

In Situ Insight – Vilnius Festival (4-5 November 2017)

In Situ Insight Vilnius Festival: Cross-festival, cross-arts collaboration: a possibility or a necessity on the 4 & 5 November 2017



From left to right: Ondřej Sikora (International Music Festival "Janáček May"), Tamar Brüggemann (Wonderfeel Festival), Veerle Simoens (Gent Festival of Flanders), Jaromír Javůrek (International Music Festival "Janáček May"), Danas Skramtai (Vilnius Festival), Julijus Grickevičius (Vilnius Festival), Leelo Lehtla (Estonian Music Festivals)

Vilnius Festival

Founded in 1997 by the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society, the largest concert organization in Lithuania, the Vilnius Festival has become one of the most notable music events in Lithuania. With primary focus on symphonic and chamber music programmes, performed by established Lithuanian and international musicians, it also promotes contemporary Lithuanian music by presenting premieres as well as commissioning new large-scale works. The Festival also collaborates with other European festivals. In twenty years of its existence the Vilnius Festival has enriched the music life of Lithuania's capital and pronouncedly contributed to a development of cultural tourism.



David Lang. Man made @ Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society © Dmitrij Matvejev

The festival's primary idea has been to promote the historical and modern assets of world culture in society. Cooperation between Lithuanian and foreign musicians has fostered the creation of a multicultural music scene in Lithuania, as well as mutual tolerance and trust, and the discovery and support of new artistic forces. The organizers of Vilnius Festival seek to reflect the cultural experiences of different nations and eras in the festival program.

The festival fulfills the main points of its program by

- ❖ commissioning a major work from well-known Lithuanian composers
- ❖ organizing a recital from a famous Lithuanian performer

- ❖ inviting a foreign orchestra, opera, or ballet troupe
- ❖ organizing an evening dedicated to a composer
- ❖ organizing a concert dedicated to Renaissance and Baroque composers' works
- ❖ presenting a legendary jazz soloist or ensemble

Date / number of events

Annually from the end of May to the beginning of July.

10-15 concerts Intended Audience Music fans and professionals of all ages, educational backgrounds and nationalities

Significance of the event

Vilnius Festival is an international music festival accredited by the European Festival Association's General Assembly in Geneva. It was accepted as a legitimate member of the Association in October 1999.

Geographical Range

Thanks to its cooperation with well-known Lithuanian and foreign performers, its common projects with Lithuanian, Italian, Polish, German, French, Croatian, Slovenian and Swiss festivals, and its active involvement in programs of cultural tourism, Vilnius Festival has dispersed far and wide the liveliness of Lithuania's culture, as well as the works of contemporary Lithuanian composers and a reputation for professionalism among its performers.

Bonds between the festival and Lithuania's cultural image

The cooperation of Vilnius Festival organizers and performers with world-renowned musicians (Yehudi Menuhin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Justus Frantz, Riccardo Muti, Krzysztof Penderecki, David Geringas, Gidon Kremer, Yuri Bashmet) has accelerated the acceptance of not only Lithuania's musical culture but also its political activities in the international realm. The support of these musicians for Lithuania's intention to integrate to the EU was raised not only by artistic acts but also by official documents. The active participation of Vilnius Festival in programs of Lithuanian cultural tourism and its close cooperation with diplomatic missions of foreign countries has generated high interest among foreign guests and tourists in both this event and Lithuanian cultural happenings in general.



David Lang © Dmitrij Matvejev



Christopher Lyndon-Gee © Dmitrij Matvejev

Cross-festival, cross-arts collaboration

A little bit of history

Established in 1940, the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society (LNPS) remains the largest and oldest state owned concert organization in Lithuania, whose main activity is to organize and coordinate live concerts, diverse classical/classical contemporary/jazz music events and tours throughout Lithuania and abroad. Its role has always been to programme Lithuanian and international top artists from various genres. During Soviet rule however, the LNPS was only allowed to programme Lithuanian and international artists under strict control of the Moscow Central Agency. Also meaning that a lot of controversial and dissident (Lithuanian) artists were unknown to the Lithuanian people and abroad. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Lithuania became independent in 1990 and all Russian funding for the LNPS stopped. Cultural life in Lithuania needed to be rebuilt from nothing and it took many years to bring the unknown Lithuanian artists and music to local and international stages. The GAIDA Festival and the Lithuanian Composers' Union as pioneers, as well as collaborations with foreign festivals like Prague Spring International Music Festival and Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music and the Polish-Lithuanian Musicologists conferences, played an important and supportive role in reviving and nurturing Lithuania's musical culture.

International collaboration

In this context the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society (LNPS) built its own Lithuanian music repertoire and connections, bringing its resident orchestras, ensembles and artists (e.g. Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra) to international stages while setting up many international projects and collaborations with various cultural institutions and festivals. In 2002–2003 the LNPS implemented a Lithuanian-Swedish two-year music exchange program, initiated similar exchange with Norway (implemented in 2005), continues the UPBEAT program, featuring young chamber musicians from the Nordic countries (since 1999). The LNPS is an active member of the Lithuanian Association of National Institutions and a number of international organizations including EFA (European Festival

Association), ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts), Nordic-Baltic Association of State Concert Institutions and PEARLE (Performing Arts Employers Association League Europe).

Also the foundation of Vilnius Festival in 1997, and other festivals founded that year like New Baltic Dance Festival and Vilnius international film festival KINO PAVASARIS, needs to be seen in this historical context. They were all set up in a time frame when the Lithuanian Prime Minister gave financial support to festivals in order to put Lithuania and Lithuania's musical culture back on the European cultural map. Vilnius Festival carried out its mission introducing widely renowned performers, commissioning and entrusting the stage to Lithuanian composers and premiering large-scale opuses by foreign composers in different genres. These festivals received 50 percent of their budget from governmental funding, while the other 50 percent needed to be collected from own resources (ticketing, sponsorship, corporate funding ...). This approach of governmental support and international cooperation worked and the festivals succeeded in programming many international top artists while also supporting local artists and Lithuanian music. One of Vilnius Festival biggest achievements for example is the amount of commissions given to Lithuanian composers. According to Rūta Prusevicienė (Director General) this success in nurturing Lithuania's musical culture and supporting contemporary Lithuanian composers is the result of joined forces on different levels (national and international). Some examples of cooperation:

- [Viva Musica Viva Baltica](#)
- [Extracultural](#)
- Cooperation with Cultural Capitals
- ...

Public enterprise VILNIUS FESTIVALS

Due to the 1998 Russian financial crisis and other situations, the governmental support for festivals dropped: 40 percent cut in subsidies and taxes increased. This forced the Vilnius Festival to be inventive and to create new collaborations and cooperation models with the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, Lithuanian Composers' Union, Lithuanian Ensemble network and more ("matched funds", outsourcing composer's administration ...). The unfortunate financial situation was also the reason to set up a new cooperation model between the festivals: [Public enterprise VILNIUS FESTIVALS](#), founded in April 2003 by Vilnius City Municipality. Members of this association are: [Vilnius Festival](#), [Sirenos Festival](#), [Gaida Festival](#), [New Baltic Dance Festival](#), [Vilnius Mama Jazz Festival](#), [Vilnius Jazz Festival](#), [Banchetto Musicale Festival](#), [Kino Pavasaris Festival](#), [Christopher Summer Festival](#) and [Vilnius City Fiesta](#). Funding from the Vilnius City Municipality to the festivals is organized via this organization. Each festivals has 1-2 permanent employees and receives a little budget for artistic activity. For the remaining budget, the festivals are reliable on own resources, other partners and collaborations on all levels (e.g. media, commissioned projects, sponsorship ...). Vilnius Festival's major (funding) partner is the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society (LNPS).





