

Grandpa and Dad worked at the stud farm, and here I am now taking care of the horses.

This is home to 106 horses, a herd of mares with offspring and breeding stallions - on 100 hectares of pasture



AUTHOR Suzana Lepan Štefančić

Filip Grgačević whistled loudly and stepped onto the meadow with buckets of oats in his hands. From a distance, a thud is heard and grows louder. But there is nothing in sight. A few seconds later, clouds of dust swirl behind the hills on the pasture. A herd of about a hundred horses appeared. Powerful Lipizzaners rush for a sudden "snack".

"They are used to getting a treat after whistling. However, the more people came and whistled, and did not give them anything, the less and less they began to respond" - smiles Filip, manager of Ivandvor, a location within the State Stud Farm of Lipizzaners of Đakovo and Lipik. Pastures and bishop's stables, only a few kilometers from the city noise of Đakovo, are home to 106 horses. It is a typical farm, with a breeding herd of mares with offspring and breeding stallions. They run freely on hundreds of hectares of pastures. About forty other males, on the other hand, live at another stable address, at a stallion facility, in the heart of Đakovo.

Filip practically grew up in Ivandvor, his Grandfather Božo and Father Jozo also worked there.

“Grandpa got a job in the 60's, and my dad in 1971. They were typical stables. My Grandfather and Father were in charge of preparing food, training and cleaning horses; they took care of raising foals, breeding etc.”- the 38-year-old tells us.

Filip and his twin brother spent every free moment of their childhood in Ivandvor. They worked there later as seasonal workers, for wages.

“The work at the stud farm used to be underestimated, laborious and hard... even my father never allowed me to work there” - our interlocutor recalls. When he finished school as a mechanical technician, Filip could not find a job in the profession, unlike his brother, a carpenter, who went his own way immediately after graduation. They then faced a great tragedy.

“My father died in a car accident while returning from work in October 2002. Two months later, I took over his place in the stud farm” Filip recalls.

There is no amount of money, he says today, for which he would trade his job.

“Horses are something special to me. And when I go on holiday to the sea, I miss not being with them. If I'm free for three or four days and I'm home, I have to get to the Stud Farm. Working with them is relaxing, there is no tape, no workload, and it's not the same every day. We take care of 106 horses, each one is different and requires different attention, just like people, but it's not the same mentality. Horses are not spoiled or corrupt and I simply enjoy their company” he says.

Although Filip is the third generation of the Grgačević family in the Stud Farm, he was the only one who bred and raised horses at home.

“My two predecessors did not have, perhaps, the financial means, there were many children, Dad had a lot of siblings” he summarizes. And Filip, in turn, emptied his stables last year, after fifteen years. “Because, from being a hobby for recreation and pleasure, it turned into a big commitment” he says.

“From work I raced home again to horses, I became a practical slave to them, I couldn't even go to the sea on holiday, or birthdays and weddings. And my job is, of course, a priority” Filip concludes.

The Đakovo stud farm was founded in 1506. It was then that the word "Stud Farm" was mentioned for the first time in a written document in history. It is associated with the Bishop of Đakovo, Mija Kesarić, in whose stables there were 90 Arabian horses. However, there is information on how it existed even before the written mention. According to that version, it was founded by the Bosnian-Srijem Bishops on the estates given to them by the Hungarian-Croatian King Koloman in 1239. Horses are first mentioned in Đakovo on the occasion of the wedding of the Bosnian Ban Tvrtko with the Princess Dorotea of Bulgaria. Ban then donated ten Arab mares and one stallion to Bishop Peter. Until 1806, only Arabian horses were bred. And that year, exactly three decades after the founding of the stud farm in Slavonia, the Lipica stud farm fled the onslaught of Napoleon's army and settled in Đakovo. The stud farm found refuge in the Bishop's stables on Vitika and stayed at that address for a year. This is the beginning of Lipizzaner breeding in Slavonia.

At the time when Josip Juraj Strossmayer became Bishop, in the middle of the 19th century, he started breeding exclusively Lipizzaner horses. Ivandvor "emerged" in 1912, when horse stables and workers' apartments were built there. It is made of acacia wood, which makes Ivandvor specific.

“Đakovo has a brand, an identity that has outgrown the borders of Croatia and it is a pride to have a horse in the barn with the letter "Đ" said Nidal Korabi, who ran the stud farm for five years, until recently. “Last year we sold a horse to

Mr. Lazar, of Hungary, a multiple world champion in two-carriage driving” he adds. Our country is a record holder for the number of Lipizzaners in the world. It is also a national and cultural heritage. Lipizzaner breeding in Slavonia, Baranja and Srijem was also declared an intangible cultural asset last Spring. “First, it is an intangible cultural asset involving one breed. It is a recognition of the rich tradition of Lipizzaner breeding in the area. It includes carnival riding, the permeation of Lipizzaners in folk verse, through folklore, in fine arts, and it was this breadth that was crucial that we managed to register the breeding tradition as an intangible cultural asset” explains Korabi. Stallions in the city, on the other hand, have stallions "reserved" for training, tourism or sales

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Manager Ivandvor: Filip Grgačević – Tel: 00 385 31/813-286- E-mail: fgrgacevic@dedl.hr



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