

**Interreg
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BEroots

**Artists
among rivers
and lagoons**

**Umetniške
POTI PERCORSI
ARTISTI**

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In the cross-border area between Italy and Slovenia, where cultures, languages, and histories meet, a unique artistic expression is also born – often hidden from the eyes of the masses, yet rich in content, authenticity, and local stories. The BEroots project strives to do just that: to shed light on creators who, through their work, enrich the shared cultural landscape but until now have not had the opportunity for broader recognition.

In this brochure, we present lesser-known artists from the cross-border region, whose creativity tells the stories of places, people, and time. Their works are an expression of personal dedication, local identity, and often the careful preservation of cultural heritage within the modern world.

The project partnership – composed of the Municipality of Vipava as lead partner, the Municipality of Sovodnje ob Soči, the Vipava Tourism Board, SDGZ-URES Slovene Regional Economic Association, VEGAL, and the Adult Education Centre Ajdovščina – seeks, within the project framework, to foster sustainable tourism development and cultural cooperation. Together, they address current challenges – from recovery after the pandemic and the development of hinterland areas to encouraging intergenerational collaboration and greater recognition of lesser-known corners and creators.

May this selection of artists invite you to view tourism and culture differently – as a space of encounter, cooperation, and co-creation of a shared future. Art has the power to connect, and the BEroots project offers an opportunity to make these connections lasting and visible.



VIPAVA

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From the places of our municipality have come – or here have lived and created, and in some cases still create – a remarkable number of artistic souls who have given us their works in literature, with their voices and instruments, or through visual imagery. While preparing the list for this presentation, I counted no fewer than twenty-three – only those who have already departed into eternity, most of them from Vipava, the heart of the municipality. Perhaps even this number is not final. Were I to add those still living, it would grow even larger. I chose to focus on those who no longer create, as with the ending of their lives their artistic journeys also reached completion. In making the selection, I considered local origins or affiliations, ensuring representation from all the villages that nurtured at least one creator. At the same time, I kept in mind the diversity of their artistic fields. From these starting points arose the present selection of ten artists from our municipality.

Jurij Rosa

Alojzij Repič

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

This artist, considered a precursor of Slovenian modern sculpture, created his works in the midst of major cultural and political changes at the turn of the century. The fact that he is not a very well-known sculptor is perplexing, seeing as he, as one of the few academically educated artists of his time from our valley, belongs to the very top of the artistic creation in the so-called academic realism, and his role in the upbringing of the most important Slovenian sculptors of the 20th century is no less important.

He was born on 11 March 1866 in Vrhpolje and died on 18 May 1941 in Ljubljana. Early in his life, it was clear that he had a talent for drawing. This did not go unnoticed for Henrik Dejak, a priest in Vrhpolje who was a skilled carver and painter. Repič first started developing his talent with his assistance until 1884, helping him restore church art. Despite his desire for an artistic education, his peasant parents were unable to send him to school. After a period of several short jobs in Ljubljana and helping the carver Jernej Ternovac in Polhov Gradec, he started and also completed the arts and crafts school for wood crafts. He returned to work with Henrik Dejak, and then moved on to assist the sculptor Krašovec in Celje. In 1890, he was already in Vienna, where he first supported himself through occasional works and received

assistance of the Carniolan Provincial Assembly; two years later, he was admitted to the Vienna Academy, where he studied with prof. Hellmer and also completed specialist studies with prof. Kundmann. He set up his own workshop in Vienna. He returned to Vrhopolje and spent two years creating art for various churches in the Vipava region. In 1905, he became a contract teacher at the School of Arts and Crafts in Ljubljana; two years later, he became a professor of various professional subjects until he retired in 1931.

Repič's talent already made waves in Vienna. His sculptural works reflected a vast knowledge of the components of the work of art and its structure, as well as powerful design ideas and skilful mastery of the structure of the human body. He mastered not only carving and modelling techniques, but was also an excellent stonemason. All these qualities are also visible in his works from the mature age of his creation.

For various clients, he made small sculptures to adorn public buildings or bourgeois houses. Some of his larger works are: *Boreča se dečka* (Boys fighting), *Borilca* (Fighters), *Čas – sovražnik mladosti* (Time – the enemy of youth), *Adam, kje si?* (Where are you, Adam?), *Glava zamorca* (The Black man's head), *Vipavski par* (The couple from Vipava), *Vinogradnika z brento* (Grapegrowers with their bushel), and *Vipavka* (The woman from Vipava). He created a number of monuments and portrayed heads of various important figures: France Prešeren, Miroslav Vilhar, Simon Gregorčič, Anton Martin Slomšek, Janez Evangelist Krek, Ivan Cankar and others. He considered the large marble tombstone of Jakob Missia, the Archbishop of Gorica, which now stands on Sveta Gora, as his best work.

All his works (including the ones he created for churches elsewhere in Slovenia) testify that he never wandered far from his early examples, especially the ones found in Renaissance and Classicist sculpture. In his younger years, he was original in his own way, but otherwise drew on motifs from ancient tradition; he processed his creations with metaphors and hidden symbols, and presented the world of ideas through concrete characters and scenes.

Persistent hard work, thorough and extensive knowledge, and exceptional talent for organisation made Alojzije Repič particularly qualified for educational work. Some called him the "nestor of Slovenian sculptors". In his twenty-six years of teaching, he has trained many young people who later went on to become renowned sculptors (including Ivan Napotnik, Lojze Dolinar, France Gorše, Boris and Zdenko Kalin, France Kralj) and painters (Miha Maleš, Maksim Sedej). He was considered a charming teacher with well-developed personal and educational abilities, and a humble, generous man. He carried out his mission in the pursuit of discovering everything beautiful, moral, and pure.

Today, a commemorative plaque on the façade of house no. 33 in Vrhopolje still reminds us of this man.



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Fran Žgur

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

»Golden birds, let the wind take my poems to the field, let young men and young girls sing them. /.../ Let the voice of my poems rise above the field in the splendour of heaven. Let joy, tears and wounds, and spring renew my Heart.« With these thoughts, Fran Žgur expressed the purpose of his poetic muse to the souls of his readers.

Fran Žgur is considered as a wonderful, bright and joyful poet by everyone who loves classical poetic verses and who cares a lot about the people of our land, who have expressed the innermost thoughts of their soft souls, inspired by nature and the homeland. His contemporaries called him "the nightingale from Vipava", a designation that still applies to him to this day.

He was born on 21 November 1866 in Podraga and died there on 13 February 1939. His house was called "Pri Aleksandrovih" (At the Aleksanders') or "Pri Sandrovih" (At the Sanders') for short. The knowledge he acquired at the elementary school in Col (which he attended at his father's request) opened new horizons and instilled in him a desire to acquire broader knowledge and education. He later attended a German preparatory school in Gorica and then entered a "realka" (Realschule) in Gorica, but was not successful

in pursuing his studies. Since the boy showed a talent for painting, his father took him to learn from the painter Simon Ogrin in Vrhnika. But he soon came back home since he felt so homesick. In doing so, Žgur closed all the doors to a classical educational path for himself. Since the Sanders had an inn, a shop and a small estate in Podraga, his father hired him to work in the store.

He was an active member, as well as the secretary and president, of a reputable association called the Agricultural Reading Room in Podraga. For a long time, the association gathered in their house.

Since his father was already a councillor of the association, he probably attended cultural events in the village as a child, and was particularly influenced by the rich library that the Reading Room gradually created. He read absolutely everything he could get his hands on.

He was a big supporter of his nation. During the First World War, the government controlled his actions; he was even imprisoned at the Ljubljana Castle and later had to forcibly move to Mittergrabern in Austria for almost a year. During the Italian occupation of Primorska, he was imprisoned as many as seventeen times due to its attachment to Slovenism and Slavism.

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The folk tradition says that he was a bad merchant but a good poet. Some renowned literary artists even visited his home. The name of the house has gained a special role in Slovenian literary history. The poet Josip Murn loved it so much that he even kept it until the end of his life as a pseudonym, calling himself Josip Murn Aleksandrov. The famous military officer and poet Rudolf Maister also visited Žgur, and he was friendly with the famous Slovenian writer France Bevk, who appreciated him and published several heartfelt writings about him. Žgur's daughter Francka married the famous poet Alojz Gradnik.

He wrote enough poems to fit into a very thick book, and many of them have been published in numerous newspapers, magazines and other printed publications. A significant part of his poetic legacy is currently located in the Provincial Archives in Nova Gorica.

His most extensive collection, *Pomladančki* (The Springtime Fellows) was published in Gorica in 1923. Before that, he had already published two selections of his poems, also in Gorica: in

the 25th volume of the collection *Knjižnica za mladino* (A Library for Young People) (1902) and in the 31st volume of the same collection entitled *Semena padajo – otroške pesmi* (Seeds Fall – Children's Poems) (1905). He mostly dedicated his poems to young people, but they also reflect his love for his country and homeland and commemorate several milestones in life, religious holidays, folk customs, nature and the seasons, and his memories of some of the people in his life.

His poems are mostly soft and gentle. They developed following the example of the poets Župančič, Murn and perhaps others, but are also authentic in many ways, expressing his human nature and his soft, lyrical soul, fused with the soil from Vipava from which they drew their special melodiousness, colour and smell. Oftentimes, they are also more striking, like this famous example: »*There, at the top of Nanos behind Tura, foul weather is gearing up; whitefly uncles, fur-bearers, swaddled up to their noses – whistling and screaming, blowing into the valley, grating white snow/.../*« Sometimes, they sound like a prayer, just like he wrote in the next poem: »*.../A silent prayer – the flower of the heart stepped into the light of heaven, became all gilded, and spread its golden wings.*«

He dedicated his collection of poems *Pomladančki* (The Springtime Fellows) to the hero Ciciban, and said in the opening poem: »*.../You have shorts, I have these toys – my poems; I give them to you.*« And ends with: »*.../Let us now go to the field and think about smart thoughts, let's pick a whole bunch of flowers and poems.*« He wrote beautiful poems for children, which earned him a place in school textbooks, magazines for children and young people, and collections of poetry for children and youngsters. He wrote beautiful poems for children, which earned him a place in school textbooks, magazines for children and young people, and collections of poetry for children and youngsters. The melodiousness of his poetry was much appreciated by Slovenian musicians who turned several of his poems into mellow melodies.

At the time of his death, the newspaper reporter writing his In Memoriam segment called *Kmet in poet Fran Žgur* (*Farmer and poet Fran Žgur*) also noted an interesting anecdote which points to the erudition of this poet. When the Italians came to Podraga in 1918, he recited Italian classical poets to Italian officers in an inn one evening, lecturing them on the development of Italian literature. They were convinced that he is only an intellectual dressed as a farmer, and he had to prove his "authenticity" using witnesses and several official documents. At that time, they were even more perplexed, shaking their heads and saying that in Italy, educated people with such extensive knowledge are university professors. But Žgur only said: »*In Slovenia, we're all so educated.*«

In 1951, Alojz Gradnik dedicated a meaningful poem to him, giving him a voice from the beyond and expressing his recognition in this special way: »*.../I am the ashes and dust from Karst, but my poems still resound; when the nightingale sings in Podraga, all of the songs he repeats are mine. /.../I will forever be a message and a reminder from the beyond that indelible traces remain in the eternal word of poets.*«

In 2007, after over 80 years, a selection of his poems finally saw the light of day in the book *Fran Žgur – vipavski slavček* (*Fran Žgur – the Vipava Nightingale*), which also contains a detailed overview of his life and work, some records of memories other people had about him and his work, and bibliography material.



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Ivan Mercina

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

Churches throughout our homeland, scattered across the peaks of hills and valleys, are part of the indispensable Slovenian identity, and church ringing is so inseparably connected with the image of the Slovenian landscape that even a resident of a particular place can identify with it. From the cradle to the grave, bells have always accompanied people in Slovenia. The main purpose of bells is to announce liturgical tasks and invite people to attend prayer, but they also serve more secular purposes (daily announcement of the hours), and are sometimes also used to introduce important events or to announce natural disasters).

Bell chiming, however, is a particular Slovenian feat that is almost completely unknown elsewhere in the world. Our bells produce special music. With them, skilful artists in the bell tower create a special atmosphere. Bells have a special impact on the human psyche: they "rejoice with the joyful ones and mourn with the sad ones", as a famous saying goes.

The teacher and musician Ivan Mercina also cultivated a special relationship with this particular instrument, since he is known as the first Slovenian campanologist. He was born in the village of Goč on 29 June 1851 and died on 27 July 1940 in Gorica. After

attending the public elementary school in his village, he went to a teacher's college in Gorica in 1874. Teaching service first took him to Prosek, then to Materija and finally to Gorica, where he stayed from 1879 until his retirement in 1917. He was musically talented and extensively used his talents for the upbringing of school youth, teaching singing and some other music subjects at various schools in Gorica for numerous years. For a while, he also taught Slovenian, German, geography and history. He also shared his knowledge with musical choirs in Prosek and Gorica. He was an excellent organist and a master of organ improvisations who also dabbled in composing or arranging melodies. He also wrote simple songs for children. 89 out of the 126 songs published in the book *Igre in pesmi za otroška zabavišča in ljudske šole (Games and Songs for Children Fairgrounds and Folk Schools)* in 1893 were written by Mercina.

In those days, teachers raising young people and taking care of the nation's culture were numerous, and so were musicians who were even better than Mercina. But Ivan Mercina was, however, the first campanologist. He was probably not the first person to be interested in bells, but in terms of professionalism, diligence and also in terms of the fruits that his activity bore, no other Slovenians have yet come close to him. He was interested in bells from a young age because he liked bell chiming, first as a boy and later as a student. Through committed studying of foreign records about bells, he accumulated a lot of knowledge, which he supplemented with practical work in bell towers.

He especially became an important campanologist after the First World War. The region of Primorska became a part of Italy, and the State started returning bells seized by the Austro-Hungarian Empire for war purposes to parishes. The Italian State paid for this operation with the money recovered through war reparations, but wanted to make most of it by only returning lighter and cheaper bells in worse condition. Mercina warned against the use of poorly made and inappropriate steel bells. Due to his efforts and knowledge in this profession, Archbishop Sedej appointed him as an expert reviewer of bells in the Archdiocese of Gorica.

He wrote articles for the magazines "Cerkveni glasbenik", "Goriška straža" and "Zbornik svečnikov sv. Pavla". His advice also extended beyond the Yugoslav-Italian border, but was not followed there, which is why he was more successful in the region of Primorska.

His four handy books published in Gorica are important for the field of campanology in Slovenia. so pomembne njegove štiri priročne knjige, ki so izšle v Gorici. He first published collected stories about campanology in 1926 and then published them again in 1930 in a collection called *Zvonoznanstvo* which also included detailed information on how to make, purchase and use bells.

Two more manuals were published in the same years (1926 and 1930): Slovenski pritrkovavec, which included instructions for bell-chiming-by-numbers, and Cerkovnikovo opravilo v zvoniku. Up until then, no other nation in Europe had similar books, which is probably still true even now.

The cover of his book Zvonoznanstvo bears a meaningful thought for the bell: »In the bell tower, high above you, is my holy home; from there, I invite you to pray and work, and it is there that I announce my compassion for you«. Perhaps this thought could also be attributed to the soul of Ivan Mercina, seeing as it beautifully reflects his heartfelt devotion to this instrument which is so valued and special among our people.

A commemorative plaque on the façade of his birth house, Goče 52, reminds us of this important personality.



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Ivan Šček

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

Due to his love for music, the life path of Vipava's own Ivan Šček has taken on a different dimension than the one originally intended for him. In his family, music already played a very important role, as singing was the thread connecting his family members. Music, which he loved from an early age, as well as the fact that he was of poor health, diverted him from working in his father's blacksmith workshop to studying musical art. He was born on 5 August 1925 and died on 20 January 1972 in Koper. After attending elementary schooling in his home village, he soon experienced the sorrows of wartime. In February 1943, he was forcibly mobilised and had to join workers' battalions, spending several months with them in various places in Italy. After the fall of Italy, he served in the Partisan Gradnik Brigade from September 1943 to April 1944. After a long-term treatment in the hospital in Gorica, he continued his education, attending lower grammar school in Vipava and grammar school and secondary music school in Ljubljana. From 1955 onwards, he taught at the music school in Koper and for many years also taught at the Koper grammar school, all the while performing music educational work in Izola and Piran. Due to the lack of teachers, he taught the visitors of those schools how to play various musical instruments. He also taught theoretical subjects, led the choir, and at the same time composed and attended additional studies at the Academy

of Music in Ljubljana, where he graduated in composition and completed his postgraduate studies. He became a music teacher and educator, composer and conductor. For nearly 18 years, he successfully raised young people, inspiring them to love music, and was able to help them to appreciate the beauty of a song sung or played with his sensitive artistic soul. He equipped many of his students with the love of knowledge and music.

In 1966, he also started leading the choir in the Koper Cathedral. With his arrival, the number of singers multiplied, and the choir reached a high quality level.

As a music artist and teacher, he became one of the creators of the Society of Friends of Music, which organised numerous concerts for adults and young people in Koper, and was also involved in the activities of the Society of Music Pedagogues of the Region of Primorska.

His moderately modern music inspired by folk motives includes about 150 choral compositions, including several ecclesiastical compositions, which he signed as Štefan Kovač, a name composed of the first name of the parish patron and the last name of his father's profession which, according to the plans that his family had for him, should also be his. The highlight of his composing opus with a religious theme for choirs is represented by several sung masses: Sunday Mass no. 1, Holy Mass in Honour of St Joseph, "Holy Night" Christmas Mass, the "Holy Mother of the Mountain Holy Mass, the most solemn Easter Mass Christ has risen, and the Light Fifth Mass, which was one of his most performed works. He also composed Lieds, including Devet šaljivk za glas in klavir (Nine jokes for voice and piano). He left behind several chamber works, such as Mala suita za klavir (Little Suite for Piano), Osem skic za klavir (Eight Sketches for Piano) and Sedem istrskih slik za klavir (Seven Istrian Sketches for Piano), and also composed vocal-instrumental works, e.g. Princeska in pastirček (The Princess and the Shepherd), Turška sužnja (The Turkish slave), Balada (Ballad), symphonic works, compositions for various wind instruments and piano, stage works, e.g. Boter petelin (Godfather Rooster), and stage radio music.

Ivan Šček loved his birthplace and his family. His encouragement also helped his son Matjaž and his daughter Alenka to become extremely successful musicians.

This important Vipava compatriot, who left traces of musical art to our nation and expressed the thought that "an artist is a devastatingly tuned instrument that vibrates over every occurrence of sadness as joy", is also remembered by a commemorative plaque on the façade of his birth house in Vipava, Ulica Milana Bajca 10.



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Ivo Česnik

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

The small village of Sanabor in the eastern part of Vipava also gave us an artistic creator. This was namely the birth village of the narrator and playwright Ivo Česnik. He was born there on 4 November 1885, and died on 19 July 1951, far away from home in the Swiss town of Flüelen.

He attended primary school in Col and Vipava, and went to grammar school in Ljubljana. His path to higher learning experiences led him to the University of Graz, where he attended lectures in as many as four sciences (Slavic, French, art history and special philosophy), but then decided to study law; he received his doctorate after having successfully completed his studies. As a student, he was actively involved in the Zarja organisation and even took over the leading management tasks. During various youth meetings, he gave lectures on the topic of family, the role of the municipality and the role of the state.

After his studies, he directed himself towards the legal profession. He first worked as a junior lawyer in Gorica, where he enjoyed participating in the Catholic cultural movement. He then went to Dolenjska and started practicing as a lawyer in Novo mesto, where he also became somewhat involved in political activity (with the Slovenian People's Party). He also dealt with national defence issues

(he delivered a lecture during the Education Union course). During the war, he moved to Ljubljana. There, he was caught in the whirlwind of national liberation and revolutionary events that brought along a new, communist political arrangement. Disagreeing with this new arrangement, he fled to Koroška with his family. By then, he was already weakened by his disease, and the IRO (International Refugee Organisation) helped him and his wife get settled in Switzerland, where he stayed in a nursing home in Flüel. This was also where his life ended, in suffering and abandonment.

Ivo Česnik was an extremely prolific writer. Literary journals and the calendar issued by the Celje Mohor Society were regularly publishing his short stories, tales and other writings, from his initial attempts before the First World War to 1945, when he published the Vipava Valley travelogue in the aforementioned calendar. Even in exile, he continued writing diligently, including during his illness. He was an old-school writer who could convey descriptions of people and places in an interesting manner. Some of his works: Stari slivar (The Old Plum Dealer), Znamenita pravda (The Famous Litigation), Za zemljo (For the Land), Blažev Štefan, Ogjar Luka (Luka the Charcoal Maker), Zlata krona (The Golden Crown), Naši ljudje (Our People), Pater Gervazij (Father Gervais), Siromakova bajta (The Poor Man's Shack), Martin Klančar, Črnošolec, Kmet Porenta (Farmer Porenta), Kolera (Cholera), Legenda o slepcu (Legend of the Blind Man), Dimnikar Jakob (Jakob the Chimney Sweep), Madona (Madonna). His last work which remained unfinished is the tale Svetogorska pesem (The Song of the Holy Mountain).

During his student years, he often performed as an actor. Out of interest and with a flair for the dramatics, he adapted Jurčič's tale Domen, which was staged several times as a dramatic play, in 1911. In 1914, he published his own original singing harlequinade called Pogodba (The Treaty), which was often played in the countryside (by 1938, the book had already been reprinted thrice). In addition, he also wrote texts touching upon religious themes in the Franciscan Gazette, e.g. Dobrodelnost prvih kristjanov (The Charity of the First Christians), Naglavni grehi v pregovorih (Cardinal Sins in Proverbs), Kulturno-zgodovinski pomen sv. Frančiška (The Cultural and Historic Significance of St. Francis), where he also published some folk songs from Vipava. He was also interested in literary history, publishing a study on the Italian writer Silvio Pellico and editing selected poems by Anton Erjavec. He compiled a short popular historiographical overview called Turki na Goriškem (The Turks in the region of Goriška), and also dabbled in translation.

Česnik's literary creation was mainly fuelled by sources close to home, since he predominantly described the life of peasants in villages. Literary history, however, did not particularly appreciate his literary works, believing that they were rather uncreative; although he sometimes touched upon a deeper reality, he mainly stuck with a simple, romantic, well-established, and mostly educationally oriented narrative.

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Janez Krhne

22

AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

»Whoever is sick in his heart is looking for a cure in the throes of this despair; let him go with me to the wine cellar, and all germs will die there.«

This verse from the legacy of Janez Krhne shows one of the characteristics of a vernacular poet who sang praises to noble wine and his native soil, knew his songs by heart, and recited them in passing to his listeners. Pleasant company always stirred his poetic spirit, and he loved to cheer up his friends with verses of all kinds: happy, humorous and sad, "sweet and sour, straight and curvilinear".

He was born on 29 June 1884 in Vipava where he also died on 4 January 1958. He went to elementary school in Vipava. He studied to become a cellarman and worked for the Vipava wine cooperative; for several years, he was even a cellarman at the branch of the Vipava wine cellar in Prague. From 1918 to 1920, he served as a municipal tax collector. In 1920, he bought a two-storey house in the middle of the Vipava Square, where he ran the famous "Krhnet" inn until his death. He was also a committed life-long member of the Vipava Firefighting Association and, at the age of twenty, was already appointed as the chief of the Vipava firefighters.

He began to write poetry as a child. He was a shepherd for the Hrovatin family. According to written tradition, he had to get up early and supposedly wanted a rooster to wake him up, which is why his first poem is dedicated to a rooster. Janez Krhne was a very sociable man. His inn was always cheerful and lively, which gave him ample opportunity to explore and discover many poetic ideas born in the pleasant company of his guests. His inn was also visited by other well-known personalities, such as poet Lili Novy, writer and poet Tone Seliškar and literary historian Anton Slodnjak.

He composed numerous commemorative poems that he kept in his memory. He never wrote them on paper, but he did write some of them on wine barrels as he went along, which was one of his special characteristics. Numerous commemorative or wine-related poems lived in the memory of the Vipava people for a long time. His poems are easy, dedicated primarily to the joys of life and reflecting his joyful nature, while some of them are also dedicated to some of the characteristics of local places, historical events and personalities. Throughout his life, he remained anchored in the immediate surroundings of his birthplace. While several of his poems have been written down, many are buried with him. He did not publish his own poems, and the only poems that remain have been recorded by his acquaintances. Some of the poems were published in newspapers, firefighting journals and calendars, with some even founding their way abroad (in the newsletters of our Slovenian compatriots in the United States called "Glas naroda" (Voice of the Nation) and "Ameriška domovina" (American Homeland)).

His poetic legacy has not yet been collected and edited. Fortunately, his daughter-in-law Jožka wrote some of his poems in a notebook that she called Dela Janeza Krhmeta (The Work of Janez Krhne). The notebook contains over 50 poems.

Krhne's poetic nature is perhaps best personified by memories such as this one by Vinko Premrl from Vipava, who wrote about the creation of one of his commemorative poems in the company of various men called Jožef from Vipava who came to his inn. During a lively discussion, Krhne noted that he wanted to say something. With chalk in his hand, he stood next to the barrel and began to write on it. When he pulled away his hand, one could read: "Jože, go to the field there, and have a good look at the land there...". This was followed by a long break that just kept on dragging on, while others had to remain silent not to disturb his concentration. But his poetic inspiration would not be denied, and he continued writing his verse: "...pluck out all the nettle and make room for wheat!".

To conclude the presentation of this rather special vernacular poet whose heart and soul always belonged to Vipava, here are the verses of one of his poems which is still a part of the folk tradition and is also

written in the aforementioned notebook:

»A barrel maker made you out of oak, Burgundy wine is contained in you, and only the man of the house can drink from it, which is why there is so much ruckus in the house. This barrel is made from acacia, and it contains sacramental wine, if a repentant sinner drinks from it, the devil will never get him. And this barrel is made of spruce, and it contains weak drink, Tine the servant drinks from it, and his destiny is really grim.«

The beginning of the notebook containing his songs includes a thought reflecting his poetic soul: *»If you want to be a free poet, get rid of all bonds, she is the only one who will weave a wreath for him, and a poet cannot be known without her.«*

This somewhat mysterious verse that leaves a lot of room for thought for the reader is, however, a reflection of his human nature. Even though he never became a famous poet, the tradition of his work still lives in the region of Vipava, at least partially.



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Josip Kostanjevec

26

AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

The literary artist Josip Kostanjevec, who was perhaps a lesser-known Vipava compatriot, was born on 19 February 1864 in Vipava and died on 20 May 1934 in Maribor. He obtained his education in his home town, in Gorica and in Koper. He trained as a teacher and moved several times to teach in different places: Ubeljsko, Trnovo, Col, Prem, Litija and, last but not least, Ljubljana. As a retiree, he also lived in different places, most recently in Maribor.

His poems first appeared in "Ljubljanski zvon" and "Kres", but did not express any particular artistic value, seeing as their author only cultivated lyric poetry imitated from other authors.

He probably realised poetry was not his strong suit, and devoted himself to storytelling. His short stories, novellas and tales were published in various newspapers, magazines and publications issued by publishing houses. In "Ljubljanski zvon", he also published a series of short stories, becoming the main storyteller of this magazine from 1887 to 1925. This position allowed him to truly develop his range as a writer, processing the themes offered to him by the living situation of the population in Postojna, Ilirska Bistrica, Vipava and the surrounding rural areas. For a while, he was also the editor of the collection

"Zabavna knjižnica" at the "Slovenska matica" publishing house.

In his work, he sought inspiration from some other Slovenian storytellers. Much like Janko Kersnik, he described themes from the life of educated rural inhabitants and the petty bourgeoisie, and like Fran Govekar, he tried to imitate the vernacular orientation that took inspiration in life in all its naturalness, describing the biological and social laws that control the mankind, which is why he can be considered as one of the so-called naturalist writers. Two of his more important stories discussing such topics are Gojko Knafeljc and Kotanjska elita (The Elite from the Hollow). Both are inspired by the life of the urban society in Postojna, but do not provide greater artistic value, since they are rather shallow and poorly represent human spirituality. The author, however, tried to convince readers that such a choice of themes was also quite justified for Slovenians, saying that Slovenian society was no less corrupt than the society that could be observed elsewhere in Europe.

He was also influenced by Ivan Cankar and Franc Ksaver Meško, mainly through their psychological novels.

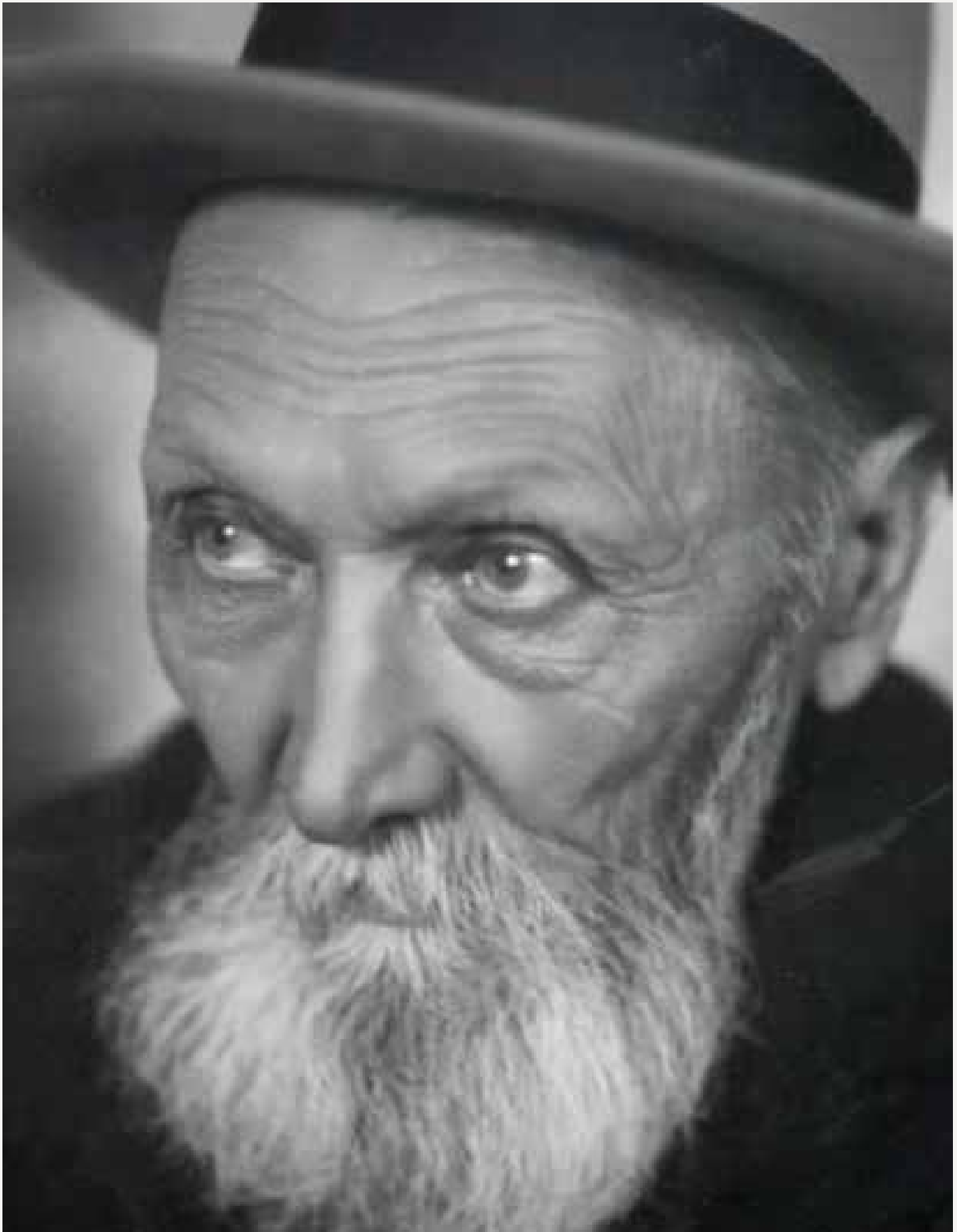
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Similar creations by this author, however, did not seek inspiration from the environment and society at large. This group includes Noč (Night), Na sončnih tleh (On the Sunny Ground), Lahkoživci (Men-about-Town), Prepozno (Too Late), Zadnji prameni (The Last Strands), Čez trideset let (In Thirty Years), Spomini gospoda Ignacija Brumna (Memories of Mr. Ignacij Brumen) and others.

His work for the "Mohorjeva družba", a publishing house based in Klagenfurt, was literally a completely different story. He changed the way he wrote, writing stories that deeply moved their readers in an educational style and using the old-world narrative technique: those were stories about good and honest people who must suffer while being persecuted by the bad people, until the truth finally comes out in the end – the good are rewarded, while the bad are punished. Readers always enjoyed Josip Kostanjevec's "evening" stories that were a rather typical feature of this publishing house. While the most characteristic tale written in this style is Življenja trnjeva pot (The Thorny Path of Life), he also penned numerous others, e.g. V Ameriko (To America), Za denar (For Money), Pošteni ljudje (Honest People) and Novo življenje (New Life).

He published his novels himself in the collection Iz knjige življenja (From the Book of Life), which was published in two parts in 1900 and 1904 in Postojna, and also published the novel Krivec (The Guilty Party) in Maribor in 1921, where the first volume of his Zbrani spisi (Collected Writings) was also published in 1923.

Literary history acknowledges the exceptional prolificacy, skill and writing proficiency of Josip Kostanjevec whose work, however, never reached a higher plane, on which the author would be able to offer new artistic revelations, but remained at the level of pleasant, somewhat spiritual, sometimes ironically spiced entertainment. His outlines of unscrupulous or meaningless actions of the members of the bourgeoisie reveal the sorrow and disgust due to a misguided life, which could be created not only by the observer, but also by a creative critic. Despite the fact that his teaching job offered him a multitude of themes in various locations, it somehow also bound his spirit and forced him to write without taking his thoughts under sufficient consideration. His latest works also bear a tinge of instructiveness. His delivery of the subject matter was rather repetitive, seeing as he described motifs and scenes in the same way in all his works, which was also the fault of his linguistic communication; while flowing smoothly and naturally, it did not contain any true artistic power.



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Radoslav Silvester

30

AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

*»Hello, Vipava, my beautiful paradise!
You will be in my memory forever, just like now;
Even if I travel the world,
Vipava, you will always remain the core of my joy!«*

This heartfelt praise to Vipava was written by poet Radoslav Silvester in one of his poems. Although he was not born in Vipava, we can consider him as "one of us", since it was in Vipava that he spent most of his time working and creating; he also died here, leaving us with a well-established presence after the end of his life path.

He was born on 3 December 1841 in Vrhnika and died on 30 April 1923 in Vipava. He studied bakery in Ljubljana and settled in Vipava after working as an assistant in Planina, Postojna and Idrija, the birthplace of his wife. Working diligently and saving up money whenever he could, he set up a shop and bakery in the Vipava market and acquired some property, as well as a good reputation among the inhabitants. Jurij Grabrijan, the dean of Vipava, inspired him for performing nationally conscious and educational work, which he adhered to with all his zeal, primarily devoting himself to poetry and proving to be one of the most prolific religious poets. He began publishing his works in 1862 in the

Catholic church newspaper "Zgodnja Danica", to which he remained loyal for more than four decades. He also published his work in nearly all Slovenian newspapers and magazines of the time, and some poems were also published in books pupils read in schools. Radoslav Silvester belongs to an era of national awakening, when every slightly more educated person tasked themselves with promoting their love for the nation and national consciousness in the fields of their work.

Most of his poems are religious, many are distinctly educational, and some are a reflection of the political situation at the time. He wrote poems in several forms, mostly sonnets, and also composed several "wreaths of sonnets". Even though he was a skilful composer of verses, his poems lack a more personal character. He was somewhat influenced by Simon Gregorčič's poems, while the influence of Anton Aškerc can also be felt in some of his work. He published several booklets of his poems. A small collection of patriotic poems called *Mali šopek domoljubnih cvetličic* (A Small Bouquet of Patriotic Flowers) was published in 1878 in Klagenfurt; in this collection, he praises the beauty of his homeland, including Vipava, and celebrates all deserving men. The poetry collection *Šmarnice* (*Glasi moje mladosti*) (Lilies of the Valley (The Voices of My Youth)) was printed in 1905 in Postojna and dedicated to Virgin Mary of the immaculate conception, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of this religious truth. The poems in this collection are distinguished by their pure form and the gentle emotions he poured into them. The collection ends with a sonnet wreath, in which the last sonnet forms a dedication "to the Queen of Paradise", composed from the first and last verses of the previous sonnets. Four more of his works were published in an independent book form: *Slovenski šaljivec* (The Slovenian Jokester) in 1900, *Spisovnik ljubavnih in ženitovanjskih pisem* (A Collection of Love and Marriage Letters) in 1901, *Voščilna knjižica* (A Booklet of Congratulations and Well Wishes) in 1904, and *Kupleti in pesmi* (Couplets and Poems) in 1913. Even in 1946, his creations were so highly valued that 11 of his couplets were published in Gorica (poems in several stanzas with a refrain, usually of humorous or satirical content). One of his best known creations among the people of that time was the poem called *Kvaternary sobota* (Quaternary Saturday), which shockingly describes the tragic death of five men from the nearby villages of Lozica, Žvanuti and Otošče in 1843, who froze to death in a snowstorm on Nanos because they failed to heed the ancient belief that one is not allowed to go to work in the forest on quaternary days.

Some of his songs were set to music by famous Slovenian composers, especially from the region of Primorska.

He also engaged in theatrical activity, verse-writing the biblical play *Izgubljeni sin* (The Prodigal Son) in 1865 and *Egiptovski Jožef* (Joseph from Egypt) in 1871, as well as the play *Sv. Uršula* (St Ursula) in 1873.

His importance in Vipava is also evidenced by the fact that the painter Janez Wolf depicted him on a fresco in the presbytery of the Vipava parish church – in a scene depicting the reception of St Stephen among the deacons.



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Rajko Koritnik

33

AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

The Vipava Valley is known for the diverse musical talents of its inhabitants. Numerous choirs and other music groups have highlighted several distinct musical talents and have managed to establish themselves not only in their home environment, but also in the broader Slovenian area and abroad. One of them was Rajko Koritnik, the first among them to become a crowd favourite in the Ljubljana Opera. He was born on 24 August 1930 in Lozice and died on 18 August 2007.

His artistic path is rather unusual. He first started working in the Lipa logging company in Ajdovščina. In 1950, he moved to Ljubljana and joined the People's Militia Band. He and his wife got an apartment in Kamnik. Since he often sang in the company of friends, professor Ado Darjan, who lived in the same house, started paying attention to his talent. He invited him to join the Kamnik music school, where he tested his pitch and his voice and was absolutely thrilled with what he heard. He signed him up for the talent radio show Pokaži, kaj znaš? (Show Us What You Can Do?) that was broadcasting from Kamnik. He dazzled the crowd by singing his favorite Italian song Mamma, son tanto felice. And this is how professor Darjan discovered an exceptional tenor voice.

Rajko Koritnik turned a new leaf in life. During that same year, he successfully passed his tests at the Secondary School of Music in Ljubljana and was admitted to the solo singing department, where he continued his education until 1960. He continued to study solo singing at the Academy of Music, but was soon enticed by the Opera of the Slovenian National Theatre in Ljubljana. He performed a test at the Ljubljana Opera, with director Demetri Žebret and conductor Rado Simoniti. He accepted their proposal and began studying for the role of Cavaradossija in the performance of *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini, which he successfully performed in November 1960. "When I got on stage and sang, the fear suddenly disappeared, and I was just singing. In those moments, there was nothing else in the world left but my singing," he recalled towards the end of his life. This performance marked a sudden, explosive success for him, as he often had to sing individual parts in arias several times. The opera had never seen such a breakthrough in the audience before then. From there on, his musical career only went up. Suddenly, the doors to the opera house opened wide for him. He basically took over the majority share of the roles in the opera repertoire. He was most at ease with important roles in the operatic creations of Italian and French composers, created at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and depicting realistic, modern life, imbued with passion and sensual intoxication. His solo roles were best explored in many well-known operas: *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini, *Don Pasquale* by Gaetano Donizetti, *Fausto* by Charles Gounod, *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni, *The Bartered Bride* by Bedřich Smetana, *Traviata* and *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi, *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini, *Lepa Vida* (The Beautiful Vida) and *Matija Gubec* by Risto Savin and others. He has performed up to ninety times a season, which is certainly an astonishing number. In his career, he accumulated 72 roles and was considered a singer who never sang supporting roles. With the Ljubljana Opera, he toured many cities of the then-Yugoslavia, as well as in Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union and elsewhere. He remained at the Ljubljana Opera until 1988. In addition, he also sang at numerous concerts and recordings for radio shows. He also performed after his retirement, having managed to maintain the same tenor voice. His voice was soft, with a large scope and a natural ability for a musical phrase.

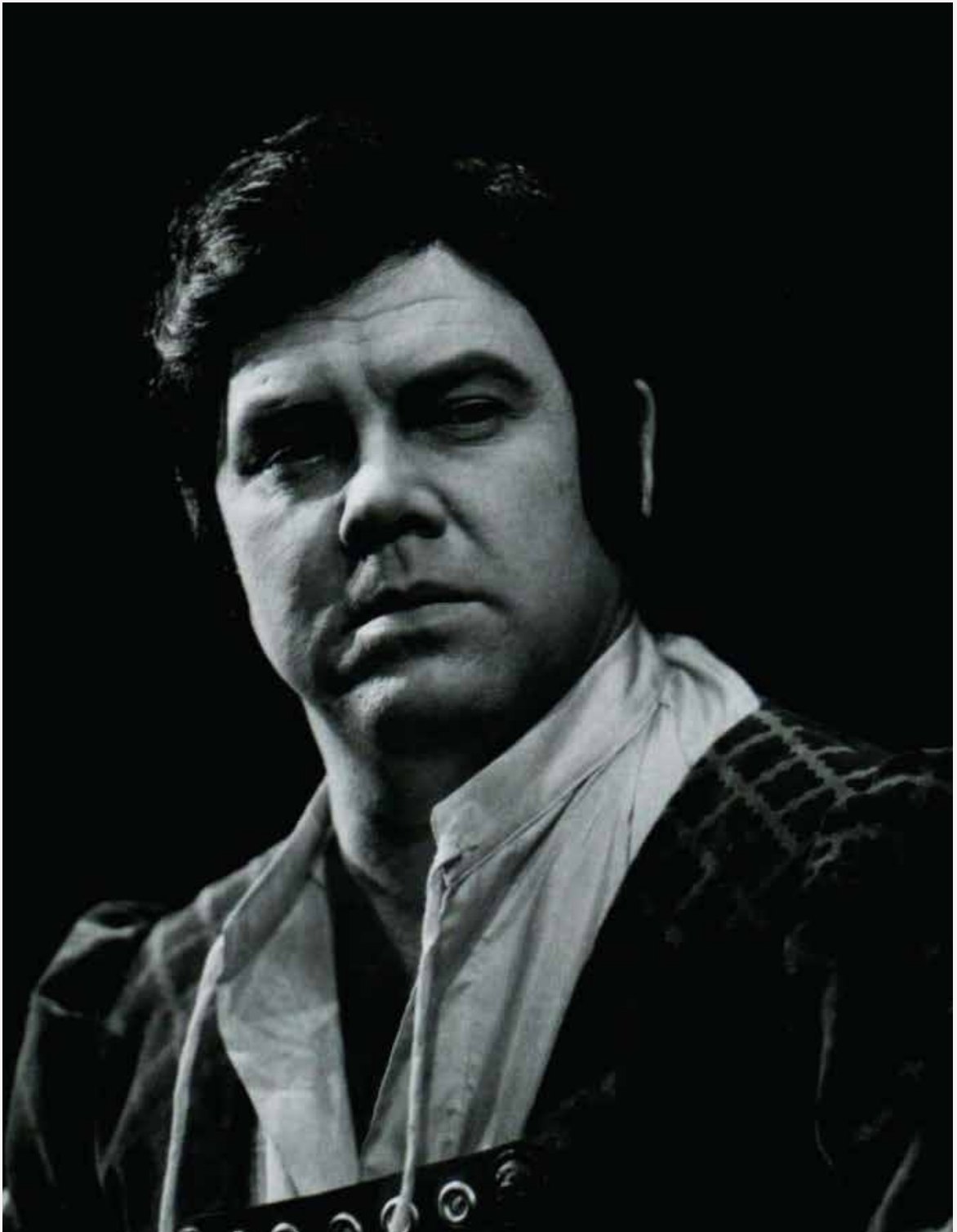
Rajko Koritnik has special merits in the field of education, since he also started developing the singing talent of other adults. In 1983, at the initiative of the Ajdovščina Music School, he started teaching solo singing to many musically talented people from nearby town who had beautiful voices and were confident and eager to take up a new challenge in life. If they did not get these new learning opportunities, their talents would remain undiscovered forever. Their excellent teacher was also a wonderful friend and confidant, who made it possible for

them to enjoy many successful performances and establish a future career in singing.

Such a successful artistic performer and teacher of hidden talents was only able to exercise all of his activities because he was driven by artistic enthusiasm and the willingness to pass on his knowledge. He also expressed some meaningful thoughts that reflect this personal trait: *»For me, the biggest reward is if students understand what I want; that is, not only do I know what I want, but I can also manage to pass this on to others. /.../School knowledge is not enough; it does not contain everything that pertains to singing and that a singer must know how to overcome. On stage, everything is different than in school. My students like me. Their successes make me go on, but I am always also critical of them, and my demands increase as they progress. I enjoy seeing them succeed.«*

Rajko Koritnik
(Lozice, 1930 – Vipava, 2007) – opera singer
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Stanko Premrl

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AUTHOR / JURIJ ROSA

Priest and musician Stanko Premrl is a well-known, respected name in musical circles. As a musician and a person who performed several important jobs in this field, he contributed greatly to Slovenian music but is unfortunately still insufficiently known as the composer of our national anthem, and is known even less as an occasional poet.

He was born in Št. Vid (Šembid), a village now known as Podnanos, on 28 September 1880, and died in Ljubljana on 14 March 1965. He left home early to go to school in Ljubljana. He wanted to become a priest and was ordained in 1903. He worked as a chaplain in Vrhnika. He studied music in Vienna. He was an educator at the Alojzijeвиšče Institute in Ljubljana, a councillor of the Cecilia Society (for ecclesiastical music), a professor and principal at the Organ School in Ljubljana, an organist and head of the Cathedral Choir in Ljubljana, an editor of the professional newsletter "Cerkveni glasbenik", a member of the Diocesan Music Council, a lecturer in ecclesiastical music at the Ljubljana Theological Seminary and the Faculty of Theology, and a professor at the Conservatory and Academy of Music in Ljubljana. He performed some of these professions for several years and even several decades. At the same time, he was also a regular minister in the Ljubljana Cathedral Church.

His extensive work, of which we can barely scratch the surface even now, made him the central figure in Slovenian church music of the 20th century, and by setting the national hymn "Zdravljica" to music, he contributed to state-building efforts at the national level. He rose high among the individuals of the Slovenian spiritual world, establishing himself, the Premrl family and, last but not least, the name of his birthplace.

His musical expressions are clear and pure, simple, yet sublime. He was constantly striving to make Slovenian music flourish. Stylistically speaking, he was considered a modernist and a reformer, bringing new, seemingly distinctly modern approaches to the music of that time. His unsurpassed organ virtuosity put him on the cutting edge of creation with this queen of musical instruments. He has exceptional merit for having educated the church music generation, bringing a new spirit to Slovenian church music which then extended from churches to the entire Slovenia. He made all of the Slovenian music, not only ecclesiastical songs, so influential that people rightly referred to the phenomenon as "Premrl's school". "One basic feature of Premrl's compositions is the warmth and light of the Vipava sun, the fire and power of the Vipava wine, and the soft melodiousness of Slovenian national songs, all of which is especially true for his church songs, imbued with Premrl's deep and personal faith," wrote one of the earlier evaluators of his creations. His compositional inspirations were expressed in as many as 2,000 compositions of various genres, which is a rather unbelievable creative opus, given how busy he was with his various other jobs.

His extraordinary conscientiousness in the practice of the priestly profession and his dedication to work in all music services were only two of his outstanding qualities; his national pride testified to his devotion of being Slovenian, and his compositions are a faithful reflection of the Slovenian land, home, and nation.

Stanko Premrl composed the melody of Zdravljica, written by Prešeren, when he was relatively young, in 1905. And it was this melody that later became the Slovenian national anthem more than eight decades after that.

The final lyrics of the anthem were determined even before the music was selected.

The musical effect of a national anthem is always of great importance. Musical language is charged with artistic, emotional and other meaning. Slovenia represents itself both at home and abroad with Premrl's music in its national anthem. While Prešeren's words without Premrl's music are not the national anthem, the national anthem is Premrl's music itself! Although every single Slovenian is said to know the national anthem, there are too many who still do not know its composer, despite the fact that Zdravljica often raises the spirits of Slovenians.

In recent years, Podnanos became known as the "birthplace of the Slovenian anthem". For the sake of accuracy, it is necessary to highlight the key facts. While Premrl first recorded the composition in Lozice, he finished it in Vienna (1905) as far as composing goes. The song was first published in the music magazine "Novi akordi" in Ljubljana (1906), and it was first performed in 1917 in the nation's capital, where decisions regarding the anthem were also made (1989–1991, 1994). In any case, it is considered that Podnanos and Lozice are most closely related to the story of the Slovenian national anthem, especially Podnanos, because of the encouragement of Matija Vertovec, folk educator and priest who worked in Podnanos and who, in 1843, called for the "first singer of love" to write a "praise to the vine", to which France Prešeren responded with his poem *Zdravljica* in 1844. The creation of the lyrics and melody of the anthem in connection with both of these locations is an irrefutable fact that both of these villages constantly try to accentuate and consolidate while raising awareness about it.

Even though Stanko Premrl was also a poet, this side of his creative spirit did not reach the level of his musical creation. His verses, a collection of the majority of his poetic reflections, are called *Pesmi in utrinki* (Poems and Impressions). This collection mainly includes poems about various experiences, intended to encourage and keep the reader in high spirits. His poems are imbued with a distinct feeling of life optimism, and deal with four themes in particular: religion, homeland, nation and music.

Premrl's life path and his creativity have already been thoroughly elaborated and published in many review articles, in seminar and diploma theses, and especially in the extensive collection called *Premrlov zbornik* (Premrl's Anthology), which was published in 1996 in Ljubljana.

In Podnanos, two memorials remind us of this deserving gentleman: a commemorative plaque on the façade of his birth house, Podnanos 60, and a larger memorial with a portrait statue on the village square. The poet Fran Žgur from Podraga wrote the following words about Premrl, which are a particularly fitting way for us to conclude this chapter: "But as soon as you heard God's voices, you poured them into our hearts; your poems became a song reflecting the beauty of God, and cried, shivered, and embraced us with the power of love."

40



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SOVODNJE ON THE SOČA

41

Slovenian towns in the Primorska region take pride in numerous individuals who, in the first half of the 20th century, with their upright stance and love for their native language, steadfastly resisted the denationalizing policies of the Fascist regime. This is also true for the municipality of Sovodnje ob Soči. Peter Butkovič Domen and Franjo Rojec belonged to two different generations, yet each in his own field sowed and brought to fruition a rich spiritual harvest: the former as a great patriot with his “homely” poetry, the latter as an enlightened shepherd of souls, who through his rich intellectual work carried the name of his native village far into the Slavic world.

Franjo Rojec

42

AUTHOR / EMIL DEVETAK

Franc “Franjo” Rojec, a senior customs officer and poet, was born on 10 September 1914 in Peci. After the outbreak of the war between Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, his family was forced to seek refuge in Mozirje, in northeastern Slovenia, where Franjo spent his early childhood. He returned home at the age of five. He attended primary school in Savogna d’Isonzo and preparatory school at the Alojzijevišče institute in Gorizia, where Jožko Bratuž was his prefect and Pavla Makuc his teacher. He pursued his studies under difficult circumstances. He later enrolled at the commercial school in Gorizia, but he completed his training as an accountant in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he emigrated in 1936. There he found employment as a government official.

Before long, he was drafted as an Italian soldier and took part in Italy’s military campaigns in Africa (Somalia). In 1942 he was captured by the British and imprisoned in Nairobi. He did not return home until 1947, after eleven years in Africa. Thanks to his professional qualifications, he obtained a position in the accounting office of the Gorizia Finance Inspectorate. After passing the state examinations in Rome, he served as a customs inspector until 1962, when he was transferred to Fortezza near Bressanone. In 1965 he moved to Trieste, where he held the post of senior official in the Regional Customs Office until his retirement in

1973. He died in Gorizia on 6 September 1994 and was buried in Savogna d'Isonzo.

Rojec was an educated, engaged man, deeply attached to his Slovenian identity. Alongside his professional career, he was active in civic and cultural life. From 1956 he was a member, and from 1965 chairman, of the supervisory board of the Rural and Craftsmen's Savings Bank of Savogna, which promoted the town's economic and cultural development (including the construction of the Cultural Center, support for associations, and more). For his long-standing commitment to the bank, he received a gold medal in 1972. In 1970/71 he was appointed state commissioner on the board of the Ivan Cankar State Vocational Institute in Gorizia. In 1991 he oversaw the reprint of *Naši kraji v preteklosti* ("Our Regions in the Past", Goriška Matica, 1926), a booklet of historical tales by an anonymous author.

He had a deep passion for local history. After retiring, he devoted himself to writing poetry and collecting folk traditions and customs, particularly the dialect expressions of his native Savogna. Over two decades he composed hundreds of poems on a wide variety of topics. Memories of the First World War and his years in Africa often surfaced in his work, leaving a lasting mark. Many verses reflect feelings of nostalgia, inner turmoil, disappointment, the struggles of life, cruel fate, even despair – thoughts projected onto an unknown future, haunted by a sense of death.

Rojec also dedicated numerous poems to local history and questions of identity tied to his homeland. He loved to celebrate the landscapes of the Gorizia region (Peč, Gabrje...), the Isonzo and Vipava rivers, and nature itself (cypresses, flowers, and more). Several of his poems were set to music by Ignacij Ota, Stanko Jericijo, and Marinka Lasič for the Sovodnje Nonet and the women's choir Sovodenjska dekleta (for example: *Sončen dan* ["Sunny Day"], *Sem in tja* ["Here and There"], *Cvetlica dehteča* ["Fragrant Flower"], *Vrbe* ["Willows"], *Zakaj vas tako moti?* ["Why Does It Trouble You So?"]).

In 1996, the Sovodnje Cultural Circle and the Union of Slovenian Cultural Associations (ZSKD) published the poetry collection *Mladim srcem* ("To Young Hearts"), which contains sixty of Rojec's most representative songs.

*Franjo Rojec
(Peč, 1914 – Gorica, 1994) - poet
SOURCE / family archive*



44

Peter Butkovič Domen

45

AUTHOR / SILVESTER ČUK

Peter Butkovič – puzzle-maker, writer, translator, publisher, illustrator, and priest – was born on 22 February 1888 in Savogna d’Isonzo, the son of Andrej Butkovič and Karolina Belinger. He attended elementary school and later grammar school in Gorizia, where he also lived for a time. Among his classmates were Joža Lovrenčič and Andrej Budal. He graduated in 1910, shortly after the death of his father, a laborer.

Between 1910 and 1913 he studied theology in Gorizia. His first appointment as chaplain was in Camigna in the Vipava Valley (1914–1916), followed by postings in Lokvica and Komen (1916–1922). In 1922 he moved to Sgonico on the Karst plateau near Trieste. In 1931 he returned to his native Savogna d’Isonzo as parish priest, where he remained until his death and where he was eventually laid to rest.

As a secondary school student, Butkovič was already active in literary life: organizing, writing, editing, and promoting underground student journals that were banned and never preserved. His first piece appeared in the newspaper Gorica in 1905. In his final school year, he founded a literary circle for female teacher trainees, and in 1910, while at seminary, he launched the student paper Alfa. Around the same time, he served as secretary of the theological academy of St. Charles. Later, in 1924, he

joined the extended committee of the Goriška Mohorjeva Society, and from 1927 to 1929 he edited the children's religious magazine *Jaselce* ("The Crib").

He published about forty poems with religious, wartime, and pastoral themes, but his main contribution was in prose – around thirty short stories. Between 1908 and 1913 his stories appeared in Catholic student journals in Ljubljana (*Mentor*, *Zora*), in *Dom in svet* ("Home and World"), and in the Gorizia paper *Novi čas* ("New Times"). After World War I, he re-emerged as a writer, especially between 1924 and 1926, contributing to Catholic educational journals such as *Goriška straža*, *Mladika*, *Rast*, and *Naš čolnič*.

He often published under the pen names *Domen*, *Domen Otilijev*, and *Grušenjka*. His stories were strongly shaped by two deeply personal experiences: his intense attachment to his mother and his decision to enter the priesthood. The maternal figure in his fiction often appears as authoritarian, indifferent, or tied to the theme of death – stories where the child dies at his mother's grave, or where the mother herself dies on the return from her son's funeral. His protagonists were almost always priests. Stories about broken families and maternal figures sometimes carried autobiographical undertones, with the image of the mother often linked symbolically to the Virgin Mary.

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Two longer tales addressed historical themes: the biblical *Spokornik* ("The Penitent", *Dom in svet*, 1911), questioning whether killing in self-defense could ever be justified; and *Izza reformacije* ("Beyond the Reformation", *Mentor*, 1909/10), in which a seminarian accompanies Protestant reformer *Primož Trubar* but ultimately turns away from Protestantism out of loyalty to his devout parents and disillusionment with his new peers.

Questions of faith permeate nearly all his writing, often posed as the inner doubts of a priest wondering whether his faith is strong enough to resist worldly temptations, or as the conclusion that love of God does not exclude human love – especially the bond with one's mother. In *Njegova povest* ("His Story", *Zora*, 1909/10), he tackled the tension between maternal love, which directs the son toward priesthood, and erotic desire.

His rural tales often drew on the Karst landscape. *Ob akacijah* ("Under the Acacias", *Mir*, 1909) tells the idyllic story of a poor boy and the daughter of a landowner – his only story with a happy ending – set against a conflict between a liberal mayor and a parish priest, which resolves in the mayor's repentance after his son's downfall. In *O treh kmetijah* ("The Three Farms", *Novi čas*, 1913), the wealthy mayor and innkeeper are cast as villains, while the honest poor villagers, guided by the priest, embody virtue.

He also explored the theme of literature itself. Majev spomin (“Memory of May”, Mentor, 1910/11) offered a programme for Catholic literature rooted in the Bible, where May symbolizes not only spring but also the Virgin Mary. Vstvarjanje (“Creation”, Alba, 1911/12) humorously highlighted the tension between an author’s intent and an editor’s policy.

Stylistically, his stories combined modernist ambition, fragmentary structure, and emotional tone, though often with a clear moral agenda: the hero who chooses “home” over the wider world, or the atheist whose life ends tragically contrasted with the believer’s happy fate. His prose at times recalled Lea Fatur or Ksaver Meško. Many stories were published as seasonal pieces, often appearing in Easter or Christmas supplements.

Beyond fiction, Butkovič wrote historical-literary essays on Simon Gregorčič (Mentor, Dom in svet) and published parts of Janez Bleiweis’ correspondence (Čas, 1914). His Art Nouveau-style illustrations and vignettes appeared in journals (Naš čolnič) and almanacs (Goriška pratika), earning him a place among book illustrators and decorators of his time.

Butkovič translated from English, German, and Italian, as well as Czech, French, Finnish, Greek, Dutch, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. In print, his most notable translation was an adaptation of the anonymous English novel Ljubezen in sovraštvo (“Love and Hatred”, Gorica, 1931). During World War II, the series Slovenčeva knjižnica published his translations of Hrast (“The Oak”) by Maria Rodziewiczówna (Ljubljana, 1943; co-authored with Tine Debeljak) and the novellas Andrea Delfin and The Glassblower of Murano by Paul Heyse (Ljubljana, 1944). Earlier, his serialized translations included works by Selma Lagerlöf, Sigrid Undset, Władysław Reymont, Leo Tolstoy, and Henry Bordeaux.

Butkovič is remembered above all as the founding father of Slovenian puzzle-making. In 1922 he published the first rebuses (podobnice) and cryptograms (skrivalice), and in 1924 he introduced the crossword (križanica) to Slovenian readers in Mladika, combining wordplay with illustrations. He ran puzzle columns – sometimes notoriously difficult – in Mladika, Mladost, Naš čolnič, and Jaselce, and filled calendars and almanacs with riddles.

In 1931, he compiled Trdi orehi (“Hard Nuts”), published by the Mohorjeva Society, which gathered 386 traditional riddles: witty questions, logical puzzles, word games, logogriphs, charades, and palindromes. He also wrote theoretical reflections on puzzle-making (O zastavljanju ugank, Mladika, 1925) and helped standardize Slovenian puzzle terminology, working with linguist Anton Breznik to coin terms which are still in use today.

In 1943, Butkovič organized a five-grade popular school in Savogna d’Isonzo. Today the local primary school bears his name, marked by a marble bust by sculptor Negovan Nemec, and one of the town’s streets is also dedicated to him. In Trebnje, a puzzle enthusiasts’

society was named after him, and his pen name “Domen” inspired puzzle journals (Ugankarski domenek, Ugankarjev domenek) and the anthology Domenek. The site of his birth house in Savogna d’Isonzo now hosts the municipal library, which maintains a commemorative corner dedicated to his life and work.

Peter Butkovič Domen
(Sovodnje on the Soča, 1888 – Sovodnje on the Soča, 1953)
– poet, writer, puzzle creator
SOURCE / Jožko Kragelj

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THE VENETO REGION

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Eastern Veneto is marked by a rich and diverse landscape, closely intertwined with water. It is bordered by two large lagoons, Venice and Caorle, which are crossed by numerous rivers. Much of this area lies on reclaimed land and faces the Adriatic Sea. These seven artists were selected for their deep connection to eastern Veneto and their ability to capture its essence through various artistic forms. All drew strong and unique inspiration from this landscape and its waters. In their own ways, these artists have helped shape the cultural identity of the region and offered distinctive and lasting perspectives on its artistic, historical, and landscape heritage.

Baldassarre Galuppi

51

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Born in Burano near Venice, Baldassare Galuppi was one of Italy's most original composers in the comic genre. He was initially taught by his father, a barber and violinist. At the age of sixteen, he moved to Venice, earning his living as an organist.

After initial failure in Chioggia, the renowned Benedetto Marcello recognised his talent and arranged for him to study with Antonio Lotti, whose favourite pupil he immediately became. In 1726, he moved to Florence, where he was hired as a harpsichordist at the Teatro della Pergola. Returning to Venice, he worked as a harpsichordist in Venetian theatres, composing occasionally.

He made his successful debut in 1729 with *Dorinda*, based on a libretto by Marcello, which marked the beginning of a long career in which he became famous for his operas and harpsichord music. He also worked with Carlo Goldoni on over twenty librettos, contributing to the development of opera buffa and dramma giocoso, influencing composers such as Mozart and Rossini. The collaboration between the two produced *Il filosofo di campagna*, considered Galuppi's masterpiece.

Despite his success in Venice, Galuppi moved to London in 1741. When he returned to Venice in 1743, Neapolitan opera buffa was beginning to gain popularity. This made a deep impression on him, prompting him to try his hand at the comic genre. Meanwhile, in Venice, he was appointed chapel master at St Mark's Basilica, a position he held until 1762, when he was summoned to Russia by Empress Catherine II, where he personally conducted the court orchestra.

Galuppi returned to Venice in 1768, continuing to compose for both the theatre and the church until his death in 1785. He was known for the vitality and lightness of his compositions, remaining an important figure in Italian music for his innovations in melodrama. His collaboration with Goldoni took opera buffa to new heights with ensemble finales, which had a considerable influence on European music. His elegant and melodic style reflected his lively spirit, with rhythmic and witty melodies that intertwined perfectly with Goldoni's texts.

Despite the fame he achieved, however, the composer was almost forgotten in the centuries that followed.

Baldassare Galuppi
(Burano, 1706 – The Veneto Region, 1785) - Venetian composer
SOURCE / Sotheby's, The Venetian School, 1750s (1751)

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Ernest Hemingway

54

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Fossalta di Piave, Villa Ivancich in San Michele al Tagliamento, the Caorle lagoon: during his intense and adventurous life, Ernest Hemingway visited these places on several occasions, leaving the inhabitants with a sense of gratitude for the trail of fame he left behind him. It is not uncommon to find black and white photographs in old trattorias or in the houses on the lagoon, displayed like trophies, in which the writer, already mature and with a white beard, is portrayed in a boat or with a hunting rifle in his arms. His life itself was a long adventure novel, but we will only retrace his passage through the lands of Eastern Venice.

He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899, into a wealthy family. At Oak Park High School, he stood out for his inclination towards literature and his talent for writing emerged. His father, on the other hand, passed on his passion for hunting, fishing and the outdoors.

The United States' entry into the First World War prompted him to volunteer to fight in Europe. In 1918, he enlisted as a Red Cross ambulance driver. That summer, he was on the Italian front. On 8 July, in Fossalta di Piave, he was wounded by shrapnel from a mortar shell. He spent his convalescence between Milan and the Veneto region, pursuing his first great love, Red Cross nurse Agnes von Kurowsky.

When the army was demobilised in January 1919, Hemingway returned to Oak Park, where he was welcomed as a hero. Success and fame soon followed. In 1922, Hemingway returned to Italy, including the places where he had experienced the war.

The novel inspired by his experiences at the front is “A Farewell to Arms”, an intense story of love and war largely inspired by his personal experiences, published in 1929. As the novel describes the defeat of the Italian army at Caporetto in 1917 and the desertion of the protagonist, the book was banned in Italy by the fascist dictatorship until 1945 because its content was considered detrimental to the honour of the armed forces.

Hemingway returned frequently to Italy after the Second World War, particularly between 1948 and 1954. During his famous visits to Harry's Bar in Venice, he met several Venetian nobles, including Baron Franchetti, whose family owned a large estate in the Caorle valleys. Hemingway often stayed at the Franchetti family home in San Gaetano, where he devoted himself to duck hunting. Here, Hemingway met the young noblewoman Adriana Ivancich, with whom he fell in love. Villa Ivancich, Adriana's family home in San Michele al Tagliamento, is still used as a venue for cultural events. It was during this period that he wrote the novel “Across the River and Into the Trees”, set in the Venetian locations familiar to the author, whose protagonist is a fifty-year-old military officer in love with a young Venetian woman, searching for youth between his love for the young woman and his memories. The novel, published in 1950, was not a great success, but it nevertheless marked Hemingway's return to the novel after ten years.

Due to its explicit references to places and people, Hemingway banned the novel from publication in Italy for two years. This did not prevent Hemingway's relationship with the young Italian woman from causing a certain scandal in Italy. The novel was not published in Italy until 1965.

Ernest Hemingway
(Oak Park, Illinois, 1899 - Ketchum, Idaho, 1961) - author and journalist
SOURCE / public domain

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Ippolito Nievo

57

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

The borderlands between Veneto and Friuli, and in particular the areas of Teglio Veneto, Fossalta di Portogruaro and Cordovado, were immortalised in one of the greatest modern Italian novels: 'Confessions of an Italian' by Ippolito Nievo, a novel that symbolises the Italian Risorgimento.

Nievo was born in Padua in 1831 into a fairly wealthy family. His father Antonio was a magistrate and his mother Adele was the daughter of a Friulian countess and a Venetian patrician, owners of the fiefdom of Monte Albano, where the castle of Colloredo stands, halfway between Tricesimo and San Daniele, places frequented by Ippolito during his childhood and which would inspire the description of the castle of Fratta in his novel 'Confessions of an Italian'. the description of the castle of Fratta, now a small hamlet in the municipality of Fossalta di Portogruaro.

He spent his high school years in Verona and his university years in Mantua, Cremona, Pavia and Padua, with frequent trips to his mother's homeland, Colloredo, and to his family, particularly in Teglio Veneto, where an uncle lived. A role model for the young Ippolito was his grandfather Carlo, a cultured man and lover of literature. It was here, between 1857 and 1858, that Ippolito Nievo devoted himself actively to writing his literary masterpiece. However, Nievo did not publish it,

both because he could not find a publisher and because he was too involved in Garibaldi's adventures.

On 5 May 1860, he joined Garibaldi's volunteers and landed in Marsala. He distinguished himself in the battle of Calatafimi and was appointed colonel. With the conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the young officer was given the task of bringing important administrative documents from Sicily back to Naples on board the steamship "Ercole", which sank during the night between 4 and 5 March 1861. All those on board perished and neither wreckage nor bodies were ever recovered from the sea.

The novel was published in 1867, after the author's death, under the title: 'Le confessioni di un ottuagenario' (Confessions of an Octogenarian). It is the imaginary autobiography of Carlo Altoviti, in which the protagonist, now in his eighties, recounts the events of his life from 1775 to 1858. It is the story of a patriot who, in his long life, sees the birth of Italy, in a novel that intertwines personal events and a romantic love story with the historical events of the Risorgimento.

The novel is set in some of the most evocative places in the border area between Veneto and Friuli: the beautiful countryside rich in water near Portogruaro, close to the sea and mountains, probably seemed to the writer the ideal place to set his story. And so it is that the Town Hall and Villa Comunale in Portogruaro, the castle of Fratta, the Stalis Mill and the Venchieredo fountain in Cordovado are immortalised in the history of Italian literature.

Ippolito Nievo
(Padova, 1831 - Tyrrhenian Sea, 1861) - author and patriot
SOURCE / Fondazione Ippolito e Stanislao Nievo



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Luigi Russolo

60

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Luigi Carlo Filippo Russolo, composer, painter and inventor, was one of Portogruaro's most illustrious citizens. Born in Portogruaro in 1885, he studied to become a violinist but then turned to painting. In 1901, he moved to Milan, where he attended the Brera Academy of Fine Arts.

Here he met the painters Umberto Boccioni and Carlo Carrà, who became his great friends. He then met Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, founder of Futurism, and in 1910 Russolo joined the movement, participating in all exhibitions, both in Italy and abroad. However, after painting several Futurist works, Russolo abandoned painting to devote himself entirely to music.

In 1913, Luigi Russolo wrote “The Art of Noises”, a true manifesto of Futurist music, in which he theorised the use of noise to compose music consisting of pure noises instead of harmonic sounds.

Russolo invented the intonarumori, instruments – or rather machines – capable of reproducing various types of sounds and modifying them at will by turning a crank. The “noise concerts” organised by Russolo both in Italy and abroad were not greatly appreciated by the public, who protested vigorously, often throwing objects at the musicians.

The score of his most famous work, “Risveglio di una città” (The Awakening of a City, a composition described by the author as a “spiral of noise”), has been almost entirely lost. Around 1929, Russolo befriended an Italian occultist in Paris, and thanks to this acquaintance, he became interested in occultism, magic and Eastern philosophies.

He devoted himself to these interests until his death in 1947, three years after his friend Marinetti, for whom he had delivered the eulogy.

Musique concrète, electronic music and, in general, all experimental music of the 20th century owe a debt to Luigi Russolo that has not yet been fully recognised.

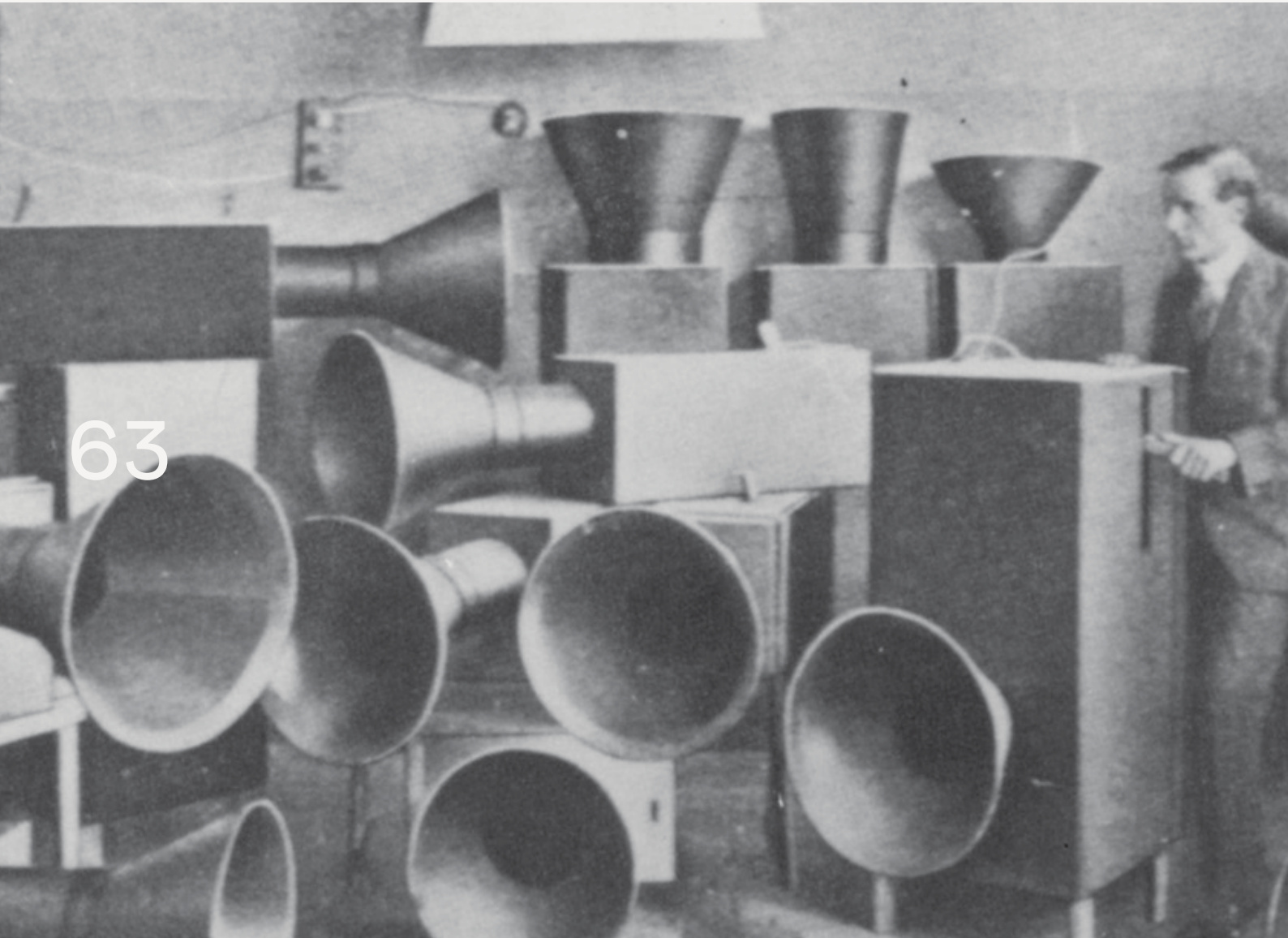
To commemorate this eclectic artist, in 2009 Portogruaro dedicated its new city theatre to Luigi Russolo. In 2018, a permanent gallery was established in the house where he was born, Palazzo Altan Venanzio, called “Casa Russolo”. The gallery contains five of his works, including his self-portrait and almost all the plates from his engravings.

Luigi Russolo
(Portogruaro, 1885 - Laveno Mombello, 1947)
- futurist painter and composer
SOURCE / Mart, 20th Century Archive, Luigi Russolo book collection,
Rus 36. Futurist editions "Poesia" (1916)

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VIR / Russolo, Luigi (1913). Luigi Russolo, Ugo Piatti in Intonarumori



Pier Paolo Pasolini

64

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Pier Paolo Pasolini was one of the most influential and controversial Italian intellectuals of the 20th century. Born on 5 March 1922 in Bologna to a lower middle-class family, his childhood and adolescence were marked by constant moves due to his father's job as an army officer. This instability contributed to making Pasolini a critical observer of the different social realities in Italy.

During his adolescence, Pasolini developed a strong passion for literature and art, which led him to study literature at the University of Bologna. This period was fundamental to his intellectual and political formation, marked by his encounter with Marxist thought and a strong anti-fascist commitment.

After the war, he moved with his mother to Casarsa, in Friuli, a region that profoundly influenced his early literary production. Here he began writing poems in Friulian, publishing a collection entitled "Poesie a Casarsa" in 1942, which brought him to the attention of the Italian literary world. In 1945, he founded the "Academiuta di lenga furlana" to help preserve this language, which he considered pure and archaic.

In 1950, Pasolini moved to Rome to escape the scandal caused by the public disclosure of his homosexuality, where he spent many years in the Roman suburbs, a marginalised and poor world that would inspire much of his work.

In 1955, he published his first novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (Boys of Life), a vivid and realistic portrait of the Roman suburbs, which attracted criticism for its crudeness and bluntness. However, he soon began to devote himself to other genres, such as cinema, theatre and journalism.

His film career took off with the release of his first film as a director, *Accattone* (1961), which painted a raw portrait of life in the Roman suburbs. This film, like many of his subsequent films, reflected his distinctive style, characterised by a fusion of neorealism and symbolism, and an intense interest in social and spiritual issues.

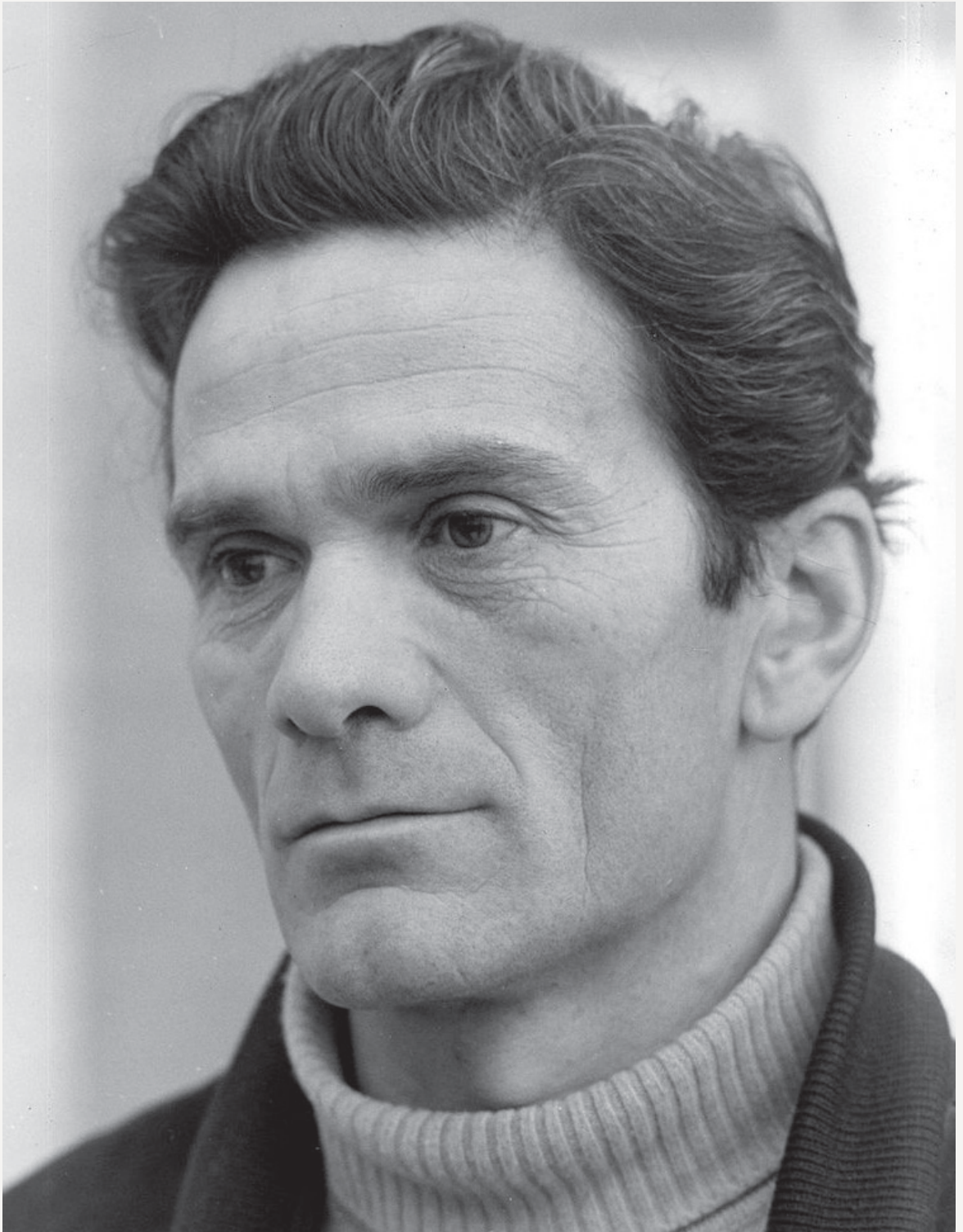
Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Pasolini continued to explore themes of marginality, religion, sexuality and power in both his films and his written works.

Pasolini was an uncomfortable intellectual who did not hesitate to openly criticise Italian society, the media and politics at the time, which made him a controversial and often isolated figure. His essay writing was equally prolific and incisive, tackling a wide range of topics from cultural change in Italy to civil rights and sexuality.

Pier Paolo Pasolini was murdered in mysterious circumstances on 2 November 1975, an event that shocked Italy, given his notoriety as a radical critic of society. Despite his untimely death, his impact on Italian and European culture remained profound and lasting, thanks in part to his many posthumously published writings. Several of Pasolini's poems from his Friulian period, when he frequently visited nearby Eastern Venice, especially Portogruaro and Caorle, were collected by his cousin N. Naldini in the 1993 book *Un paese di temporali e di primule* (A Land of Storms and Primroses), which greatly contributed to the rediscovery of his early work and promoted the places of his youth.

Pier Paolo Pasolini
(Bologna, 1922 - Ostia, 1975) - author, journalist, and director
SOURCE / public domain

66



Romano Pascutto

67

AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Among the personalities born and raised in the eastern Veneto region who deserve to be remembered is Romano Pascutto, poet, partisan and politician. Born in San Stino di Livenza in 1909, Romano Pascutto was the son of a poor family of artisans who, after the retreat from Caporetto in 1917, were forced to move to Florence.

After the First World War, the family moved to Pordenone, where Romano studied at a technical institute. Due to his left-wing and anti-fascist ideas, he was soon identified as a subversive and emigrated with his brother to Libya in 1930, where he remained until 1942, working for a shipping company.

On his return, he joined the Resistance and was arrested and sentenced, but managed to escape from prison. After the war, he worked in Venice for the Tirrenia shipping company, maintaining his political commitment and writing extensively, mainly poems in dialect, but also short stories, novels and plays, all imbued with a deep social and human commitment.

Among his best-known works are the novel *La lodola mattiniera* and the collection of poems in the San Stino dialect *Tempo de brumesteghe*,

winner of the Marta Prize, for which Pascutto is considered one of the most important Italian dialect poets.

“L' acqua, la piera, la tera” was published posthumously, with a preface by the famous poet Andrea Zanzotto, a book that brings together published and unpublished poems. The harsh and hard life of humble people, their many sufferings and their few hopes were the themes most dear to Pascutto.

He was a councillor, alderman and, from 1975 to 1980, mayor of his native town, which named its cinema-theatre after him. Pascutto's complete works are published by the Venetian publisher Marsilio Editori in three volumes: “L' acqua, la Piera, la Tera”. Pascutto died in Treviso in 1982.

Romano Pascutto
(San Stino di Livenza, July 7th, 1909 – Treviso, April 8th, 1982)
- poet and political figure
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Vittorio Marusso

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AUTHOR / GIOVANNI MANISI

Vittorio Marusso was born on 17 June 1867 into a modest family. At school, he immediately demonstrated a natural talent for figurative art. At the age of 16, he moved to Venice and enrolled at the Regio Istituto di Belle Arti, where he was able to study free of charge thanks to his special artistic talent, living on scholarships. The teachers he met during his studies praised his remarkable skills in drawing and oil painting.

However, his artistic education was interrupted by a serious eye defect, which forced him to leave Venice and return to San Donà di Piave.

Those who knew him remember his walks: in front of a sunset, Vittorio Marusso would stop to observe the image that fascinated him so much, as if there were an intimate and intense connection between man and landscape. Then, with a few quick brushstrokes, the artist would capture those moments on canvas and later complete the painting in his studio.

In 1940, due to blindness and poverty, he was admitted to the retirement home in San Donà di Piave, now home to the art academy dedicated to him. In the last years of his life, his large black-rimmed glasses, pierced in the middle to focus the light, which looked like

small binoculars, often made him irritable and grumpy.

On the night of 29 November 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, in the dark, he tried to reach the bathroom and headed towards the stairwell. In the darkness, he fell and hit his head, dying tragically.

Among Vittorio Marusso's countless works, the altarpieces in the churches of Musile di Piave, Passarella di Sotto and the chapel of the Orphanage of San Donà di Piave are particularly noteworthy, as are his oil paintings that immortalised the landscapes of eastern Veneto.

Vittorio Marusso
(San Donà di Piave, 1867–San Donà di Piave, 1943) – painter
SOURCE / Accademia d'Arte Vittorio Marusso



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among rivers
and lagoons: artistic paths
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