

Mak Grgić, young guitarist heading for success

Mak Grgić got his name after his father's favorite poet Mehmed Alija Mak Dizdar, one of the greatest and most acclaimed Bosnian poets of the 2nd half of the 20th Century. An ordinary walk with his father from some time ago sketched out his path for life--actually his love for the guitar. A world youth karate champion until a couple of years ago, after years of hard work and education, a month ago Mak received a standing ovation at a famous international festival in Russia. Critics predict him success, but one step at a time – he is just 22.

He never thought of being a musician. He was just more interested in sports – he was training karate intensively and at the age of 12 already became the youth world champion. Four years before that, he and his father were talking a walk and he stopped in front of a notice about new students enrolling to a music school. “So, we said, why not enroll?!” Karate and guitar were going side by side until his secondary school, but then he injured his thumb in a karate fight. He realized that such a sport and a serious engagement with classical music didn't work well together. Music prevailed, but he kept the concentration skills he developed from martial arts. Obviously, they work. Notably, if he has the time, Mak is able to practice without ceasing.

He of course takes a break to have his lunch and hangs out with his friends in town in the evening. Even though serious musicians are sometimes thought to be this way, Mak is not a solitary person. Had his friends used him for getting the girls' attention because of the romantic sounds of the guitar? “Our generation is more into discos and electronic music, so the guitar was not an accompaniment of romantic evenings on the beach, nor was it used as a means of romantic conquests.”

Juggling time. Something tells me that Mak Grgić would be successful at anything. He is a focused and intelligent person to talk to; he clearly states his mind and admits that he expects a lot from himself. “I wish to become an excellent musician,” he says decisively. He would never let any success draw him into laziness. He couldn't, since he has grown used to discipline from his early age. While attending the Music Conservatory Elly Bašić in Zagreb, he used to spend the first three days of the week attending his secondary school in Ljubljana, while his Thursdays and Fridays were spent in Zagreb. “What was the reason for making a young man juggle his time in such a difficult fashion?” The secondary school in Ljubljana was my last serious attempt of gaining good basic knowledge. I think I have achieved that. Attending the conservatory in Zagreb was, on the other hand, a decision made out of a strong wish to work with the wonderful professor Ante Čagalj, with whom I wanted to make my progress. Every effort certainly pays off when one starts doing what one desires and doing what one enjoys most. “I enjoy music. I have an infinite and pure love for it.”

Ante Čagalj was not only his professor, but as well the founder and mentor of the Zagreb Guitar Quartet, which has been giving concerts for more than 18 years.

Three years ago Mak was offered a membership. He is by far the youngest member of the Quartet, especially established and renowned in Croatia. Let me also add a spicy detail: he performed with the Quartet at the wedding of Niko Kranjčar, a famous Croatian football player - whose wedding met with wide media attention.

“It is an honor and a great delight to be a part of this group. To perform and play solo is very interesting and quite fulfilling, but to create something with other musicians is the greatest pleasure of all. I definitely experienced the culmination of such emotions just recently, playing with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra in St. Petersburg! Such an experience just leaves you breathless. A fantastic sensation!” explained Mak with sincerity.

The Russian audience was blown away. At his Russian debut at the international music festival The Palaces of St. Petersburg, he has moved the audience of some 800 people attending the concert. Under the baton of maestro Vladimir Lande, he performed the Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez for guitar and orchestra.

The ever demanding Russian audience was enraptured with his playing and rewarded him with a long ovation, not usual for a guitar player to receive. Started already after the second movement of the Concierto, the ovation left Mak speechless and surprised even before finishing the third and last movement. The most successful performance was immediately followed by an invitation to the next year festival, when Mak is supposed to perform a premier of a guitar concerto of a Russian composer, who is going to write the new concerto especially for him. In addition, he was promised to receive other invitations and performances over the big pond. There, he was taken under the wing of a New York agent, which was again an outcome of an interesting coincidence. Mak is aware of the fact that the organizing and coordination of his performances might be time consuming, so he leaves some of it to his agents in Slovenia, Croatia and USA.

A diligent lad, isn't he? Well, above all he is very devoted to music. He has promised himself to give his best to improve the appreciation of the classical guitar and raise it to a level of other, more established classical instruments. He has already been rewarded with many laurels from national and international competitions. Apart from that, he also wishes to once again become present on the Slovene artistic stage, since he left it at a young age. Meanwhile, when he finds some time, he will continue to jog around and play some football, but just for fun.

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