



# Nicolas & Ksenija *hrvatski sinonimi plesa*

Supružnici **Nicolas Quesnoit** i **Ksenija Plušćec Quesnoit** uživaju u svom Plesnom centru ZAGREB by Nicolas, a uz to imaju još jednu veliku strast – uređivanje stanova i kuća

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## **Nicolas & Ksenija: Croatian Bywords for Dancing**

Spouses **Nicolas Quesnoit** and **Ksenija Plušćec Quesnoit** merrily dance their days away at the Zagreb Dance Centre by Nicolas, but they also gave a whirl to another great passion of theirs – decorating apartments and houses

**P**rivatni život i profesionalni put profesionalnog plesnog para, Hrvatice Ksenije Plušćec Quesnoit i 47-godišnjeg Francuza Nicolasa Quesnoita odredio je Englez Richard Porter. Taj poznati britanski učitelj plesa, u Londonu je istodobno vježbao Nicolasa, a u Zagrebu bi svaka dva mjeseca trenirao sa Ksenijom. I vrlo brzo je zaključio da bi Nicolas i Ksenija bili sjajan plesni par pa ih je odlučio spojiti.

Međutim, Nicolas nije bio oduševljen tom idejom jer je za Hrvatsku znao samo kroz izvješća o ratu, pa je njegova želja bila da Ksenija doseli u London.

No, na kraju je ipak Nicolas otišao u Zagreb, pomalo nevoljko, ali onda su se, sasvim neočekivano, dogodila dva iznenađenja. Najprije se Nicolas na prvi pogled zaljubio u Kseniju, a potom i u Hrvatsku.

Vratio se u London, prodao auto te se preselio Kseniji koja je u Zagrebu imala stan i svoj plesni klub u kojem je počeo raditi.

Plesni virtuoz Quesnoit vrlo se brzo uklopio u novu sredinu. Kao sudac s diplomom najprestižnijeg obrazovnog plesnog centra na svijetu za sportski ples IDTA London, postao je predsjednik hrvatskog Zbora plesnih sudaca. Član je i renomirane svjetske plesne organizacije World Dance & Dance Sport Council, član Hrvatske udruge profesionalnih trenera i sudaca, a bio je i trener hrvatske plesne reprezentacije.

Čim je Nicolas stao na noge, roditelji su primijetili da prirodno reagira na glazbu i da bi mogao imati talenta za ples...

– Stoga su me već sa šest i pol upisali u plesnu školu. Nakon tri godine, s nepunih deset, prvi put sam postao prvak Francuske, a nakon toga sam još tri puta osvojio taj naslov – prisjeća se.

Nakon što je završio Agronomski fakultet u Francuskoj, a u želji da napreduje kao plesač, odlučio je nastaviti plesno obrazovanje u inozemstvu. Stoga se preselio u London, tadašnji svjetski centar za sportski ples.

Dok nije svladao jezik, u prvo je vrijeme uređivao i njegovao golf terene i to je, kaže, bilo krasno razdoblje, jer je preko dana bio na zraku, a navečer je tri sata vježbao u dvorani.

S novom plesnom partnericom ubrzo se plasirao među prvih šest britanskih parova te je postao član britanske plesne reprezentacije. Finalist prvenstva Velike Britanije u kombinaciji deset sportskih plesova bio je 1998. i 1999., a 1997, 1998,



ROUEN 2002.



MILANO 2003.



IZOLA 2003.

**T**he course of the private life and the career path of the professional dance couple, Ksenija Plušćec Quesnoit from Croatia and her 47-year-old husband, Nicolas Quesnoit from France, were set and steered by the Englishman Richard Porter. This well-known British dance teacher was simultaneously training Nicolas in London and Ksenija in Zagreb, visiting her every two months. It did not take him long to figure out that Nicolas and Ksenija would be a great dance couple, so he decided to pair them up.

However, Nicolas was not keen on the idea, as his knowledge about Croatia was limited to wartime accounts, and he wanted Ksenija to move to London.

Be that as it may, Nicolas ended up going to Zagreb, albeit under quiet protest. But what do you know: entering Zagreb, he got off on the right foot with it! Life threw him two curves: first, Nicolas fell in love with Ksenija at first sight, and then head over dancing shoes with Croatia itself.

He went back to London, sold his car, and moved in with Ksenija, who had her own apartment and dance studio in Zagreb, where he started working.

It did not take long for the dance virtuoso Quesnoit to fit into the new environment. As a dance adjudicator with a degree from the most prestigious educational dancesport centre in the whole wide world, IDTA London, he became chairman of the adjudicators of the Croatian Dance Association. He is also a member of the renowned international dance organisation World Dance & Dance Sport Council, as well as the Croatian Association of Professional Dance Trainers and Adjudicators. He has also coached the Croatian national dance team.

As soon as little Nicolas started walking, his parents noticed that he responded to music naturally, and that his walking might turn into dancing before long...

– That's why they enrolled me in a dance school at the gentle age of six and a half. After three years, when I was less than ten years old, I became champion of France for the first time, and after that, I won that title three more times – he recalls.

After graduating from the Faculty of Agriculture in France, his itchy feet made him pursue dance studies abroad. So, he moved to London, the mecca of dancesport at the time.

Before he mastered the language, he worked as maintenance at golf



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courses. He describes it as a period in which the grass was green(er) on every side – he enjoyed fresh air during the day and trained in the gym for three hours every evening.

With his new dance partner, he soon made it to the top six British dance couples and became a member of the British national dance team. He was a finalist in the WDSF World Championship Ten Dance in 1998 and 1999, and in 1997, 1998, 1999, and in 2000, he made it to the Latin American Dance Finals in Great Britain.

While in London, he got his degree, acquiring the title of dancing master of Latin and standard dances, and passed all the exams for an international adjudicator.

He also triumphed in the USA, where he lived with Ksenija for a short while; in 2004, he made it to the Top 15 professional dancers of the World Ranking List. In addition, he excelled at American professional dancing competitions: he came in first in Las Vegas, won second place in Palm Desert, and fourth place in Los Angeles. On top of that, he was a finalist in the most prestigious American dance competition, The Open. At all of these competitions, he clean swept the dancing floor with most of his opponents using his Latin American moves...

And while he enjoyed an excellent reputation in dance circles all around the world, he gained wide popularity in Croatia thanks to his performances on the television show "Dancing with the Stars". Partner dancing with the actress Zrinka Cvitešić, he won the first season in 2006. That did a 180 spin on his life.

– Before that, people here didn't know who I was, and then all of a sudden, my dance moves gained traction on the Croatian scene and made me famous. People started recognising me on the street; everyone was so kind and cordial to me, so I realised that people appreciate what I do – he says.

Public recognition is all well and good, he says, but the most important thing is that he contributed to the popularisation of dance and his Zagreb Dance Centre by Nicolas, making it the most famous dance centre and school in Croatia.

– Working with the great actress Zrinka Cvitešić was a wonderful experience. She's a great person with remarkable talent and work ethic. We weren't dead set on winning; our primary goal was to do our best and enjoy the process, come what may. And

1999. i 2000. bio je u finalu Velike Britanije u latinskoameričkim plesovima.

U Londonu je diplomirao, dobio titulu učitelja latino i standardnih plesova, a položio je i sve ispite za međunarodnog suca.

I u SAD-u, gdje je s Ksenijom kratko boravio, postizao je sjajne rezultate: 2004. uvršten je u Top 15 profesionalnih plesača na svjetskoj rang listi. Osim toga, briljirao je na američkim profesionalnim natjecanjima: pobijedio je u Las Vegasu, osvojio drugo mjesto u Palm Desertu te četvrto u Los Angelesu. Uz to, bio je i finalist najprestižnijeg američkog plesnog natjecanja US Open. Sve to u latinoameričkim plesovima...

I dok je uživao ugled i visoki renome u svjetskim plesnim krugovima, široku popularnost u Hrvatskoj je stekao zahvaljujući nastupima u televizijskoj emisiji „Ples sa zvijezdama“. U paru s glumicom Zrinkom Cvitešić pobijedio je u prvom izdanju 2006. što mu je iz temelja promijenilo život.

***U paru s glumicom Zrinkom Cvitešić pobijedio je u prvom izdanju „Plesa sa zvijezdama“ 2006. godine. To mu je iz temelja promijenilo život...***

***Partner dancing with the actress Zrinka Cvitešić, he won the first season of “Dancing with the Stars” in 2006. That did a 180 spin on his life...***



NICOLAS, KSENIJA, BRIAN WATSON & CARMEN VINCELJ, MIAMI 2004.

***Među brojnim  
javnim osobama,  
kod Ksenije i  
Nicolasa dolazilo  
je i dosta sportaša,  
izdvojimo samo  
tenisače Marin  
Čilića i Gorana  
Ivaniševića te  
rukometaša  
Manuela Štrleka...***

***Among numerous  
public figures,  
Ksenija and Nicolas  
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Marin Čilić and  
Goran Ivanišević,  
and handball player  
Manuel Štrlek...***

– Prije ljudi nisu znali za mene, a onda sam odjednom postao poznat i popularan. Prepoznavali su me na ulici, svi su bili ljubazni i srdačni, vidio sam da ljudi cijene to što radim – kaže.

Priznanje javnosti je lijep i dobar osjećaj, kaže, no najvažnije je da je pridonio popularizaciji plesa u svom Plesnom centru ZAGREB by Nicolas tako da je on postao najpoznatiji plesni centar i škola u Hrvatskoj.

– Bilo je prekrasno iskustvo raditi s velikom glumicom Zrinkom Cvitešić, ona je sjajna osoba, veliki talent i radnik. Nismo razmišljali o pobjedi, primarni cilj bio je dati sve od sebe i uživati pa što bude. I na kraju smo pobijedili – zadovoljno pripovijeda Nicolas.

Druga mu je partnerica bila pjevačica Danijela Martinović.

– Ona je beskrajno draga osoba, baš kao i karizmatična televizijska voditeljica Danijela Trbović koja je vrlo duhovita osoba s kojom mi je bilo vrlo zabavno trenirati – govori Nicolas.

Plesao je i s vrhunskom stručnjakinjom za kulinarnstvo Anom Ugarković, koja je supruzi i njemu svako toliko pripremala brojne delicije, da bi na kraju plesao i s nekadašnjom vrhunskom klizačicom, danas liječnicom Sandom Dubravčić Šimunjak.

– Sanda je, kao prava sportašica, čak i mene, velikog radnika, tjerala trenirati preko svih granica – smije se.

Natjecateljski ples primarno je umjetnost koja zahtijeva sportski pristup, objašnjava Nicolas te dodaje:

in the end, we did the actual victory dance – says Nicolas with great satisfaction.

His second partner was the singer Danijela Martinović.

– She is such a sweetheart, just like the charismatic television host Danijela Trbović, who is a very witty person with whom I had a lot of fun during training – says Nicolas.

He has also danced with the top culinary expert Ana Ugarković, who prepared various delicacies for his wife and him every now and then, and then he was paired up with the former legendary ice skater, Sanda Dubravčić Šimunjak, who now works as a doctor.

– As a hardcore athlete, Sanda pushed even me, a hard worker, to blood, sweat and tears (of joy) – and to the limit – he says, laughing.

Competitive dance is first and foremost a form of art that requires a sportsmanship approach, explains Nicolas, adding:

– We are artists at heart, and our dancesport differs from social dancing in that we compete in it.

The main task of the dancers, notes his wife Ksenija, is to touch people's hearts and evoke emotions, so that the audience can relish in them together with the dancers.

– Dancers must also be entertainers, because that's the only way they can achieve peak performance. If you are cold and detached, you will be unable to make the audience feel anything – she says.

On the other hand, Nicolas cites nutrition, strength, endurance, a good night's sleep, flexibility, vigour, and nimbleness as bedrocks for any solid performance.

– And all of these are characteristics of athletes as well – he says.

In order to become a top-notch professional dancer, one needs to have a "mileage" of ten years of intensive training in their legs, and to become a virtuoso, as Nicolas claims, the person must go the extra ten-year mile.

– All in all, you need to have 12,000 hours of training in your legs to climb to the top as an athlete, dancer, or artist. Dancing has become an uphill battle, and it's a long way to the top if you wanna rock and roll – he states.

But there is another prerequisite for a dance couple to crack the top ten:

– Connecting with your partner is of utmost importance. The ultimate task is to merge two bodies into one – says Nicolas, while his wife Ksenija



points out the significance of harmony between the dancers:

– Mature communication between partners is extremely important for the success of a dance couple, just as if it were a married couple. There were extremely talented male and female dancers who didn't work as a couple because they didn't know how to communicate with each other...

Nicolas highlights that a lot of things have to fall into place for a dance couple to be successful, and that is no easy feat.

– The woman and the man must be of similar age and possess approximately the same amount of talent. They must also be mentally and physically compatible, have a similar nature, and be willing to compromise. It's also imperative that they have the same ambitions, persistence, and motivation, and it's equally important that they both be in perfect health – he says.

But Ksenija adds that it is just as relevant for them to possess similar financial means since being a first-rate professional dancer is financially challenging as well.

When asked if it is desirable for the dance couple to be personally involved, in terms of a relationship or marriage, Nicolas answers that it is not necessary.

– No, they don't have to dance down the aisle, but there must be mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance.

On the other hand, his wife Ksenija believes that couples must be close because they enter each other's private spaces.

– While dancing skin to skin, they are constantly touching each other, looking at each other, breathing in unison. Dancing is the activity that brings two people closer together than any other, both physically and mentally, so it's not surprising that there is often chemistry between them.

There are very clear criteria for rating dance couples.

– The adjudicators rate choreography and execution, and then technique, musicality, i.e., being in sync with the music, as well as the quality of leading and following in pairs – explains Nicolas.

He notes that the most important role of the male dancer is to make his partner stand out as remarkably feminine and an exceptional dancer with his flawless and safe guidance...

The Zagreb Dance Centre by Nicolas is certainly the most popular one

– Mi smo umjetnici u duši, a naš se sportski ples razlikuje od društvenog plesa po tomu što se mi natječemo.

Osnovna zadaća plesača je, napominje supruga Ksenija, da dirnu ljude u srce, da probude emocije tako da ih publika može osjetiti i uživati zajedno s plesačima.

– Plesači moraju biti i zabavljači jer jedino tako mogu postizati vrhunske rezultate. Ako ste hladni i bez emocije, nećete kod publike probuditi nikakve osjećaje – govori.

Nicolas pak tumači da je za svakog plesača bitna prehrana, snaga, izdržljivost, dobar san, fleksibilnost, eksplozivnost i brzina.

– A sve su to karakteristike sportaša – veli.

Da bi netko postao vrhunski profesionalni plesač potrebno je desetak godina intenzivnog treninga, a da bi postao virtuoz, tvrdi Nicolas, potrebno je dodatnih deset.

– Ukupno treba imati 12 000 sati treninga u nogama da bi se popeli na svjetski vrh kao sportaš, plesač ili bilo koji umjetnik. Ples je danas postao prava znanost – reći će.

No postoji još jedan uvjet da plesni par uđe među najbolje na svijetu:

– Spoj s partnerom jako je važan. Ultimativni je zadatak da od dva tijela napraviš jedno – kaže Nicolas, dok njegova supruga Ksenija ističe kako je vrlo bitan i sklad među plesačima:

– Za uspjeh plesnog para, kao i za uspješan brak, iznimno je važna zrela komunikacija među partnerima. Bilo je vrhunski talentiranih plesača i plesačica koji nisu uspijevali kao par jer nisu znali međusobno komunicirati...

Nicolas ističe da se puno toga mora poklopiti da bi neki plesni par bio uspješan, a to nije nimalo lako postići.

– Žena i muškarac moraju biti sličnih godina i imati približno istu razinu talenta. Također moraju biti psihički i fizički podudarni, sličnih karaktera, biti spremni na kompromise. Bitno je također da imaju iste ambicije, upornost i motivaciju, a jednako je važno da oboje budu perfektnog zdravlja – kaže.

Ali ništa manje nije važno, objašnjava Ksenija, da budu i sličnih financijskih mogućnosti jer je bavljenje vrhunskim plesom financijski i te kako izazovno.

Na pitanje je li poželjno da plesni par bude privatno intiman, da su u vezi ili u braku, Nicolas odgovara da to nije nužno.



NICOLAS, RICHARD PORTER & KSENIJA

– Ne, to nije neophodno, no među njima svakako mora biti međusobnog poštovanja, razumijevanja, tolerancije.

Supruga Ksenija pak smatra da parovi moraju biti bliski jer jedno drugome ulaze u privatni prostor.

– Dok plešu tijelo uz tijelo stalno se dodiruju, gledaju se, dišu jedan u drugoga. Ples je aktivnost u kojoj se dvoje ljudi najviše približavaju fizički i psihički, pa stoga nije čudno da se unutar para nerijetko događa određena „kemija“.

Postoje vrlo jasni kriteriji pri ocjenjivanju plesnih parova.

– Ocjenjuje se koreografija i prezentacija, zatim tehnika, muzikalnost odnosno sklad s glazbom te kvaliteta vođenja i praćenja u paru – tumači nam Nicolas.

Napominje kako je najbitnija uloga muškarka u plesu da svojim besprijekornim i sigurnim vođenjem učini svoju partnericu ženstvenom i izvrsnom plesačicom...

Plesni centar ZAGREB by Nicolas svakako je najpopularniji u Hrvatskoj. Ljudi tu dolaze ne samo zbog vrhunskih učitelja plesa nego i zbog rekreacije koja ujedno pripomaže oblikovati tijelo, ali i omogućuje vrhunsku zabavu.

Širok je spektar polaznika – od svakodnevnih ljudi do poznatih sportskih zvijezda, političara svih opcija, glumaca, liječnika, poduzetnika. Puno je i djece, no ipak najviše je onih između trideset i šezdeset godina.

– Za razliku od situacije drugdje po Europi, gdje je u plesnim školama najviše umirovljenika, u nas ih je najmanje. Za njih su nažalost tečajevi jednostavno preskupi – kaže Nicolas.

U njegov plesni centar dolazi i velik broj mladenaca koji žele brzo

napredovati i pripremiti se za prvi ples na vjenčanju. Nije nikakva rijetkost niti to da ljudi kod njih dolaze sami, bez partnera...

Mnogo je poznatih imena dolazilo kod Ksenije i Nicolasa. Među njima je bilo i dosta sportaša; izdvojimo samo tenisače Marina Čilića i Gorana Ivaniševića te rukometaša Manuela Štrleka...

Kseniji i Nicolasu, koji su već sedamnaest godina u braku, osim što su postigli sjajne poslovne i sportske uspjehe, ostvario se još jedan san. Uspjeli su posvojiti 16-mjesečnog dječaka koji ih uveseljava svaki dan.

Uza sve to, Quesnoitovi imaju još jednu strast: uređivanje stanova i kuća. Prvo su obnovili stan u kojem su živjeli, potom su ga prodali te sagradili niskoenergetsku kuću u Samoboru. Zatim su renovirali kuću Ksenijinih roditelja u Dubravi, a onda i više plesnih dvorana smještenih u 500 kvadratnih metara u Plesnom centru u Ozaljskoj ulici u Zagrebu, a koje su vrhunski opremljene zvučnicima, ogledalima, kvalitetnim parketima... Doprili su također obnovu jedne vile kod Labina, koju zasad iznajmljuju, no plan je da je jednog dana prodaju i s tim novcem izgrade kuću u Zagrebu.

– Vrlo smo proaktivni, neprekidno smišljamo nove projekte, postavljamo si nove ciljeve. Ksenija ima smisao i talent za uređenje unutrašnjosti, a ja sam zadužen za okoliš i vrtove – zadovoljno će reći Nicolas.

Na kraju razgovora Ksenija je ponosno pohvalila Nicolasa kako je napravio prekrasan kontinentalan vrt u Samoboru, a prostor oko njihove istarske vile pretvorio u divan mediteranski vrt... ⑤

in Croatia. People come there not only for the excellent dance teachers but also for recreational purposes, which helps tone the body while also promising a great time.

There is a wide spectrum of participants, from ordinary people to star athletes, politicians left, right, and centre, actors, doctors, and entrepreneurs. There are also a lot of children, but most of the students are between thirty and sixty years old.

– Unlike elsewhere in Europe, where dance schools have the most senior citizens, we have the fewest. Unfortunately, the courses are simply too expensive for them – says Nicolas.

A large number of soon-to-be newlyweds come to his dance centre for a quick course to get into a groove for the first dance at their wedding. It's also not at all uncommon for people to come alone, without a partner...

Among numerous public figures, Ksenija and Nicolas have trained a lot of athletes, such as tennis players Marin Čilić and Goran Ivanišević, and handball player Manuel Štrlek...

In addition to achieving great business and sports results, another dream came true for Ksenija and Nicolas, who have been married for seventeen years. They managed to adopt a 16-month-old boy who makes each of their days better than the last.

On top of all that, the Quesnoits have another passion: decorating apartments and houses. First, they renovated the apartment they lived in, then flipped it and built a low-energy house in Samobor. Then they renovated the house of Ksenija's parents in Dubrava, followed by several dance halls located in their 500-square-metre Dance Centre in Ozaljska Street in Zagreb, which they furnished with high-end equipment: speakers, mirrors, premium-quality parquet flooring... They also completed the reconstruction of a villa near Labin, which they are currently renting out, but their plan is to sell it one day and use the money to build a house in Zagreb.

– We are very proactive, constantly coming up with new projects and setting new goals. Ksenija has a knack for interior design, and I'm in charge of the grounds and gardens – says Nicolas, beaming with pride.

At the end of our conversation, Ksenija also did not miss the opportunity to praise Nicolas for creating a beautiful continental garden in Samobor and turning the grounds around their Istrian villa into a wonderful Mediterranean garden... ⑤