



SISTER ACT

ANA IVANKOVIC + MAŠA IVANKOVIĆ LENASI

We got the chance to sit down and learn a little bit more about these very special sister virtuosos in Belgrade. Both talent and heart definitely run strong in this family.

We had the very great pleasure of working with Maša last year, and were super thrilled to find out her sister, Ana, is also a musician. Ana - can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Ana: I started playing the violin when I was 9, and then I switched to the viola once I started high school. I instantly fell in love with it. I was 12 when I sat in the orchestra for the first time, and that is when I knew that I wanted to do it until the end of my life. Playing has helped me through some of the most difficult periods of my life, and playing has always been my safe space and an escape from reality.

A couple of concerts that I have played changed me - I left part of my soul and heart on those stages. And I am so happy for those experiences. Apart from playing, I enjoy dancing salsa, scuba diving, and reading. I also love going out and traveling, meeting new people, and throwing parties. I am a really outgoing and open person.



What do you each of you enjoy the most about being able to collaborate with each other? Is there anything about being sisters that makes it more challenging? Do you get on each other's nerves?

Maša: First thing about two of us is that we are sisters by birth and best friends by choice! We do get on each other's nerves easily, especially when we are working together, but we chill out quickly. The tricky part is to leave the problems and arguments on *work*, and not take them home, since we live together. So a lot of maturity is important as well as the ability to separate work and our relationship.

Ana: Maša and I started playing together in the orchestra while I was still in high school and I remember being really proud of my baby sister joining me. It wasn't until we were both at the academy that we really started playing together in a chamber ensemble. And there was an instant click. We have that sisterly connection, similar taste in classical music, and the same energy and passion. We understand each other without too much talking. She is my best friend and favorite person to play with, but also my worst critic. Of course, we get on each others nerves - professionally and personally - but at the end of the day, she is the first person I call whenever something good or bad happens, someone I know I can lean on, and someone I will always be there for. She is my person.



Portrait of Maša Ivanković Lenasi rehearsing with the Youth Orchestra in Rome

How do you go about coming up with inspiration for a project like this - music, wardrobe, setting, etc? What was different about this year's collaboration as a duet vs last year's solo?

Maša: Our filmmaker Luka has amazing ideas! Ever since the first time we met, we got along about everything and we were literally finishing each other's sentences - reading each other's thoughts. I always find inspiration in other people: creative minds. Cozy clothes and cold weather are always inspiration. I would say that everything inspires me, which makes this a hard question to answer!

I would say this collaboration is a bit more fun and maybe also a little bit easier since I am not the only one playing. It is always easier and more fun in two, especially if it is with someone who you are close with.

What is it about music that makes it such an important part of the holidays?

Ana: Music is an important part of life, not just the holidays. When you can't express feelings or when you can't find words, you can always turn to music. Music is what feelings sound like. And music is what brings that special magical spark to holidays. As one of my all time favorite composers said "Music begins where the possibility of words end." J. Sibelius

Maša: Music is something that I chose a long time ago, and it makes everyday of my life so special and fulfilled - even when things are not going as planned. So with the holidays around the corner, that only makes music become more special and more joyful, and even if it is tough period of my life. Music makes life easier.

What is your dream performance/job/scenario with regards to your music?

Ana: My dream job would be to be a member of Berlin Philharmonie. It is my favorite orchestra in the world, and Berlin Philharmonie Hall is one of my favorite places in the world. As far as the dream performance goes, I kinda already did that - in the Hall of Berlin Phil, as a member of a German Nordic Youth Philharmonie, with my sisters sharing the stage with me, playing Eine Alpensinfonie by R. Strauss. When I am on stage in an orchestra, there is no happier person in the universe.



Berliner Philharmonie, courtesy of A. Savin Wikiphotos