

## Šukar

The year 1990 was the first year the group Šukar started to work together, joining then-active members of various tamburitza orchestras of folklore groups from Ljubljana. After many long years of playing traditional melodies and folk music, they devoted themselves to playing primarily gypsy or Romany music. They dedicated the entire collection of their work to this type of music.

The group Šukar is a tamburitza ensemble, so the members perform music on folk plucked string instruments typical of the Panonian region. In its most basic form the group is made up of five members, with the most common combination of instruments being first and second brač, tambour cello, bugaria and double bass. In place of first brač sometimes the bisernica is used, sometimes the violin.

The group appears in larger performances as an extended ensemble, which, in addition to the basic tamburitza quintet configuration, includes two percussionists, a cymbalist, an extra violinist, guitarist and backup vocalists, so that a complete band can be made up of up to 12 members.

The repertoire of the group includes music of Romany people from all over Europe, whose different ways of living in different environments, under different influences of the dominant cultures where they have migrated over the centuries, have created an assorted musical tradition, which Šukar cultivates in its work.

The basis for Šukar's performance and repertoire springs from a collection of written, recorded and songs passed down by oral tradition, which they then remake in their own way. Most of them are dance songs and ballads, arranged for the tambour quintet, and are performed in that way in concert or for recording. Šukar most frequently uses the Pristevacki and Cergarski variations of the Romany language in its Romany songs, mostly because of their wide usage and accessibility, but other dialects are also represented in their songs, such as the language of the Sints, the Hungarian Romanys, the Vlach and Romanian Romany communities and the Russian or Carpathian Romanys.

Shortly after the founding of the group in 1990, after the first independent public appearance in a local club in Ljubljana, the group started to gain a reputation and its listening audience began to expand. The relatively fast breakthrough of the group was also aided by working with the famous Slovenian singer-songwriter Vlado Kreslin. Šukar recorded the song "Namesto koga roža cveti" ("In whose place do the flowers bloom") with him on the album of the same name (ZKP RTVS 1991) and later appeared with him in various concerts and performances. Šukar also appeared with Vlado Kreslin at the "EUROMUSIC 91" festival in the month of August in Nürnberg at the Musik der Nationen show, as representatives of Slovenia.

Although the group still occasionally works with Vlado Kreslin, Šukar pursued its independent path and at the suggestion of their friend Vojko Kokot recorded their first music cassette with the title "Cigani ljubijo pesmi" ("Gypsies Love Songs") in Studio "14" RTV Slovenia in 1992.

The cassette was released by the CORONA label in 1992. The first cassette was received with very good reviews from the public and the media, so a year later, in 1993, in Studio Metro,

Šukar recorded their second cassette entitled "O ravbarjih, cigojnarjih" ("About Pilferers and Gypsies"). Jani Kovačič made a guest appearance on this project with some of his original songs, which the group remade in their own style. The cassette was released by ZKP RTV Slovenia in 1993.

With both projects it is worth mentioning that Sašo Fajon, the band's producer, helped a great deal in its musical beginnings.

During that time Šukar was playing a lot of concerts. It was precisely at this time that they enjoyed a great deal of recognition when their performance at the mega-concert "BOOM 93", dedicated to the rebuilding of the burnt-down Studio Tivoli, was listed by the media among the headliners of the evening. In November of that year Šukar also performed at the "EX PONTO" festival.

The same year Šukar also participated in the recording of Robert Magnifico's song "Pastirče mlado" ("Young Shepherd") on the album "Od srca do srca" ("Heart to Heart"), Helidon, 1993.

The year 1994 was a big breakthrough for the band. In May they released their first CD with the Corona label, entitled "Ciganska duša - Romani dji" ("Gypsy Soul"), which enjoyed tremendous success. It contained their entire Romany collection from both cassettes.

At the end of May in the same year Šukar made one of the biggest Romany pilgrimages in Europe - to the picturesque village in southern France, Stes. Maries de la Mere, where they became regular guests almost every year as performers at the event. There they became involved in new friendships and acquaintances. They met members of the band Gipsy Kings, the famous Manitas de Plata, the photographer Nigel Dickinson and connected indelibly with the Sints of Strasbour. Since then they have returned to Stes Maries on a regular basis and each time they play at various celebrations of their Romany friends.

Šukar has performed for gypsies from the very beginning in Slovenia as well, at different performances dedicated to the Romany culture and way of life.

From August 12th to the 19th, 1994, Šukar took part in the international ethno festival, "Okarina 94", where they appeared with other selected groups from all over Europe. Along with the group Ando drom, Šukar produced the programme of the gypsy evening.

In October 1994 Šukar were guests on the show "Sonntag Konzert" ("Saturday Concert") of the German television ZDF, which is one of their programmes taped in Ljubljana.

The same year the group also worked on the song "Obrni, obrni" ("Turn, turn") on Vlado Kreslin's CD "Nekega jutra ko se zdani" released by Bistrica in 1994.

In those early years Šukar played a lot of concerts around Slovenia and also abroad, appearing in Klagenfurt at the "KONTAKTNA LEČA" ("CONTACT LENS") performance. Among other things the guys planned a series of appearances with guests at the Club Cankarjev Dom, which they pulled off in 1995, where they remade their own versions of songs by well-known rock and pop stars. The guests included Saša Lošič, Roberto Magnifico, and Zoran Predin.

It was these performances that led them to work with Zoran Predin, with whom they played in concert and started to think about a CD together. At the same time they performed their music quite often in schools around Slovenia with the organization Glasbena mladina Slovenije (Music Youth Slovenia).

They spent the end of May 1995 in France again, and decided that they would come to the gathering every year, since they had been so well accepted there and had met a lot of new friends. They found the strength for their new CD there, which they recorded with Aco Razbornik at Studio Tivoli Productions. The producer was Roberto Magnifico, and the album entitled "Amaro Dive" ("Our Day") came out under the Corona label in January 1996.

After the release of the CD "Amaro dive" ("Our Day") the video for the song "Keme merav" was also taped, directed by Mirko Simić, and a year later was nominated for a Zlati petelin (Golden rooster) award in the category for best video. The group was nominated five times for the most prestigious music award in Slovenia - the Zlati petelin (Golden Rooster) - for that CD. Out of the five nominations, Šukar received two Golden Roosters, for best album in the ethno/folk category and for best performers in the ethno/folk category.

In autumn 1996, Šukar recorded the CD "Mentol bombon" ("Menthol Candy") with Zoran Predin, which became a big hit in Slovenia in the Slovenian language. The album was nominated in four categories for a Golden Rooster award, and the performers received two Golden Roosters, for best sound on an album and for best pop singer.

In 1997 Šukar released a new CD. "Čhaie" ("Girl") was their third CD, and had 12 songs on it, including a remake of the legendary Girl (Lennon-McCartney), which they sang in the Romany language. The CD came out under Corona in 1997, and for the title song Čhaie they also made a video, directed by Vinci Vogue Anžlovar.

The same year they began to venture onto foreign stages. They started to make new appearances at different ethno festivals and concert halls, mostly around France, but they also had performances elsewhere, in Austria, Italy, and so on.

Because of the abundance of performances and guest appearances abroad Šukar didn't release their next CD, entitled "Prvo iv - Prvi sneg" ("First Snow") until the year 2000. The release coincided with the celebration of their tenth anniversary together, which they celebrated with a sold-out crowd at the Gallus Hall in Ljubljana's Cankarjev Dom. Besides their Slovenian musical guests at that concert, they were also joined by the French group Zaragraf and the Japanese artist Sojiro, with whom they performed part of the programme. Among the distinguished guests attending the concert were the president of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, and Her majesty the Japanese princess Sayako. Because of the quality and magnitude of the concert and the important visitors, it was this performance that was the next great turning point in the work of the group.

At that time the group put out a songbook, "Šukar gilja", where we can find the words, translation and notes to the majority of their songs recorded on their previous albums. The songbook with its glossary is Šukar's contribution to all lovers of gypsy songs, making it easier to understand the meaning of the Romany tradition.

At the end of 2000 the group Šukar recorded a video for the song "Asel lake" from the album "Prvo iv" ("First Snow") under the direction of Mirko Simić.

At the end of April 2001 the band traveled to Norway, to the town of Trondheim, to the festival of gypsy culture and music, the Romani Baxt Festival. They received special recognition from the organizer of the festival as the best music group of the festival.

In May and June and throughout the summer months, the band performed around Slovenia, leaving for its first trip to the Far East, to Japan, in September. There they participated in a festival in the city of Arai and put on a very successful concert with their host, Japanese musician Sojiro.

Right after their trip to Japan the group left for France, to the city of Nimes, where they also played a successful concert and planted the groundwork for further invitations in France.

In 2001, in cooperation with Radio Slovenia, the group recorded the musical basis for a literary CD, on which Janko Ropret recites gypsy poetry in the Slovenian translation by Ivan Minatti. That CD won the Zlati mikrofon (Golden Microphone) award.

New challenges faced the group Šukar in 2002. In February they were invited to Paris with Zoran Predin, and went to France again in March, to Limoges and Issles, and in May to Lille, making an appearance at the grand performance Le ball de les tzigannes before a crowd of 12,000 alongside the ensembles Loulou Djine and Kostovitz orchestra. The group went on a short tour of France in the summer in the region of Bretagne, where they performed at five festivals in different towns in the region.

On the 3rd and 4th of October the group played two sold-out concerts at Gallus Hall in Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana. This concert was the first time they worked with distinguished guests Oto Pestner and Bajaga. The concert was also recorded by RTV Slovenia as a television concert show in the series of "Musical Pearls". The band recorded their fifth, and this time live, CD at this concert, which they released a year later.

At the beginning of 2003 they appeared as guests at the renowned gypsy theatre Romano pralipe and participated in their theatre performances. During the 2003 season the group has been continuing with concerts, this time around Slovenian theatres. In the month of May they appeared in a big concert at Ljubljana's Križanke as guests of the legendary gypsy singer Šaban Bajramović. After the concert the group went to France to celebrate St. Sara's Day. On June 10th they prepared for the Slovenian premier of the documentary film "Vonj po zemlji - Parfume de la tere" ("Scent of the Earth"), which they produced and designed the musical image of along with the art group Simetrix. The film was directed by Mirko Simić.

Šukar performed at the Amphitheatre Auditorium in Portorož on August 16, 2003, at the Slovenian premiere of the film "Cigani, psi in ljudje" ("Gypsies, dogs and people") by Tihomir Radetić, where they designed the musical programme for the evening together with other famous artists in the area of gypsy music (Luis from Serbia and Teodora from Romania).

During the summer months Šukar made their way around Slovenia promoting the release of their newest CD with a number of performances.

On September 29, 2003 Šukar's newest CD came out - a double CD entitled "EN CONCERT" ("IN CONCERT").