

Press release, 07 June, 2017

## A Festival celebrating diversity

**The 2017 Bergen International Festival comes to an end after a fortnight of nearly 300 events featuring classical and contemporary music, dance, opera and visual arts.**

Festival Director Anders Beyer is very content with the overall level of quality of the festival productions, as well as the response from audiences and critics. This is his fifth festival in the Western Norway city of Bergen.

‘We have succeeded in inspiring, challenging and including over 63.000 visitors of this year’s festival, bringing people together to experience the uplifting spirit of the arts,’ Beyer says.

This year’s Festival Composer and Artist in Residence was Finnish Kaija Saariaho. Her music was presented in chamber, operatic and orchestral formats throughout the festival.

### Opening speech by HM The Queen

The Queen of Norway, HM Queen Sonja gave a very personal speech at the Festival’s [Opening Ceremony](#) in the Bergen city square of Torgallmenningen on 24 May. The 4500 strong audience, which included HM King Harald of Norway, enjoyed stellar performances by the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Rufus Wainwright and many other festival artists. The Queen’s opening speech was inspired by ‘identity’ – the theme of this year’s Festival.

‘Our lifelong duty as humans is to pursue the best within ourselves. What matters are our attempts at acting in accordance with what we believe to be fair and proper. Our courage to stand by who we truly are. Otherwise we will stumble through all that we encounter in life,’ the Queen said in her speech.

### A variety of works presented

Composer and artist Rufus Wainwright composed the music to the epic musical theatre work [Shakespeare’s Sonnets](#), directed by Robert Wilson, staged as the Festival opening performance. Wainwright also [performed his musical interpretation](#) of William Shakespeare’s Sonnet No. 87 – *Farewell* with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra at the Festival’s Opening Ceremony.

During the Festival’s first three days, Canadian theatre legend Robert Lepage performed his play [887](#), a journey into the realm of childhood memories. London Sinfonietta performed in the historic 13<sup>th</sup> century stone building Haakon’s Hall, alongside Norwegian soloists and Danish bass player Ida Nielsen. The concert celebrated the Norwegian Society of Composers’ centenary and the programme included world premieres by Norwegian composers Eivind Buene and Rolf Wallin.

### **Bergen International Festival 2017:**

- Organised for the 65th time
- The largest festival of its kind in the Nordic countries
- 285 events
- 15 days
- 40 venues
- 1850 artists/performers
- 165 volunteers
- 63.000 visitors
- 29.000 tickets sold

[Read Her Majesty Queen Sonja's full speech here.](#)

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