. Brina, led by singer and puppeteer Brina Vogel, once performed widely abroad—including at WOMEX—but now appears more selectively, blending ancient ballads with contemporary el-

ements in a delicate acoustic style. Preceding this new wave of folk rein-vigoration, **Fake Orchestra**, established in 1997, paved the way as an eclectic collective fusing jazz, Slavic folk, African rhythms, rock, and cabaret, across avant-garde and pop styles.

Jazz has a habit of luring Slovenian musicians into adventurous territory—and sometimes launching them straight into the wide world of global sounds. Take **Harmelologic**, a duo that, not unlike Atanasovski, weaves jazz into a vibrant tapestry of **Balkan sounds**. Or guitarist and another WOMEX alumnus **Teo Collori** with his band **Momento Cigano**, who gives Django Reinhardt's gypsy swing a 21st-century twist—with original tunes, razor-sharp musicianship, and a dash of showmanship.

Romani music has been part of Slovenia's musical landscape for as long as Roma communities have lived here, absorbing influences from local traditions while drawing on styles of Romani music from the Balkans and contemporary genres along the way. **Imer Traja Brizani**, a bassist, composer, and proud champion of Roma heritage, has spent decades fronting **Amala**, his band that marries the fire of Romani tradition with the exploratory nature of jazz. The first group to bring Romani and Gypsy sounds to wider Slovenian audiences was the non-Roma ensemble Šukar, founded in 1990, which recently ceased performing following the passing of its charismatic leader, Igor Misdaris.

From the vibrant pulse of Romani tradition back to the reimagining of Slovenia's folk heritage, Janez Dovč continues to chart his own path. He manages his music shows and the **Celinka** record label, while also leading the **Sounds of**

Slovenia collective and wrapping old folk tunes in fresh, pop-infused textures. Meanwhile, Rudi Bučar skillfully navigates the space between Istrian pentatonic scales and pop-rock sensibilities in both his original and traditional songs. Istrian melodies also remain a rich and enduring source of inspiration for **Vruja**, the traditionally rooted band led by **Marino Kranjac**, one of the key figures of the 1980s Istrian folk revival, who actively continues to promote Istrian musical heritage. **Bogdana Herman** has been a household name in Slovenian folk revival for half a century, seamlessly bridging experimental, electronic, and traditional musical worlds. **Ljoba Jenče**, another singer and folk music collector from an earlier generation of revivalists, channels a personal connection to tradition through her singing, often performing in natural acoustic settings and releases both her own arrangements of traditional song and field recordings.

At the same time, well-established performers with careers spanning more than three decades—such as **Magnifico** and **Vlado Kreslin**—remain prolific and continue to captivate audiences both at home and abroad. Often called the “*Bob Dylan of the Balkans*,” Kreslin began his musical journey as a rock singer before joining Beltinška Banda in the early 1990s. Together they bridged generations through music rooted in their native Prekmurje. To date, Kreslin has released 22 albums, toured widely, and collaborated with numerous renowned



The trio **Širom—Iztok Koren, Samo Kutin, and Ana Kravanja**—forge a unique stylistically cohesive expression that spans opulent folk sounds and contemporary acoustic rock meditations. Their work has been praised by established media outlets such as *The Wire*, *The Quietus*, and *KEXP*, and has taken them to stages around the globe. In autumn 2025, the Glitterbeat label released their fifth studio album *In the Wind of Night, Hard-Fallen Incantations Whisper*, which received exceptional international attention, including recognition as *The Guardian's* album of the month.

Photo: Nada Žgank, Maša Pirc.



Glitterbeat is a label specialising in global music. It was founded in 2012 in Germany, with an active creative hub in Ljubljana. It combines contemporary global soundscapes with local traditions and runs the **tak:til** sublabel dedicated to instrumental and experimental music. Glitterbeat is a multiple WOMEX Label Award winner for best independent label.



Zvezdana Novaković ZveN is a versatile musician and performer whose work moves from ethno traditions (from Bulgaria to Brazil), theatre music, electronics-infused experimentation, and classical and jazz performance, to teaching vocal techniques and leading choirs, and to storytelling and the harp—all bound together by her unmistakable voice. Photo: Dejan Ulaga.

musicians. Magnifico, by contrast, is the chameleon of the Slovenian scene—constantly reinventing his image and musical identity, from a Dionysian St George to a Balkan gigolo or a nostalgic “Schlager” singer—infusing his work with eclectic influences including Latin, surf, reggae, funk, and Balkan beat. Joining these veteran trailblazers, **Čompe** (a dialect word for potatoes) have spent over three decades crafting a singular musical universe where folk, jazz, and cabaret meet the works of renowned Slovenian poets—most notably Dane Zajc—brought vividly to life through Janez Škof’s accordion and a dynamic, theatrical delivery.

Alongside these seasoned performers, new voices have begun emerging from the geographical periph-

ery and cultural margins, charging Slovenia’s folk and global music wilderness with fresh local momentum and carefully crafted idiosyncrasies that draw both from the centuries-old grassroots creativity as well as from contemporary musical and other artistic currents. Steeped in their surroundings and driven by curiosity—a vital element of any musical exploration—the instrumental trio **Širom**, along with their sister band **Bakalina Velika**, led by farmer-songwriter Jani Kutin, delve into the untamed, mystical interplay between the human and natural worlds through rich sonic and vocal imagery. In recent years, **Širom** has become one of the region’s most internationally acclaimed musical acts. It is also the flagship Slovenian musical export of **Glitterbeat**,

a distinguished Slovenian-German record label based in Ljubljana that specialises in music from the Global South.

Multi-award-winning harpist, singer, and composer **Zvezdana Novaković ZveN** transcends the boundaries between classical, folk, and jazz music, collaborating with artistic kindred spirits from across the globe. Another noteworthy global music performer, **Katja Šulc**, also commands an international presence; her projects set Roma, Native American, and Mexican poetry to music.

Accordionist, globetrotting musician, and puppeteer **Matija Solce** is the driving force behind the **Floating Castle Festival**—a vibrant summer gathering at Slovenia’s Snežnik Castle that brings together artists from around the globe, blending global music, theatre, circus arts, and storytelling in an eclectic, community-driven spirit. Long-time festival collaborators **Wild Strings Trio** and the duo **Zajtrk** both weave folk traditions with other acoustic lineages and musical idioms. The acoustic guitar duo **Aritmija** forges musical connections on a path stretching from the Balkans to India, joined by percussionist **Nino Mureškič**, who has likewise collaborated extensively with Indian musicians for decades.

Witty provincial chanson-esque charm, obscure folk symbolism, and vernacular lyrics laced with gallows humour, social commentary,

and masterful storytelling define the work of the **Uršula Ramoveš in Fantje z Jazbecove grape** trio, as well as their (almost) next-door, quirky-folky counterparts **Hostnik pa Krečič**.

A new vanguard of folk music aficionados has emerged in the post-pandemic era. Embracing the rustic hues of the 1980s folk revival sound, they weave it into original and traditional repertoires. Most are rooted in their home regions and the Balkans, while some, like **Noreia**, draw heavily on Irish traditions. This growing circle includes **Nika Prusnik & bratje Poljanec**, **Ingver in Gverilke**, **Bajate**, **Gugutke**, and other emerging collectives that are steadily claiming their place in the folk music sphere.

Wilderness is an untamed place—an antidote to the predictable and the safe—where the unfamiliar meets the fascinating. Slovenia’s folk and global music scene offers a rich soundscape that challenges, enchants, and inspires. Best to answer the call of the wilderness and experience it for yourself.

Shifting From the Treasury of Traditional Music Towards Pop

Aleksi Jercog

The very term *narodno-zabavna glasba* (direct English translation: folk-pop music, known in German-speaking countries as *Oberkrainer Musik*) indicates that this genre combines elements of traditional music and pop. In truth, this genre has always sounded more traditional than modern-pop, given that it has been the foundation of Slovenian village jamborees, wedding parties, and family celebrations for decades. With the arrival of the youngest generations of Slovenian musicians, this balance has been steadily shifting towards pop. This is undoubtedly a sign of our times: on the one hand, it accompanies the commercialisation and standardisation of contemporary popular music, while on the other, it signals a generational change in the audience. Younger listeners are simply not attuned to the traditional *melos* and instead seek music that captures their attention and addresses the issues of today.

This folk-versus-pop duality frames the work of musicians and bands who—even in these modern times—remain faithful to their roots while creating new, original works within the *narodno-zabavna glasba* idiom. Perhaps the genre's recent revival can be attributed to precisely to these new approaches and to the harmonies derived from pop and, at times, even jazz. To be frank, the number of concerts and recording is not vast; like certain other musical genres, *narodno-zabavna* music has become somewhat niche. Yet within this niche lies a wealth of high-quality, meaningful music that remains worthy of cultivation, protection, and—on our part—observation.

Narodno-zabavna glasba conveys wholesome messages: it not only celebrates the beauty of Slovenia (and in recent years has spread from the countryside into urban settings), but also speaks of noble sentiments and values. Yet present-day lyricists—including **Ivan Sivec**, **Igor Pirkovič**, **Vera Šolinc**, **Matej Kocjančič**, **Damjan Pasarič**, **Matej Trstenjak**, and others—are by no means anchored in the past. Their lyrics explore themes, and occasionally vocabulary, that younger audiences can relate to.

It is also worth noting that today's musicians—members of ensembles playing this genre—tend to be far more skilled on their instruments than their predecessors, who codi-

fied the genre from the mid-1950s. Most contemporary performers of *narodno-zabavna glasba* have completed higher musical education; some are music pedagogues, others professional musicians active in other musical fields. They have honed their technique, introduced new approaches, and demonstrated that it is possible to modernise and further develop this genre, which, despite such innovations,

remains firmly rooted in vernacular music traditions. Today, this approach is successfully carried forward by the **Vražji muzikanti** (Die teuflischen Musikanten), **Mladi korenjaki** (Die jungen Helden), **S.O.S. kvintet**, **Veseli svatje**, **Petovia kvintet**, **Poskočni muzikanti**, **Pajdaši** (Oberkrainer Kameraden), **Stiegl kvintet** (Stiegl Quintett), **Robert Smolnikar Trio**, and others.



Fehtarji or Entertainment and a Polka-Beat Show

Other performers, such as Polkaholiki or Zvita feltna, might be considered representative of a subgenre within *narodno-zabavna glasba*, leaning more towards pop in their approach to performance. They entertain through both their songs and videos, putting on an engaging show at their events. This style belongs more to pop than to traditional music.

A clear example is the band Fehtarji, comprising members drawn from other *narodno-zabavna glasba* ensembles. Fehtarji take the above-mentioned characteristics almost to the extreme, both in their lyrics and in their unrestrained frivolity. The result is clear: their concerts are highly entertaining and attract large audiences; it is safe to say they would struggle to fill venues as easily if they performed only Oberkrainer music. Photo: Fehtarji Archive.

These ensembles perform at numerous festivals, concerts, and radio and television shows, all of which serve as a veritable springboard, particularly for the youngest bands. The longest-running competitive festivals boast more than a half century of history (*Ptujski festival* marked its 56th edition this year), while others are not far behind (*Števerjanski festival*, *Graška Gora poje in igra*, *Vurberški festival*). Non-competitive festivals and themed concerts (*Festival Avsenik*, *Alpski večer*, *Narodnozabavni vikend v Begunjah*) host ensembles of great renown and long-standing tradition. The most successful among them include **Alpski kvintet** (Alpenoberkrainer), **Slovenski muzikantje** (Original Oberkrainer Sextett), **Ansambel Franca Miheliča** (Ensemble Franz Mihelič), **Ansambel Braneta Klavžarja**, **Ansambel Zupan** (Robert Zupan und seine Oberkrainer), **Igor in Zlati zvoki** (Igor und seine Oberkrainer), **Vagabundi** (Alpen Vagabunden), **Okrogli muzikantje** (Die runden Oberkrainer), **Slovenski zvoki**, **Hišni ansambel Avsenik** (Hauskapelle Avsenik), **Veseli Begunjčani** (Oberkrainer aus Begunje), and the hugely popular **Modrijani**.

Perhaps the only ensemble today capable of filling halls with the purest form of “classical” *narodno-zabavna glasba* is **Ansambel Saša Avsenika** (Sašo Avsenik und seine Oberkrainer). As the leading representative of the third generation of the legendary Avsenik dynasty, **Sašo Avsenik** (b. 1991) bridges

the tradition of authentic Slovenian *narodno-zabavna glasba* with the expectations of contemporary audiences. His ensemble continues the demanding legacy of his illustrious and, in many respects, unsurpassable predecessor **Ansambel bratov Avsenik** (Slavko Avsenik und seine Original Oberkrainer), while incorporating up-to-date elements that appeal to younger listeners. The ensemble performs both in prestigious Central European concert halls—where his grandfather Slavko Avsenik once triumphed—or at village fêtes across Slovenia. Two sides of the same coin: still shining brightly, and still of lasting worth.

Seven decades after his debut, **Slavko Avsenik** (1929–2015), Sašo’s famous predecessor, remains the foremost role model for accordionists of the genre. His remarkable story is chronicled in several monographs, but a few of his greatest achievements deserve mention: more than a thousand original compositions, around ten thousand live performances, eighty-five albums for the Slovenian and German markets, thirty-five gold and platinum records, and dozens of international awards and honours—achievements recognised by the *Guinness Book of Records* in 1990.

While Slavko Avsenik serves as the role model for piano accordionists, **Lojze Slak** (1932–2011) remains the greatest legend of a related instrument – the diatonic button accordion. Over time, an unintentional divide emerged between proponents



Sašo Avsenik, the grandson of the legendary Slavko Avsenik (1929–2015), continues the family tradition of Slovenian *narodno-zabavna glasba* (Oberkrainer folk-pop music). Their music bridges past and present, delights audiences across generations, and preserves a heritage celebrated at home and abroad for decades. Photo: © Avsenik Museum.

of the piano accordion (quintets in the Avsenik tradition) and those favouring the diatonic button accordion (trios with multipart vocals, in the style of the Lojze Slak Ensemble). In reality, Avsenik and Slak held each other in great esteem and were not rivals. Indeed, Slavko’s brother **Vilko Ovsenik** (1928–2017) produced **Ansambel Lojzeta Slaka** and **Fantje s Praprotna**.

Although the quintet formation composers a broader musical palette for musical arrangements and more complex textures, compositions for trios with the diatonic button accordion have also attained a high level of artistry. This is demonstrated by the work of **Ansambel Banovšek**, **Ansambel Jureta Zajca**, **Ansambel Roka Žlindre**,

Gadi, Spev, Raubarji, Špadni fantje, Erazem, and many others.

The diatonic accordion shines brighter than ever today, enjoying even greater popularity amongst the youngest generation than the piano accordion. This is partly thanks to the efforts of outstanding players and educators such as **Zoran Lupinc** (b. 1961), **Toni Sotošek** (b. 1970), **Denis Novato** (b. 1976), **Robert Goter** (b. 1976), **Zoran Zorko**, **Miha Debevec** (b. 1978), **Klemen Rošar** (b. 1988), **Nejc Pačnik** (b. 1990), **Manuel Šavron** (b. 1991), and others, who have taken on the responsibility of passing knowledge to younger generations.

Another notable phenomenon is the rise of girl ensembles. A quarter

of a century ago, **Vesele Štajerke** were the pioneers of this trend; they were followed by **Navihanke**, **Polka punce**, **Zapeljivke**, **Iskrice**, **Mlade frajle**, **Frajerke**, **Slovenke** (LadyKryner), and the reactivated **Kvintet slovenskih deklet** (Die Oberkrainer Polka Mädels).

Beyond the internet, the preservation of older *narodno-zabavna* re-

cordings lies chiefly with television and radio stations that continue to broadcast this music. Although the contribution of the national broadcaster RTV Slovenija has been relatively modest (with notable exceptions such as the now-discontinued Friday evening TV shows *Slovenski pozdrav* and *V petek zvečer*), fans of the genre can rely on dedicated private outlets—particularly the lead-

When Oberkrain Meets Jazz



Multi-instrumentalist and composer Andrej Toplišek (b. 1981) is a true exception within the contemporary Slovenian *narodno-zabavna* scene. An accordionist and former member of Okrogli muzikantje, Toplišek is both a devoted admirer of Avsenik's music and a passionate jazz and classical music enthusiast. Between 2011 and 2024, he recorded a series of distinctive solo and collaborative albums in his home studio, reflecting this duality (folk septet/jazz combo): *It's Time for Jazz*, *Akkord-eon-2015*, *Oberkrainer Suite*, *Postkarte aus Slowenien*, *Tradicija in umetnost* (Tradition and Art), *Home Town Suite*, *Prvi poskus*, and *The Storyteller*. In his hands, *narodno-zabavna glasba* takes a creative turn towards winds its way jazz and chanson, charting entirely new musical paths. Photo: Vito Korbar.



The Oberkrainer Polka Mädels, a quintet of Slovenian women, have been performing since 2012. They are among the most successful folk entertainment groups in Slovenia and are known for their interpretations of Avsenik's music. They have performed numerous times at home and abroad and have received several prestigious awards, including the Oberkrainer Award, the Alpen Grand Prix, and the Števerjan Festival Award. Photo: Facebook Archive Kvintet slovenskih deklet/Die Oberkrainer Polka Mädels.

ing Radio and TV Veseljak. High-quality live performances by top ensembles are also aired by Radio Slovenija's *Četrtek večer slovenskih pesmi in napevov* (Thursday Evening of Songs and Tunes), Radio Maribor's *V dobri družbi s Kristijanom* (In Good Company with Kristijan), Radio Koper's *Gremo plesat* (Let's Go Dancing), and the minority-language broadcaster Radio Trst A with the concert series *Iz domače zakladnice* (From the Home Treasury).

Anyone seeking proof that Slovenian *narodno-zabavna* music is both popular and deeply tied to national identity need only look beyond Slovenia's borders. In Slove-

nian communities abroad—in the Trieste, Gorizia and Udine provinces, in Carinthia and further afield across the Alpine world, the USA, Canada, and Australia—this music continues to thrive, both live and on the airwaves. For Slovenians abroad, *narodno-zabavna glasba* has played a vital role since its emergence in the mid-1950s; cultivating this genre provides emigrants and minorities not only an emotional bond to their homeland, but also a means of preserving and valuing their mother tongue. For all these reasons, *narodno-zabavna glasba* was inscribed in Slovenia's Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017.

Wind Band Music in Slovenia

An Incubator of Outstanding Musicians

Boris Selko

When the rhythmic hits and tones of percussion, woodwinds, and brass ring out, everyone in Slovenia knows that a *godba* (wind band) is playing. “Godba” (with the primary sense: played music) is the general Slovenian term for wind bands, a label that best captures these ensembles, which have a very rich tradition in Slovenia. In most of their home towns, these bands are key providers of musical culture and cultural performance.

They vary in size: smaller groups have around twenty musicians, while larger formations can have more than a hundred. They are led by younger or older trained conductors, with a growing number of female conductors in recent years. Players vary in their musical education, from compulsory primary training to secondary music schooling, all the way to academy-trained musicians. These are by no means

the bands of old—those made up of untrained enthusiasts with poor-quality instruments driven solely by love of music. We are now talking about orchestras playing demanding scores at a high artistic level. Slovenian wind bands perform different repertoires for a variety of occasions. In addition to marches, which they are best known for, they also perform Slovenian *narodno-zabavna glasba* (folk-pop mu-



The Police Orchestra and the Slovenian Armed Forces Band are Slovenia’s only professional wind orchestras. They enrich the country’s cultural and protocol scenes. The orchestras participate in national, protocol, and ceremonial events; perform at independent concerts at home and abroad; and take part in charity events. Founded in 1996, the Slovenian Armed Forces Band (pictured above) brings together musicians who have passed auditions and military training, most of whom are academically trained. They also perform in big bands and chamber ensembles. Founded in 1948, the Police Orchestra employs only academically trained musicians who have successfully passed an audition in which a commission selects only the best. This makes the orchestra comparable to the best European professional ensembles, and its excellence is recognised both at home and abroad. The musicians perform more than 300 times a year and are increasingly performing in smaller chamber ensembles.

Photo: Tadej Krese, Marjan Grošelj.

sic), jazz, rock, evergreens, and global hits. The most work goes into their concert programmes, which include works by known Slovenian and foreign composers of classical music and other genres. These pieces are actually adapted from the same scores as those used by symphony orchestras. Wind bands typically consist of the aforementioned instruments, though it is no longer unusual for them to include

harps, strings, or keyboard instruments. It is important to note that wind band performances are not limited to concerts; they also cultivate a strong marching band tradition with parades and choreographies, most often in the company of majorette groups. Within the ranks of their parent wind bands, there is also an emergence of percussion and chamber ensembles, as well as, lately, also big bands.

Maestros and Young Talents of the Slovenian Wind-Band Scene

For the development and visibility of Slovenian wind-band culture, it is vital that works by Slovenian composers are prominently featured and performed at home and around the globe. Renowned older maestros include Bojan Adamič, Vinko Štrucl, Jože Privšek, and the Avsenik brothers. Equally important for the future are composers such as Rok Golob, Milko Lazar, Igor Krivokapič, Peter Tovornik, Aleksander Čonč, Tilen Slakan, and Rok Nemanič Nemo. The development of orchestras is also closely linked to numerous top-tier conductors including Miro Saje, Matevž Novak, Mitja Dragolič, Gregor Kovačič, and Miran Šumečnik. Overall, the Slovenian wind-band tradition relies on the knowledge and experience of the elders, the talent and enthusiasm of the youth, a strong sense of tradition, and above all, a great love of music.

There are more than 150 active wind bands in Slovenia, from the most numerous amateur ensembles, to primary and secondary school or conservatory bands, all the way to the **Wind Orchestra of the Academy of Music in Ljubljana**. Slovenia also has two professional wind orchestras: the **Slovenian Armed Forces Band** and the **Police Orchestra**. In recent years, veteran bands have also emerged, accepting musicians over the age of 50. Strong bonds connect all the orchestras, as many members of professional ensembles continue to play with their primary amateur bands, often holding double memberships.

The history of Slovenian wind band music is particularly impressive insofar as the oldest wind ensemble (**Idrija Miners' Band Society**) has been officially active without inter-

ruption since 1665, with a few other bands about to celebrate their 190th and 200th anniversaries. In terms of tradition and origins, this places Slovenia among the very forefront of European and global wind-band music.

The national umbrella organisation, the **Wind Band Association of Slovenia**, is in charge of administration, networking, training courses, national competitions, and publishing. Each year, the Association holds a conducting school, a course for band leaders, various instrumental seminars, and competition comprising four categories (from 3rd class to concert level). It awards honours and plaques, publishes scores by Slovenian composers, and fosters international and national cooperation among wind bands. One of the association's guiding principles is to encourage young people to en-



Ever since 2015, the Krka Wind Orchestra has collaborated closely with established international composers and conductors such as Nigel Hess, Philip Sparke, Alexandre Kosmicki, Bart Picqueur, Otto M. Schwarz, Franco Cesarini, and Jose Suner Oriola. Photo: Boštjan Pucelj.

ter band life conscientiously. To this effect, the **Festival of Youth Band Culture – Musica Creativa** summer camp has been running for 44 years, bringing together up to 150 Slovenian and other young players at a time. Highly qualified mentors and conductors accomplish tremendous work in a single week, as attested by the closing concerts, which have often been performed on the **Slovenian Philharmonic** stage. The Wind Band Association of Slovenia is also a member of the international associations **CISM** and **WASBE** and therefore, by extension, is registered with **UNESCO**.

Being a band musician is more than merely taking part in leisure-time activities; it is a form of belonging that takes tireless work and numerous sacrifices. In truth, it amounts to

a way of life that holds no small importance in the Slovenian cultural realm. Considering the knowledge and love of music attained in wind bands and through further education, it is no surprise that numerous Slovenian musicians stand as the foremost artists in their fields, many performing in Europe's and the world's most renowned opera houses, symphony orchestras, and other ensembles, not to mention as soloists, concertmasters, conductors, and mentors. Slovenia, while being a small country, is a great incubator of distinguished musicians. Slovenian wind bands also have a common anthem, composed by **Bojan Adamič** with lyrics by **Frane Milčinski Ježek**: "Trata-ri now blares our melody..."



Musica Creativa is a week-long youth wind-band programme in Izola that has been bringing young musicians from across Slovenia together for over four decades. Supported by the Public Fund for Cultural Activities (JSKD) and the Wind Band Association of Slovenia, it fosters creativity, collaboration, and musical growth. Photo: Nikola Predovič.

You're All Invited to the Carnival

How Joker Out and Nina Pušlar 'Won' and Why Slovenian Pop-Rock Doesn't Mind

Jaša Lorenčič

Slovenian pop-rock can be the greatest—or somewhere in between. And it certainly doesn't mind.

In 2023, something happened in Slovenia that had only ever happened once before, exactly twenty years earlier. A relatively young Slovenian 'pop' rock band went where none had gone before: the country's largest venue by far, marked 'sold out' well in advance. After **Siddharta** came **Joker Out**.

Siddharta's unique blend of indie rock with a touch of pop caught a timely wave at the turn of the millennium. In 2003, at Ljubljana's **Bežigrad Stadium**, they became the first Slovenian group ever to play a stadium. At the peak of transition and on the road towards the European Union, optimism and collective pride prevailed: *we can do what the greatest can do*. Filling stadiums was no longer reserved for Metallica or Bob Dylan—our own band could do it too! An audience of thirty thousand was national news, the headline of the year if not the decade.

Twenty years later, the relatively young Slovenian band **Joker Out**—shrewdly and boldly labelling themselves as *shagadelic rock'n'roll*—played Slovenia's largest indoor venue, **Stožice Arena**. This was their victory lap, their homecoming on the heels of having qualified for the Eurovision finals and a tour schedule packed with shows abroad. A repeat, a reprise? Siddhartha = Joker Out? Yes and no.

Carpe Diem, Baby!

If we were 'forced to' name one band that now embodies and even preserves Slovenian pop-rock the way Siddharta once did, it would be Joker Out. They've ticked every box and done everything there was to do. They won the breakthrough secondary-school competition (**Špil Liga**), released their melodious debut *Umazane Misli* (*Dirty Thoughts*) after the pandemic and followed it with the darker *Demoni* (*Demons*). They sold out Ljubljana's biggest club venue, **Cvetličarna**, twice, did the same at the legendary open-air **Križanke**, and finally ventured where Slovenian pop rarely goes with such mo(nu)mental force—to Eurovision 2023 with 'Carpe Diem'.

They may have been chosen to represent Slovenia without the traditional national contest, but what was more striking than their qualification for the final was the way they charged into the European scene, rather than merely flirting with it.



Joker Out is one of Slovenia's most significant recent musical breakthroughs. Their infectious energy and signature shagadelic rock'n'roll transformed them from a local phenomenon into a European sensation. Their Eurovision hit song Carpe Diem has racked up tens of millions of streams, while their album Souvenir Pop has taken them to sold-out venues across Europe. Photo: Primož Lukežič.

They came better prepared than Siddharta, who only tested international waters. Joker Out dived in head-first and seized the outside world—from Scandinavia and the British Isles to the Balkans—determined to make their home internationally.

Buldožer, Pankrti, Lačni Franz, Videosex, Laibach ...

Success abroad is, of course, relative: Slovenian pop is unlikely to fill Wembley. In the past, it found its own distinct path within Yugoslavia. Setting aside Avseniki and the accordion having won audiences across the northern border, Slovenian performers once commanded attention through the former federation with their fresh, modern, alternative approaches, particularly among fellow musicians. They were neither pure pop nor pure rock, but skilful in blending the two.

In the 1970s, Buldožer dished out their unconventional absurdist prog-rock. At the dawn of the 1980s Pankrti unleashed primal anti-establishment punk, Lačni Franz delivered sharp wit and a singular new-wave sensibility, and Videosex brought youthful electro-pop energy that was ahead of its time. And then there was Laibach, the industrial avant-garde who paved their way to international fame by challenging the limits of the state regime.

English? Stands No Chance Anymore

So why all this talk about Joker Out? Because they were part of Festival 202 in June 2025, alongside **Mrfy**, **Koala Voice**, **Jet Black Diamonds**, and **Kokosy**. It was a triumph, a parade—a carnival, fittingly echoing the lyrics of Joker Out's *Novi val* (*New Wave*). These kindred—not



Provocateurs With a Vision

Laibach, founded in Trbovlje in 1980, has been Slovenia's most internationally influential band for more than four decades. Their blend of industrial, symphonic, and electronic sound, paired with a distinctive visual aesthetics, has forged a singular artistic expression and established the retro-avant-garde movement. They have performed throughout the world—including in highly isolated North Korea—and have influenced numerous artists and creators, notably Rammstein.

Photo: Joerund F. Pedersen.

terribly dissimilar—primarily rock bands form a pop-rock 'package': melodious, rhythmic, sometimes guitar-driven, sometimes not.

The list of similar keeps growing. Some, like **Fed Horses**, **Masharik**, **Regen**, and **AKA Neomi**, stand out for their powerful female vocals. Others, like Maribor's mature pop punk collective **Alo!Stari** or the older blues-rock collective **Hamo & Tribute 2 Love**, thrive as live favourites.

What unites nearly all of them—and most Slovenian performers—is their

language. Where the rock bands of the 1990s, such as **Big Foot Mama**, **Mi2**, **Siddharta**, and **Dan D**, sounded both powerful and perhaps *too* obviously domestic in their use of Slovene, the language is now almost obligatory, while English has been largely pushed aside. Koala Voice, who started in English and gained traction abroad—something only **Elvis Jackson** had managed before—illustrate how the linguistic tide shifted towards Slovene over the past decade.

Nostalgia Here, Nostalgia There

Beyond language, it is striking that the pandemic wasn't followed by a generational clash. Quite the opposite—generations merged, sometimes literally. In the Guštin family, father Miha once wrote songs with Big Foot Mama, while his son Kris does the same with Joker Out. Classic Slovenian pop-rock names enjoy as much, if not greater, renown as before. Slovenian classic rock has become canon. The genre's veterans—Siddharta, Big Foot Mama, Mi2—have taken victory laps at sold-out Stožice shows, releasing no more than two new albums between them in the last five years. Loyalty counts. Even **Miha Guštin – Gušti** filled Križanke a concert celebrating his 40 years in the industry.

What worked in the 1990s and lived to see the new millennium continues to hold sway and can always count on another reunion, anniversary, or wave of nostalgia. **Magnifico**, a phenomenon in his own right and a chameleon of genres, languages and styles, followed up a run of Stožice concerts with one of Ljubljana's biggest open-air shows in Stanežiče at the end of summer 2024, and is returning for his traditional Christmas concert at Stožice as an ethno-rock 'charlatan'.

But it's not only the largest venues that count. Elvis Jackson remains a live-act constant, still capable of entertaining crowds; even the long-time mid-tier **Flirrt** recently filled Križanke. The legacy of Velenje's

glam-rockers **Šank Rock** resurfaces from time to time, and the revolving roster of female singers keeps the **Tabu** line-up youthful. Like elsewhere, nostalgia in music is always in strong supply—and these days, it pays more than ever.

The Story of Nina Pušlar and Lessons from the Field

At any rate, Slovenian pop-rock is about far more than just bands. The more pop-oriented moments often come from solo performers who find themselves somewhere in between genres. The name currently commanding the most attention is **Nina Pušlar**. Far from new to the scene, she emerged from TV talent shows, that, as elsewhere, produced a number of enduring artists. Yet after twenty years of steadfast effort and unwavering dedication to her vision, Pušlar stands alone in having filled Stožice. Given her catalogue of hits on commercial radio station, perhaps it was only a matter of time.

Pop-rock in Slovenia exists on multiple levels at once. **Raiven** and **Maja Keuc**, both former Eurovision representatives, came close, but lacked the hits and continuity to go further. Dropping in from the 'left', the unapologetic **Masayah** and the multicultural Balkan trap diva **Senidah** cross into the urban scene, largely sidestepping pop-rock tradition. From the 'right', artists like **Nika Zorjan** lean towards pop.

Internationally, the Croatian-Slovenian duo **freakind.** are a standout



Dubbed the “Balkan trap diva”, **Senidah** is a contemporary artist who transcends genre. Her distinctive voice, uncompromising style, and strong artistic identity are reshaping the musical landscape of the Balkans and beyond, captivating millions of listeners worldwide. Photo: Dušan Petrović.

success. Winners of the Music Moves Europe Jury Award at the **Eurosonic Noorderslag Festival**, they also write and produce for K-pop, including *Layover* (2023) for BTS member ‘V’, which sold over 1.67 million copies on its first day, and over 2.1 million by the end of its first week—a record for any solo act. The al-

bum reached No. 2 on *Billboard’s* K-pop Albums chart, while the single *Love Me Again* surpassed two billion streams on Spotify. Freekind. also write for the popular girl group NewJeans.

As for singers, Slovenian pop-rock abhors one-hit wonders.



The freekind. duo create music that reflects their personal growth and search for inner balance, while inspiring others to embrace their own path towards inner peace and connection. Infused with jazz, soul, and hip-hop, their songs explore self-acceptance, love, vulnerability, and optimism. Photos: Giovanni Mafrici.

Jan Plestenjak, the quintessential pop singer, is slowly entering veteran status; despite occasional breaks, he has no clear successor. **Žan Serčič** comes closest with his fresh, likeable approach. He has filled Križanke twice, but still awaits his nationwide breakthrough. Acts from ‘the left’, like **Hauptman**, lean more urban and harbour no pop ambitions.

Slovenian pop-rock knows its strengths: Stožice, public media, and awards. But don’t be surprised to find these same musicians playing small-town gigs, sharing the bill with entirely different genres and bands. Or to find them missing from commercial radio stations altogether. Elsewhere, that might be unusual, but here ... there’s simply not

much choice. That’s why Laibach play in Ruše, Mi2 perform with Ansambel Stil in Juršinci, and Joker Out will mark their tenth anniversary with the biggest open-air concert on ‘student square’.

Slovenian pop-rock may be the greatest—or somewhere in between. And it certainly doesn’t mind. In fact, it thrives on it.

Thought

Slovenian pop-rock knows its strengths: Stožice, public media, and awards. Sure. But don’t be surprised to find these same musicians playing small-town gigs alongside entirely different genres and bands.

Slovenian Metal: A Study in Success

In the last five years, the Slovenian extreme scene has seen great successes.

Ivan Ceganec

Over the last five years, since our previous publication presented the vast metal scene of Slovenia, a comparatively small European country, things have, thankfully, not taken a turn for the worse.

Perhaps the only sad news to report is that the world-renowned **Metal Days** festival has ceased to exist. While the reasons are varied, the poor state of affairs in the cultural-artistic sector following the COVID-19 pandemic played a major part. Its place in Tolmin has been taken by the somewhat smaller, yet successful and increasingly renowned **Tolminator Festival**. Meanwhile, with the exception of the cult **Krawal**

near Železniki and **Trnje Fest** in the village of Trnje near Pivka, smaller local festivals of extreme music have slowly transformed into single-day club events. The momentum of the cult Postojna-based **Kontejn** has slowed, whereas Maribor's **Pekarna** has picked up steam again, Izola's **Hangar** is providing an increasingly strong programme, and Ljubljana's Metelkova has seen the opening of two new extreme-music

In recent years, the Slovenian powerviolence scene has flourished as one of the most vibrant underground movements. It unites bands, collectives, and venues from Postojna, through Ljubljana, Ilirska Bistrica, Kranj, and Izola, to Maribor, all operating on DIY principles. Foto: Melisa Čehič.



Brutal Sound with a Slovenian Signature

Within Destruction is a Slovenian deathcore band formed in Jesenice in 2010. Initially rooted in deathcore and death metal, their style has incorporated influences from metalcore, nu-metal, and anime aesthetics, developing a distinct style. The current line-up includes Rok Rupnik, guitarist and vocalist Howard Fang, and drummer Luka Vezzosi. They have released six studio albums including their newest *Animetal* (2025, Sumerian Records). Within Destruction regularly appear at concerts and festivals across Europe, Asia, and North America, which makes them one of Slovenia's most successful musical exports.

Photo: Matic Kutin.

venues: **Menza pri koritu** and **Jalla Jalla**. The autonomous zone **Plac v Ljubljani** is noteworthy for its association with the powerviolence revival (more on this later).

Slovenian bands have been gaining growing recognition both at home and abroad, from established acts to newer arrivals. The throne of international renown belongs to **Within Destruction**, a band whose frequent album releases consistently push the envelope of their sonic identity while sending them on ever-

new European, American, and Asian tours. Heavy-metallers **SkyEye**, with three acclaimed albums, also enjoy wide recognition, largely through international touring. The black-metal group **Srd** and stoner-leaning shredders **Britof** extend Slovenia's presence far beyond our borders, while **Inmate** regularly flirt with the mainstream, including Eurovision.

Dissonant death-metal bands **Siderean** and **Kamra** are also forces to be reckoned with, combining extreme music with regular inter-



Dirty Skunks have been organising and producing metal, hardcore, punk, stoner, and alternative concerts since 2002. They are the driving force behind the Tolminator festival at the confluence of the Soča and Tolminka rivers, which has quickly gained traction in the international metal community since its launch in 2023.

Photo: Marijo Županov.

national appearances, often supported by foreign labels. Slovenian death-/black-metal band **Ensanguinate** have toured South America, steadily expanding their global reach. Though currently less active, **Dickless Tracy** will soon celebrate 30 years of uninterrupted existence, while the godfathers of Slovenian grindcore, **Extreme Smoke 57**, remain ferociously vigorous. **Razvalina** are currently the strongest Slovenian exponents of US-style death metal, while pornographically infused death metal continues to be exported by **Vulvathrone**. Grinder quartet **Glista** have made a strong progressive turn, while the younger wave is mobilising not only musically but also in socially critical ways, with grind outfits such as **Kultivator** and **Gastritis** patiently building a scene-within-the-scene. Veteran

acts like **Agregat**, **Wasserdicht** continue to play an active role.

Speaking of scenes: we cannot skip over how powerviolence has exploded in Slovenia during this period, with unprecedented numbers of bands emerging, especially popular with younger crowds: **Carl Johnson**, **GreenxCrack**, **The Snot**, **FTD**, **Mejhn**, **Tvroid**, **Preclarvus** (the world's first mediaeval powerviolence band!), **Sranje**, **Opran Možgan**, **Pinke Panke**, to name just a few. Sadly, the one-man project **Smedja in smetke** has passed into the great grind pit in the sky.

On the more traditional end of the metal spectrum, following **Vigilance's** demise, **Challenger** have taken centre stage, supported by a German label and gradu-

ally making a name for themselves abroad, as have **Moshead**, while **Metalsteel** and **Eruption**, who are also gaining ever greater foreign recognition, are maintaining their strong presence at home.

Interestingly, there has been a surge of fat Sabbath-inspired riffs. **Omega Sun**, who have been seen stateside, are leading this charge, while local acts such as **Ambra**, **Jegulja**, **Hoba**, **Chains**, and **Britof** (who even appeared in a video edition of the cult Ozzfest!) are maintaining the riffing tradition.

Younger bands such as **Black Camo** mix traditional heavy metal or thrash with more contemporary sounds, while **Decair**, **Morywa**, and **Armaroth** explore progressive and groove-oriented directions.

With their increasingly demanding musical evolution, **Morost** are generating considerable excitement in extreme-music circles, while their younger listeners are hammering out their own path to the stars through bands like **Kresnik**, **Godzilla**, and **Nightcrawler**.

Hei'an are a particularly interesting phenomenon, having broken onto world stages in very short order, offering a modern take on progressive metal. In fact, after fewer than five club shows, they were already playing the legendary 70,000 Tons of Metal cruise festival.

Standard-bearers of the extreme scene, **Noctiferia** appear to be on a creative hiatus; Dekadent have re-

tired from the stage, and the promising **Hellsword** have vanished into the unknown. Following the death of member **Mijo Popović**, the status of the cult band **Pomaranča**—legends of the Slovenian and Yugoslav hard-rock/metal scene who made their way back to the top last year—also remains unclear. Meanwhile, **Hellcats** still keep a fairly regular gigging schedule and organise the single-day Rock Women's Day, and there is hope that the female doom outfit **Mist** will awaken from hibernation.

In 2024, following the success of his documentary *Železne stopinje* (*Iron Footsteps*), author **Denis Brnčič** put out a second, supplemented edition of his eponymous book. The legendary **Paranoid Zine** webzine, which recently marked its anniversary with a documentary film, continues to lead metal media in Slovenia.

It's also worth noting that Slovenia's first-ever metal label, **On Parole Productions**, remains highly active, both in issuing domestic releases and in distributing foreign titles. And a final, telling point of interest: it isn't only bands that raise the scene's profile abroad. Individuals are just as important as bands for raising the scene's international profile. Many Slovenian musicians—young and old—can be found on international tours working as night-liner drivers, stage techs, roadies, or merch managers, promoting Slovenia among foreign bands and agencies as a trustworthy, quality-driven destination.

Where Have All the Troubadours Gone?

Singer-Songwriters From Slovenia

Katarina Juvančič

Slovenian singer-songwriters are a flock of sundry birds, conveying their messages using a cornucopia of musical forms, literary styles, and performance approaches. These modern musical storytellers may be found busking on street corners, playing intimate living-room concerts, or drawing crowds at bigger concert halls with songs that are lyrical, intimate, socially engaged, or steeped in protest.

The first Slovenian singer-songwriters appeared in the late 1960s. **Tomaž Domicelj**, **Aleksander Mežek** (known abroad as Alexander John), and **Andrej Šifrer** built their reputations largely on the American folk legacy of masters like Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. By the mid-1970s, however, a new wave emerged—artists who blended poetry and music in idiosyncratic, artful ways. This approach culminated in **Tomaž Pengov**'s lyrical *Odpotovanja* (1973) and lushly orchestrated, chanson-like tracks on **Marko Breclj**'s *Cocktail* (1974). Their breakthroughs inspired a generation of young musicians to expand on the “six-strings-and-one-narrative” template. The most distinguished among them, the husky-voiced **Jani Kovačič**, combined socially critical lyrics with sharp guitar riffs laced with subtler influences from traditional songs, chansons, and beat poetry, which he continues to perform with vitality even in retirement.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Slovenian singer-songwriter scene diversified, professionalised, and expanded in scope. It embraced rock band frontmen like **Vlado Kreslin**, **Zoran Predin**, **Peter Lovšin**, and **Andrej Guček**; grassroots bards like **Adi Smolar** and **Drago Mislej – Mef**; songwriter **Boštjan Gartner**; the feisty poetess **Ksenija Jus** (now retired from performing); and dialect storyteller **Iztok Mlakar**, who seldom appears in public yet remains the country's best-selling singer-songwriter. Some of the most influential figures that came from abroad, like **Chris Eckman** (Seattle, USA) and **Damir Avdič** (Tuzla, Bosnia–Herzegovina), have become integral to the Slovenian singer-songwriter landscape. Emerging from the blues and garage rock of the '90s, bass player **Niko Novak** has forged a solo career as a grainy-voiced Slovenian singer-songwriter, splitting his time between Ljubljana and Berlin.



An American Singer-Songwriter in Ljubljana

Chris Eckman is one of those singer-songwriters with a rare, alchemical touch. He has proved this as principal songwriter for the Seattle rock/folk band The Walkabouts and through six critically acclaimed albums. His songs have been performed by Townes Van Zandt, Steve Wynn, Willard Grant Conspiracy, and others. *Americana UK* called him “one of the best American singer-songwriters”. His 2021 album, *Where the Spirit Rests*, won the prestigious German Record Critics Award, while his latest album *The Land We Knew the Best* was named UNCUT's Album of the month in January 2025 and ranked 26th on its year-end list of best releases. Eckman, co-founder of the Glitterbeat label, has lived in Ljubljana for over 20 years and collaborated with many Slovenian musicians as well as British experimental musician Alastair McNeil, who produced his last two solo albums. Photo: Jaka Babnik.

The first decade of the new millennium saw the advent of a new generation of Slovenian singer-songwriters, including **Tadej Vesenj**, **Matej Krajnc**, **Leon Matek**, **Andraž Polič**, **Boštjan Narat**, **Nika Solce**, and the late **Katarina Avbar**, duos such as the sibling duo **Severa** and **Gal Gjurin** (both of whom sustain respected solo careers and lead their own bands), **Katarina Juvančič & Dejan Lapanja**, **Pliš**, **Natrljetno kolobar-**

jenje s praho, and more recently **Tretji kanu** (now a band). Many honed their craft at the **Kantfest International Festival**, founded in 2002 to nurture emerging talent and provide them with stage and studio work opportunities. Although Kantfest is currently on a hiatus, its legacy endures in the continuously expanding local and international singer-songwriter platforms. This autumn, the 15th edition of the **International Songwriting Festival MaK** will take



Veteran of the Slovenian underground scene, Niko Novak crafts a dark urban blues sonic landscape. The former Dicky B. Hardy and Incurabili frontman now performs solo, pairing his baritone vocals with bass guitar. His songs conjure a nocturnal, cinematic atmosphere of city streets. Photo: Simao Bessa.

place in the small town of Grobelno near Celje. MaK, which names Tomaž Pengov as its main and formative in-

spiration, showcases both Slovenian and foreign singer-songwriters.

3:rma is a dark-folk duo featuring vocalist Maša But and guitarist Urška Supej. Their blend of poetry and music explores social themes. They recorded their debut album, *A Well-Paved Road*, with London producer Femi Temowo. In 2025, Supej was named one of 20 recipients of the Will Smith Emerging Artist Fund, supporting the careers of promising musicians. Photo: Ira & John.



Young singer-songwriter Kiki combines folk, pop, and electronica. Her music is distinguished by atmospheric arrangements, multi-layered vocals, and poetic lyrics that speak to her audience with warmth and emotional depth.

Photo: Lila Žervanov.

This ongoing expansion of opportunities for both emerging and established songwriters has fostered a fresh wave of modern and eclectic troubadours—**Martin Ramoveš, Daniel Vezoja, Tomaž Hostnik, Andrej Fon – Olfamož, Jana Beltran, Jure Lesar, Samuel Blues, Ditka, Balladero** and others—who infuse the scene with fresh energy and impetus.

The post-pandemic era has brought forth a new current of artists who intertwine musical expression with lyrical nuance, keen social awareness with reflective introspection,

and theatrical gusto with compelling narrative. Some, like **Primož Vidovič, Boštjan Pertinač, Luka Gluvič, Tina Marinšek, Nina Virant, Manca Berlec** and **Kiki**, craft their songs in Slovene, while others—including **Dora Tomori** and the female duo **3:rma**—favour English in both writing and performance. Among these emerging voices, Dora Tomori and Kiki are steadily gaining recognition at international music festivals and broadening their reach beyond Slovenia's borders.

Dig Deeper: Beyond the Mainstream

The Alternative Music Scene in All Its Varying Forms

Jaša Bužinel

In today's music economy, artists must rely on major platforms for the distribution and promotion of their music, while most labels and venues survive only with government support. In such a precarious environment, what does it truly mean to be independent and alternative? In Slovenia, it usually translates as music that does not enjoy regular airplay on national or commercial radio and television stations. It encompasses various niche scenes, sometimes connected, though more often completely detached from one another. While eclectic in terms of sound, aesthetic, and values, we still tend to present them all under a single umbrella—for lack of a better term.

Emerging from local DIY communities and largely overlooked by the mainstream press, these scenes offer some of the most exciting music in Slovenia today. Their roots trace back to late-1970s and 1980s Yugoslavia, when a new era in Slovenian popular music was heralded by bands like Buldožer, Pankrti, Laibach, Borghesia, Demolition Group, and Miladojka Youneed, by labels such as ŠKUC and FV Založba (later FV Music), and by the influential Novi Rock festival.

Following Slovenian independence in 1991, Novi Rock continued to introduce up-and-coming acts alongside international bookings until the end of the millennium. Its successor, Klubski maraton (Club Marathon), smaller in scale but similar in scope, was established by **Radio Študent** in 2001 as an annual competition,

giving six selected bands the opportunity to perform on a nationwide tour. It remains an essential launchpad to this day, with many participants eventually becoming major domestic acts. The importance of Radio Študent—a non-profit Ljubljana-based radio station established in 1969—cannot be overstated, both as a platform for underground music (including its label **ZARŠ Records**) and serious music journalism. Another major bastion of alternative music is **Metelkova City**, an autonomous social and cultural centre in the heart of Ljubljana. Its multiple clubs, alongside counterparts and squats in smaller towns (**Mostovna** in Nova Gorica, **MKNŽ** in Ilirska Bistrica, etc.), form an essential musical network.

To be precise, most independent venues and labels today are not



Mladinski klub Nade Žagar (Nada Žagar's Youth Club) (MKNŽ) in Ilirska Bistrica has hosted domestic and international acts since 1966. In defiance of time, it continues to foster a creative environment for young people, emphasising DIY culture, subcultures, and alternative music, and enjoying strong local support.
Photo: Evgen Čopi Gorišek.

fully financially independent. Almost all rely on public funding from the Ministry of Culture and city councils. The Metelkova club **Gala hala** established **KAPA Records** in 1997, later kick-starting the careers of influential noughties bands such as **Red Five Point Star**, **Srečna mladina**, and **Move-knowledgement**. In recent years, the label's protégés, including the YU-rock-inspired indie underdogs **Čao Portorož** and **IN-SAN**, psychedelic noise rockers **Moving as a Giant** and post-punk poets **Nina Bulatovix**, have all found critical acclaim at home. Others have captivated audiences abroad, with post-punk trio **balans** playing the Balkans, alt-rock shoegazers **Haiku Garden** touring Europe, and post-metal experimentalist **The Canyon Observer** even performing in Cuba.

Moonlee Records, one of the most acclaimed indie labels in the Balkans, boasts a roster that includes jangle-rock ambassadors **Lelee**—regulars on the Balkan underground circuit, punk singer-songwriter **Damir Avdić**, the loudest power trio **Nikki Louder**, and the above-mentioned reformed neo-psychedelia masters **Move-knowledgement**. Apart from many influential Croatian, Serbian, and Macedonian bands, their catalogue also boasts the currently inactive melodic hardcore legends **In-Sane** and EBM trailblazers **Borghesia**.

Ente Tapes is a boutique label specialising in limited cassette releases. **Tschimy**, an r'n'b/pop chansonnier from their roster, has injected some much-needed freshness into national radio, while avant-rockers **Svojat**, with their surreal



Ljubljana-based power trio **Svojat** blends no-wave avant-garde blues, Saharan punk, Beefheartian luddism, and free improvisation. The album *Ošili me modro* (Ente Tapes, 2024) picks up where their debut left off, cementing their unique character on the local scene. Photo: Archive Svojat.

experimental guitar music, have landed on various domestic AOTY lists; the band's frontman, Andrej Fon, an important protagonist of the underground, also appears as **Olfamož**, a singer-songwriter project with an unparalleled sensibility for trans-genre experimentation and witty, sharply observed lyrics. Other notable outliers include jazz-rockers **Kavasutra**, whose technical virtuosity matches their wild taste in provocative wordplay, and youngsters **Bibliban**—imagine Primus meets The Stooges, with an added dash of puerile humour. Meanwhile the proggy quintet **Bregove dere**, featuring an exceptionally talented violinist, shows clear influences of 1970s avant-folk/rock legends.

Radical changes in the musical ecosystem have forced many artists—even pop-adjacent acts like the alt r'n'b singer-songwriter **Nejc Pipp** and energetic hip-hop performer **Sahareya**—to self-release on Bandcamp and streaming platforms. The same is true of the most cherished Slovenian bands like **Bakalina Velika**. This singular folk-rock sextet has won the hearts of audiences with sincere songs about death, love, hope, universal truths, and old beliefs, delivered in the dialect of the Soča Valley. As is typical of many Slovenian musicians, members of Bakalina Velika are also involved in other projects, including the intercontinental funk juggernaut **Jimmy Barka Experience**,



Sextet **Bakalina Velika** writes contemporary folk tunes and epic musical fables with socially engaged and lyrical themes. Its members bring wide experience from various projects, including *Čompe*, *Širom*, and *Feedback*. In 2025, they self-released their third album *Use kar sije* under their Čadrg Records imprint. Uniquely, some of their instruments are crafted from “Čadrg spruce,” over 6,500 years old. Photo: Janez Pelko.

led by two veteran DJs and a masterful drummer, and the world-renowned “imaginary folk” trio *Širom*.

Some of the most famous proper indie bands in the vein of Pixies or Pavement are **Kokosy**, now a major name on national radio, along with underground acts such as **Long Dumb Voices**, **Morvern**, **vsemag**, and **mal premal**. On the louder end, new-gen emoviolence quartet **zbrucz**, experimental noise

duo **Hexenbrutal**, dark ambient/post-metal project **Stamor**, and ska punk/hardcore veterans **Pigs Parliament** stand out, the latter being longtime regulars at the internationally acclaimed festival **Punk Rock Holiday** in Tolmin. This annual festival is famous for its exceptional location, barrierless main stage, and the fact that it regularly sells out before the line-up is announced.



Festival of Musical Discoveries

Showcase festival MENT Ljubljana runs across multiple venues in the city. Founded in 2015, it connects local, regional, and international performers, spanning electronica, indie, alternative, world music, and experimental genres. Alongside festival events, a conference for musical professionals focuses on networking and on presenting labels, agencies, concert organisers, and media. A hub for artists, experts, and music enthusiasts, MENT Ljubljana is regarded as a key platform linking Slovenia's music scene with the international arena. The festival was named Best Indoor Festival and Best Small Festival in 2017.

Photo: Maša Pirc, Matjaž Rušt.

The DIY ethos pervades the music of bedroom producers, too, creating unconventional electronic music that is often too experimental for clubs, such as the uncategorisable hyperpop/nu-metal sensation **Mala roza muca** and post-internet IDM creator **tachyon**. In pop, the Gen Z hero **Ružno pače** captivates Balkan teens with his energetic rush of digital pop-punk while remaining below the radar of the mainstream media. **Astrid & the Scandals**, led by singer **Astrid Kljun**, channel a 90s alt-rock-inspired sound with dynamic performances.

Alternative acts do not shy away from blending genres and sensibilities. Fusionist trio **auto** draws from Anatolian rock, krautrock, psychedelic surf, and blues, crafting soundtracks for dusty open roads. **Glitterbeat Records** protégés **Etcetera** have a unique electronic jazz sound marked by complex rhythms and saxophone-synth interplay. Singer-songwriter **KiKi** has developed a hypnotic alt-pop-via-folk aesthetic with introspective songs, while one-woman project **Muzikačaka** remains among the country's most interesting avant-pop acts. Contemporary pop and trap artists such as **ŽENA**, **.travnik**, **Matter**, and **PTČ** have found audiences beyond the traditional hip-hop scene. The drum'n'brass trio **Pantaloons** have earned a reputation as a go-to party band, while **Liamere** and its outstanding singer Malidah have emerged from the Bristolian trip hop tradition, but expanded their

sound into a radio-friendly format. Synth-pop mainstay **TORUL** continues to grow an impressive international following through regular performances abroad.

Most of these artists regularly perform at festivals championing alternative music. These include **Sajeta** (Tolmin), **In Memoriam prof. Peter Hafner** (Škofja Loka), **Trnje** (Pivka), **Kunigunda** (Velenje), and **MENT, Tresk**, and **Orto Fest** in Ljubljana. Yet much of the real magic happens in tiny venues with tiny crowds, where the scene truly comes alive. Small though they may be, these spaces are highly diverse and indispensable to the development of new talent. Its protagonists—musicians, promoters, label heads, technicians, and countless volunteers working behind the scenes—share a passion for innovative and fresh, occasionally confrontational, and wonderfully strange music, pushing sonic boundaries and audience expectations.

Can They Kick It?!

Where Exactly Are Slovenian Rhyme-Kickers' Slogans Flying?

Borja Močnik

Hip-hop culture in Slovenia didn't so much emerge as erupt—in sudden, vivid bursts during the 1990s, from the country's post-independence years to the dawn of the new millennium. When the now-legendary US group The Roots played Ljubljana in 1994, it wasn't just their performance that turned heads. At the end of the concert, a crowd of local rappers jumped on stage for an impromptu freestyle session, passing the mic from one to another—a moment that signalled the pulse of a scene still in its infancy.

Rap albums were rare back then, but they mattered. The story began in 1994 with **Ali En**'s cult *Leva scena*, followed in 1996 with the break-out record by the Maribor duo with a quirky name – **Dandrough**, and symbolically rounded off in 2000 with *Trnow Stajl*—the best-selling Slovenian rap album to date. Its author, **Klemen Klemen**, a master storyteller from Ljubljana, remains one of the country's most recognisable rappers.

Fast forward to today, and the landscape looks very different: the scene is fragmented, production conditions are better, resources are more easily available, and the players are better organised. At Ljubljana's former squat Metelkova, the regular monthly event *Rapetek* (RapFriday) has been running monthly since 2003—a legendary night that has hosted countless regional and international stars. Meanwhile, **Rhyme**

Kickers, the iconic radio show on Radio Študent (broadcasting since 1993!) is a true institution. It's now hosted by **Jizah**, the leading hip-hop activist from the sunny side of the Alps, who took over from the legendary radio host and hip-hop enthusiast Napo-lee-tano.

Dedicated rap festivals are still few and far between, though the regional Hip-Hop Reunion in Velenje stands out. Organised by rapper and veteran MC **Mrigz**, this one-day event brings together artists from across the ex-Yugoslav space—in a small mining town with an exceptionally lively rap scene.

Because of the language barrier (even within the former Yugoslavia, Slovene isn't widely understood) beatmakers often have more international breakout potential than the main act MCs. The first to make waves was US-based **Gramatik**,



A Platform of Hip-Hop Culture

Rapetek (from *rap petek* = “rap Friday”) is a regular concert series of hip-hop music run by Kapa society at Gala Hala and its summer garden, expanding to larger venues when necessary. Operating for 22 years, it has established itself as Slovenia's central hip-hop culture platform. Co-curated for many years by Marko Godrnjavec Jizah, an influential figure of the domestic hip-hop scene, the cycle also spawned *Mladi Rapetek* (*Young RapFriday*), a youth competition that fosters creativity in language, the arts, and dance, with participants gaining performance and self-expression skills, collaborating with peers, and learning about different facets of hip hop culture through practice. In 2023, the same concept and approach were applied to adults with *Zlati Rapetek* (*Gold RapFriday*). Photo: Marko Obradović, Maša Gojić.



Versatile Ljubljana-based artist Mark Jacob Cavazza, aka VAZZ LIVE, began as a poet and rapper. Following several high-profile solo releases, he formed a full live band blending hip-hop with rock and psychedelia. Their latest album, *Psiha* (2024), delivers raw energy and emotional depth, supported by a powerful live experience transcending genres and generations. Photo: Andraž Fijavž Bačovnik.

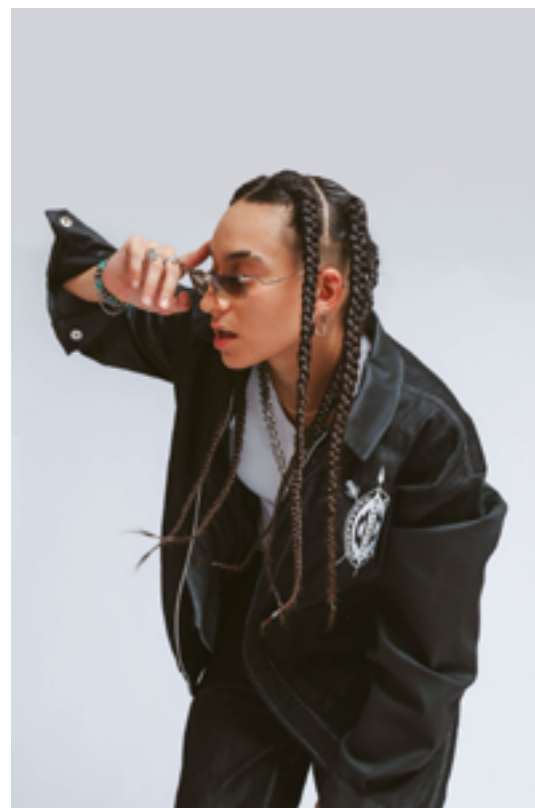
who, while not tied exclusively to the hip-hop scene, has collaborated with rap titan Raekwon. Among younger artists are Maribor's **Emiljo A.C.**, who supplied most of the beats for the *Black Rock* album by New York stalwarts Onyx, and the enigmatic **Hyu**, who bridges hip-hop and pop with sleek crossover appeal through collaborations with a variety of pop vocalists. Then there's **Nikson**—a genre-hopping wunderkind, also known as **MC Neeko**—and Maribor's **YNG Firefly**, who has recently stepped into the spotlight as an MC with the electro-pop-emo-(t)rap group **.travnik**.

Veteran **Borka**, a cornerstone of Ljubljana's music scene, wears many hats: DJ, host of Breakwave on Radio Študent, concert promoter, and

a beat producer with several acclaimed releases.

Among rappers with international reach, **N'Toko** stands tall. A sharp lyricist and former national free-style champion, he rhymes fluently in both English and Slovene and has toured widely, including in Japan. Though quieter in recent years, his influence remains huge. Another stalwart is **Zlatko**, who has been tirelessly putting out albums, singles, and videos for almost two decades.

A wave of Slovenian rappers has since crossed into the mainstream—names like **Emkej**, **Leopold I.**, **VAZZ**, and **Massayah**. Before them came **Trkaj**, **Nipke** and the indefatigable **Zlatko**. **Drill**, from Izola, en-



Masayah (Mia Puhar Rodin) is a new-generation musician who blends rap, R&B, and contemporary urban aesthetics. She received the Golden Flute Award for Album of the Year and Song of the Year for her debut album, *Zavedno* (2023). She is also the recipient of the Elle Style Award, which recognises her influence in music, fashion, and broader culture. Her socially engaged music and compelling stage presence have established her as one of the most prominent figures in Slovenian urban music.

Photo: Arin Rapuš.

joys immense popularity while refusing to compromise his gritty authenticity.

Young vocalist **Sahareya** operates at the intersection of rap and soul. **ŽENA**, on the other hand, stays closer to classic hip-hop, and Kamnik's electro-trap trio **Matter** carved out their own cult following with 2016's *Amphibios*, their debut release. Ljubljana collective **SBO** mix pop-culture parody with scattershot eclecticism, while trap-oriented acts **Capital Crew** and **Ezra** split the difference between a more nihilistic, carefree, party-driven style and introspective moodiness.

A new generation of artists is blurring the lines entirely—merging rap with (emo)trap, electronica, and hyperpop. Names like **Minnite**, **.travnik**, the aforementioned **Neeko** and the duo **PTČ** (who went viral on TikTok), form a diverse constellation of creators who care little for “old school” rules, reaching listeners in new, digital-first ways.

Today Slovenian rap lives and evolves across radically different contexts—from the heart of the hip-hop scene to pure pop and a variety of youthful hybrids that find their audiences not only on stage, but increasingly through social media.

An Abundance of Electronica Micro-Scenes

A Small Country with Wide Panoramas of Electronic Music

Borja Močnik

We begin with a brief historical overview. The first regular electronic club nights in Slovenia started quite early. Perhaps the very first was **Technodrom** in 1991, held at K4—the longest-running club in Ljubljana—led by **Aldo Ivančič**, the frontman of the cult EBM group **Borghesia**. After that, things began to unfold rapidly, gathering serious momentum in the second half of the 1990s. This was when Slovenia's most famous DJ, **Umek**, made his international breakthrough, as did several other remarkable production ventures, most notably the duo **Random Logic**, strongly influenced by electro and the Detroit techno scene.

Simultaneously, the Slovenian club scene expanded and solidified in the closing years of the century. This included the salient rise of **Ambasada Gavioli** (which was modelled on grandiose Italian mega-discotheques), the vast rave and electronica festival phenomena (such as Meet Me), and the exceptional—indeed, disproportionately large relative to the size of the country—surge of drum and bass, driven above all by the **Radyoyo** crew.

The contemporary Slovenian electronic landscape is chiefly defined by its small size, great vitality, fragmentation into numerous niche micro-scenes, and a fairly limited professional infrastructure (few clubs dedicated to electronic music, a lack of specialised media platforms, agencies and promoters, etc.). On the other hand, it boasts an enviable number of active labels, DJs, pro-

ducers, and crews. For cultural and historical reasons, these actors are closely regionally oriented southwards, towards the territories of the former Yugoslavia—the densely woven cultural web now widely known as the *Yugosphere*.

Several niche publishers stand out among domestic electronic music labels: **kamizdat**, which channels fringe, even radical, local electronica under Creative Commons licences; **KRI**, focused chiefly on electro and EBM; **DeepEnd!**, supplying bass-driven offshoots; **DE/FRAGMENT**, known for its research-minded releases in techno, electro, and bass; and **rx:tx**, which, for more than two decades, has been delivering a genre-agnostic mix of local and international sounds, from exploratory hiss and squall to radio-friendly beats and grooves.



An Icon of the World Techno Scene

Uroš Umek, aka DJ Umek, is a key player on the world techno scene. His energy, technical finesse, and feel for groove have been shaping techno culture for more than three decades. His label, 1605, is a touchstone for innovative electronic music, while his continuous streak of global hits sustains his status as an artist known to ceaselessly push the boundaries of sonic aesthetics. Umek nurtures young talent and connects producers and fans worldwide, headlining the biggest festivals and clubs, while exploring underground electro sounds under the alias Zeta Reticula. Photo: Luka Kaše.

In terms of club infrastructure, aside from the above-mentioned **K4**, **Channel Zero** at Ljubljana's former squat Metelkova also merits separate mention as the site of regular alternative events, including specialist electronic nights spanning EBM, electro, techno, jungle, and bass.

In lieu of non-existent mega fests, recent years have seen a rise in smaller, specialised, boutique, and niche festivals. The biggest, **Butik**, takes place at a spectacular location by the Soča River, just outside Tolmin.

Smaller festivals include **Sonica**, **Grounded**, **LuckIsOn** (an eponymous extension of the DJ and producer collective, whose members often perform abroad), and **Niansa**. A distinctive open-air DIY series, **od:vod**, features events that migrate between different locations across the country. Every autumn, a drum and bass feast day, **Drum and Bass Konferenca**, takes over nearly all the clubs at Metelkova.

A quick run-through of the more visible players reveals the incredible



Butik festival is a five-day gathering of electronic-music lovers in the natural haven of Tolmin, featuring underground electronica with at least 40% Slovenian artists. The festival regularly sells out and has been listed among Resident Advisor's ten best festivals worldwide. Photo: Matej Čebulec.

variety of the local scene. The mainstream remains dominated by **Umek** and his entirely corporate mode of operation. DJs **De Xenia** and **Brina Knauss**, despite their differing styles, are also deeply embedded in the industry, particularly through their strong so-

cial-media presence. The enduring **Valentino Kanzyani** gained international renown soon after Umek, at the end of the 1990s, subsequently pivoting from techno to tech house. In the following generation, veteran **Aney F.**, who founded the enduring label Innocent Mu-



RotorMotor is an electronic duo whose energetic performances actively engage audiences. Their DJ sets are a high-octane fusion of euro trance, UKG, and hard house bangers. They release original productions with labels such as Para//e/ and Adopt BAE, while their songs also appear in sets by other DJs, including Pegassi, Benwal, Cleopard2000, and Trancemaster Krause.

Photo: Pika Ivana Kostanjšek.

sic in 2012, stands out in the minimal/tech-house sphere. Among these more mainstream figures, the duo **RotorMotor** also deserve mention—their high-octane sets tearing from trance to hard house and turbo-dance have become hugely popular in recent years.

Beneath the surface—down in the damp underworld of small-scale scenes—producers and DJs **Christian Kroupa** and **Ichisan** have racked up an impressive tally of releases and international bookings: the former in exploratory techno, electro, and house; the latter in nu disco. The regular releases of the versatile duo **Warrego Valles** fea-

ture a wide variety of genres ranging from contemporary techno to hyperpunk and hyperpop. DJ, producer, and activist **Sunnysun** remains exceptionally active across hip-hop, house, and footwork. **Raketa** fires on several vectors: she is a DJ, host of the radio show *Vibe Check*, resident at the club night **Refresh**, and a radio/club sound technician.

Younger DJs and producers have embraced the contemporary trend of genre eclecticism in their own singular ways, performing and producing hybrids of house, breakbeat, electro, ambient, downtempo, and jungle. Many of them also spin vinyl, and some deliver powerful live sets.



A member of the young(est) generation of domestic DJs, **Akaj** regularly performs at electronic events across Europe, both with vinyl-only DJ sets and live shows. He is a member of the **od:vod** collective and curates for the **Origin** and **Panavision** labels. Photo: Neža Grazer.

Standouts include **Akaj**, **Simm**, **Lottie**, **Mayell**, **Eliaz**, **Tzena**, **dvidevat**, and **Maša**, several of whom regularly play abroad.

Among local crews, three deserve special mention. **Nimaš izbire** leans, broadly speaking, toward the “Bristol sound” of varied bass mutations, fronted by DJs/producers **Fujita Pinnacle** and **Nice Trick**, who appear frequently overseas and on various influential radio platforms. Then there’s the **Cosmic Sex** crew, which, in addition to regular Metelkova events (ranging from bass to techno and Latin-American dance trends), also runs the illegal open-air summer party **Monade**. Meanwhile, **Clockwork Voltage**—

a community more than a crew in the traditional sense—is an entirely distinct phenomenon. Its members share a passion for building and tinkering with modular synthesizers; this highly communal project hosts regular events and releases. Among its members, **Shekuza** stands out, favouring exploratory yet dance-floor-minded strains of techno.

All this makes for a steady influx of new domestic music, branching out in countless directions. Slovenia’s integration into the global electronic-music industry may be limited, but that does not mean a lack of creativity, variety, connectivity, international resonance—or sheer output.

Slovenian Music in Film, Advertising, and Computer Games

Manca Ogrin

Slovenian music holds a special place in our audiovisual arts—from early film scores to contemporary television, advertising, and computer-game production. Even though Slovenian creators often work with limited production resources, their distinct musical expressions have shaped a varied and rich musical tradition that bridges artistic, commercial, and international creative dimensions.

The Development of Slovenian Film Music

The story of Slovenian film music begins in 1948,¹ when France Štiglic directed the first Slovenian sound film *Na svoji zemlji* (*On Our Own Land*). The score was composed by **Marjan Kozina**, considered the founding father of Slovenian film music. His orchestral compositions, particularly the motifs from *On Our Own Land* and *Mojčina Pesem* (*Mojca’s Song* from the film *Kekec*), framed the relationship between music and narrative that would continue to influence Slovenian film for decades to come.

A few years later, Kozina’s score for *Kekec* (1951, directed by Jože Gale) shaped the foundations of Slovenian musical identity. The song *Kekčeva pesem* (*Kekec’s Song*) became a cultural touchstone while

the film won the Venice Film Festival’s Golden Lion for Best Children’s Film. The 1950s brought new genres: in the comedy *Ne čakaj na maj* (*Don’t Whisper*, 1957), Borut Lesjak introduced *popevka* (a Slovenian pop genre) as a carrier of the film’s narrative, foreshadowing the later intersection of popular and film music.

The 1960s saw a modernist shift. In the film *Ples v dežju* (*Dance in the Rain*, 1961), **Bojan Adamič** employed jazz and harmonic dissonance, while in *Zgodba, ki je ni* (*On the Run*, 1967) and *Ko zorijo jagode* (*Strawberry Time*, 1978) **Jože Privšek** blended popular music with orchestral elements. During this period, Slovenian films began including pop-rock bands, for example **Kameleon** for *Sončni krik* (*Cry of the Sun*, 1968), signalling an expansion of Slovenian cinematic

1 Adapted from the article by Mitja Reichenberg, ‘Filmska glasba in zlata leta slovenskega filma 1’ (‘Film Music and the Golden Years of Slovenian Film, 1’), *Slovenika* 4 (2018), available at: <https://slovinci.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/slovenika.2018.4.1.6.pdf>



Versatile Slovenian composer Bojan Adamič was renowned for his film scores, most notably for his powerful and dramatic compositions for *Valter brani Sarajevo* (*Walter Defends Sarajevo*). The film became highly popular, particularly in China, where it is cited as one of the most-watched foreign film productions of all time. Chinese poster for the film *Walter Defends Sarajevo*.

stylistic range. Other notable musical contributions of this era include Bojan Adamič's score for *Valter brani Sarajevo* (*Walter Defends Sarajevo*, 1972) and Boštjan Hladnik's music for *Maškarada* (*Masquerade*, 1971).

The 1970s and 1980s were the golden age of Slovenian cinema sound. **Urban Koder's** music for *Cvetje v jeseni* (*Blossoms in Autumn*, 1973), which set the zither as the symbol of the Slovenian rural soul, is among the best-known film scores in Slovenian film history. **Dečo Žgur** composed one of the most beloved children's film melodies for *Sreča na vrvi* (*Hang on Doggy*, 1977), while **Jani Golob** bridged the boundary between film and popular music in *Poletje v školjki* (*A Summer in a Seashell*, 1984). The film *Rdeči boogie ali Kaj ti je deklica* (*Red Boogie*, 1982) is a Slovenian drama directed by Karpo Godina and scored by

Janez Gregorc. It tells the story of a group of musicians entertaining Yugoslav work brigades after the war, though they really just want to play jazz and boogie, genres the government deemed imperialist and undesirable. In the same period, Bojan Adamič's *Butnskala* (1985) unveiled its own original grotesque musical dramaturgy.

The 1990s brought about a new generation of composers educated both at home and abroad. **Slavko Avsenik Jr.** (*Socializacija bika*, *The Socialisation of a Bull*, 1998) and **Mitja Vrhovnik Smrekar** (*Ekspres*, *ekspres / Express*, 1997) professionalised film scoring by fusing orchestral, electronic, and jazz elements. The music for the first feature film of independent Slovenia, *Babica gre na jug* (*Grandma Goes South*, 1991), was composed by **Vinci Vogue Anžlovar** and **Milko Lazar**.

The third millennium has brought even more plurality to Slovenian film music: **Uroš Rakovec**, **Chris Eckman**, and **Boštjan Gombač** create more intimate, minimalist soundscapes (*Šelestenje*, *Instalacija ljubezni*, *Hit poletja / Rustling Landscapes*, *Installation of Love*, *Summer Hit*), while the duo **Silence** score the film *Slovenka* (*Slovenian Girl*, 2009) by introducing electronic ambient aesthetics. Their later work on *Odrešitev za začetnike* (*Family Therapy*, 2024) directed by Sonja Prosenec, earned them the Vesna Award for Best Original Score.

In recent years, Slovenian films have demonstrated a clear shift in their approach to the sonic landscape. While popular music was seldom used in the past, it now plays an in-

creasingly important role in the cinematic experience. Contemporary domestic performers are often included from the early stages of production, adding authenticity. Better-known examples of this include the use of music by bands like **Koala Voice** in the film *Prasica*, *slabšalni izraz za žensko* (*Bitch*, *a Derogatory Term for a Woman*, 2021), **MRFY** in *Gepack* (2024) and *Pa tako lep dan je bil* (*It Was Such a Beautiful Day*, 2024), and **VAZZ** in *Igrišča ne damo* (*We Won't Give Up the Playground*, 2024). Another important individual in this process is **Žiga Drofenik**, one of the few Slovenian synch agents, who helps creators select music and clear licensing for the use of music in films. This trend of blending film and music reflects a broader rebirth of the Slovenian music scene.

Silence—a duo comprising Primož Hladnik and Boris Benko—blend electronic and experimental approaches to compose music for albums, theatre, film, and television. Their past work includes collaborations with various directors, Laibach, and film projects, including their award-winning score for *Odrešitev za začetnike* (*Family Therapy*). Photo: Borut Peterlin.



Other notable composers include: **Laren Polič Zdravič** (*Moški; Vaje v objemu / A Real Man, Tango Abrazos*), **Aldo Kumar** (*Pod njenim oknom; Lahko noč, gospodična / Beneath Her Window; Good Night, Missy*), **Davor Herceg** (*Kruha in igler; Idila / Bread and Circuses; Idyll*), **Drago Ivanuša** (*V leri; Kruh in mleko / Idle Running; Bread and Milk*), **Milko Lazar** (*Dedek gre na jug / Grandpa Goes South*), **Sašo Lošič** (*Kajmak in marmelada; Outsider / Cheese and Jam*), **Nino de Gleria** (*Odrešitev za začetnike / Family Therapy*), **Borut Kržišnik** (*A Life in Suitcases*), **Sebastjan Duh** (*Gajin svet / Gaja's World*), **Janez Dovč** (*Legenda o Zlatorogu / The Legend of Goldhorn*), **Drejc Pogačnik** (*Posledice / Consequences*), **Anže Kacafura – Cazzafura** (*Čefurji raus! / Southern Scum Go Home!*), **Tomaž Okroglič Rous** (*V imenu ljudstva / In the Name of the People*), **Leon Firšt** (*Šepet*

Laren Polič Zdravič is a composer, singer-songwriter, and musician specialising in original music for theatre, video games, film, and animation. His distinctive style spans a variety of music styles, blending archetypal and contemporary approaches to create music as an independent art form rather than mere accompaniment. Photo: Tristan Dragan.



metulja / Whisper of a Butterfly), **Mitja Reichenberg** (*Svet edincev / The World of Only Children*), **Bratko Bibič** (*Sanremo*), **Tomaž Grom** (*Ne misli, da bo kdaj mimo / Don't Think It Will Ever Pass*), and many others.

Kino-uho, a regular film series organised by the Slovenian Cinematheque, explores how film and music blend. It presents works where sound—particularly music—plays a key role, either as a narrative-driving device, a form of authorial expression, or a standalone artistic element. The programme often includes concerts and live sound interventions accompanying silent films, resulting in a unique visual and aural experience.

The music **Magnifico (Robert Pešut)** composed for the Serbian film *Montevideo, Bog te video* (*Montevideo, God Bless You*; 2010)

Borut Kržišnik composes film scores using avant-garde and experimental approaches, integrating visual narrative with sound dynamics. He scored Greenway's *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* trilogy in advance of filming. Working with a virtual orchestra allows him to retain complete control over timbre, colour, and dynamics. Photo: Jure Eržen.



directed by Dragan Bjelogrić, became extremely popular—even being adopted as ‘folk’ despite the author’s clear identity.

Anže Rozman is another striking international success story, working with **Bleeding Fingers Music** under the mentorship of **Hans Zimmer** and collaborating with National Geographic, the BBC, and Netflix.

Music in Slovenian Advertising

In advertising, music is a key conveyor of emotion and brand identity. In Slovenia, adverts often use well-known songs or original compositions adapted to the visual language of the campaign. One of the most famous examples is the song *Lep je dan*, performed by **Anja Rupel**, which has been associated with



Internationally Acclaimed Composer for Film and TV

Anže Rozman is a four-time Emmy-nominated composer for film, TV, and concert music. Based in Los Angeles, he is a member of Hans Zimmer's company, Bleeding Fingers Music. He holds a degree in composition and music theory from the Academy of Music in Ljubljana and a master's in film music from Berklee College of Music, Valencia. His scores for *Prehistoric Planet* (Apple TV+), *Beckham* (Netflix), *The Universe* (BBC), and *The Planets* (BBC) brought him international recognition. In Slovenia he is also known for scoring the TV series *Primeri inšpektorja Vrenka*. Photo: Claire Lejeune.



Epix Soundworks, a Maribor-based collective of composers and sound designers, creates original music and sound for video games, trailers, media, and artists. Led by founder **Martin Bezjak** and co-lead **Danilo Kapel**, they combine creativity with contemporary production techniques, drawing on more than twenty years of experience. Photo: Tomaž Praunseis.

Ljubljanske mlekarne (Ljubljana Dairies) for decades. A similar function is served by Perpetuum Jazzile's arrangement of the same song, which revived its nostalgic appeal in a contemporary style. More recent notable examples include **Muff**'s composition *Naj si je*, which became the signature tune of Pop TV.

Jani Golob's music is also ubiquitous, from the national advertising anthem *Slovenija, moja dežela* to *Prisluhni školjki*, which was used in Planica ski-jumping promotions. In this context, **Miha Kralj**'s *Andromeda* merits mention. **Siddharta**'s *Ledena*, used to promote the Union Brewery, forged another widely known association between music and brand, while **Vlado Kreslin**'s *Pustite nam ta svet* and *Cesta* helped shape campaigns for Lidl and Škoda. **Koala Voice** also bridged domestic music and commercial advertising through their Škoda campaign.

Over the years, Telekom Slovenije adverts have leaned on original Slovenian pop hits, such as **Tabu**'s *Angel* and *Poljubljena*, ensuring a youthful tone for the brand. The same can be said of *Poglej* by **Neomi** for T2 and *Ne bodi kot drugi* by **Ditka**, which accompanies the Spar chain store campaign. **Slon in Sadež** took a humorous approach with their *Sponzorska plata* (*Sponsorship Album*) for Ljubljanske mlekarne, whose playful take on the very concept of sponsorship embodies the duo's critical yet relaxed sonic identity.

These examples perfectly illustrate how Slovenian musical creativity blends organically with the advertising industry, often even more than in other European countries. This attests to the high quality of our domestic production and strong emotional connection between the audience and the local sonic expression.

Music in Slovenian Animation and Interactive Media

The first Slovenian animated feature *Poskušaj migati dvakrat* (*Try to Wink Twice*, Zvonko Čoh, Milan Erič) was scored by **Igor Leonardi**, whose playful acoustic approach set a new standard for the sonic palette of domestic animation.

The distinctive sonic identity of the recent series *Koyaa: Izmuzljiv papir* (*Koyaa: Elusive Paper*) by **Miha Šajina** and **Borja Močnik** has also gained international recognition.

Slovenian music has found its way into video games. For instance, **Happy Ol' McWeasel**'s song was used in the world-renowned *Call of Duty* franchise, which also featured award-winning music by **Jure Jerebic**. Compositions by **Rok Nardin**, the most renowned Slovenian trailer music composer, have been featured in promos for numerous international projects. The studio **Epix Productions**, another standout in the field of interactive media, creates music for games and multimedia projects, while **Studio Ritem** and **Julij Zornik** are key production partners in several Slovenian films, adverts, and games.

The networking project **Europe in Synch**, whose partners include SIGIC, further strengthens the position of Slovenian musicians in the European synchronisation industry (music for film, television, advertising, and games) as well as offering

education and international networking opportunities.

Conclusion

Slovenian musical creativity in films, adverts, and computer games is marked by exceptional versatility—ranging from Marjan Kozina's monumental symphonic expressivity to the subtle electronic ambience of Silence and Anže Rozman's vast international orchestrations. In these media, music is not merely accompaniment, but rather an active co-creator of the narrative, building the emotional atmosphere, and reinforcing cultural identity. Despite limited production resources, it is vital to strengthen professionalism and build closer ties between musicians, producers, and filmmakers. At present, these connections are still too meagre; improving them would enable Slovenian music to achieve global renown while remaining true to its local voice.

Collecting Societies



IPF, k.o.

The Collective Management Organisation of Performers and Producers of Phonograms of Slovenia, k.o. (IPF, k.o.) is the only Slovenian organisation managing the neighbouring rights of performers and phonogram producers (record labels). It collectively manages and protects the rights of Slovenian performers and phonogram producers in Slovenia and abroad, and, on the basis of international contracts, also manages the rights of foreign performers and phonogram producers in Slovenia.

www.ipf.si



AIPA, k.o.

AIPA, k.o. primarily deals with the collective enforcement and securing of the rights of authors, performers, and producers of audio-visual works. AIPA has been operating under the Copyright and Related Rights Act since October 2010. On the basis of bilateral agreements, mandates, and other forms of authorisation from coauthors, performers, and producers of audio-visual works, AIPA enforces and secures worldwide. AIPA is a full member of the international organisations CISAC, SAA, SCAPR, Agicoa Alliance, FERA, and AEPO-ARTIS.

www.aipa.si



SAZAS

SAZAS, Society k.o.

SAZAS, Society k.o. is a collective management organisation for the protection and promotion of musical authors' rights in Slovenia. It has operated as a collective management organisation since 12 March 1998 when state authorisation was issued by the Intellectual Property Office of Slovenia (SIPO) – authorisation no. 800-3/96 – for the collective management of authors' rights in music, covering performing rights, mechanical authors' rights, and for the distribution of private copying levies. SAZAS has been a full member of CISAC – International Confederation of Societies of Composers and Authors since 1996 and BIEM, the international organisation representing mechanical rights societies, since 2003. (Source: <https://www.sazas.org/English-forms>)

www.sazas.org



KOPRIVA, k.o.

The KOPRIVA Society is a collective organisation responsible for implementing the right to fair compensation for audio or video recordings made for private or other personal use (personal reproduction). The compensation is payable to authors, performers, phonogram producers, and film producers. KOPRIVA transfers the compensation to the following organisations: AIPA, IPF, SAZAS, and ZAMP (Slovenian Authors' Society).

www.kopriva.si

Formal Music Education in Slovenia

Music education in Slovenia is delivered at three levels: primary (primary music schools), secondary (parallel instruction at a secondary music school or conservatory or at a music high school), and university level.

Many Slovenes study music in their teens and those deciding to pursue a career in music may choose one of three university courses: the Ljubljana Academy of Music, the Musicology Department of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, or the Music Department of the Faculty of Education, University of Maribor.

The **Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana**, offers courses in the musical

Univerza v Ljubljani
Akademija za glasbo



arts (composition and music theory, orchestral and other instruments, voice, and sacred music) and music education, at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels. The Academy also comprises a number of large instrumental and vocal ensembles, chamber ensembles and three annual public concert series: concerts of larger ensembles, chamber music concerts, and soloist concerts.

The Academy also participates in a number of international

projects. Academy students have won important international prizes and perform to great acclaim on both Slovenian and international concert stages.

www.ag.uni-lj.si

The **Department of Musicology** at the **University of Ljubljana's Faculty of**



**DEPARTMENT OF
MUSICOLOGY**

Arts is the only Slovenian higher-level educational institution offering musicology and ethnomusicology courses at all levels. It participates in a number

of national and international research projects, organises symposia, and hosts guest lecturers from abroad, and publishes the musicological journal *Muzikološki zbornik (Musicological Annual)*.

<https://muzikologija.ff.uni-lj.si/en>



University of Maribor

The **Department of Music** at the **Faculty of Education** at the **University of Maribor** trains future music teachers. Students study composition, instrumental performance, vocal technique and specialised teaching methods.

<https://pef.um.si/en/about-the-faculty/departments/departament-of-music/>

About Music Slovenia



Music Slovenia is a consortium of Slovenian musical institutions promoting Slovenian music nationally and internationally. Its aim is to connect stakeholders across Slovenian musical scenes and encourage collaboration worldwide, in order to increase the visibility and popularity of Slovenian music. Music Slovenia is officially represented by SIGIC – The Slovenian Music Information Centre.



For further current information about Slovenian music and musical infrastructure visit www.musicslovenia.si

About SIGIC



The Slovenian Music Information Centre (SIGIC) is the central information point for Slovenian music, musicians, music professionals, and current music events and activities. SIGIC promotes Slovenian music and musicians nationally and internationally, collaborates with local and international institutions, and is a full member of IAMIC (International Association of Music Information Centres). SIGIC publishes the web music magazine *Odzven*, offering critical analysis of current music, and releases compilation CDs showcasing contemporary Slovenian artists. www.sigic.si

Contact

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P: +386 1 241 20 82, E: info@sigic.si

About MOMUS

The SIGIC project MOMUS – Monumenta Musica Slovenica, developed in collaboration with the Faculty of Philosophy and 119 institutions and individuals, compiled and documented more than 200 monuments in two years. In 2018, SIGIC published an interactive musical guide to these monuments for the European Year of Cultural Heritage, which aims to encourage as many people as possible to discover and experience European cultural heritage. The online publication's interactive design includes digital and digitised visual materials along with detailed descriptions of the monuments and associated persons from the field of musical art.

Momus // *Monumenta musica Slovenica*

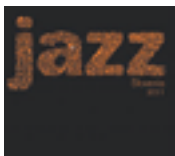
About Praznik glasbe Music Day (Fête de la Musique)

Each year on 21 June, Praznik glasbe (Music Day), organised by SIGIC – the Slovenian Music Information Centre, joins the international Fête de la Musique initiative. More than twenty towns across Slovenia mark World Music Day with free concerts and street performances across styles and generations. The event brings music to unconventional spaces such as squares, parks, bridges, and museums. Artists perform voluntarily, while visitors enjoy free music. SIGIC is one of the few music information centres in the world to organise the Fête de la Musique at a national level, uniting all Slovenian regions in celebrating music.



Praznik Glasbe
fête de la musique

Publications



Jazz Slovenia 2011



Etno Slovenia 2011



Odzven 2011



*Eksperiment
Slovenia (2013)*



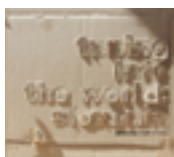
*Listen to Slovenia:
Pocket Music Guide
(2013)*



*Klasika Slovenia:
Orchestral Works
Vol. 1 (2015)*



*Jazz Slovenia 2015:
Time to Improvise*



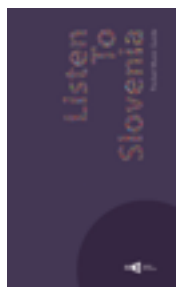
*Tuning into the
World: Slovenia
(2017)*



*Klasika Slovenia:
Orchestral Works
Vol. 2 (2018)*



*Music Slovenia - Jazz
2019*



*Listen To Slovenia:
Pocket Music Guide
(2020)*



*Music Slovenia -
Slovenia Cantat 2021*



*Music Slovenia
- A Selection of
Contemporary
Compositions for
Orchestra and
Ensembles (2025)*



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www.sigic.si



www.musicslovenia.si