

Newsletter No. 679
A Quick Trip to Ljubljana



Jim Haynes © Roman Sipic

Thursday, 15th: A shuttle picks me up and we ride one minute up the street and parks in front of Paul & Carol Roussopoulos's home in the Villa Seurat. A fellow comes out and gets into our small van. His name is Olivier and we drive him to a suburb in the south east of Paris. When he leaves us, we speed to CdG 1. After clearing passport and security control, I continue to the Adria Airways gate area. There I learn that the flight will be late departing. Settle down to reading *that summer in paris*. A woman named Anna Mortley is supposed to be flying with me to our IETM conference. But there are so many people waiting to board aircraft that it is impossible to know who it might be.

Then the flight is called. I sit behind a woman who is alone and ask her if she might be Anna, but she is not. Nevertheless give her an invitation to the Sunday night dinner. She thanks me and says that she would like to attend. Read today's *Le Monde* and there is a special supplement about the Cannes Film Festival. There is also a front page item about the death of Robert Rauschenberg. He and I were once models together for a fashion show in Paris. Dinner is served and it's delicious. The flight attendants could all be supermodels. Very tall attractive women. And then we are landing. It is after 23.00 hours.

Meet Anna Mortley when I exit the airport. We flew on the same flight, but we did not cross paths in the plane. She is from Australia but has lived almost her entire life in France. In Paris, she is with the Collectif 12, based in a suburb west of Paris

The young driver, who speaks excellent English, takes us to the Park Hotel. We quickly check-in. I suggest we go to the late night Salon bar where Nevenka Koprivsek said that we would find her. Anna agrees. Deposit my small bag in Room 807 and head back downstairs to the lobby. Anna and I head out into the night. It's a short walk to Trubarjeva street. I immediately spot Michael Green. He breaks out into a big smile of welcome. And just beyond stands Nevenka Koprivsek. Another big welcoming smile! She is the director of the IETM Ljubljana team that is organizing this event. She and I first met in the late 80s in Cannes and discovered that we were neighbors in Paris. The beginning of a close friendship. Soon introductions are being made and lots of talk erupts. Michael is the co-artistic director of One Yellow Rabbit, a theatre company based in

Calgary, Canada. We first met at the Traverse bar when they were performing at the Traverse during a festival. We continued to meet at the Traverse, and later Michael traveled to Paris and attended a Sunday night dinner. Someone suggests drinks. Michael is standing with an attractive woman named Eva Maarika Schmitz. After we are introduced, I learn that she lives in Köln, is half Finnish, half German. Nevenka produces drinks for everyone. We manage to find some places to sit. A fellow from Los Angeles, Mark Murphy, joins us. He is the executive director of the Cal Arts theatre in L.A. I keep asking for information about IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts) and learn it was “spontaneously declared” in July 1981 at the 5th Festival of Polverigi (Ancona, Italy) by a group of young Italians who thought it would be a good idea for performing dance and theatre people to meet. And since then there are two large gatherings every year that move from one city to another. The next meeting is scheduled for Zurich, then Vilnius and Glasgow. Nevenka introduces Michel Quéré, who is based in Brussels and is one of the officials of IETM. It’s getting late and both Anna and yours truly are tired, so we head back to the hotel in the softly falling rain. Nevenka urges us not to miss the Opening Speech that will be given tomorrow morning at 9.30 by the Minister of Culture. We promise to be there. Sleep like an angel.

Friday, 16th: Get up about 7, shave, shower, dress and go down for breakfast. At 8.30 there is time to register. Spot Michel Quéré who says he is walking to the Ethnographical Museum and he will be pleased to show me the way. This is quickly completed. Everyone is given a print out of all those participating listed by country, organization, family name, first name, telephone number, mobile number, email address and website. Very useful tool.

It’s time to head for the Address of Welcome. Return to the Park Hotel to wait for Anna and Michael. Sit near an attractive woman named Sarah Tuck (rhymes with muck). She is with an organization called “Create Ireland” and is based, I think, in Dublin. Michael and Anna appear and we walk the short distance to Slomskova 11, the Stara Elektrarna Museum, which still functions as a generating plant as well as a rehearsal and performance area. An impressive building. More morning coffee. Nevenka gives us huge smiles of welcome. Anna and I find places to sit. Most of the talks are in English, but the minister, Vasko Simoniti, is obligated to give his speech in Slovene. Not a problem – thanks to the simultaneous interpreting in English and French.

When it is over, Anna and I wander slowly to the first panel discussion entitled ‘Happy Together’ with a subtitle “Communities, Scenes, Circles, Networks, and other models of Cooperation and Friendship from the 1960s until Today” with Rob van Kranenburg, from the Waag Society in Belgium, as moderator and with panelists Bojana Kunst (a philosopher from Serbia), Emina Visnic (from Zagreb) and Michael Stolhofer (from I am not sure where.) I half listen, half dream. The room is packed with bright earnest faces. I spot Nevenka standing in the back by the door and we exchange air kisses. And then it is over. Anna and I go up to meet Emina Visnic; she will be the moderator at our session at 14.30 this afternoon. Also meet Yohann Floch, who will be on the panel with us. Yohann is with an organization in Paris entitled Hors Les Murs that seems to help street theatre

performers. We have a brief meeting and Emina suggests that I speak first. (Maybe it is age before beauty.)

Get in the queue in the café and find myself standing behind Eva Maarika Schmitz. She orders a cabbage soup, so I order the same. She suggests that I join her and some friends outside. But when I discover they are standing around a very small table, I elect to return to a table inside where I can sit and enjoy my soup. Lunch passes quickly. All over people are talking and laughing. A very friendly conference. It looks like the IETM's goals are being fulfilled. Our hosts are doing a great job.

Time to meet my fellow panelists, so it is back to the Ministry of Culture building. The two hours fly by. Our session is entitled 'Imagine Me and You: I do' with a subtitle "Communities, Scenes, Friendships". I talk about the Paperback Bookshop and Gallery (where free coffee and tea were provided to one and all). I talk about the Traverse Theatre, the Arts Lab and the Arts Lab movement (where old buildings can be converted into creative and joy-filled spaces), and I talk about the Sunday dinners in Paris (where all guests are introduced to each other and many friendships, love affairs, etc come out of these dinners). I report that other people in other cities are starting these "salons". Everyone is invited to come and dine. The dangerous subject of "ART" is introduced by me and I go on to suggest that it does not exist, that when we talk about art, we are really talking about media. I cannot remember what else I said nor very much what anyone else said. Anna mentions the fact that her organization has a large house with guest rooms and they are able to invite companies to come and stay. There are questions and even some compliments and many people seem to agree with me. I suggest that the most important thing is to enjoy one's self and to help others to do the same. Feedback comes from Rasmus Adrian (from Copenhagen's Kaleidoskop), from an attractive woman from Stockholm whose name I fail to get, and from a woman named Chrissie Poulter.

Wander back to the café and one of Nevenka's pretty assistants, Kaja Cencelj, tells me that the journalist from the newspaper, *Delo*, Patricija Malicev, is here to interview me. We are introduced and she asks if I will agree to be photographed. Of course, not a problem. Then I must go out to the street and meet Roman Sipic. He says it will only take a few minutes, but he wants me to walk about 100 meters down the street. And when we get there, we discover there are two more photographers there taking photographs of young attractive women. Lots of remarks float back and forth among us. Both women are knock-outs. Roman snaps away and then he says it is enough. I suggest one more and walk over to place myself in front of the Marilyn Monroe lookalike. Roman clicks off a few more. And we all laugh, including the blonde bombshell. Roman and I walk back to the café and I give him an invitation to dine when he is next in Paris. He says that he will email me a few photos. (And he does.)

Sit with Patricija and discover that she is a super smart lady and that she has done her homework. Relevant and penetrating and provocative questions. I do my best to answer as sensitively as possible. We discover we both know Alaa Al Aswany, the Egyptian novelist who has had a world best-seller with his book, *The Yacoubian Building*. I report that I met him at the Edinburgh Festival last August and that I arranged for the film of the

novel to be screened at the Calcutta Film Festival this past November. I ask her if she has read his new novel, *Chicago*, and she has. He sent her a copy from Cairo. We go for a walk so she can purchase a packet of cigarettes. We meet Kaja Cencelj and we both say how much we like her. Patricija tells me that Kaja plans a career in journalism. After the walk to the super market, we decide to attend a performance of Heiner Müller's *Quartet*, directed and adapted by Sebastijan Horvat. We walk slowly to a pizza restaurant very near the theatre. An attempt to eat a pizza fails because we do not have enough time. In the end, the order is cancelled and we enter the theatre only minutes before the production begins.

The two actors, Natasa Matjasec and Radko Polic, are both excellent. But what they must go through to perform their roles is too rough for me. At one point we almost have a major accident when Radko's shirt catches on fire. But Natasa is able to put it out and the actors continue without missing a beat. The piece is based on *Dangerous Liaisons*, the novel by Laclos. There have been at least two film versions. This production is Spartan to say the least and concentrates on the acting of these two strong personalities.

Afterwards we walk a short distance to an Italian restaurant called Allegria. Patricija has a Caesar salad and I have a lasagna. More talk. Afterwards we walk to an outdoor café near the National Theatre where I am introduced to three friends, Teja Lavrencic, Miljenic Kadic, and a woman named Natasa. More talk. I am getting tired. Patricija calls a taxi on her mobile phone. We drop her near the restaurant, so she can collect her bicycle and I continue to the Park Hotel. Consider going to see if Nevenka and Michael Green are at the Salon Bar, but it is late and I am tired, so upstairs to Room 807 and fall into bed.

Saturday, 17th: A superb night's sleep. Poor Anna Mortley had to get up at the crack of dawn to get her flight to Paris. A lazier start today. Up about 8 and after washing, dressing and packing, make my way downstairs for breakfast. A fellow asks if he may join me. He looks familiar. And yes, it is Wolfgang Hoffman. He and I met in Edinburgh in August 2001 when we were both awarded Herald Devils. He started and directed *Aurora Nova* in St. Stephen's church. Recently he has been directing the Dublin Fringe Festival. We have a great talk. Lots of catching up. I learn that he has an Irish wife, Finula, and that they have a son, Noah. They are living in Potsdam, just outside Berlin. Wolfgang is commuting between Dublin and Potsdam. This year will be his last with the Dublin Fringe Festival. And now he is not sure what he will do next. Talk covers the Edinburgh Festival, the Calcutta Film Festival, and our trips to India. We talk about Ricky Demarco, my life in Paris and the Sunday dinners, my son, Jesper and his son, Noah aged 3. Give Wolfgang a copy of *White Washing Fences*. We decide to walk over to the café for another cup of coffee. (The Park Hotel is a delightful place, but the breakfast coffee is terrible.)

I ask the lovely Maria Lapic at the Park Hotel reception desk if I may check-out at 11.30 (instead of 11) and she says "no problem".

Wolfgang and I have more coffee and more talk. Then I leave him, return to my room, collect my bag, go downstairs and officially check-out. Collect my passport, air ticket and wallet from the hotel safe. Leave my small bag in the luggage room. Tease Maria. Call Michael Green in his room. Tell him that it was great to have shared Ljubljana with him. Tell him that I am leaving a book with Maria at the reception desk for him. Thank Maria and head back to the Registration Offices. Marco Brumen stops me and introduces himself to me. He and I have exchanged a number of email messages. We have a good short talk.

Inside see Chrissie Poulter from the Dublin Arts Lab. We also talk about the Birmingham Arts Lab. She thanks me for all my activities in the mid-60s, which she says inspired her and many others. I tell her she owes me a 10% royalty. More giggles. I report that I once debated Mary Whitehouse on live television in Birmingham. And my team won! Give her a newsletter about the Sunday dinners.

Go back to the offices and talk with the information team. Get a telephone number for a taxi service. Learn that Nevenka will lead a group discussion at 14.30.

Back to the front café and sit alone. Order another cappuccino from Sabine. She tells me she studies English literature. Scribble a few notes that I will need when I get home. Yohann Floch passes my table and stops to chat. He says that he had fun last night following my instructions: having fun drinking beer. I congratulate him! Chrissie Poulter asks if she may sit and eat her salad. Of course. Nevenka joins us with her lunch. Sabine delivers a large orange juice plus two bureks. They are delicious. I feel like taking a hundred back to Paris. Nevenka introduces me to Leila Badis and I learn that she is going to the airport this afternoon in a taxi to catch her flight to Paris and that I am welcome to travel with her and two others. She suggests I meet her here at 16.30 with my bag and we will ride out. Nevenka says that we are leaving early. But it is not a problem for me. I ask Nevenka to call Patricija Malicev. Learn that Patricija will come to the café about 13.30.

Patricija asks if I would like to ride around Ljubljana. She has her car with her. But I prefer to stay here at the café and enjoy the positive energy flowing all around us. We have coffee, juice, and bureks. Patricija has written three pages in today's *Delo* about the IETM Conference and many people congratulate her. Nevenka's afternoon session starts soon, but we sit at an outside table and eat and drink. How lazy of us. But how delightful to be lazy.

Leila Badis signals that the taxi will arrive in ten minutes to take us to the airport. Give Patricija kisses on her cheeks and thank her for her positive energy. It has been a great pleasure to share time and space with her. Walk out front and get in the front seat of the taxi. Leila and two women from Paris get in the back seat. And then we are off. The driver does not speak English, but I recognize we are passing Nevenka's family home. Ask the driver if it is Titova ulica and yes, he says it was, but it has a new name now. I remember staying there in the late 1980s and I remember the road to the airport. The three in the back seat chat and I hear words in French drift in my direction. And then we are at the airport.

Leila and I check in at the same counter. We check our bags, and clear passport and security controls. Meet a woman from Barcelona named Isabel Castellet, who does something with dancers. She says she attended my afternoon session. I give her a newsletter and invite her to dine when she is next in Paris. She gives me her card. Time to board the plane. Leila and I sit together and begin a conversation that does not end until we leave each other in Paris. What a bright, attractive and nice person she is. Once again it is a tiny plane with extremely attractive flight attendants.

It's a smooth flight. And seemingly a quick one. After we collect our bags, I suggest we take a taxi and I will drop her at her home. But when we exit, the bus to the Opera is outside and just about to pull out. I suggest we jump aboard. And we make it with seconds to spare. We talk non-stop about the conference and all the delightful individuals we met in Ljubljana. We talk about her boyfriend, who is from Sicily, and I tell her about how I became a "Sicilian godfather". We talk about her youth spent in the 14th arrondissement. What an attractive young woman she is! I hope her boyfriend realizes what a treasure he has. When we arrive, I decide to take a taxi home. Leila walks with me a short distance. A taxi pulls up. We embrace and say our farewells. She heads for the metro and the 20th. Soon the taxi pulls up to my home for the past 35 years. I am home from another trip. Inside the empty atelier, there is a note from Amanda Morrow, welcoming me back. I spy a small pile of post including a box of Ragusa (chocolate bars) from Selma Surbeck in Switzerland. Dangerous stuff. Ragusa is my drug. That and women of course. And travel. And festivals - film, theatre, literary. And life. I love it. Thank you, Nevenka, and all at Bunker in Ljubljana for hosting such a delightful and fun event. I enjoyed every minute

Tomorrow is another Sunday dinner. The weather report suggests it might rain. The advanced booking indicates we will be about 60. (It turns out not to rain and we are 66.) Lots of ex-Yugoslavia people attend including Jon Ivanovski, the Macedonian Ambassador to France, my friend, Evgenija Demnievska, a painter and long time resident of Paris, the playwright, Dejan Dukovski, and a photographer, Sladjana Stankovic. And Ruzica Dragicevic and a Bojana. Plus Galina Prokhorova (who has cooked our feast) and her two guests, Olga and Tatiana, from Russia. A very Slavic evening. Two American-Serbs, Ryan Mitrovich and his sister, Jessica – both from California. And old friend, Stanley Cohen, who arrived from New York today and still had strength to attend another Sunday dinner. Old friend, Colin Gravois, also comes with Marshall Leaffer. Colin has a travel agency that specializes in taking people to Louisiana. He has been living in Paris since 1969, is married to the wonderful, Hamida. They have two lovely daughters. And Marshall is a professor of law at the University of Indiana and a world authority on copyright law.

Next Sunday, the 25th of May, Jodi Poretto will cook red beans and rice. A New Orleans specialty. She arrives in Paris on the 21st. My cousin, Laurie Haynes Coberly, is visiting from Hanalei, Hawaii and she will prepare spinach soup.

I will fly to Prague the 31st of May to participate in another Prague Writers' Festival, thanks to Michael March and Vlasta Brtnikova. I will once again stay in the Josef Hotel and once again produce a daily blog.

Then on June the 17th, I will fly to Edinburgh for the Film Festival and a talk at the National Gallery of Scotland (on the 24) and fly back to Paris the 26th. While I am away, Mary Bartlett and Paul Allman will handle the Sunday dinners with lots of help from Amanda Morrow.

In August, another trip to Edinburgh for the theatre and literary festival. Maybe I will attend another Frankfurt Book Messe in October. But for sure another trip to India in November to participate in the Kolkata Film Festival (10 to 17 November). And to see friends in Mumbai and in Delhi. Stanley Cohen is talking about attending the film festival again.

Life is full of delightful madness. I love it. Maybe I will travel to Istanbul soon and take a boat across the Black Sea to Odessa. John Flattau says he will come with me. There is even a possibility that Alan Furst will come with us. Alan has a new book published entitled *The Spies of Warsaw*. I love his books and highly recommend them. If you have not read his novels, do so immediately. There is just not enough time to do all one would like to do.

But as I must keep reminding myself: to make the gods laugh, tell them your plans.

This first draft, completed the 19th of May 2008, just might be the last and only one. Six pages is enough to use. Newsletter No. 679 completed.

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