What is (and if anything at all) Antonio Janigro to us today?

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antonio janigro

How many meanings are delivered, today, to us, by this name so easily pronounced with as many as seven of its wide Italian vowels? Here is the answer: to our people, exasperated with the daily politics, this name has no longer any meaning. But those among us who have found refuge from the curse of history, with politics being its most devoted and meanest servant, in arts, that is, in the matters of subtlety and sagacity of mind, in assessing the world using aesthetic standards instead of the mace of power, are still remembering Antonio Janigro. Some of them are remembering him from his Zagreb period (1939 – 1968), others had no personal contact but got introduced to his art trough yesterday LP records or present CDs, both have linked the name of the Italian of Zagreb (he was born in Milan) with the moments of exaltation while listening the recordings of the classical music in their rooms, ranging from the Baroque to the Croatian contemporary composer Kelemen. Indeed, we should bear in mind that the Zagreb Soloists (originally the Zagreb Soloists Ensemble) became the shining star in the global concert sky together with the emergence of the LP records, as witnessed most successfully by the records of that period, first of all by the recordings made for the Vanguard, and later on by those of RCA.

Antonio Janigro, with his long bony face, leaning somewhat forward during walk, with a parting on the left side of his head covered with dark black hair, appeared for the first time as a soloist in Dvorak's *Cello Concerto in B minor*, Op. 104, together with the Zagreb Philharmony on the 16th October 1939, and for the last time (after which he would leave Zagreb), with the same physical features, again as the conductor of the Zagreb Philharmony on the 22nd May 1968, in the squeaky, rather dark, with unwaxed black parquet floor, on the whole shabby, and yet irresistibly intimate Concert Hall "Istra" in the Teslina Street, conducting Milko Kelemen's *Equilibres*, Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major* (with Pavica Gvozdic as soloist) and Tchaikovsy's "Fifth".

In the meantime, or, precisely, in 1954, Maestro Janigro founded his magnificent thirteen-member musical team. And, to repeat, there was nothing at that time on this globe that could steal the limelight from the Croatian capital, to deny the anthological relevance of the music performed by the Zagreb team. Thus, no wonder that the recordings of the Antonio Janigro ensemble from that distant past are even today being re-issued worldwide with considerable commercial success.

We have not read Gayoty's monograph *Antonio Janigro* (Geneva, 1962), but we believe that it also underlines what was the essence of Janigro's greatness: *'a brilliant completeness of performance and a voluminous sound, which made his cantilena magnificent'* (Krešimir Kovacevic).

Embodying an undisputable negation of today's notorious and obtrusive political tycoons, the contribution of this cellist and conductor to the global image of Zagreb by virtue of his spirituality is much more significant than the one made by all the cohorts of braggarts changing along with the changes in the political regimes. And this is enough for Janigro to rest in peace and to remain for ever our precious and cherished memory.