

## PERFORMANCES OF SLOVENIAN BASS JULIJ BETETTO (1885–1963) IN CROATIA

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### *Abstract*

Slovenian bass Julij Betetto (1885–1963) undoubtedly left a deep mark on Croatian opera and concert performance in the first half of the 20th century. A cosmopolitan, but a patriot by heart, he interpreted around 175 roles in 140 operas and participated in more than 173 concerts. In total, he gave more than 3241 performances, from which more than 60 took place on Croatian opera and concert stages. The article deals with his important contribution in the artistic field as well as indirectly in the pedagogical field – many of his students successfully enriched the 20th-century Croatian operatic scene with their roles. The article looks at a selection of Betetto's opera and concert perfor-

mances in Croatia and their critical responses, pointing out also some of his Slovenian students who famously characterized the Croatian opera scene in the 20th century, including bass Marjan Rus and tenors Rudolf Francl and Josip Gostič.

**Keywords:** Julij Betetto; bass; opera; concert performance; singing teacher; Croatia; singing school; Marjan Rus; Rudolf Francl; Josip Gostič

**Ključne riječi:** Julij Betetto; bas; opera; koncertni nastupi; pjevački pedagog; Hrvatska; škola pjevanja; Marjan Rus; Rudolf Francl; Josip Gostič

Bass Julij Betetto (1885–1963) is considered one of the most important Slovenian and Yugoslavian music performers of the twentieth century who, in addition, left a deep mark on the history of European opera singing.<sup>1</sup> In his artistic career,

<sup>1</sup> Tina BOHAK ADAM: Artistic career of Bass Julij Betetto in Ljubljana Opera, *De musica disserenda*, 14 (2018) 2, 73-88.

spanning over half a century, he appeared with the most acclaimed opera singers of the time, including the eminent Italian tenor Enrico Caruso.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he established himself as a concert singer, an excellent singing teacher and a manager of music education.<sup>3</sup>

At the age of sixteen, Betetto began singing in the choir at St Jacob in Ljubljana, led by tenor Fran Gerbič (1840–1917) from 1899 to 1910. Gerbič, a graduate of the Prague Conservatory, discovered an extraordinary talent in young Betetto and in 1902 accepted him in his singing class at the Glasbena Matica music school of Ljubljana.<sup>4</sup> As an expert of »bel canto« singing, Gerbič stabilized Betetto's natural position and balanced voice, classified as »basso cantante«. He also improved Betetto's vocal technique.<sup>5</sup> Later on, Betetto continued his studies with Matej Hubad, a prominent Slovenian musician and teacher at the singing school of Glasbena Matica, who educated the majority of opera singers active before and after the First World War (Josip Križaj, Pavla Lovše, Josip Rijavec, etc.) in Yugoslavian operas and abroad.<sup>6</sup>

As is evident from the available sources and literature, Julij Betetto first toured Croatian territory on 3 April 1904, when he took part in the Easter mass at Petrinja. He sang the *Regina Coeli* for baritone-solo by Croatian composer Ivan pl. Zajc. As a critic wrote in *Banovac*, Betetto »exalted all piety with his beautiful solo singing«.<sup>7</sup> This was certainly a good incentive for a nineteen-year-old man at the beginning of his career who was, at that time, a member of the opera choir in Ljubljana.<sup>8</sup> As far as we know, in 1905 Julij Betetto did not appear in Croatia.

As a guest at the opera, he first introduced himself to Croatian audiences on 15 April 1906, in Karlovac. He created the baritone role of Henri in the opera *The*

<sup>2</sup> Dragutin MAČUKA: Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere, *Revija*, (1947) 1, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Tina BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – Nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcov*, Ljubljana: Akademija za glasbo, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Fran Gerbič decisively influenced the rise of Slovenian music culture as one of the first professionally educated Slovenian musicians in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that while studying at the Prague Conservatory Gerbič, as a distinguished tenor, met Croatian historian and politician Tadija Smičiklas and Croatian writer August Šenoa, who connected him directly with Zagreb. At their initiative, he arrived in Zagreb at the end of June 1869 and participated with Ivan pl. Zajc in the founding of the Zagreb Opera Department (1870). As a pillar of the Zagreb Opera, Gerbič was significantly shaping the local operatic scene for almost a decade (until 1878). T. BOHAK, *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – Nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcov*, 11; T. BOHAK: Solopevska pedagogika na glasbeni šoli društva Glasbena matica od začetkov do ustanovitve konservatorija (1882–1919), in: Branka Rotar Pance (ed.): *Javno glasbeno šolstvo na Slovenskem – pogledi ob 200-letnici, Glasbenopedagoški zbornik Akademije za glasbo v Ljubljani*, Thematic Issue, vol. 25, Ljubljana: Akademija za glasbo, 2016, 69; Marija BARBIERI: Franjo Grbič (Fran Gerbič), *Leksikon hrvatskih opernih pjevača, Opera.hr*, <<https://opera.hr/index.php?p=article&id=16>> (access 14 November 2019).

<sup>5</sup> D. MAČUKA: Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> \*\*\*: Vjestnik. Crkvena glazba, *Banovac*, 17 (1904) 14, 2; \*\*\*: Vjestnik. Uskrсни blagdani, *Banovac*, 17 (1904) 15, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> T. BOHAK ADAM: Artistic career of Bass Julij Betetto in Ljubljana Opera, 74.

*Bells of Corneville* by Robert Planquette. A critic wrote about his creation that »[...] with his gorgeous baritone he just aroused the audience«. Three days later (18 April 1906) he presented to the Karlovac audience at opera concert with tenor Stanislav Orželski. Betetto sang the aria of Don Ruy Gomez de Silva from Verdi's opera *Ernani* and reawakened the audience. A critic again praised its implementation, when he wrote: »[...] with a particular feeling, with some precision sang Mr. Betetto aria Silva from 'Ernani' [...]«. <sup>9</sup>

Two months later, on 14 June 1906, Betetto organized a solo opera evening in the Istrian town of Kastav, near Rijeka and Opatija. The program included arias from Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*, Verdi's *Ernani*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* as well as some foreign art songs and Slovenian folk songs. According to the source, Betetto sang in many other Croatian coast cities. He supposedly received great critical acclaim, which cannot be stated with certainty due to the lack of sources from his early artistic period. <sup>10</sup> At the concert in Kastav, an engineer named Filipović heard Betetto's voice and invited him to organize a solo concert in Zagreb with his help. Betetto responded positively and held a concert in a smaller hall where he performed opera arias and several Slovenian folk songs. The concert was also attended by bandmaster Ivo Muhvić, who invited Betetto to participate in military music concerts of the domestic 25th Croatian Home Guard regiment. These concerts took place every night in the Streljana garden in Tuškanac. Betetto engaged in the concerts, making excellent performances of various solo musical acts, which brought him significant recognition in the Croatian area. This performance is counted as Julij Betetto's first contact with Zagreb. <sup>11</sup>

On the invitation of the Drama Society, Betetto, together with the Ljubljana Opera ensemble, performed in the Croatian National Theatre in Varaždin on 2 April 1907. The Zagreb Opera House was abolished during the period (1902–1909) and, consequently, the hosting of a Slovenian ensemble was of great importance for the cultural life in Varaždin. <sup>12</sup> They performed Verdi's *The Troubadour*, Betetto playing Ferrando's role. A critic wrote: »[...] Mr Betetto, whom we heard in the role of Ferrando, gave us some pretty and pleasant moments with his singing, which we will like to remember because Mr Betetto is on the way to assume a very fine and excellent place in the temple of the art. [...] The local town music ensemble played under the excellent guidance of the lovely chaplain of the Ljubljana Opera. H. [Hilarij, t/n] Benišek made a great contribution to the brilliant success of the first evening. [...]« <sup>13</sup> Among other things, at the end of the 1907 season, he sang

<sup>9</sup> \*\*\*: Domaće viesti. Člani slovenskog kazališta u Karlovcu, *Glasonoša*, 2 (Karlovac, 1906) 16, 3.

<sup>10</sup> \*\*\*: Operni večer v Kastvu, *Edinost*, 31 (1906) 162, 2.

<sup>11</sup> D. MAČUKA: Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Opera HNK u Zagrebu – povijest, <<https://www.hnk.hr/hr/o-nama/povijest/opera/>> (access 5 November 2019).

<sup>13</sup> \*\*\*: Slovenska opera v Varaždinu, *Slovenski narod*, 40 (1907) 78, 5.

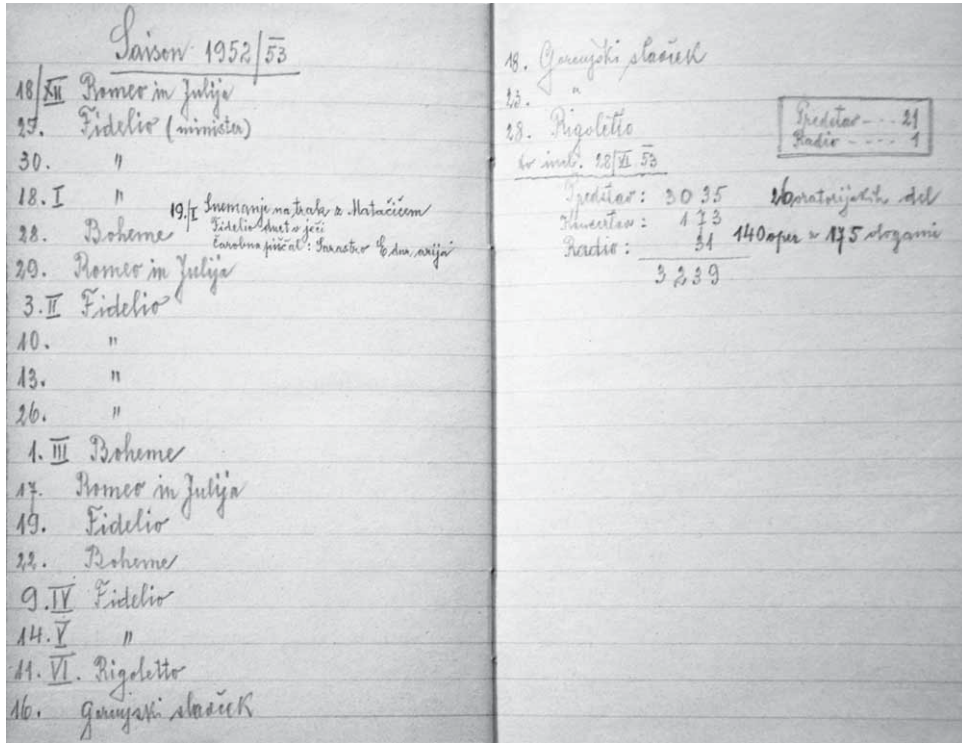


Figure 1: Betetto's personal diary (photo: Tina Bohak Adam; in the private collection of the author, with permission)

Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust* on the tour of the Ljubljana Opera in Varaždin, Sarajevo, and Sisak.<sup>14</sup> Positive reviews definitely had a great impact on Betetto before his departure for Vienna in the fall of 1907 where he completed his studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna two years later.<sup>15</sup>

A significant turning point in Betetto's artistic career was the year 1909, when he made his debut as a soloist at the Vienna Court Opera in early October, playing Lampe in the comic opera *Versiegelt* by Leo Blech. On the day of his solo debut, he started writing his personal diary of operas and concerts, doing so until the end of his artistic career in January 1954. His personal diary provides basic information such as the year and season, and the date and title of the opera or concert performance which is useful for further research on his operatic and concert performances at home and abroad.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> D. MAČUKA: Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere, 18.

<sup>15</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – nestor opernih in koncertnih pevocev*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

At the beginning of his career, Betetto wanted to sing the roles with a cantabile, serious character such as Prince Gremin, Lothario and other similar roles, but the opera management in Vienna directed him to comic roles, which he later loved and started enjoying in creations such as Kecal, Don Basilio, Lunardo and others.<sup>17</sup>

During his time in Vienna (1909–1922), Betetto regularly performed at the Ljubljana Opera and as a soloist at concerts of the Glasbena Matica music society and the Slovenian Philharmonic. Yet it seems that he always liked to return to Zagreb. At the beginning of May 1910, he played a part in an event of the Committee for the Strossmayer Monument. Under the guidance of Matej Hubad, the Mixed Choir of Glasbena Matica performed with the accompaniment of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and soloists soprano Mira Costaperaria-Dev and bass Julij Betetto.<sup>18</sup>

In 1922, Betetto returned to his native Ljubljana and became an indispensable soloist of the Ljubljana Opera at the invitation of his former teacher Matej Hubad, who became its new director.<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of December 1923, he gave another solo concert for the Zagreb audience. According to a summary in the *Slovenski Narod* newspaper, the *Riječ* newspaper wrote: »Even with his first concert last year, opera singer Julij Betetto had great success in Zagreb. Last night's concert was just a confirmation of his extraordinary art. Regarding yesterday's program, we particularly praise the second part, in which he achieved great success, especially in the songs by Fuchs and Hermann. The first part of the program did not suit him well, especially Brahms's *Vier ernste Gesänge* because of his temper that distanced him from the character of the Prophet's songs. Following warm approval from the audience, he concluded with Tchaikovsky's *Serenade*. The piano accompaniment was excellently played by Mr Krauth. Other newspapers posted very favourable reviews as well.«<sup>20</sup> Betetto's performances have always been extremely prepared by considering every detail. His work was very accurate and artistically responsible.<sup>21</sup> On rare occasions, critics also mentioned some flaws in his singing. The newspaper *Dom i svet* designate similar shortcomings Betetto's voice: »[...] Mr Betetto has a sympathetic voice, great modulation, personality, and vocalization, maybe sometimes we forgot good singing school. The program was not chosen very well (I don't know, why he sang Brahms' 'Vier erste Gesänge?'), but he still achieved success with Lajovic's 'Serenade'. He was followed very discretely by prof. Krauth.«<sup>22</sup> Betetto was a highly disciplined and exemplary artist and nev-

<sup>17</sup> Ciril CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, Ljubljana: Slovenski gledališki in filmski muzej, 1990, 118.

<sup>18</sup> D. MAČUKA: *Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcev*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> \*\*\*: *Koncert Julija Betetta v Zagrebu*, *Slovenski narod*, 56 (1923) 279, 2.

<sup>21</sup> C. CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, 35

<sup>22</sup> A. V.: *Glazba. Koncerti*, *Dom i svet*, 36 (1923) 24, 430.

er expressed his views on such criticism. Let us say that he did not mention this concert in his private diary, probably due to the criticism about his choice of the program for the first part of the concert. We also ask ourselves about the relevance or consistency of his private diary. We find out that his notes in it are very precise for his opera performance, which cannot be said with certainty for his concerts. Also, we could highlight the fact that he started to write this diary after his study in Vienna and consequently we don't have an accurate list of his performances before and during his study.

In early April 1924, he appeared as a guest in the Zagreb Opera in two opera performances, as Lothario in Thomas' *Mignon* and as Don Basilio in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. As usual, he again received superlative criticism such as: »The guest, after a unanimous judgment, sang unforgettably«, »played extraordinarily« and presented a play that was humorously given to the last detail.«<sup>23</sup>

In 1924, after high-profile guest appearances, Betetto was invited by the management of the Zagreb Opera to become the fourth pillar of this institution in the 1924/1925 season with soprano Zdenka Zikova and tenors Mario Šimenc and Josip Rijavec. This plan did not work out, because Josip Rijavec accepted an engagement with the Berlin Opera and Julij Betetto, as a conscious patriot, stayed in his domestic Ljubljana. He was still involved with the Zagreb Opera as a guest.<sup>24</sup>

On 25 June 1925, Betetto performed at the Zagreb Opera as Kecal in Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride* and three days later as Ramfis in Verdi's opera *Aida*. Let us highlight that Kecal was one of his favourite and most famed characters, which he first performed in Vienna at the age of twenty-five and which followed him throughout his artistic career. Betetto's Kecal became synonymous with the most sophisticated character – both in terms of vocal technique and acting.<sup>25</sup>

It is no coincidence that after the performance of the Zagreb newspaper *Slobodna Tribuna* published a flattering review of his role of Kecal. He proved himself as well in the role of Ramfis: »Mr Julij Betetto, who belongs to a special type of singers in our country and is known for his traditional successes, has once again proved us his skills in the role of Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*). His gorgeous and voluminous voice gets a full and sophisticated expression in every note. Betetto was able to realize the comic figure of Kecal in Smetana's opera and develop all his dignity in *Aida* as Ramfis. His exquisitely trained bass fully synchronized with the magnificent caressing of ancient Egyptian worship. As we have already written, the Zagreb press has once again spoken in favour of Betetto's engagement on the Zagreb opera stage.«<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> C. CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, 57-58.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>25</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcev*, 13.

<sup>26</sup> \*\*\*: *Zagreška kritika o Juliju Betettu*, *Jutro*, 6 (1925) 154, 6.



**Figure 2: Julij Betetto as Kecel in Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* in Maj 1919 (photo: Holdt; National and University Library Ljubljana, with permission)**

It should be noted that as an illustrious artist Betetto regularly received offers for various engagements not only in Zagreb but also in Belgrade and Lyon; yet, as a true patriot, he remained loyal to the domestic opera stage with the exception of two seasons (1930–1932), when he performed in Bavaria, in the Munich State Opera. He was aware that working in Ljubljana's opera would bring him financial independence after his retirement.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of January 1927, the Ljubljana Opera ensemble under the baton of Mirko Polič hosted in Osijek, performing Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte*.<sup>28</sup> The Osijek's daily *Die Drau* published the following review: »Yesterday we celebrated a happy meeting with Mirko Polić, the current director of the Ljubljana Opera, who can surely be given credit for the musical life of our city as well. Mr Polić gave us, in artistic perfection, a lovely Mozart work. With his chosen singing group, he

<sup>27</sup> Slovenian Theatre Institute – SLOGI Ljubljana, the fund »Julij Betetto«, II. Letters, no. 186 and 189.

<sup>28</sup> C. CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, 71.

produced a large-scale opera performance for us. Under his leadership, the orchestra sounded full and it appears that it no longer has to do with the minor concerns of a theatre director in the province. [...] Mr Betetto, an artist by the grace of God, the greatest form of an artist, sang Don Alfonso. His full-bodied, round, big, warm voice leads with excellent knowledge. His performance can only be spoken about in superlatives and it is impossible to escape the charm of his deep bass. Immediately after the first tones, the audience was mesmerized by this extremely beautiful voice. We have heard such a nice piano only on the biggest stages so far. The house was sold out and the audience extremely grateful. [...]»<sup>29</sup> It is more than obvious that such flattering reviews had made Betetto worthwhile and had certainly provided him with a significant foundation for a further artistic career, which was rising quickly during this time.

At the end of May 1927, the Ljubljana Opera ensemble again represented six operas in Dubrovnik and Split, where Betetto presented as Rocco in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Hermann in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Dubrovnik critics labelled Betetto's Rocco as a »unique singer in understanding and implementation«. After the performance of *Tannhäuser* in Split, it was possible to read in *Novo Doba* that »Betetto is the most complete singing unit in the group and formed a dignified, exalted Landgraph«. <sup>30</sup> The enthusiasm for hosting the Ljubljana Opera in Split was so great that they extended Mozart's *Così fan tutte* again and Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, where Betetto performed as Pimen. <sup>31</sup>

It should be emphasized that one of the most important guest appearances of the Ljubljana Opera was also in 1936, when they performed six operas, from Verdi's *Otello* and *Macbeth*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* to Strauss' *The Rose-Bearer*, Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and Massenet's *Manon*. Betetto performed as Raimondo in the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* and a critic of the Split newspaper *Novo Doba* wrote about his creation that »he convincingly portrayed the noble Raimondo with the dignified play and the intelligent and heartfelt singing of his pasty bass«. <sup>32</sup>

As can be seen in Betetto's private diary, there is no mention also of the concert that took place on 20 May 1939, at the initiative of the United Slovenian Societies in the Great Hall of the Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb to commemorate the 70th birthday of the Slovenian priest, historian and musician Janko Barlè. The choir of Glasbena Matica performed under the baton of the Ljubljana Opera director Mirko Polič together with the soprano Ljudmila Polajnar and bass Julij Betetto

<sup>29</sup> \*\*\*: Gostovanje ljubljanske opere v Osijeku, *Slovenski narod*, 60 (1927) 18, 3.

<sup>30</sup> C. CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, 72.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.



and piano accompanist Marijan Lipovšek. The program consisted exclusively of works by Slovenian composers.<sup>33</sup>

The latest research findings show that Betetto regularly performed in Croatia on a variety of occasions, as an opera soloist and a concert performer. He showed up in at least thirteen productions of the Karlovac, Zagreb and Osijek Operas, mainly in the period between the two wars, ten concerts in various Croatian cities and participated almost forty times on tours of the Ljubljana Opera in Dubrovnik, Split, Osijek, and Šibenik.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, he also performed as a soloist in Zagreb at eight concerts organized by Glasbena Matica of Ljubljana and the Croatian Singing Society Kolo. Among other things, he performed in the oratory *The Lives and Memory of the Glorious Teachers and Brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs* by Croatian composer Božidar Širola. In the middle of April 1946, he collaborated as a soloist with the Ljubljana Radio Choir in a concert of the Slovenian opera *Lepa Vida* by Risto Savin in Zagreb.<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that the lists mentioned below are probably not complete and the number of Betetto's performances on Croatian territory is even greater because, as cited earlier, he assuredly did not record all the concerts in his private diary for one reason or another.

**Table 1: Julij Betetto's Guest Performances in the Croatian Operas<sup>36</sup>**

SEASON	DATE OF PERFORMANCE	COMPOSER	OPERA	ROLE
1923/1924	4/4 1924	Ambroise Thomas	<i>Mignon</i>	Lothario
	6/4 1924	Gioacchino Rossini	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Don Basilio
	23/8 1924	Gioacchino Rossini	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Don Basilio
	28/8 1924	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
1924/1925	25/9 1924	Bedřich Smetana	<i>The Bartered Bride</i>	Kecal
	27/9 1924	Gioacchino Rossini	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Don Basilio
	29/1 1925	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
	25/6 1925	Bedřich Smetana	<i>The Bartered Bride</i>	Kecal
	28/6 1925	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Aida</i>	Ramfis
1927/1928	10/2 1928	Sergei Prokofiev	<i>The Love for Three Oranges</i>	King of Clubs
1932/1933	29/1 1933	Jacques Fromental Halévy	<i>La Juive</i>	Cardinal de Brogni
1936/1937	3/6 1937 – Rijeka	Jakov Gotovac	<i>Ero from the Other World</i>	Marko

<sup>33</sup> \*\*\*: Združena slovenska društva v Zagrebu, *Jutro*, 20 (1939) 111, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Branko HEĆIMOVIĆ – Marija BARBIERI – Henrik NEUBAUER: *Slovenski umjetnici na hrvatskim pozornicama – Slovenski umetniki na hrvatskih odrih*, Zagreb: Slovenski dom, Vijeće slovenske nacionalne manjine Grada Zagreba, Svet slovenske nacionalne manjšine Mesta Zagreba, 2011, 262-263.

<sup>35</sup> D. MAČUKA: *Julije Betetto – zaslužni prvak slovenske opere*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Personal diary of Julij Betetto, without pagination. In the private collection of the author.

**Table 2: List of Julij Betetto's concerts and other performances in Croatia<sup>37</sup>**

DATE OF CONCERT	PLACE
22/2 1923	Zagreb
4/12 1923	Zagreb
6/7 1927	Zagreb
17/10 1927	Zagreb
5/7 1934	Biograd
8/7 1934	Biograd
21/7 1934	Biograd
15/4 1946	Zagreb

**Table 3: Julij Betetto's Guest Performances with the Ljubljana Opera Ensemble in Croatia<sup>38</sup>**

SEASON	DATE OF PERFORMANCE	PLACE	COMPOSER	OPERA	ROLE
1925/1926	24/4 1926	Dubrovnik	Ambroise Thomas	<i>Mignon</i>	Lothario
	25/4 1926	Dubrovnik	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Sparafucile
	26/4 1926	Dubrovnik	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
	30/4 1926	Split	Richard Wagner	<i>The Flying Dutchman</i>	Daland
	2/5 1926	Split	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
	4/5 1926	Split	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Aida</i>	Ramfis
	6/5 1926	Split	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
	7/5 1926	Split	Josip Hatze	<i>The Return</i>	Dako
1926/1927	22/1 1927	Osijek	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Alfonso
	21/5 1927	Dubrovnik	Ludwig van Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	Rocco
	24/5 1927	Dubrovnik	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Alfonso
	27/5 1927	Split	Richard Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Hermann
	29/5 1927	Split	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>	Figaro
	2/6 1927	Split	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Alfonso
	3/6 1927	Split	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen
1928/1929	12/5 1929	Split	Italo Montemezzi	<i>The Love of the Three Kings</i>	Archibaldo, King of Altura
	14/5 1929	Split	Sergej Prokofjev	<i>The Love for Three Oranges</i>	King of Clubs
	15/5 1929	Split	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Pimen

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

SEASON	DATE OF PERFORMANCE	PLACE	COMPOSER	OPERA	ROLE
	16/5 1929	Split	Giacomo Puccini	<i>Tosca</i>	Sacristan
	17/5 1929	Split	Richard Strauss	<i>Saloma</i>	First Nazarene
			Giacomo Puccini	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	Simone
	19/5 1929	Dubrovnik	Sergej Prokofjev	<i>The Love for Three Oranges</i>	King of Clubs
	20/5 1929	Dubrovnik	Giacomo Puccini	<i>Tosca</i>	Sacristan
	24/5 1929	Dubrovnik	Bedřich Smetana	<i>Dalibor</i>	Beneš
	25/5 1929	Dubrovnik	Gioacchino Rossini	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Don Basilio
	26/5 1929	Dubrovnik	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Sparafucile
1935/1936	2/5 1936	Split	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Otello</i>	Lodovico
	3/5 1936	Split	Gaetano Donizetti	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Raimondo
	4/5 1936	Split	Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Macbeth</i>	Assassin
	5/5 1936	Split	Richard Strauss	<i>The Rose-Bearer</i>	Baron Ochs
	9/5 1936	Split	Modest Mussorgsky	<i>Khovanshchina</i>	Dosifey
	10/5 1936	Split	Jules Massenet	<i>Manon</i>	Le Comte des Grieux
1938/1939	10/5 1939	Split	Jakov Gotovac	<i>Ero from the Other World</i>	Marko
	12/5 1939	Split	Jules Massenet	<i>Manon</i>	Le Comte des Grieux
	13/5 1939	Split	Richard Wagner	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Henry The Fowler
	15/5 1939	Split	Amilcare Ponchielli	<i>La Gioconda</i>	Alvise Badoero
	16. 5. 1939	Split	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Gremin
	18. 5. 1939	Šibenik	Giacomo Puccini	<i>La Bohème</i>	Colline
	20. 5. 1939	Šibenik	Jakov Gotovac	<i>Ero from the other world</i>	Marko

### *Students of Julij Betetto on Croatian Opera Stages*

Julij Betetto did not only establish himself as an eminent opera and concert performer but also as an excellent singing teacher. He gained his first teaching experience during his time in Vienna by teaching at an unknown private music school. He worked as a singing teacher for nearly forty years. At the end of 1924, he began teaching singing at the Conservatory of Glasbena Matica. Later on, he taught at the National Conservatory and, in 1939, became Full Professor at the newly formed Music Academy, which was renamed the Academy of Music in



**Figure 3: Julij Betetto in 1952 (photo: Studio Potrč; National and University Library Ljubljana, with permission)**

January 1946. He continued to work there after the war, until his retirement in 1962. Betetto founded his own singing school, based on his extensive experience, acquired knowledge and under the influence of schools of esteemed authors.<sup>39</sup>

Betetto's singing school was not systematized or published in the form of a didactic manual. It was a reflection of the intertwining of a remarkable artistic career and teaching experience. An important feature of Betetto's singing school was singing in a »mask« – properly focused tone in the forward direction that should be nicely shaped and rounded.<sup>40</sup>

As a renowned performer, he regularly toured across the Yugoslavian territory and it is not astonishing that many young singers from Zagreb, Skopje, Sarajevo and other parts of the former Yugoslavia began to attend his singing lessons. In doing so, one wonders why Betetto attracted so many individuals who were eager to learn by his teaching approach. We must certainly not overlook his popularity, exceptional personality and a dedicated sense of teaching which are, along with high professionalism and an artistic vein, without a doubt one of the foundations for a successful teaching career.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcev*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

Furthermore, we can doubtlessly claim that Betetto had an indirect influence on the Croatian scene as well since many of his students were successfully performing on various opera stages in Croatia for many years.<sup>42</sup> The most outstanding of them include bass Marjan Rus and tenors Rudolf Francl and Josip Gostič are presented below and were perceived as his students.<sup>43</sup>

Slovenian bass Marjan Rus (1905–1974) studied singing with Julij Betetto for six years (1926–1931) at the National Conservatory.<sup>44</sup> He made his debut in the 1931/1932 season as a guest performer in the Ljubljana Opera with the role of Don Basilio from Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. He continued his collaboration with the Opera between 1932 and 1935 as a soloist.<sup>45</sup> He was engaged in the Croatian National Theatre of Zagreb between 1935 and 1939, where many other Slovenian singers, including Betetto's students (Josip Gostič, Zvonimira Župevc, and others), were already performing at the time.<sup>46</sup> In 1939, Marjan Rus was hired by the Vienna State Opera, where he would work until 1960 when he completed his artistic career. Marjan Rus never worked as a singing teacher but rather dedicated himself extensively to the problems of the opera theatre, educating listeners and performers alike.<sup>47</sup>

It is also important to highlight tenor Rudolf Francl (1920–2009), who, like Marjan Rus, spent a certain part of his artistic career on the stage of the Zagreb Opera.<sup>48</sup> At the Zagreb Music Academy, he studied singing with Marija Kostrenčić for less than half a year, since he had to return to Ljubljana at the beginning of the war.<sup>49</sup> Upon his return, he was arrested by the Italians and imprisoned in Gonars, where he remained for seventeen months. After arriving from the camp, he enrolled in the Middle School of the Ljubljana Music Academy in 1943, where he studied singing with Julij Betetto, whom he greatly appreciated and respected. In an interview, Francl said: »[...] I have great memories of him; he was like a father to his students. He helped us a lot. He was insightful, even when our voice or

<sup>42</sup> \*\*\*: Betetto, Julij, *Proleksis enciklopedija online*, 2014, <<https://proleksis.lzmk.hr/12044/>> (access 11 November 2019).

<sup>43</sup> National and University Library Ljubljana, Music Collection, the fund »Julij Betetto«, folder Konservatorij, Akademija, teaching, the personal notebook of Julij Betetto.

<sup>44</sup> Radoslav HROVATIN: Marjan Rus, *Slovenska biografija*, Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013, <<https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/osebba/sbi528498/>> (access 16 November 2019).

<sup>45</sup> \*\*\*: Bassist Marijan Rus se poslavlja, *Slovenski narod*, 68 (1935) 191, 3; Tončka STANONIK – Lan BRENK (eds.): *Osebnosti: veliki slovenski biografski leksikon*, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2008, 985-986.

<sup>46</sup> M. BARBIERI: Marjan / Marijan Rus, *Leksikon hrvatskih opernih pjevača, Opera.hr*, <<https://opera.hr/index.php?p=article&id=107>> (access 11 November 2019); Primož KURET: *Sto slovenskih opernih zvezd*, Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 2005, 78–79.

<sup>47</sup> R. HROVATIN: Marjan Rus, *Slovenska biografija*.

<sup>48</sup> Dušan MEVLJA: Rudolf Francl – sedemdesetletnik, *Večer*, 46 (1990) 85, 12.

<sup>49</sup> M. BARBIERI: Rudolf Francl, *Leksikon hrvatskih opernih pjevača, Opera.hr*, <<https://www.opera.hr/index.php?p=article&id=134>> (access 11 November 2019).

'stima', as he said, was bad.«<sup>50</sup> In 1944, Franci made his debut on the stage of the Ljubljana Opera as William in Thomas's opera *Mignon*. After his debut, he was constantly gaining audience attention and became one of the most popular Slovenian opera soloists. In 1953/1954 he was engaged in the Croatian National Theatre of Zagreb.<sup>51</sup> In 1956, Rudolf Franci signed a contract with the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf, where he remained until 1963. Afterwards, he returned to the Ljubljana Opera, where he remained active until his retirement in 1983.<sup>52</sup> Rudolf Franci was teaching in the last years of his life. We do not know the methodology behind his teaching, as it was not documented, but it is quite possible that his former singing teacher Julij Betetto was his role model in this respect.<sup>53</sup>

In later years, some of the Slovenian and foreign opera singers, being at the peak of their opera careers, occasionally came to Betetto for advice and guidance on how to successfully continue working.<sup>54</sup> One of them was a former opera lead singer, tenor Josip Gostič (1900–1963), who had been active in the Zagreb Opera for almost three decades.<sup>55</sup> At first, Gostič studied singing at the Ljubljana Conservatory with Jeanette Foedransperg and Matej Hubad. Later on, Gostič continued his singing training in Vienna with famous teacher Marie Rado-Danielli.<sup>56</sup> He was an opera singer of the highest artistic quality, distinguished by a beautiful voice, balanced in all positions, musicality, extraordinary memory, sense of interpretation and elegant and convincing performance on stage.<sup>57</sup> He worked as a soloist in the Ljubljana Opera until the 1936/37 season when he went to Zagreb to become not only the first tenor but also the favourite of the Zagreb audience. His last performance there took place on 12 October 1963 as Manrico in Verdi's Opera *Il Trovatore*.<sup>58</sup> In the 1951/1952 season, he was a member of the Vienna Opera. He was a world-class artist, and it is not surprising that the famous conductor Karl Böhm made a positive statement about him: »A singer that no longer exists today.«<sup>59</sup> It is important to mention that in 1935 Josip Gostič and Julij Betetto sang together in Ljubljana Opera, in Massenet's opera *Manon*. It was always a challenge for Betetto to work with his students. The Croatian bass-baritone Tomislav Neralić

<sup>50</sup> Juan VASLE – Vesna VELKOVRH BUKILICA: Od nogometnega vratarja do operne zvezde, *Slovenec*, 78 (1994) 10, 9.

<sup>51</sup> B. HEČIMOVIĆ – M. BARBIERI – H. NEUBAUER: *Slovenski umjetnici na hrvatskim pozornicama – Slovenski umetniki na hrvaških odrih*, 252-253.

<sup>52</sup> P. KURET: *Sto slovenskih opernih zvezd*, 131.

<sup>53</sup> Nina OŠTRBENK: Rudolf Franci ganjen prevzel naslov častnega občana, *Dnevnik*, 56 (2006) 124, 12.

<sup>54</sup> M. BARBIERI – Marjana MRAK: *Josip Gostič – pevec, kakršnega danes ni; takvo pjevača danas nema; so was gibt es heute nicht; no more singers like him*, Homec: Kulturno društvo Jože Gostič, 2000, 292, 295.

<sup>55</sup> M. BARBIERI – M. MRAK: *Josip Gostič*, 292.

<sup>56</sup> P. KURET, *Sto slovenskih opernih zvezd*, 74-75.

<sup>57</sup> M. BARBIERI – M. MRAK: *Josip Gostič*, 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> M. BARBIERI: Josip Gostič, *Leksikon hrvatskih opernih pjevača, Opera.hr*, <<https://www.opera.hr/index.php?p=article&id=124>> (access 17 November 2019).

recalled Josip Gostič: »[...] I first listened to him live (until then only by radio) as a high school student in Maribor, and he played the role of Des Grieux in Massenet's opera *Manon* in a great cast with Zlata Gjungjenac, Julij Betetto, and Robert Primožič. That was in 1935. Gostič was the lead singer in the Ljubljana Opera at the time, and I had no idea that in a few years I would be standing with him on the stage of the Zagreb Opera. [...]«<sup>60</sup>

The number of students who studied with Betetto in his almost forty-year teaching career is staggering. In practice, he preferred to see that students already had a good technique, so that he could devote more time to interpreting art songs and/or operatic arias.<sup>61</sup> Given the patterns that Betetto followed and the success of many students, Betetto's singing school can be considered comparable to the teaching methods used across Europe of the time.

Julij Betetto spent his entire life promoting the quality of Slovenian culture, whether with his work in the Ljubljana Opera, which he raised to a European level, or his teaching, which produced an overwhelming number of top opera and concert singers and singing teachers. Moreover, he became the head of the Ljubljana Conservatory (1934–1940) and later the rector of the Music Academy (1942–1946) and the Academy of Music (1947–1950, 1957–1962).<sup>62</sup>

It can be concluded that Julij Betetto conveyed European experiences from Vienna and Munich to the Croatian Operas with his unique role creations and decisively influenced the audience. As we said, the Zagreb Opera's management recognized its best qualities and they wanted him in their opera ensemble but he did not respond to the invitation. He remained a member of the Ljubljana Opera and performed as a guest in Zagreb Opera. His interpretations were also described using superlatives by the critics of the various Croatian newspapers. A successful artistic career also had a significant impact on his teaching career. Betetto's singing school was recognized as one of high quality in both the Croatian and wider Yugoslavian area. We also ask ourselves what the secret of his extremely successful teaching work was. The answer must be sought in the fact that young people, as well as mature artists, saw in Betetto a singer and a man they could trust, believed in his abilities and admired him as an interpreter. He was a mentor and protector to his students. Today Betetto's singing school is no longer used by current singing teachers. The reasons might lie in the fact that only a few of his students became singing teachers, such as Vekoslav Janko, Rudolf Francl, Radmila Smiljanič, and others. Most of them devoted their time solely to their artistic careers.

On the death of Julij Betetto his student, the bass Marjan Rus, in his condolence letter to Betetto's wife Irma described his teacher comprehensively: »He was

<sup>60</sup> M. BARBIERI – M. MRAK: *Josip Gostič*, 288.

<sup>61</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto (1885–1963) – nestor opernih in koncertnih pevcev*, 97-98.

<sup>62</sup> T. BOHAK: *Julij Betetto, Novi slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 2, Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2017, 379-381.

a gentleman in gestures, speech and his soul. He was a servant of the arts, sacrificed to the extreme with the tremendous sense of responsibility, to our students an ideal and father. [...] He was looking forward to our success, has lived with the youth and stayed young and modern until the last breath.«<sup>63</sup>

As one of the greatest Slovenian opera singers of all times Julij Betetto had a significant influence on performing and teaching, even in Croatia.

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<sup>63</sup> C. CVETKO: *Julij Betetto – umetnik, pedagog in organizator glasbenega šolstva*, 160.



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*Sažetak*NASTUPI SLOVENSKOG BASA JULIJA BETETTA (1885. – 1963.)  
U HRVATSKOJ

U prvoj polovini 20. stoljeća oblikovanju hrvatskog opernog i koncertnog stvaralaštva znatno je pridonio slovenski bas Julij Betetto (1885. – 1963.). U hrvatskom je prostoru nastupio više od šezdeset puta, pretežno u razdoblju između dvaju svjetskih ratova. Kao gost se predstavio u karlovačkoj, zagrebačkoj i riječkoj operi, u nekoliko hrvatskih gradova kao koncertni stvaralac i kao član ljubljanske Opere, koja je više puta gostovala u Dubrovniku, Splitu, Osijeku i Šibeniku. Kozmopolit koji je četrnaest godina radio u bečkoj Dvorskoj operi (1907. – 1922.) te dvije sezone u bavarskoj Operi u Münchenu (1930. – 1932.) svojim je europskim iskustvima znatno utjecao na kvalitetu izvedbe hrvatskih opernih ansambala. Hrvatska publika i kritika prihvaćale su Betettovo operno i koncertno stvaralaštvo s oduševljenjem, a uprava zagrebačke Opere čak ga je htjela angažirati kao solista, no kao osviješteni domoljub ostao je u Ljubljani i redovito gostovao na hrvatskom tlu. Julij Betetto bio je priznat ne samo kao eminentan operni i koncertni reproduktivac, već i kao izvrstan pjevački pedagog. Na osnovi svojih bogatih iskustava i stečenoga znanja te pod utjecajem priručnika uvaženih autora oformio je vlastitu školu pjevanja, u okviru koje se pokazao kao odličan profesor. Kao pedagog radio je gotovo četrdeset godina te je izravno utjecao i na hrvatski prostor kako su brojni učenici niz godina uspješno sudjelovali na različitim opernim podijima Hrvatske, među mnogima i slovenski umjetnici bas Marjan Rus, tenori Rudolf Francl i Josip Gostič. Betettova škola pjevanja prepoznata je kao kvalitetna i na hrvatskom i širem jugoslavenskom prostoru, no danas je u aktualnoj pjevačkoj pedagoškoj praksi više nije moguće pronaći. Uzroke treba tražiti u činjenici da su samo rijetki pojedinci postali pjevački pedagogi. Julij Betetto bez dvojbe je jedan od najvećih slovenskih opernih pjevača svih vremena, koji je kao umjetnik i pedagog ostavio neizbrisiv trag i na hrvatskom prostoru.