



Miha Pogačnik

Interview: Miha Pogačnik

The Artist is the one who is able to mirror the truth; with or without permission...

Prepared by: **Tina Drolc**, M.Sc.

Miha Pogačnik, a leadership resonance expert, violinist, Slovenian Cultural Ambassador and a professor at the IEDC – Bled School of Management, is also an exceptional virtuoso in the corporate and the political world. Through music and art, he demonstrates the principles of renewal and change, transforming thinking patterns and removing barriers which limit creativity and vision. He creates an inspirational platform for tackling teamwork and effective communications for more than 150 companies worldwide. Having lived 19 years in the US and 26 years in Hamburg and Mexico, he also initiated over 200 intercultural IDRIART festivals and conferences in crisis areas of the world: among them Budapest, Tbilisi, Ulan Baatar, Tibet, Dubrovnik, Amazonia, and South Africa before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

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Q "An artist who must create far from home actually becomes a student of life-changing school for cosmopolitanism", you have said. What has carved you into a visionary leadership expert from an artist and initially traditional concert violinist?

A In the early 1980s, I realised as a concert violinist that something essential was not possible within the world changing so dramatically. However, the concerts were still the same as few centuries before and only intended for those who love classical music. On the contrary, I always claimed that art is something which not only feels good but creates excitement and a certain level of awareness with which the representative of the classical music should be able to address the social problems of today directly and powerfully! So, 35 years ago, I established a unique festival in France, Chartres. While I have played many concerts at different places before it just happened that in the cathedral when I started playing I realised the cathedral was saying, "Play on me, not just on your violin!". From that time on, I really tried to extend every tone into every corner of this cathedral, to stop playing micro violin and start with macro violin. With this concept, I try to explain to big companies how to lead out of the periphery, like in the cathedral – play out of every corner of that huge space and make sure that when the music comes back, the echo does not interfere but rather you establish sensitive relationship with the periphery. At that time I was a very good networker in the traditional sense and I managed to establish this Chartres Festival the following year, with 1,200 people from 40 countries who came for one week. And this festival was really a step to a new phase of my life. I invited many artists from all over Europe to come and through music and arts, presented the polyphonic identity of Europe while deadly Pershing missiles were placed on German soil in 1983. Then I decided to move Chartres festival to Bled and imagine, at that time, 800 people from outside Slovenia came! Suddenly a violinist brought many important people to Slovenia, from then on the social innovation emerged: Audiences following art-

ists to the places to the crisis areas around the world, because I knew that where there are crises, there are also opportunities. From there on a 20 years period started for me, more than 200 festivals which I extended from Slovenia to Budapest, Prague and all continents -Latin America, New Zealand, Mongolia, India, the Amazon, Tibet, etc. At one point I was running 16 non-profit organisations around the world.

Q How do you approach the challenges, conflicts and crisis of today?

A I have never stopped being a violinist which is my core activity, but I do not get stuck with it and I have found innovating way of implementing it. My own perception of the art has shifted from the 80s. I would not now be doing intercultural festivals in a crisis area because I know more about the causes and I know that today we have economic wars and so I decided to go to the root of the cause. We need to change the inner economic system and then we will have a different life. In Swedish, the word for economy is **näringslivet**, which means food for life. Now tell me, "Is the economy of our time food for life?" If we live in a world where the economy is the God of everything, then I think it is necessary

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to add a bit of the arts into the centre of the economic thinking, as creative artist to be a part of these economic activities, to reach and transform the core of **Homo Economicus**. Nevertheless, we are not there. We are in the concert hall with the wives of those CEO's who send them to the concert! I always say an artist should be an entrepreneur and should discover where his/her place is and fight for it! An artist draws on the tradition of the court jester - funny - but the one who is able to mirror the truth to the emperor; with or without permission...

Q You work with many global names such as the World Economic Forum, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, Airbus, Emirates, Coca Cola, Mercedes-Benz, Microsoft, Novartis, Pfizer, Shell, Porsche and many others. How does your music based approach attract them?

A I play strictly classical masterpieces and I know which music element helps to create an environment where leaders suddenly reconsider their ways of operation. First, I get a very precise briefing on the current condition of the organization because if you want to bond with your client you do not only show them a Power-Point presentation, you give them something creative. I need to know everything about the company and their challenges to know which

music masterpiece can create a proper resonant space for them to be able to rethink the solution. I show them how the music also involves crisis and solution therefore they make a connection, suddenly they hear with their "corporate ears" what I play and paint. I first take them very quickly through the musical process, which has archetypal character, up and down moments. If you learn to master a real problem, you create a second curve in your life. Secondly, after their interdisciplinary experience of musical journey I put them into small teams where they become artists as a team! Given that they have the opportunity to be creative, all kinds of things happen... and everybody is learning through the artistic approach, which is not dangerous. Because, in art, you can make mistakes, you are not in the numbers and pressures of the company. They transfer channel all their corporate problems through the art; often also laugh about themselves and have fun! After this, they become great listeners, because nowadays we lost this capability due to the increased electronic environment. Intuits can identify 55 sorts of snow and the population around Pacific can identify over 150 shades of blue on the ocean

surface! Who can today be so sensitive? And what is missing in today's life is meaning and music helps a lot here! A masterpiece radiates meaning in highest potency! When a human finds the meaning, he/she can operate at many levels. We have so many people these days walking around shopping malls and you can see that they are lack of meaning.

Q We already find, even in the largest companies, their "Chief Inspiration Officer". What does this job position stand for?

A If you do not have inspiration in an organisation, then you have a situation when people say "our company is just ok" and people have jobs where they feel they just have to do it, feeling OK but not really motivated. You have good managers who know how to work together but they "play the wrong music" which does not inspire them. But what you really need to do is to go far beyond your product, how do you relate to people, what are deep effects of your products... you have to look at the activities from a different angle. That is why a Chief Inspiration Officer needs to stand together at the top of the company and give it the character, the peripheral strategy as playing in the Chartres cathedral. That is already happening and will happen more and more in the future.

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Q "When looking at Slovenia from abroad, I can see that Slovenes have very quickly substituted quality of life with 'corporation' luck of distant masters", you once wrote. It seems we have a challenge...

A I always keep saying in the Adriatic region, not to always do what they tell you in the west, do not forget your identity. Try to discover what you have and what your valuable contribution is to this world because in the west true inspiration has in many ways dried out. There is a lot of infrastructure but some gentle human principals are missing. Companies are full of fear. I am saying to my people in Central Eastern Europe: bring out the unique quality you have. When making deals in the west first you call all the lawyers, then you sign and then you go to dinner where everyone pays for themselves. But in the east it is all the other way around: first you make a relationship and celebrate then you need no lawyers, just a hand shake!! I go for that, there is nothing higher than trust, it is deeply human. ◀

Miha Pogačnik and Ban Ki-moon Secretary-General of the United Nations

