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World Guitar



Miroslav Tadic may not exactly be a household name in the guitar world, but to those who do know of him his status is near legendary. When I

first attended The California Institute of the Arts in 1992 I was a jazz guitar major and had never heard of “Miro,” as he is often called. There was definitely a buzz among the guitarists about this mysterious figure who always seemed to be in a hurry and was a bit intimidating walking the halls at 6’3” tall. The jazz majors studied primarily with Larry Koonse, but the word was to definitely try to get a secondary lesson with Tadic. The newcomers would ask “why?” and we were told Miroslav would definitely “mess you up with some new stuff.” Stuff that you were not hip to, no matter how good a jazz player you were.

Miroslav is an artist with an exceptionally large breadth of guitaristic and musical knowledge. The music of Robert Johnson, Jimi Hendrix, Baden Powell, Paco De Lucia, Frank Zappa and J. S. Bach are all well within his grasp as a professional performer. His collaborations and projects represent an amazingly diverse and proficient guitarist; yet it is perhaps in the musical language of his homeland that he is most revered. The success of his partnership with Macedonian rock guitar superstar Vlatko Stefanovski has possibly surprised some people that two acoustic guitarists can fill large venues. The audiences have been electrified by their performances of mostly odd metered music with no vocals and extended solos. For the purpose of this article I asked Miroslav a few questions specific to this genre, which is at the least probably somewhat unfamiliar to most readers.

You’ve had a very successful acoustic duo with Vlatko Stefanovski for over ten years now. How would you describe the music of the duo?

The great majority of our pieces are based on traditional folk themes from Macedonia. It is a small country in South-Eastern Europe, which stands at the crossroads of many cultures. Its music has assimilated many rich and varied influences, including Turkey and other near and Middle East countries, the Roma (Gypsy) people, Greece, Bulgaria, and Western Europe. The result is music, which can be anything from deeply sad and melancholic to very lively, quirky virtuosic and energetic with a wealth of modes, meters, rhythms, and ornaments. Vlat-

ko and I also bring our own influences, such as blues, rock, flamenco, and classical music. This creates an exciting and unique style, which is really hard to define as a common musical genre.

Let’s get into odd meters a bit. What meter do you generally use with your beginning students?

Seven - seven is neither too long or too short of a cycle. The core of all the Eastern European odd meters however is to look at them as groups of two and three. In the end, the final number doesn’t matter. For example, if we have a meter of five, we have 3+2 or 2+3. For seven it is 3+2+2 or 2+2+3. If we have nine that is not divided symmetrically we have 2+2+2+3. Eleven can be either 2+2+3+2+2 for fast pieces or 3+2+2+2+2 for slower ones. Twelve is divided as a 7+5 with either of the mentioned subdivisions within the 7 and 5. The most common meters in this music are actually five, seven, eight, eleven, twelve, and eighteen. Eighteen is felt as 11+7. Thirteen and fifteen are not as common traditionally. In Macedonia there are more songs in seven than in any other meter.

Joe LoPiccolo



Do you feel that being so fluent in odd metered music gives you a different perspective on duple meters?

I don't necessarily see myself as being any more fluent than people that are used to playing in 4/4, but I do see how much we actually break up 4/4 into groups of 2 and 3. Putting a group of 3 somewhere displaces the internal downbeats within the bar and works well in any music that has syncopation. An example is using a grouping of 3+3+3+3+2+2 (16th notes) over a bar of 4/4. What I really try to do with my students is have them feel the odd meters in the same way they feel 4/4.

I think most people find 4/4 easier as it's usually felt in even pulses, do you agree?

You can actually feel any odd meter as an even pulse; but, you are doing it in two bars. For example, two bars of 7/8 with the subdivisions can also be felt as a bar of 7/4 totally straight. Or, you can use the metronome beat as a dotted quarter and play 3 bars of 7/8 against 7 dotted quarter notes. You know you really have the odd meters when you can play them with the subdivisions against a straight metronome.

Can you talk a little bit about the piece included on the CD?

"Makedonsko Devojce" is based on a written piece by a known composer from Macedonia; but, it is so well known that most people consider it a folk song. It's a very simple tune; but, I elaborated on it enough that I feel that it is basically my composition based on that theme. It's in 7/8 in the most typical rhythmic subdivision in Macedonia, 3+2+2. It's very important to play the fingerings exactly as I notated them, in order to have the phrases and voicings sound as I intended. I recorded a version of it on my solo album Window Mirror released by MA Recordings and it has been recorded and performed by other artists as well. Your readers will notice that my recording differs slightly from the written score. That is because I always take some liberties with my pieces when performing or recording them.

What's coming up for you that you are excited about?

I've been building some guitars and I really enjoy that. I'm also really excited that my music is now being published by Doberman-Yppan. I'm writing out some of the things that I've had in mind to publish. I'm honored that people want to play this music. I have a new recording with Dusan Bogdanovic, Seobe (Migrations) that is almost completely improvised. We are both really happy with it. A DVD of the duo with Vlatko is coming out that features Swapan Chaudhuri on tabla and Theodosii Spassov on kaval. It's really something special and has duo, trio and quartet performances. It marks the tenth year of my collaborating with Vlatko.

Miroslav Tadic is on the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia California. His recordings and sheet music can be found at www.miroslavtadic.com.

*Thanks to the Open Fist theater company in Los Angeles for allowing me to attend their production of Frank Zappa's Joe's Garage. While he didn't perform in the show, Miroslav performs the music of Frank Zappa with the The Grande Mothers Re:Invented

Editors note: For an insight to the music of Joe LoPiccolo visit - www.joelopiccolo.com

"At such a young age, he's really got it going on, he's really great. His first CD is a great effort. I give it a high mark — super cool."
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