„Revived History – the Story About David Meisel“

( It is a little longer version because the movie length is only 5 minutes)

Introduction:

Karlovac is situated in the central part of Croatia. In the past the town was an important centre of traffic, economy and culture. Many people of various nationalities came to the town because of its good location, between the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic Sea, and at the beginning of the 19th century came the first Jewish families. Those families contributed to the development of the economy, the art and the culture of our town. One of those families was the Meisel family.

Interview:

Same time ago Tena, the great-granddaughter of David Meisel, found family photographs in an old box, which were taken by her great-grandfather.

1. When did your great-grandfather come to Karlovac?

My great-grandfather came to Karlovac from Bohemia, Moravia to be more precise, because he was unanimously elected for the service of cantor and also for the service of the secretary for the Jewish Community in Karlovac. He started his service on the 1st of November 1906.

1. What was his occupation?

David had a profound hearing and he was an educated musician too. He had a nice voice. He was a beautiful lyric tenor. He conducted a mixed choir at the synagogue, the choir which was educated by him personally. He was very popular because of his approach, his determination to educate, and his abilities to conduct. He was also the president of the Union of Cantors in the then kingdom of Yugoslavia for many years, editor of the Cantors’ Journal, one of the founders of the Charity in the Karlovac, and he was also the secretary of the Charity at the same time. As soon as he came to Karlovac, he was involved as a conductor to work with the mixed choir „Nada“, which consisted of craftsmen and workers, and in 1919, he got a plaque for his extraordinary work. On regular basis, parallel with this, he sang in the First Croatian Choir „Zora“, which he begun to conduct in 1922, but under one condition, he will conduct the choir as a volunteer and he must be elected unanimously. He was determined, talented and dedicated to his work with the choir, and also very strict, disciplined and energetic. That was the reason why he could rehearse a very demanding arrangement. „Zora“ made its greatest vocal achievements under his conduction. Along with many performances through the then state, the most important was the one in Belgium. After an excellent achievement at a competition in Zagreb, they were invited to sing at the Brussels Court on the occasion of the Gala that was arranged by the Veterans of the First World War, and then the whole Europe heard about „Zora“ and Karlovac. After they returned to Karlovac, the mayor organized a welcome gathering, which was attended by 7000 people. „Zora“ interpreted Schubert’s Mass in S-major under his conducting, at the 100th Anniversary of Franz Schubert, which was transmitted directly at the radio station „Zagreb“. „Zora“ was also conducted by David and accompanied by the Philharmonic Orchestra from Zagreb performing „Overture“ from the „Porin“ opera, composed by Vatroslav Lisinski. There are many things that he did in his life, as we know by now, but there are also many new things that we are learning day by day…

1. How did he meet your great-grandmother?

After he came to Karlovac, the Weiss family gave him a place in their house where my great-grandmother also lived. She was adopted by the Weiss family long before that. So, David and Olga got acquainted there and then they fell in love.

1. Did they have a children?

Yes, they had 3 children, Zlatko, Edit and Erna. Erna was my grandmother.

1. Where did they live in the town?

They lived in a house at the very centre of the town, exactly across the building of the „Zorin-dom“ theatre, which was built, on the basis of financial support and initiative of another prominent Jew in Karlovac, Vilim Reiner, just for the purpose of the „Zora“ choir.

In school we learned what happened to the Jews after the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia and after the establishment of the fascists governance.

1. Please can you tell us what happened to your family at that time?

Immediately after the Independent State of Croatia was established, three days after the proclamation of the State, on the 13th of April 1941, David was taken to prison in Karlovac, then to Zagreb, and after that to the “Danica” concentration camp in Koprivnica. His son Zlatko was also there; he was taken there very shortly after David. From Koprivnica they were taken, among many others, to Lika, where they were killed in the “Jadovno” concentraction camp. Edit and Erna were taken too, but thanks to the help of one acquaintance among the gendarmerie, they escaped the fate of other Jews who were deported to the concentration camps from which they never came back. So, if that hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t be here telling you this story, I wouldn’t exist…

1. Did you find some other things of your great-grandfather’s, except the photographs?

I found some other things in the box, I also hope to find other things in the house.

But something that touched me deeply is the discovering of David’s composition „Keduschah“, which he published exactly one year after he came to Karlovac. It is a liturgical composition which was performed during masses in the synagogue, it had 3 paragraphs, it was written for a solo voice of cantor, for the accompaniment of an organ, with a note which composition is sung by the choir as the answer. I work at the music school in Karlovac, as guitar teacher, and although the composition isn’t made for a guitar, I made an arrangement of the first paragraph, sticking to David’s original mode and harmonization.

This year in our town gallery will be organized the exhibition of the photographs which Tena Bunčić found in that old books – the exhibition will be arranged by Dinko Neskusil, known photographer from our town. She is also planning to write and publish a book about her great-grandfather.

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Photographs from: 1. Ivan Ott, Draženka Polović, Ljiljana Ščedrov: “Prvo hrvatsko

 pjevačko društvo Zora 1858-2008”, Gradsko kazalište Zorin

 dom, Karlovac, 2008.g.

 2. [www.kafotka.net](http://www.kafotka.net) – Dinko Neskusil

 3. Tena Bunčić – private collection

 4. Internet – [www.express.hr](http://www.express.hr)

 - YouTube

 - [www.vojnapovijest.večernji.hr](http://www.vojnapovijest.večernji.hr)

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