

After Jugo

Sarajevo, the life of a generation

www.afterjugo.com

a multimedia project by Marco Pavan

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Azra

My name is Azra, and I came from Croatia, it is a long story! I lived in Sarajevo since four years now and I am working as a fire dancer. In short, that's it!

I work for an organization called Tanelarija which started with the aim of promoting contemporary dance and after few years of existence developed in some other fields, so now we have a project called Cirkus Art through which we try to bring circus art here, because in Bosnia there is no such thing yet, and we do education and we perform. We have a fire dance group: Tanelarija fire dance. Some people who work in this field professionally, we dedicate our life to it and because we make a living with it I call it professional. We also have courses for adults, we do projects in high schools, we did projects in orphanages and animation for children with lot of organizations in Sarajevo. The group which is performing is formed by about ten of us. We perform in a lot of manifestations in Sarajevo like commercial stuff, but our aim is street art. So we go to festivals, travel, perform and bring workshops here in Bosnia. Last year we organized one in Mostar: we organized the first circus art festival in the country and it was very successful. And our goal for the future is to also make this festival here in Sarajevo and build a street art scene. We want to introduce people to that because is quite new here although all around us, in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, there are such festivals. We are basically the only one that are doing that, which is good and bad at the same time. It is good because it brings lot of opportunities and we have lot of work and we can share the knowledge with other people. But it is also bad because we really have to bring everything we need, also the education, and we have to organize it and do a bit of this organizational work, that I don't like.

How people react to this, for them, new art?

It depends, it is a bit strange here. I had some strange experiences on the streets, hearing people saying that it is easy to be full of ourselves and the we don't have to expect them to give us money. I think they equal it with begging on the streets because people are not familiar with it. For example we were at one of the biggest festival in Austria, in Linz, and there is such a different approach there, people really appreciate what we do. You perform on the street for people and people appreciate it. But here last summer we had two guest clowns and we performed on the street and there were diverse feelings. Some people were like: "who are you? you are just being full of yourselves". And some other people were supporting us: we had some problems with the police, they didn't allow us to perform. While some people looked at us strange: "what are you doing? some foreigners came with some new idiotism here", when the problem with police came up, there were some people giving us advices: "go hundred meters below, there is a different part of town and different police guys, they won't bother". These are now only few people, and I know there are many but we didn't reach them yet. Actually this is my challenge to stay here, because it would be easy to go where there is a street art scene but there would be also a bigger competition. That's why

it is also good and bad here. Outside Bosnia you have people from which you can learn something but there is also competition.

How long have you been a fire dancer for?

I have been a fire dancer for six years, because I started back home in Croatia, and when I came here I was very lucky to immediately meet the people who work in this field of performing arts. Because this is not the only thing I do, I was also working in theatre and to contemporary dance. So I was lucky to meet those people. When I moved here I was also studying and I somehow started professionally few months ago, although I have 6 years experience, but it was always more like a hobby.

Why did you choose to come to Sarajevo?

It is a long story and quite personal. I am originally from Serbia, from Sandzak, and since my family are Muslim and I grow up in Croatia and at one point I missed this part of Balkan I came here, for personal reason to explore this land and find this world. And I stayed because I feel good here. But what made me come here, I have no idea. I can say it is the music, because I love sevdah music, I can say the humour of the people, the openness of the people, and Sarajevo is a very beautiful town although is very hard sometimes. What is hard? Exactly what I said before, sometimes you have to fight for something, if we want a street art scene we have to built it. Personally I have everything what I need here, so I am trying to make a balance with the profession. And there is not a lot of support in so many senses, we don't have our rehearsal space, it is hard to ask for some financial support because of the political situation. The organization Tanelarija was founded by a girl who is half Belgian - half American, but born in Italy, she came here to finish her studies, too, and she had just the simple idea to have a dance class because there were none. And later on her boyfriend came, he is Austrian. We are a mixed group: he is from Austria, she is Belgian-American, I am from Croatia, two girls are from Mostar and a local girl. We are trying to have local and younger people to pass on the knowledge, so basically most of them are Bosnians now, except me!

Did you noticed any change in Sarajevo during the years that you lived here?

A lot of Sarajevo changed from outside not from inside, I think is a very passive town, very slow moving, it is very concentrated on people, on human sharing. It is very easy to get to know a Bosnian, to have a rakja, but on a professional level it is very hard. It is changed, a lot of new building were built, but I didn't notice a lot of change.

People who surround me are very open minded, so I really never had the chance to see any differences or discrimination, luckily, but I noticed when I first came it was very confusing for people because I have a Croatian accent and a Muslim name. So when I said "I am from Croatia" they would go "No, you are not, where are you original?" and I would say from Serbia and they are like "No, you are not" and when I say Sandzak people understand. Maybe I felt this because there are a lot of jokes about Sandzak, so they had fun with that, but it is joking. I really didn't meet people from who I can see discrimination or just the differences of religion. Maybe just because I don't care about it. And I avoid these people.

Will you stay in Sarajevo in the future?

I don't know! It is a big question for me, I would like to stay for so many reasons, because there are a lot of activities and I built my life somehow and I have people who I love. But I have a need to search for knowledge that I can't really find here, so now I have this struggle, but if I find this, for

sure I will stay. I think it I am very lucky because what I do it is new here and we have a lot of opportunities but I don't know for how long it will last. For now I see the future is quite open for us in this sense, but also when I see around I understand why people say it is a difficult situation, because it is very hard to find a job even when you finish the university. So for us is maybe a fortune that we are in this cultural field which is new and developing and lots of people want to build it and we have a lot of inputs from outside and abroad.