

Fellows at ESO

David Jones

Unlike many of the other astronomers who have had their profiles printed on these pages, I had no “key moment” that turned my life towards astronomy, no childhood event which would turn my path towards the stars — rather it was a slow drift that I never noticed happening. I’d always been obsessed with understanding the world around me, asking “why?” even more often than a typical child (much to the frustration of my parents), which I suppose was the first sign of my inclination towards the sciences.

By the time I reached 18 and had to choose what to do at university, I’d narrowed my path down to chemistry or physics and applied to study both at a variety of universities in the United Kingdom. Somehow, I ended up studying physics with astrophysics at the University of Manchester, home of the 76-metre Lovell Telescope and the Jodrell Bank Observatory. In spite of taking this course, I generally found the astronomy modules hard going and was frustrated by the astronomer’s annoying habit of clinging to absurd nomenclature that makes little sense with our current understanding. However, I persisted and in my final year selected a project that involved the use of a 20-centimetre telescope to make your own observations (I’d been regularly accused of being more of an engineer than a physicist by my fellow classmates, and this project seemed to be the most hands-on one available).

Staying up all night beneath the cold and cloudy Manchester skies left a lasting impression; it was only then, at the age of 21, that I realised that I was doomed to be an astronomer and an observational astronomer to boot! After graduating, I continued in Manchester to study for my doctorate working with Myfanwy Lloyd and Tim O’Brien studying the effects of binarity on the late stages of stellar evolution, particularly on the formation of planetary nebulae. During my PhD, I was fortunate enough to spend a year working on the Spanish island of La Palma as a support astronomer for the 2.5-metre Isaac Newton Telescope. This experience, coupled with repeated observing trips to Chile, Mexico and South Africa,



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made it clear that an observatory was the place for me, and led me to join ESO as a Fellow with duties at the Paranal Observatory in March 2011. During my three years at ESO I’ve had the privilege of night work on two of the magnificent 8.2-metre Unit Telescopes, as well as supporting instrument operations as the FORS2 Fellow. Now entering my fourth and final year, I have moved to the Universidad de Atacama in Copiapó to help found an astronomy department in the heart of the desert which plays home to ESO and the world’s most important telescopes.

Koraljka Muzic

I come from the small, historic town of Solin on the southern coast of Croatia. Nowadays it sounds surreal that someone still (relatively) young grew up in Europe without a phone and, for most of the time also without a TV. But maybe without today’s omnipresent technology and with information more difficult to access, knowledge was more appreciated by the average kid. But maybe I’m just a bit old-fashioned... Anyway, our town simply didn’t have the phone network until I turned 13 (and, citing my parents, why would anyone in their right mind want that noisy thing in the house?!) and the local TV mechanics were not able to make that device work for more than a month at a time.

So I grew up running around, making mud cakes and secret shelters, playing my guitar, and reading any book I could find along the way. From an early age, I remember being fascinated by nature in general, and spent a lot of time reading the ex-Yugoslavian classic *1000 zasto, 1000 zato* (1000 questions, 1000 answers), the only place to find answers to intriguing questions like: Why do we sweat and what happens while we sleep? Do elephants really fear mice? When did people start wearing clothes? Some questions turned out to be rather useful later in my life: What is smog? What are the Easter Island statues? Since when have people made beer and how did we invent coffee? And finally: What are the stars made of, and what exactly is the Milky Way?

As a teenager I was fascinated by Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* series, and tried to imagine the vast Universe from the perspective of our tiny planet (which resulted in a headache most of the time). But what I loved most was the natural and cultural diversity of this pale blue dot. I wanted to travel, and experience other places. The first small step was to start studying physics at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, where, during my final year, I had a taste of what astronomy really is about. This led me to start a PhD in astronomy at the University of Cologne and the Max-Planck Institute for Radioastronomy in Bonn. I chose to study the



Koraljka Muzic

very central parsec of the Milky Way, attracted by the beautiful images captured by NACO at the VLT, and the simple life philosophy of my soon-to-become supervisor. When I admitted that I was having trouble choosing between his project and another PhD project related to star formation, he just said: Don't worry, it's not a matter of life and death. And it obviously was not, not that time, and not at any time in my life after that. From time to time, I still find it healthy to remind myself of that.

After the PhD, I stayed for a short postdoc at the University of Cologne, until I got an opportunity to change not only the city I lived in, but also the science focus of my research. My old interest in star formation lead me to take up a postdoc dealing with brown dwarf formation at the

University of Toronto. Two years later, I continued my continent-hopping tour, to land in Chile and start the ESO Fellowship.

My duty station is Paranal, and although we all like to complain about the tiring night shifts, it is a special and fascinating place to be. For me maybe even more special, since it is the first observatory I've ever been at, and Unit Telescope 1 is the first telescope I ever observed with (how spoiled that sounds)! I sit on my favourite spot near the mountain top, and look at that bare, calm, vast desert, and again the same old thought comes back of how small we are, and how preoccupied we are by insignificant things. Have I changed at all since I was 15?

Personnel Movements

Arrivals (1 Jan–31 March 2013)

Europe

Aniyan, Suryashree (IN)	Student
Chira, Roxana-Adela (DE)	Student
Coccatto, Lodovico (IT)	Astronomer
Csépány, Gergely László (HU)	Student
Lampinen, Mervi Johanna (FI)	Head of IT Unit
Saulder, Christoph (AT)	Student
Szécsényi, Orsolya (HU)	Contract Officer
Zahorecz, Sarolta (HU)	Student

Chile

Perez, Maria Francisca (CL)	Procurement Officer
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Departures (1 Jan–31 March 2013)

Europe

Barbosa, Carlos Eduardo (BR)	Student
Bonzini, Margherita (IT)	Student
Bourtembourg, Reynald (FR)	Software Engineer
Gall, Elisabeth (DE)	Student
McPherson, Alistair (GB)	E-ELT Programme Manager
Michaleli, Anna (GR)	HR Advisor
Sirey, Rowena (GB)	Senior Advisor to the Director for Science

Chile

Garrido, Hernan (CO)	Student
Grellmann, Rebekka (DE)	Fellow
Sippel, Anna (DE)	Student
Vera, Enrique (CL)	Dome Mechanic