



Muzeum Historyczne Miasta
Krakowa

Intangible Heritage of the City

MUSEALISATION, PRESERVATION, EDUCATION

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Edited by
Magdalena Kwiecińska



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Jože Štukl | Škofja Loka Museum

The Škofja Loka Passion Play - *Processio Locopolitana*

Škofja Loka and the Loka Feudal Estate

Škofja Loka is a small town of 12.000 inhabitants, situated in Gorenjska region, 20 km northwest of Ljubljana, the capital city of the Republic of Slovenia.

In medieval and post medieval times, Škofja Loka was the centre of the Loka Feudal Estate, which was the property of the Bishops of Freising from 973 till the year 1803. The beginnings of medieval town, which was formed at the confluence of the Selška and the Poljanska Sora Rivers date back to the 12th century. Its oldest part is the Town Square or »Plac«, which was formed on the upper terrace in the middle of the 13th century¹. The Town Square was the hearth of the town's social and economic life. With the expansion of the settlement, on the lower terrace, parallel to the Upper Square, The Lower Square or »Lontrg« was formed, from the 14th century on also called the New Square². The houses on both, Upper and Lower Squares were built densely to each other so as to allow as many of them as possible to be placed next to the market place. They were long and narrow in shape, with their fronts facing the square and their gardens and outbuildings behind.

¹ Avguštin Cene, *Škofja Loka. Kulturni in naravni spomeniki Slovenije*, Maribor 1988, p. 5.

² Blaznik Pavle, *Škofja Loka in Loško gospostvo (973–1803)*, Škofja Loka 1973, p. 40.

According to the standard data, the town was first mentioned a market in 1248, while it was granted city rights in 1274³.

Poor Clares and Ursuline Sisters in Škofja Loka

In medieval and post medieval times, Škofja Loka was a rich and flourishing trading settlement whose economic prosperity attracted also different Catholic monastic communities. The first were Poor Clares who settled here as early as 1358 in a convent in the very centre of the old town. Apart from noble girls, there were also many city girls that joined them. They carried out their spiritual mission based primarily on contemplation and prayer, partly also on raising noble girls, until the Josephine reforms. Namely, Austrian Emperor Joseph II. dismissed by patent dated of 12th January 1782 all those orders, especially the contemplative ones, which did not directly benefit the education and social assistance⁴. However, the convent did not stay vacant long; Ursulines inhabited it already in October of the same year, starting their mission of educating young girls.

Capuchins, Their Activity and Arrival in Škofja Loka

Capuchins were the only male monastic community to arrive in Škofja Loka. As the youngest of the Friars Minor of Francis of Assisi, their order was founded in Italy in 1528⁵. The rules of their order were initially focused primarily on poverty, extensive prayer and contemplation; however, in subsequent years they emphasised also biblical studies, preaching and hearing confessions. After Pope Gregory XII. abolished the prohibition on their spreading outside Italy in 1575, Capuchins rapidly spread all over Europe. That was in the late 16th and early 17th century, in the period of Reformation and Catholic Revival. The Catholic authorities requested Capuchins to make their sermons as well as their exemplary life affect the heretics to return to the truth of Catholic faith and that the religious life of the remaining Catholic population would prosper again⁶. In Slovenian area, Capuchins

³ Kosi Matjaž, *Začetki Škofje Loke in freisinški škofje kot ustanovitelji mest* [in:] „Blaznikov zbornik. Zbirka Loški razgledi“ 2005, no. 11, p. 87-88.

⁴ Hančič Damjan, *Klarise na Kranjskem*, Ljubljana 2005, p. 15.

⁵ Benedik Metod, *Kristusovo trpljenje v kapucinski duhovnosti* [in:] „Pasijonski doneski“ 2015, no. 10, p. 36.

⁶ *Idem*, *Kapucinski samostan s cerkvi sv. Ane*, Celje-Škofja Loka 2008, p. 16.

first settled in Gorica / Gorizia in 1591 and afterwards as follows: in Ljubljana 1606, in Celje 1609, in Maribor 1613, in Ptuj 1615, in Radgona, in Trst / Trieste and Krmin 1617, in Beljak / Villach 1629, in Vipavski križ 1637, in Kranj and Krško 1640, in Celovec / Klagenfurt 1646, in Gradišče ob Soči 1650 and in Novo mesto 1658⁷. Capuchins were the most numerous monastic community on the territory of Slovenia in the 18th century. They arrived in Škofja Loka relatively late, in 1706. However, they had already been well known here prior to their settling in the town. The reason for this was that Capuchins' activities were not limited merely to the place where they lived, but they offered support to a wider area. It was precisely due to their preaching activities in the surrounding parishes that they eventually became a true people's order in a broader sense of rapprochement and coexistence with the people of all strata. Thus they also came occasionally to preach in Škofja Loka, first from Ljubljana and after the year 1640 from Kranj. Excitement over them by the Loka people eventually reached such proportions that they wanted to build them a monastery in the town so as to always have them in their midst. To this end, a Loka trader Sebastijan Lukančič as early as 1647 left in his will a garden in front of the Selška town gates and a considerable sum of money to Capuchins, with the intention that they would build a monastery there if possible⁸. Capuchins finally arrived in Škofja Loka on September 7, 1706. The building of their monastery was not completed yet, which is why they settled temporarily in a house next to the Holy Trinity Chapel at the Town Square. The building of the monastery began with the laying of the foundation stone in 1707 and was, together with the church, largely finished until 1709. In the church, which was dedicated to St. Anne in 1713, there had been 1300 masses already in 1710⁹.

Apart from hearing confessions and preaching, there were various other forms of their activity through which Capuchins influenced the spiritual image of the Baroque man. Here belong in particular organising various folk observances, among them being Passion processions which developed from medieval liturgical

⁷ Dolinar France, *Kapucini* [in:] „Enciklopedija Slovenije“ 1990, vol. 4, p. 405-406; Benedik Metod, *Kapucini kot pomemben dejavnik v oblikovanju duhovne podobe slovenskega naroda v 17. in 18. stoletju* [in:] „Loški razgledi“ 1999, no. 46, p. 12.

⁸ Kovač Primož, *Ustanovitev kapucinskega samostana v Škofji Loki*, „Loški razgledi“ 1993, no. 40, p. 41.

⁹ Benedik Metod, *Kapucinski samostan...*, *op.cit.*, p. 31-42.

processions, known practically all over Europe already in High Middle Ages. A big role in the development of processions had the introduction of the feast of Corpus Christi (Festum Corporis Christi), which in the late 14th century started to be celebrated with a procession. In such processions, amidst flowers, flags and banners, religious pictures and sculptures were being carried along, later also consolidated sculptures and finally live scenes with people were added, which were gaining an increasingly theatrical character in the Baroque period. Some people, however, see the beginnings of Passion processions in the Easter plays, commemorating Christ's Resurrection, to which gradually other subject matters such as the scenes from the Passion of Christ were added¹⁰.

The Škofja Loka Passion Play

The Škofja Loka Passion Play (hereafter ŠLPP) is a Good Friday penitential procession which was performed in Škofja Loka. Its text, composed of rhymed verse (863 altogether), arranged in 13 scenes, was written in the Škofja Loka Capuchin Monastery by a Capuchin monk - Friar Romuald (Lovrenc Marušič 1676–1748) while he was active in Škofja Loka as a preacher and a procession leader (1715–1727). There is very little data about Friar Romuald. The reason lies in that Capuchins did not use to extensively write about themselves in chronicles or elsewhere, which is why we also know so little about the personal lives of many other famous ones. We know that he was born in Štandrež / Sant' Andrea near Gorica / Gorizia and died in his home village at the age of 72. He entered the Capuchin order in 1699. He spent his novice year in Celje. He took his religious vows on March 13, 1700. He completed his studies of philosophy in Celje and Maribor, and theology in Ljubljana. He spent 49 years in the order¹¹.

ŠLPP is considered the oldest extant dramatic text in Slovenian language with some additions in Latin and German language and with director remarks. It is a unique testimony of the medieval – Baroque dramatisation and of the standard language of the day. The ŠLPP was initially untitled. It was only the piety which has a name – the Good Friday procession. It was this folk piety that

¹⁰ Marin Marko, *Škofjeloški pasijon (signum temporis)* [in:] *Škofjeloški pasijon. Diplomatični prepis*, ed. Aleš Berger, Ljubljana 1999, p. 197.

¹¹ Benedik Metod, *Ob odkritju spominske plošče patru Romualdu Lovrencu Marušiču (1676–1748)*, 21. marca 1997, „Loški razgledi“ 1999, no. 46, p. 20.



Historical depiction of the Škofja Loka Passion Play. Boris Kobe, 1967, oil on canvas. The collection of Slovenski Gledališki Inštitut, Ljubljana, photo: Tihomir Pintar.

inspired the dramatic text and its name. The name ŠLPP was written down for the first time in Koblar's edition of the Škofja Loka Passion Play facsimile in 1972¹².

History of Research

The ŠLPP has so far been published in four book editions. The first to publish the entire transcription of the ŠLPP together with an introductory review of the history of Passion processions was Josip Mantuani. His work was published in the journal *Carniola* VII–VIII, 1916/17.

The second scholar dealing with the ŠLPP was France Koblar. He published the ŠLPP facsimile together with an accompanying study in 1972. The edition was

¹² Ogrin Matija, *Oče Romuald, Škofjeloški pasijon, Znanstvenokritična izdaja*, Celje 2009, introduction.

intended to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first performance, wherein the author took the year 1721 as the year of the occurrence of the ŠLPP.

The third edition of the ŠLPP was prepared by Jože Faganel and Primož Simoniti. It was published in the Kondor collection in 1987 and reprinted and published again in 1999¹³.

The fourth and so far the most comprehensive and extensive scholarly critical edition of the ŠLPP, consisting of 431 pages was prepared by dr. Matija Ogrin with colleagues from the Institute for Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies at ZRC SAZU in 2009. This edition has another special feature: in addition to the printed version it is also published electronically, and is available free of charge at the web address <http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc>.

Appearance

The ŠLPP is a handwritten book or codex in the size of 19,7 cm x 28,4 cm and contains 51 sheets / folios. Its binding is covered in parchment previously used for a rent roll of the Loka Estate. The folios are made of several kinds of fine, light and thin paper, produced in north Italian paper mills¹⁴. The text analysis shows that the ŠLPP was written by 6 different hands.

The main part of the ŠLPP from Folio 3r to 40v is a uniform work, written by a hand that we ascribe to Friar Romuald. Due to the fact that just the introductory and accompanying guidelines on the staging of the ŠLPP were written by other hands, the text in a paleographic sense can be perceived as completely uniform. It was recorded in a single, perhaps intermittent but unvarying process of writing. Given that the entire text practically does not contain any errors, which could be ascribed to the process of recording, we conclude that it was transcribed from different templates or versions of the Passion play. It was only later that there appeared a certain fragmentation in the initially uniform manuscript, mainly in the form of some later-hand additions and other interventions such as pasted or cut / torn out sheets and similar¹⁵.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 325-326.

¹⁴ *Idem*, *Vprašanje tradicije Škofjeloškega pasijona. Ekdotična perspektiva*, „Slavistična revija“ 2008, no. 56, p. 291.

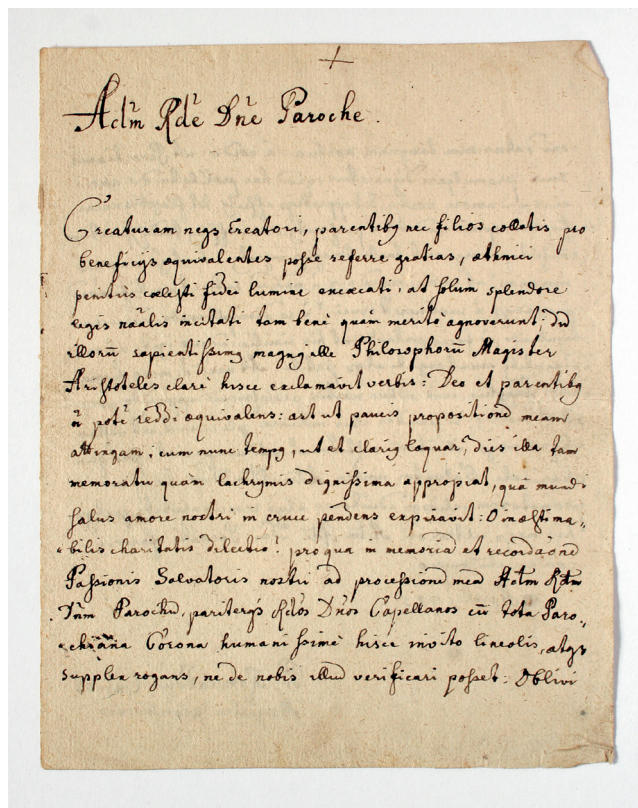
¹⁵ Ogrin Matija, *Oče Romuald...*, *op. cit.*, p. 333-334.

The Date of the ŠLPP and the Beginning of the Procession in Škofja Loka

The creation of the ŠLPP and the beginning of its staging has until recently been dated to 1721, a year recorded in Folio 2r. New analyses have revealed that the Folio 2r was written separately from the main text and was only subsequently pasted into the Codex, which is why its date cannot be applied to the entire manuscript. The analysis of the introductory legal provisions and of the text as a whole reveals that the ŠLPP was neither composed nor premiered in the year 1721, but was being annually staged prior to this. The extant documents, especially the letters of invitation, with which the procession leader invited people to participate in the procession, is clear evidence that Friar Romuald was staging the Passion procession already in 1715.

The oldest surviving letter of invitation to the Passion procession in Škofja Loka was written by Romuald's predecessor and dates to 1713. This is clear evidence that the Passion procession in Škofja Loka was at that time already an established event, having been performed in Škofja Loka in the Slovenian language even before the arrival of Friar Romuald. The beginnings of the Passion play tradition are unknown and lost in the darkness of the preceding decades. The letter mentions as many as 16 scenes, which were very picturesque and baroque or even earlier medieval in character. The high number of scenes, particularly their picturesque and symbolic nature that incorporates medieval and Biblical motifs, are characteristics of the early Passion plays of the 17th and early 18th centuries. However, after 1720 the Capuchin authorities demanded that the Passion plays should be limited to the scenes of the Passion of Christ according to the Gospels. The Passion plays were accordingly made shorter.

Friar Romuald wrote the main text of the ŠLPP in 1715 and later added to it. It is not possible to reconstruct the original 1715 version. It must in places have been similar if not the same as the surviving text, but most certainly it was more picturesque and contained even more scenes. The time span in which Romuald wrote, re-wrote, added and finally concluded his Passion play, extends from 1715 to 1727. The version surviving to this day, with 13 scenes, was presumably created as late as 1727 when Romuald last edited the text. Friar Romuald that year either left Škofja Loka or transferred his role of a procession leader to someone else. On that occasion, he meticulously transcribed the manuscript and added instructions for future performances so as to help his successor. Thus the public announcement of the procession for the following year, 1728, was already written

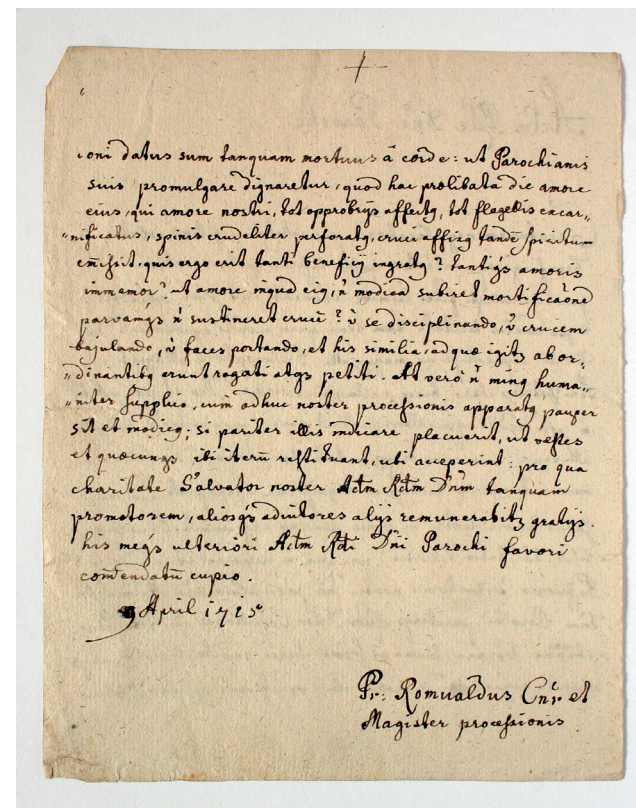


by a different hand, most certainly by a new procession leader whose name is unknown. It must have been him who had all the texts bound into a codex sometime between 1728 and 1730. Afterwards, up to the mid-18th century, several different hands added to the Codex and these later insertions already respected the newly cut edges of the book¹⁶.

Staging of the ŠLPP in the Past and in Present Days

In the 18th century, the Loka Passion procession was performed annually. Along with similar processions of that kind, it was part of the penitential observance of Good Friday, thus representing an important part of spiritual preparation of people for Easter. By featuring Christ's suffering in a very dramatic way, they

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 350-351; 354, 406-408; *Idem*, *Tri stoletja pasijonskega izročila*, „Pasijonski doneski” 2016, no. 11, p. 79-85.



A letter of invitation of father Romuald on his procession from April 9, 1715, Škofja Loka Capucine monastery.

clearly aimed at people's recognition of the fatality of sin, their repentance and final betterment. However, after 1767 the Passion procession in Škofja Loka ceased to be performed, being abolished by Karel Mihael Attems, the Archbishop of Gorizia (1752-1774) for its inappropriateness and „almost obscene scenes”¹⁷.

From 1767 until the first quarter of the 20th century, there were no performances of the Passion play. It was staged again more than a century and a half later, on the occasion of the Craft-Industrial Exhibition in Škofja Loka in 1936, by Tine Debeljak, with the assistance of the director Pavel Okorn. However, it was not performed in the form of a procession along the streets and squares of the medieval town, but as a theatrical performance in the courtyard of the Škofja Loka town school. Here a mighty stage, with an area of 200 square metres was set up, surrounded by a backdrop representing the medieval town which was created

¹⁷ Benedik Metod, *Izhodišča Škofjeloškega pasijona*, „Pasijonski doneski” 2006, no. 1, p. 28, 35.

by Bara Remec. The performances, which took place successively from July 12 to 16 and in which 165 amateur actors from Škofja Loka and the surrounding villages took part, were attended by more than 5000 spectators¹⁸.

The second world war prevented further stagings of the ŠLPP. After the war, staging was absolutely impossible due to the then communist regime in our country. The conditions changed after 1991 when Slovenia became an independent state and embarked on the path of gradual democratization. Nevertheless, it took several years before the conditions for its staging were ripe. Thus, the entire ŠLPP in its original form was re-staged in 1999, and then again in 2000, 2009 and 2015.

Due to the complexity of its staging, it has been determined that the event should take place only every six years. Modern performances closely follow the script written by Friar Romuald, though the number of the scenes increased from 13 to 20. Romuald's Passion play contained 13 scenes: 1 Paradise, 2 Death, 3 The Last Supper, 4 Samson, 5 Sweating Blood, 6 Flagellation, 7 Coronation, 8 Hieronymus, 9 Ecce Homo, 10 Christ on the Cross, 11 Mother of Sorrows / Seven Sorrows of Mary, 12 The Arc of the Covenant, 13 The Holy Sepulchre. At the re-staging in 1999, the then director Marjan Kokalj, due to the practical feasibility on the platforms and in order to improve the understanding of the Play by the modern spectator, added a foreplay and made some cuts in the scenes. The result was 20 (out of 13) scenes: 1 Paradise, 2 Death, 3 Hell, 4 Guilds, 5 Entering Jerusalem, 6 The Last Supper, 7 Samson and Sweating Blood, 8 Judas and the Judgement, 9 Herod, 10 Flagellation, 11 Coronation, 12 Hieronymus, 13 Ecce Homo, 14 Two Robbers, 15 Stations of the Cross, 16 Crucifixion, 17 Mother of Sorrows, 18 The Arc of the Covenant, 19 The Holy Sepulchre, 20 Music Band. All the subsequent stagings have followed this classification¹⁹.

The founder and preserver of the ŠLPP used to be the Fraternity of the Holy Corpus Christi which was founded at St. Jacob church in Škofja Loka in 1634²⁰. It was at their initiative that Capuchins in Škofja Loka accepted the task of regularly organising the Passion procession on Good Friday. As an order bound to poverty,

¹⁸ Florjančič Alojzij Pavel, *Kronologija uprizorjanj* [in:] *Škofjeloški pasijon 2009*, ed. Alojzij Pavel Florjančič, Škofja Loka 2014, p. 189; Planina France, *Škofjeloški pasijon 1936* (reprint), „Pasijonski doneski” 2016, no. 11, p. 105.

¹⁹ Kokalj Marjan, *Režija Škofjeloškega pasijona v širšem smislu*, „Loški razgledi” 1999, no. 46, p. 117; Golob Milan, *Pasijonski paberki*, „Pasijonski doneski” 2016, no. 11, p. 17-18.

²⁰ Štukl France, *Drobižki k Škofjeloškemu pasijonu*, „Loški razgledi” 1999, no. 46, p. 107.

the Capucins did not have the means of their own to prepare a procession. Thus the Fraternity of the Holy Corpus Christi provided the necessary funds, while Capuchins took over the entire organisation of the procession and made sure that the event was carried out in an appropriate and decent manner²¹.

In accordance with an agreement of successor rights between the Capuchin Monastery and the Municipality of Škofja Loka, the production role that once belonged to the Fraternity of the Holy Corpus Christi (abolished due to the Josephine Reforms in the late 18th century) was transferred on the Škofja Loka Municipality. The Municipality as the producer of the ŠLPP today, apart from providing a formal, legal and financial framework, is also responsible for establishing a technical committee which appoints a director and a production manager and monitors the preparations for the project. The bearers and practitioners of the ŠLPP are the residents of Škofja Loka and the nearby villages who are preserving the Passion play heritage as individuals, families, local communities, associations, groups and cultural institutions. The most important role belongs to the heads of amateur theatre groups who as a rule are the most respected persons in their local communities. During preparations for the project they cooperate closely with the each-time director and in the non-Passion period they are in charge of maintaining permanent ties between the actors and the other participants in a particular village.

Today the ŠLPP, similarly as in Romuald's time, is still performed during Lent and Easter time and takes place along the streets and squares of the medieval town of Škofja Loka whose architecture provides the best theatrical backdrop. The only illumination are lamps and torches, the only artificial scenery are stationary platforms with the seats for spectators, portable platforms carried by the bearers on which the scenes are enacted and similar platforms pulled by horses. The order of the scenes remained the same as it was in Romuald's time, either. The scenes follow each other with a few minutes' delay. Each scene is enacted at each of the four different locations of the town where there are the platforms with the seats for the spectators. Accordingly, at each of those four venues the entire Passion play can be seen, as one scene after another is being enacted in front of the audience and then proceeds to the next one. Spoken texts are accompanied by music and singing as

²¹ Benedik Metod, *Izhodišča...*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

well as by the sound effects produced by the Flagellants and Cross Bearers, while the accompanying meditations explain the forthcoming scenes²².

Last year's (2015) staging involved 958 performers, of them 369 women and 589 men. The actors had 106 spoken and 8 prominent silent roles; there were 64 horsemen, 41 horse guides, 100 Adam's children, 53 hermits, 55 penitents, 12 grenadiers, 10 dragoons, 58 members of guilds and fraternities, 234 choral singers, 9 solo singers, 17 band musicians, 10 drummers, 171 bearers of the platforms etc. However, the residents of the entire town centre regularly participate in the event, by putting lit candles on the windows of their houses.

Keeping "Passion Vitality" During "Non-Passion" Years

There are several associations as well as individuals in Škofja Loka who are concerned with preserving the ŠLPP heritage also during »non-Passion« years. They prepare activities, important for keeping »Passion vitality«. Here belong the ŠLPP Days, organised annually during Lent / Easter time and which, besides other events, are primarily characterized by expert meetings and lectures on the topic of the ŠLPP; the Škofja Loka Museum Society annually publishes a comprehensive periodical publication *Passion Journal*; there are several photographic exhibitions at home and abroad; throughout the year, there are numerous evenings and concerts of Passion music; in the Capuchin Monastery there is a permanent exhibition of the ŠLPP with a possibility of seeing the original manuscript, which is kept in the Capuchin library.

Legal and Formal Framework of Protection the Living Heritage of the ŠLPP

In the past decade, a lot of efforts were put in preparing the legislation necessary for the preservation of the ŠLPP and keeping it as an element of living heritage. In 2007, The Municipality adopted a Decree on Staging the ŠLPP²³, which regulates its permanent staging in a procession form, within the town centre of Škofja Loka, during Lent / Easter time. In 2008, the ŠLPP was inscribed in the Register of Living Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Slovenia at the

²² Kokalj Marjan, *Uprizoritev Škofjeloškega pasijona v letu 1999* [in:] *Škofjeloški pasijon. Diplomatični prepis, op. cit.*, p. 242.

²³ Uradni list Republike Slovenije, no. 109, 30.11.2007, p. 15036.

Ministry of Culture RS²⁴. In 2012, The Government of the RS declared the ŠLPP Intangible Cultural Heritage of National Importance, with a view to ensuring its public accessibility and its transmission from generation to generation as well as to maintain the protected elements in accordance with the promulgation decree²⁵. In 2016 we are in the midst of a complex task of putting the ŠLPP on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO. The process of nomination is currently in the final stages of evaluation. The results will have been known by November 2016.

Last and Future Performances

The last staging of the ŠLPP was in 2015. There were eight performances, from March 21 to April 12, and it was visited by 23.000 spectators altogether. The next staging will be in 2021 and it will coincide with the Europassion Association Congress which will be held in Škofja Loka at that time.

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²⁴ http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/Razvidi/RKD_Ziva/Rkd-08-629-001-p.pdf [accessed 16.6.2016]; <http://www.zkds.si/filelib/Pasijon.pdf> [accessed 16.6.2016]; <http://www.nesnovnadediscina.si/sl/skofjeloški-pasijon> [accessed 16.6.2016].

²⁵ Uradni list Republike Slovenije, no. 56, 23.7.2012, p. 5800.

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