

THE FESTIVAL BAND HISTORY

by Stefan Laudyn

Part I: A Boy Meets A Boy, Coming Out

Chronologically, I started playing music when I was about 12. During summer holidays I met a boy, who played recorder (straight flute). Lacking formal education and talent, I had the third key element: persistence. I learned how to read music. My parents bought me an East German instrument; the brand name was Saturn.

Then came a guitar, which my Dad bought me for equivalent of \$6. It was a quintessential cheap acoustic guitar. I was about 14.

Then at secondary school (at 15-19) I was more into classical guitar. My guitar hero was John Williams (same name like the film music composer).

Then during my studies at the Warsaw Polytechnics I finally got a classical guitar, which you could tune almost properly. My guitar hero (to this day) was Roberto Baden Powell de Aquino, Brazilian virtuoso and composer.

But yes, I also listened to pop or rock music: The Beatles, Les Zeppelin, then Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Cat Stevens. And I stayed faithful to my teenage fascinations, buying later their CDs and scores.

I first saw The Festival Band on stage in Sofia in the early 2000s. It was a WOW! But as a fingerstyle (or nailstyle, to be precise) classical guitar player, it wasn't easy to fit in.

In the spring of 2003 I bought nylon strung electric Yamaha, and started preparing for the gig in Sofia in March 2004.

But first I was invited in Cannes 2003 to play classical pieces at the Finnish party at Hotel Splendid. It was attended by my long time friend Stefan Uhrík, who never saw me playing before. Upon return to Prague, Stefan surprised his wife Hana buying an electric guitar and an amp - he had played the blues years before, but she didn't know about it.

It was I think March 2004, when S Uhrík and I joined TFB. As said before, I was persistent. I could spend months, learning one song. Same procedure applied with the Polish band I joined around that time - Rude Boys.

Part II: Glory Days

And the day came that we were together on stage - the three Stefans with proper Bulgarian musicians. Not being an expert in Bulgarian rock music, I had no clue who they are.

Then I realised they were the giants - among them Kirill Marichkov and Valdi Totev from Shturcite, Bulgaria's response to The Beatles.

Over the years, when I look at the line-ups of TFB, I can't believe I was and still am, part of it.

TFB plays every year in Sofia. I was lucky to join just before the first invitation from abroad - and we played in Utrecht, Netherlands. Then we played in Karlovy Vary (Postovni dvur, outdoors), Berlin, Sarajevo, Thessaloniki, Motovun, Palic, Krakow, Warszawa, Vilnius...

As I was responsible for the logistics on many occasions, I have my notes and set lists in my home and office computers.

Part III: Some Stories

2004 - first concert abroad in Utrecht, as part of film market there; and first surprise - practically every band member is put into another hotel, so gathering all of us for the rehearsal is a big logistical operation; then we realise we are like Deep Purple - every band member in another hotel (but the difference is they cannot stand each other)

2006, November, Thessaloniki - on the day of our concert the president of Greece visited the festival, for the first time in history, so initially there was hardly any audience at our concert; then they come, and everything was fine; the organisers provide very good backline - huge 100 watts Marshall amps; when you strum a chord, you feel the strong wind from behind;

Berlin - around 2006; we play at the grand ballroom of Adlon Kempinski hotel; Dieter Kosslick joins us on guitar and the first thing he does is he breaks a string; they say later at the press conference he proudly showed his finger, which had been cut by the breaking string;

Karlovy Vary - we played there I think three times outdoors at European Film Promotion party at Postovni dvur; Claudia Landsberger and Renate Rose joined us for the backing vocals for „Sympathy for the devil” by the Rolling Stones; when we played this song in Sofia at Boyana Studios, Volker Schloendorf jumped on stage to do the backing vocals and then he told a story - he was in the studio when the Stones recorded the song, and he was part of the original backing vocals there - wow! Since then Volker, no matter how busy he is, he always says hello. You know, Volker, my mate from the band...