

Simon interviews : Veronique le Sergent

Simon: So I'm here in Bubry with Veronique le Sergent, and you are an authoress, a painter and?

Veronique: Um, a lecturer

Simon: A lecturer in?

Veronique: And I play music as well

Simon: And you play music. And you play?

Veronique: The cello and the piano.

Simon: Ok. So, tell me because you've just published your first book. Tell us about that.

Veronique: Well it's a very long story because I used to be an English teacher and was very very busy. 30 years ago I received from um a member of my family many many documents historical documents about an ancestor we had who lived in the twelfth century, his name was Miles de Cogan and his father was Norman, then he went to Wales and my ancestor Miles de Cogan worked for King Henry II because he needed knights to settle peace in Ireland.

Simon: Right

Veronique: Because in those days it was, well Ireland was made of several kingdoms and they were fighting each other. So he fought all his life and he was given a large piece of land around Cork in this war and unfortunately for him he was murdered in an inn along with 5 other knights and we don't know exactly why and who ordered the murder. So I didn't want to write a historical book because I don't feel legitimate to do that. I'm more interested in literature so it's a sort of a historical novel, and inside there's a prophecy so it is going to be followed by a second book which will take place in the 18th century yes and it will start in Versailles because I worked in Versailles as a teacher and the third book which is not written yet, the second is but not the third will take place in Brittany, it will start with well I shouldn't say it already because it's kind of secret you know. Um but it will my father was from Auray and by a strike of luck I met a lady in Auray who owns a manor and well I don't want to say more but it will be a sort of travel back in times.

Simon: Great.

Veronique: Starting from the 1950s back to the 18th century and back to the 17th century because my ancestors came back from Ireland to Auray, and then still further on back in time in the 13th century to know why he was murdered in 1182.

Simon: Extraordinary tale. I mean how have you managed to put together the, how much of it is based on these documents and how much of it is beautiful fiction writing?

Veronique: Well, I was given documents, the family tree, extracts from um documents from Cork University and then as time went on there were more and more historical elements on the internet so I grabbed things here and there and also I wanted to make sure that I was keeping with the times. So I made very very long thorough researches on what life was like back in that time to know what a knight was expected to do, to know the Plantagenet empire, etc. So it meant a lot of researches.

Simon: A lot of research.

Veronique: And then you know it's my part I would say well there is a thread so to speak but my part is well when I write it is as if I was somewhat guided maybe would do that my ancestor would do that, would say that, and then another idea crops up you know and um well I have read so many things about literature that naturally comes you know sometimes .

Simon: So the book that you just published is if you like the first volume in a trilogy because it's going to be 3 books, and covers the sort of known existence of this ancient relative of yours who was murdered who became a knight for Henry II and was murdered in Ireland. Well that alone that's a Hollywood block buster.

Veronique: It could be. It could be.

Simon: That sounds great. Okay. And presumably it's in French?

Veronique: Yes it is in French, but I have family in America so maybe I will translate it into English.

Simon: That would be great, you would have a large audience for English-speaking people with the Irish connection obviously. OK well that's a great beginning to 2025 for you for launching a novel. Tell me a bit about your music.

Veronique: Well my music well it's very funny because I didn't like school when I was a

child, I wanted to be a ballet dancer. And er well for many reasons it was impossible. I practiced a lot of sport instead. But I had this musical ear I think. It was deep inside and I started playing the piano when I was about 14 which is very late actually. My mother used to play but I didn't want my I don't have a very good link with my mother you see, and so I started playing the piano when I was 14. I carried on all through my studies and then when I was married with my children I took lessons so I would say I have been playing the piano ever since I was 64 you see. And well it was very funny as far as the cello was concerned because I love the sound of the cello it reminds me of the voice

Simon: It is the closest instrument to the human voice.

Veronique: It is. The closest. So it was funny because when you start with the piano and then carry on with a second instrument it's quite different you know? I didn't have any problem reading the music. But the position and everything was so complicated and when I settled here after my retirement and my divorce, etc I had this cello I played for myself for about 2 years and then I decided on my birthday to call a friend a teacher a cello teacher I found one a very good one in Vannes so this is it but I started back I would say because my position is not good, I've a very good earring well that's about it.

Simon: And the painting?

Veronique: Oh the painting is a very complicated story because I've always loved painting and my step-mother she was a painter when my parents divorced she taught me a bit but she said that I had this in me. So sometimes I was shared between music and painting so sometimes I do I did more paintings, I exhibited, I sold paintings and it's difficult I'm a sort of jack of all trades.

Simon: Well I think we had this conversation on the phone, about jack of all trades, and I think you mentioned Renaissance and I think there's actually nothing wrong with being a jack of all trades and I think it's a rather disparaging term. It could be that you're just multi-talented, and that you're good at all three things you know. And I suppose generally in life we are not given enough time to master all 3 disciplines that we might be interested in, but that doesn't mean to say we couldn't and it seems that since your retirement you certainly put a lot of time and effort into exploring all your talents. Well I think we'll leave it there because that's been fascinating.

Veronique: I've just one thing to add if you don't mind.

Simon: Yeah?



Veronique: When I write poetry I can't write poetry in French, only in English.

Simon: Oh that's

Veronique: So here I'm just going to show you, I've got paintings and poetry in English.

Simon: Oh that's fantastic, So for radio I'm going to describe what I'm looking at, because you have no idea. There's a beautiful watercolour on the right-hand side of the page a sort of seascape with hills in the background, a broken pier and all very washed out colours, it's beautiful. And on the left is a poem. Thank you very much for talking to Spotlight on Brittany and wish you luck with all your creative ventures this year

Veronique: Thank you.