



The Patron of the 2017 Ljubljana Festival is the Mayor of the City of Ljubljana, Mr Zoran Jankovič.

PRESS RELEASE

Ljubljana, September 2017

Closing of the 65th Ljubljana Festival

There is no question that this year's jubilee festival summer was an unforgettable and hugely successful achievement, covering a great variety of genres. We spent it in the company of world-class artists from around the world and top local talents. Undoubted highlights included the performance of Madama Butterfly by the China National Opera from Beijing, the remarkable film and theatre actor John Malkovich, Argentine pianist Martha Argerich, Latvian mezzo-soprano Elina Garanča, the Catalan theatre company La Fura dels Baus with their production of Carmina Burana, and many others. Over the course of just over two months, the festival included more than 78 events seen by more than 57,000 spectators from Slovenia and abroad and featuring approximately 4,200 artists from more than 30 countries. This year, for the second time, the Ljubljana Festival also took place on pleasure boats on the river, offering a unique view of the city and a truly special experience accompanied by the performances of students from the Academy of Music and Conservatory of Music and Ballet in Ljubljana. The Ljubljana Opera and Ballet Theatre and the Grand Hotel Union joined the wide range of festival venues this year. The 65th Ljubljana Festival officially ends on 31 August, following the final events on the programme: a performance of the last part of Wagner's Ring Cycle, Götterdämmerung, and the closing concert of this year's festival. Wagner's monumental music drama will be performed by St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, under the baton of charismatic conductor Valery Gergiev. A triumphant close to the 65th Ljubljana Festival will then be provided by the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, once again under Valery Gergiev, and Uzbek pianist Behzod Abduraimov.

Looking back

The festival summer that has just passed was scorching hot, full of variety and very successful. In just over two months it offered more than 78 events that were seen by more than 57,000 spectators from Slovenia and abroad. All the events announced in the programme were performed as planned, and despite the damage to the roof of Križanke's summer theatre and the unpredictable weather, we were only forced to change the venue of two events. We will have to wait until the end of the year before we can talk about final figures, but a broad estimate places the budget for the events of the 65th Ljubljana Festival at €2,800,000. The City of Ljubljana, which also pays the salaries of Festival employees and some of the material costs, contributed €833,233 to the programme of the 65th Ljubljana Festival and other events organised by

Festival Ljubljana in 2017. Contributions from sponsors and donors are estimated to be €880,000, while estimated ticket revenues (shared with the Festival's co-producers) are €730,000.

Records and curiosities

The Ljubljana Festival also served up some unique experiences this summer that received considerable coverage in the media. Predictably, the largest number of journalists and film crews were present at the opening event, the scenic cantata *Carmina Burana* performed by the remarkable Catalan theatre troupe La Fura dels Baus. This year's Festival also gave us another opportunity to hear the world-famous diva Elīna Garanča with a concert of opera arias, the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra (Russia's oldest symphony orchestra), the great pianist Martha Argerich, virtuoso violinists Roby Lakatos and Dmitry Sitkovetsky, and the French accordionist Richard Galliano. Other events included an evening with the film and theatre actor John Malkovich, a concert featuring four outstanding soloists from

London's West End and New York's Broadway – the musical theatre capitals of the world, performances by St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre and the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev, and many other remarkable artists. Renowned Italian harpsichordist and pianist Gian Maria Bonino played an 1803 fortepiano by an anonymous maker and a fortepiano from Schumann's time that was built in John Broadwood's workshop in 1845. This latter instrument (serial number 16504) is of historical importance in that it was played by Frédéric Chopin himself during his sojourn in London. This year's Summer Night concert marked the 80th anniversary of the birth of Jože Privšek, while Vlado Kreslin (with guests) celebrated the 26th anniversary of his first Ljubljana Festival appearance at Križanke. Conductor Valery Gergiev received the Silver Order of Merit – one of Slovenia's highest honours – for his more than two decades of appearances in Slovenia and his contribution to enriching our cultural life.

We also organised a number of presentations in other countries: at the Consulate General of the Republic of Slovenia in Klagenfurt in the presence of Consul General Milan Predan and Jan Ciglencečki, director of the Slovenian Tourist Board's Vienna office; at the Town Hall in Graz in the presence of the city councillor for culture and the arts Günter Riegler and Anton Colarič, vice president of the board of Festival Ljubljana, Ljubljana city councillor and chair of Ljubljana City Council's international relations commission; in Trieste with Oscar Cecchi; at the Max Fabiani Gallery in Štanjel, which we visited from Ljubljana with a special Festival Train courtesy of national rail operator Slovenske Železnice, together with Komen mayor Marko Bandelli and Boštjan Koren, the director of Slovenske Železnice's passenger division; in Zagreb with the director of the city's Komediya theatre Krešimir Batinič, baritone Đani Stipaničev and soprano Sandra Bagarić; in the Andromeda Hall of the Austria Trend Hotel with John Malkovich; and in the Križanke complex's Knights' Hall, Pergola and Devil's Courtyard in the presence of other performers and event organisers.

Other points of interest

We are very happy with the extraordinary response from the media this year: more than 765 journalists, photographers and camera operators obtained accreditation for the events of the 65th Ljubljana Festival and, between them, contributed more than 1,861 articles and news items in the period from 1 April to 28 August. This year we offered live broadcasts of event openings and press conferences on the vživo website, YouTube and the Ljubljana Festival Facebook page. Another new feature this year was the Ljubljana Festival Instagram account. Also notable is the fact that we are celebrating quite a number of anniversaries this year. Twenty years have passed since the International Fine Arts Colony was established, the Ljubljana Festival has reached its

jubilee 65th edition, 25 years have passed since Darko Brlek became the general and artistic director of the Ljubljana Festival, 20 years have passed since conductor Valery Gergiev's first appearance in Slovenia, we opened the exhibition Hommage à Negovan Nemeč, immortalising the sculptor's 30-year creative career, and held a concert to mark the 15th anniversary of the contemporary music ensemble MD7. We also paid tribute to theatre director Tomaž Pandur, who died suddenly last year, with a performance of his monodrama *Immaculata*. Premieres at this year's festival included Emmerich Kálmán's operetta *The Gypsy Princess*, a co-production with Zagreb's Komedija theatre, Ana Sokolović's chamber opera *Svadba*, a co-production with the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, the new Slovene musical *Vesna* (based on Matej Bor's film of the same name, which is considered Slovene cinema's first romantic comedy) and the remaining parts of Wagner's Ring Cycle, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre premiered the first two parts of the tetralogy (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*) at the Ljubljana Festival in September 2013. This year they returned with the last two parts (*Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*) and thus completed the first full performance of Wagner's Ring in Slovenia, an important milestone for musical culture in this country.

Wagner's Ring Cycle

Two monumental music dramas by German opera revolutionary Richard Wagner – *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods) – received their first staging in Slovenia this year. Wagner revived the idea of the unity of music and drama, elevated the importance of the visual impact of staging and direction, and replaced period-based musical structures with a kind of "musical prose" growing from a sequence and network of leitmotifs into "eternal melody". The summit of Wagner's oeuvre is the *Ring of the Nibelung* – a cycle of four music dramas: *Das Rheingold* (The Rhinegold), *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods). Wagner's operatic works are "total works of art" (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) of great scenic complexity that make enormous demands on the singers in the lead roles and require a vast orchestra. For this reason they are usually only tackled by top opera companies in the most splendid venues.

Among the leading opera companies in the world is the **Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg**, led since 1988 by the famed conductor **Valery Gergiev**, its musical director, who since 1996 has also been the theatre's artistic director and general director. Through Gergiev's efforts, the Mariinsky has revived Wagner's operas. The 1997 staging of *Parsifal* was the first performance of that work in Russia for more than 80 years. *Lohengrin* was promised in 1999, and by 2003 the whole of the magnificent Ring Cycle had been performed in full. This was the first time in almost a century that the entire tetralogy had been performed in Russia, and also the first production in Russia to use the original German. The Mariinsky's repertoire also includes Wagner's operas *Tristan und Isolde* (2005) and *Der fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman; 1998, 2008).

A bright future

We end the 65th Ljubljana Festival with even more enthusiasm for our work, and with the belief that once again this year we have met expectations and enthused many new visitors. The biggest evidence of our success is the fact that every year the festival is able to boast a carefully chosen programme, first-class performances by some of the world's leading artists, and ticket prices that are accessible to a wide range of spectators. These are the reasons why the festival sells out, and why it also attracts visitors from neighbouring countries. A further contribution to its success comes from the numerous special offers available, including packets of tickets for multiple events and a 40% discount for young people still in education (a scheme that allows us to help raise the cultural awareness of the younger generation). We should not, of course, forget the loyalty of our sponsors and the support we receive from the City of Ljubljana and its mayor

Zoran Janković, which enables us to invest in an even more impressive programme. In this spirit, we are already preparing the programme for the forthcoming **66th Ljubljana Festival**. Until then, you are cordially invited to the **25th edition of the Young Virtuosi cycle**, which begins on 19 October 2017, **the 33rd Slovene Music Days**, which run from 12 to 19 April 2018, and our programme of winter events at the Grand Hotel Union from 6 to 10 February 2018, which will help raise Ljubljana's profile as a top cultural destination even during the winter months.

Thank you for the interest you have shown in the Ljubljana Festival, and for your support. We wish you a pleasant autumn.

Information / Public relations

Živa Steiner

Tel. +386 (0)1 241 60 18

Ziva.Steiner@ljubljanafestival.si

www.ljubljanafestival.si

www.facebook.com/ljubljanafestival

www.instagram.com/ljubljanafestival

twitter.com/FLjubljana

The founder of the Ljubljana Festival is the City of Ljubljana, which also provides financial support.



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The founder of the Ljubljana Festival is the City of Ljubljana. The Festival has been a member of the European Festivals Association (EFA) since 1977.