

Nordic-Baltic Music Festival Conference

Harpa Concert Hall, Reykjavik, Iceland

5-7 October 2011

Minutes

INTRODUCTION

The conference was opened by Steinunn Birna Ragnarsdottir, Music Director of Harpa, and Asta Magnúsdóttir, Icelandic Ministry of Culture, who welcomed the delegates warmly to Reykjavik and to the concert hall. The focus of this first Nordic-Baltic festival conference is our cultural collaboration, its validity and future possibilities.

Harpa was a challenge to build and is an even greater challenge to run. It has been the goal of musicians in Iceland for decades to have a house for music and a place to gather. The concert hall stands now as a visible result of not giving up, a monument of victory – and a home of festivals.

Music is important in Iceland and the last few years have seen a continuing increase in the number of concerts – in 2010, the average was 5.8 per day. There are 90 music schools and 300 choirs. Undoubtedly, the increasing number of festivals helps this development. The hope is that the conference will contribute to a positive development of festivals throughout the participating countries. Festivals have an important role to play in the development of music life, as art and culture in general has a role to play for instance in the economical development.

On this note, the conference's keynote speaker Mr Franz Patay, Secretary General of the International Music and Media Centre in Vienna and Managing Director of the Kunsthau Wien, was introduced. Based on his experiences as executive director of the "Vienna Mozart Year 2006", Mr Patay offered an outline of the role of art in future Europe.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Franz Patay
Secretary General of the International Music and Media Centre in Vienna
Managing Director of the Kunsthau Wien

Music is very often treated as part of the service sector, and this is admittedly one of its aspects. The second face of culture, however, goes beyond this industry, enriching human life and serving as food for the soul. This aspect has no economical value and cannot be measured in terms of profit and loss, but remains a vital part of what culture workers do. Nevertheless, being able to show the value of cultural projects in terms of investment is becoming increasingly important in order to attract funding and sponsoring.

In the case of the Vienna Mozart Year 2006, a study was carried out to prove that it was a financial investment, indicating intangible results – such as enhancing the brand value of the city through marketing, reviews and press publicity – as well as tangible results.

An outline of the tangible results show that the Mozart Year generated around 44 million € in incomes from tourism, for instance the number of hotel nights booked by visitors coming to take part in activities related to the event. Results also indicate 1200 additional jobs, mostly in the service sector and the creative industries. (As always there are two sides, and the printing industry was mentioned as an example of a field that might not necessarily benefit from investments in culture. Higher demands may cause printers to invest in more advanced technical equipment, thus decreasing the amount of jobs.) The overall result of the Vienna Mozart Year was an increase in GDP. Though the event meant 37 million € in additional costs for the public sector, it generated a 72 million € increase in tax incomes, resulting in an actual revenue of 15 million €.

Significant areas of investment for the Mozart Year were sustainability, youth, and creativity. An important aspect was also working with the concept “fair music”, guaranteeing a fair remuneration for the creative staff. Even for this large celebration, encompassing a vast number of events, coverage by international media and 12,000,000 visitors to the website, there was a challenge in finding sponsors. One of the keys to the success of the Mozart Year was that the organisation had no strong affiliations, but an equal distance to all parties participating in the project. This created a feeling of equal cooperation and joint efforts that was very important. It also proved right to disregard the pressure from the tourist board to make packages – what visitors want to experience is authentic Viennese music life. Of course it was pivotal to find the graphic profile, playing with what people know about Mozart to make it both interesting and appealing.

In comparison to the Vienna Mozart Year 2006, the celebration of the Haydn year was a very different project in a very different surrounding. The Haydn celebration was focused around being in places where Haydn was, and a central aspect was including the whole region in the activities, creating events and inviting visitors to stay longer in the area.

The open air music/dance/opera film festival held annually in Vienna is yet another different project. It attracts around 600,000 visitors and started as a promotion for culture, offering the audience the possibility of seeing concerts and dance or opera performances on film for free. 46% of the visitors come from Vienna and around 14% from the rest of Austria, but there are also 4% foreign visitors, there especially for the festival. In a survey, 69% of the audience stated that they would not go to another cultural activity, for instance in a concert hall or an opera house, so it is clear that the festival reaches a different audience. The festival has a budget of around 1.2 million €, of which 800,000 € comes from the city of Vienna and the rest is raised through sponsoring. Even though admission is free, the event pays for itself through the kind of tangible results described in relation to the Mozart Year. The concept has now been exported to other cities, among them New York and Moscow.

When it comes to the future, there is a concern that these studies, for all their validity, will not be of any help. Many public households are broke, not only when it comes to culture. In times of financial instability, culture becomes an endangered species.

This is why organisers of cultural events must be strong in mobilising audiences and communities to support culture. In Austria, more people attend cultural activities than football

– but football is always visible in the media. There are several ways of going about this mobilisation, for instance online petitions. Two examples, one successful, one not, are given to illustrate the benefits and difficulties of this particular tool. Pulling the audience in rather than pushing them in is a way – of course the larger the budget, the easier the pushing becomes, through PR and visibility. With a more limited budget, as is more often the scenario for cultural events, new standpoints and strategies are required. Social media now offer possibilities of efficient “low cost” marketing. It is about encouraging an emotional investment on the part of the audience, which helps mobilising – playing on the audience not wanting to lose their emotional investment.

Of course, the question still remains where the money for events is to come from. One possibility may be to establish closer cooperation with the sectors that benefit from the events, hotels, restaurants, and so on. Whether it is through sponsoring, advertising or activities, collaborations can be fruitful. Another possibility is crowd funding, where the audience or the fans can contribute to the event. Festivals in particular have a communication with their audiences that may be an excellent starting point for this. It can also prove useful to look at funding opportunities outside the cultural field, for instance in health/wellness. It is a partly new field to create studies on how participation in cultural activities changes people’s lives, health and social environment, and the health budget could become a new possibility of funding.

As the speech was rounded off with questions and comments from the delegates, a concern was voiced regarding the seeming short-term planning on the part of politicians, and concerning the fact that there is a difference in mindset between the political world and the cultural one. One answer may be to stay with the audience and the community, to mobilise the crowd – this also means being recognised by the politicians. The local connection and anchoring in a community is highlighted by one delegate as important, as is the idea of a festival being responsible, taking care of its audience, the people who live in the place where the festival is held, and the place itself. Finally, the importance of place is brought into focus, as the city as cultural experience is discussed. The whole public space surrounding an event is part of the experience. Experience is the new currency, and there are constantly many things competing for people’s attention. From this perspective, too, it comes back to building a relationship with the audience.

PRESENTATIONS OF THE PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

1. ICELAND – Arndis B. Ásgeirsdóttir

There are around 50 music festivals in total in Iceland – 14 classical and contemporary, 5 jazz and blues, 9 pop and rock, and 9 mixed, as well as several international festivals and concert series. The festivals educate, entertain and enlighten, and draw people to a place. Music is currently flourishing and festivals play an important part in the music life. Being the director of a music festival is also an important and influential job. The last 20 years has seen the development of a festival fever, and two new festivals will be launched in 2012.

A few examples of the existing festivals are:

The Reykjavik Arts Festival, a festival for all art forms, is the most important venue for international musicians who do not appear in other festivals. Skalholt Summer Festival, founded in 1975, focuses on baroque, renaissance, and contemporary music. For

contemporary music there is also the Dark Music Days, founded in 1980. The same year was also first year for the Chamber Music Festival, a festival for chamber and vocal music. A newer example is Icelandic Airwaves, initiated in 1999, which in 2005 attracted around 1700 foreign guests. The Folk Festival in Siglufjordur, finally, redefined the venue and the town, bringing both prosperity and a stronger sense of identity.

Funding comes from the state, from the city of Reykjavik and the municipalities, as well as from sponsors. The state granted in all 215,000,000 ISK (approximately 1.4 million €) to music festivals in 2011, and the city of Reykjavik gave local music festivals around 80,000 €. Funding also comes from other local municipalities, private sponsors and ticket sales. No festivals have been put out of business during the financial crisis, but one effect has been that the focus on Icelandic artists has increased. It is clear that the festivals are of great importance to society, and also an important part of economic development.

2. ESTONIA – Marko Lõhmus, Tallinn Philharmonic Society

The Philharmonic Society organises three festivals in Tallinn, and Estonian music life in general is quite “festivalised”. There are more than a hundred music festivals in all, spanning opera, classical, contemporary and jazz. Two thirds of these festivals take place between May and September, making summer a true festival season. The Association of Estonian Music Festivals has 32 members – classical, jazz and contemporary music festivals as well as opera and ballet festivals. The aim of the association is to support festivals in order to achieve high artistic quality, and to represent interests nationally and internationally.

There are three state concert organisations: the state concert institution Eesti Kontsert, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir. Eesti Kontsert organizes nine festivals, from contemporary music festival NYJD to the Saaremaa Opera days. Funding comes from the Ministry of Culture, but also from subsidies from local authorities. Side by side with these institutions there are also many non-governmental, local, municipal, and private concert agencies and festival organisers, creating a vivid concert scene across Estonia. Many events take place outside Tallinn and help make the cultural life in other towns and parts of the country more versatile. Initiatives often come from professional musicians aiming to develop and enrich their musical field of interest, for instance organ music or jazz.

State support for festivals in Estonia consists of three parts: direct subsidy from the Ministry of Culture budget, grants from the Estonian Cultural Endowment and support from the State Gambling Board. Almost all music festivals receive support from the Ministry of Culture through the “Musical Festivals and competitions” support programme which was initiated 19 years ago. Having a significant impact on the festival life of Estonia, this support programme is the reason the country’s musical life is as “festivalised” as it is. There is also a “Young musicians” sub-programme, to support music for and by young musicians and audiences. Grants from this part of the programme, however, was only 10% of the budget of the supported festivals.

Cultural endowment, or Kultuurkapital, which was founded before the Second World War and reopened 20 years ago, is the most significant source of funding and a major cultural policy tool. Quite unique in Europe is that neither parliamentary nor governmental politicians can argue about the budget of this organisation. The law is that 3.5 percent of alcohol and tobacco, and 46 percent of gambling taxes goes directly to Cultural Endowment. There have of course

been certain cuts, but only a decrease of around 15%, to be compared to a 50% decrease in the ministry support programme. Also, though all the budgets of public institutions are frozen for the coming year, the Cultural Endowment budget will increase by more than 13%.

Finally, the State Gambling Board offers opportunities of funding, but mainly gives funds to cultural heritage and consequently to festivals connected to that. Support primarily goes to smaller festivals outside the capital, and to folk or choir music festivals.

Apart from direct subsidies from the ministry of culture, opportunities include funding from local authorities, which all support festivals.

The question of how to explain the economical impact of an annual festival has been discussed for several years. Politicians argue that they want to see numbers – but how can it be measured? The Association of Estonian Music Festivals has initiated a study, undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economics, with the aim of measuring the side effects of ten festivals taking place outside Tallinn. Hopefully, the study will reveal some arguments for festival organisers to use. Results should be available in February or March 2012.

3. DENMARK – Jörgen Boe, Vendsyssel Festival, Björn Ross, Copenhagen Renaissance Music Festival & Sine Tofte Hannibal, The Danish Composer's Society

There is no national festival association in Denmark yet, and the situation of music festivals in the country is presented by three organisers giving their perspectives.

In 2010, there were in all 146 music festivals in Denmark. Pop, rock, and folk festivals are often locality festivals, tied to a specific place, whereas festivals of classical, jazz, electronic and contemporary music are more often programme festivals, focusing on content rather than place. Most festivals in Denmark are younger than 20 years, and the audience today seem to be attracted to the festivals as events. In spite of an ever-increasing number of festivals, the danger of a festival overload does not seem imminent. The festival season seems to grow longer while the concert season shortens.

Financial obstacles do not prevent organisers and arrangers from working. Most festivals negotiate a patchwork of state funding, local funding and sponsorships, combined with box office revenues and sales. At the top of the wish list is a possibility of applying for multi-annual support.

The Vendsyssel festival was founded in 1970, and annually offers 60 concerts throughout a five-week period. 50 concerts are arranged by and paid for by local organisers, 10 by the festival itself. Volunteers work during the festival, helping with the events. Between four and six foreign ensembles perform each year, but it is a pity that they leave after only one concert. Collaborations to arrange more concerts would be positive, as would be a closer general cooperation between festivals in the Nordic-Baltic area.

Copenhagen Renaissance Music Festival is the only early music festival in Denmark, and one of the few in Europe specialising in renaissance music. The focus is on international artists, productions, networking partnerships, education and research. Approximately 60 percent of the festival's funding comes from private foundations and sponsors, which is quite unique for

Denmark. Only 10 percent of the receipts come from state funding. Around 60 percent of the budget goes to the artists.

There are four festivals of contemporary music in Denmark. They focus on different aspects, but have some things in common: they are small organisations, funded by fundraising, and dependent on volunteers working for them.

4. LATVIA – Guntars Kirsis, Latvian Concerts & Astra Sefere, The Riga Opera Festival

Latvia is a country of music, with a strong musical profile. Music festivals held in 2012 will include:

- The Riga Opera Festival
- The International Sacred Music Festival
- Festival Vienna Classics
- Festival Saxophonia
- The Early Music Festival
- Riga Festival (including dance and visual arts)
- Autumn Chamber Music Festival
- International Piano Stars Festival
- Festival Liepaja Summer
- Cesis Arts Festivals

Many festivals have started quite recently and it is still a developing form. Still, there is a versatile range of festivals, presenting local as well as international artists, and attracting a foreign audience of around 20 percent. The Latvian state concert agency currently organises 6 annual festivals.

A general festival budget might consist of 40% state funding and 30% box office revenues, leaving the remaining 30% to be raised through various other sponsors. In the last two years, more than 50% of the cultural budget has been lost, leaving Latvian music festivals in a difficult place. Still, box office revenues have increased during the same time, in spite of the financial situation.

5. NORWAY – Tone Ystanes, Norway Festivals

Norway Festivals has 84 members and represents all kinds of art and culture festivals. In total there are between 900 and 1000 festivals in Norway, of which 335 are music festivals. Most are summer festivals, but a few use snow and winter as an asset. Most are four-day events, held between a Thursday and a Sunday.

An image of a mountain top serves as an example of a typical Norwegian festival. Two young men decided that they wanted to have a rock festival in the middle of the mountains, though there was no infrastructure and it had never been done before. They tried and succeeded.

Apart from the many local and individual initiatives, there are 15 central festivals, or node festivals (Knutepunktfestivaler), that are granted more long-term funding. The festivals are considered leading in their respective fields and have the benefit of being able to plan ahead, knowing the node status guarantees support. The support consists of 60% government funding and 20% from the county and the municipality respectively. For music festivals in general, public funding constitutes between 25 and 80 percent.

With more and more new festivals there is danger of an overload, and though there has been a slight shift resulting in more culture sponsoring, organisers often struggle with sponsoring and private funding. It is still largely a young, amateur-dominated industry. The question is what the future of festivals will be – celebrations, cross-genre events, niche festivals, or perhaps chain festivals with branches in different cities and countries? Another pivotal question is how we can share our experiences. There needs to be an emphasis on research and knowledge.

6. GREENLAND – Najaaraq Möller, Aasivik Music Festival

Greenland has 57 000 inhabitants in total, of which 16 000 live in the capital. The next biggest town has 4 000 inhabitants, while the smallest community has only 3. In short, Greenland offers a special landscape for festival organisers.

Aasivik Music Festival is a local festival for Greenlanders. Connected to the independence movement, it started in 1973 and ran for 23 years. Now that independence has been achieved, it is time to gather again and talk about identity. Consequently, Aasivik will be held again in 2012.

There are 5 to 6 “big” festivals per year, most of them music festivals. Funding comes from different sources, often private companies. The largest sources of funding are Tuborg and Air Greenland. There is a strong wish to find collaboration possibilities and new financing options.

7. FINLAND – Kai Amberla, Finland Festivals

Finland’s festival life is characterised by diversity. There are somewhere between 400 and 500 festivals in the country – since the festival concept is a broad one, the number is difficult to define. Finland Festivals represents culture festivals of all kinds and has almost 100 members, of which approximately 70% are music festivals. Nine are “export festivals” that work specifically together with the travel trade.

For Finnish festivals in general, roughly 70% of incomes are earned by the festivals themselves and 30% come from public funding. This is the exact opposite of the percentages for opera houses, concert houses etc. Average figures suggest that box office receipts represent around 42% of incomes, municipal subsidies around 15%, and state subsidies only around 8%. An average festival budget is centred on production, with 44% of the budget going directly to artists and other production related expenses. Around 10% is used for marketing, and only 9% goes to fixed salaries for employed staff.

It is clear that festivals have an audience – there are about 750 000 tickets sold to festivals each year in Finland. There are also many events with free admission, and total visitor numbers are around 2 000 000. 6% of the audience are foreign visitors.

Festivals are “art for art’s sake” – most often realised by artists and art lovers.

One important question to ask is what festivals in the Nordic area can offer cultural tourists. The Nordic area is not in the periphery of the world any more – FinnAir is mentioned as an

example – and this will change things in the future, for instance through a new Asian market. Through its festivals, Finland can offer a unique combination of sound and silence.

8. LITHUANIA – Ruta Pruseviciénė, Vilnius Festival and The National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania

Festivals are a strong part of regional identity, and it is important that music and arts festivals were part of the national movement for independence. 2011 marked the 20th anniversary of this independence, and the festival scene in Lithuania is still strong, especially for contemporary music and art. There are more and more short term political tendencies, governments change fast, and this of course has an impact on the artistic life.

The Vilnius Festival, however, is a result of both a political and a creative will to fight the depression and economic crisis of 1996. Important artistic as well as political celebrations took place during the festival. The Vilnius Festival has connected international artists to local high quality musical sources, and commissioned works by contemporary composers – ballets, and operas – still on the repertoire of opera houses today.

Much remains to be learned about management and marketing.

Vilnius Festival is a member of EFA, European Festivals Association, which is a platform for strengthening international links and exchanging ideas. It is not an organisation about business, buying and selling, but about networking and connecting. All the festivals participating in the Reykjavik conference are warmly invited to Bergen in 2012 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of EFA.

Regeneration is a main focus for EFA and the organisation arranges an atelier for young festival managers, which has many applicants from outside the network as well. The global perspective is another central question, and the first European-Asian festival meeting was held in 2010 during the Shanghai Festival. Nordic and European knowledge about running festivals is becoming important in the world.

9. SWEDEN – Peter Eriksson, Swedish Music Festivals

Swedish Music Festivals started 23 years ago and currently has 45 members, some of which also include for instance visual art or dance in their programmes. The festivals are spread across the country and represent different genres such as classical, folk and jazz. The dominant festival genre is chamber music. In total, there are approximately 140 to 150 music festivals in Sweden.

The financial situation for festivals goes up and down and funding comes from a mix of public and private sources. Usually, festivals cannot receive state support, but rely on local and regional subsidies. Sponsoring is still not a large source of income for Swedish festivals.

The cultural landscape and the music society have changed much in the last few years. More and more money is being transferred to the district councils and more decisions will be made on a regional level. It is still too early to say how these political decisions will affect the music life in the long run.

10. THE FAROE ISLANDS – Kristian Blak, Summartonar

The music scene in the Faroe Islands has developed quite recently, during the last 160 years. It is possible to think of the islands as one region in terms of audience etcetera – it is easy to reach all parts of the country. The festivals are mainly community festivals, music festivals, and open air festivals, often relating to nature.

Summartonar started in 1984, and since 1992 it is a composers' festival, inviting performers and composers from other countries. It is held in 15 different places around the islands, so you can be a tourist at the same time as you are enjoying the festival. The connection to nature is also present in the venues – there are cave concerts, which have been visited by over 15 000 people. Only 40 people at a time can listen to the concerts, which make them exclusive, like caviar.

Funding is a challenge. All activities begin with nothing every year, or with a deficit from the year before. Though enough money has always been raised so far, it is tiring. Often visiting groups can contribute with money raised in their own countries. The audience is not like that of bigger cities, they cannot pay high admission prices. This is one of several differences of working in a small society.

In all, the festival budget is around € 100 000. Half of this is raised by the festival management, while the rest comes from various sources.

11. FESTIVALS IN EUROPE AND THE FESTUDY PROJECT – Jan Ove Hafstad

No representatives from EFA were able to come to Iceland, but Ruta spoke a little about the organisation during her presentation. The network's aim is to encourage festivals in not feeling alone, to allow them to learn from each other and to enable them to do things together.

A while ago, France Festivals conducted a study among their members to learn more about their structure, financial situations, goals and challenges, and the idea was brought up in EFA to launch a similar study on a European level. It has never been done before, and after some discussions it was decided that festivals throughout Europe would be looked at using a comprehensive research methodology.

Through a questionnaire, the study will collect information about general issues, communication, human resources, staff and structure as well as financial data, all based on the results of 2011. This questionnaire or survey will initially be tested on five festivals and research will start in full scale in the beginning of 2012. The study is organised centrally by France Festivals, with a core team of three researchers from Spain, Belgium and France. However, the gathering of information will be organised on a national level, each participating country employing a researcher. Results will be collected and concluded in meetings during 2012, and should be ready for publication by the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013.

Each participating festival will receive a confidential comparative report to be used in their work. The study will also be a tool for all festivals to use in working with audiences or the government.

Thirteen or fourteen national festival federations are members of EFA and nine in total have so far joined the study (Sweden, Norway, Finland, UK, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, France and Flandern Festivals in Belgium). It is also possible for individual festivals to participate and researchers can be hired. The broader the research is, the better the result will be.

DISCUSSION

Moderated by Steinunn Birna Ragnarsdottir

Jan Ove Hafstad, Swedish Music Festivals

Kai Amberla, Finland Festivals

Ruta Pruseviciénė, Vilnius Festival & National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania

**Franz Patay, International Music and Media Centre in Vienna & Kunsthaus Wien
together with the conference delegates**

The discussion was opened with the question of whether the participating organisations have anything in common, and a natural point of departure was that everyone present is convinced that culture and art is important. The challenge is finding ways of collaborating as well as learning and benefiting from each other's best practices, of joining efforts, and turning ideas into practical projects. Since lasting values are now in demand in society, and music might be said to be one of the most lasting things there are, now may be a good time to do all this. The meeting offered a possibility to discuss the validity of a deeper collaboration between the participating organisations and ways of channelling this collaboration. The goal of the discussion was for a tangible result to come out of the conference.

The validity of collaboration may be defined through two main strands of activities, one administration and financing, the other artistic content and programming. There is much to be gained from cooperating in both these fields, for instance through sharing the costs of bringing international artists to the area, or joining forces to have more negotiating power with large sponsors or partners. The need to secure financial grounds is something all festival arrangers have in common, as is the insecurity of not being able to plan ahead. A stronger cooperation may greatly improve the chances of achieving long-term contracts of financing.

The Nordic-Baltic region is currently important in many ways, and culture is a prominent part of the vision of many of the countries represented at the conference. Collaboration projects between these countries are also interesting on different levels – the fact that the conference received money from Nordisk Kulturfond (The Nordic Culture Fund) indicates this. There may be several possibilities of receiving support from Nordic funds and it should be clearly shown that cooperation between festivals is something new and exciting. The European Commission is currently deciding on a strategy for the Baltic region which might also mean new opportunities.

It is clear that there is an intellectual value in a collaborative network of some kind, since many ideas, artistic as well as administrative, are born through discussions and meetings between festivals. Working with events that set trends, festival managers in a sense have to know what the audiences want to listen to before they themselves do.

From the artist's point of view, a Nordic-Baltic festival network could be very positive and offer opportunities of allowing a production to circulate between several countries. Artists often find ways of collaborating, and this could be a way of supporting and helping them.

As a start, it is agreed that a database, e-mail group or online community of all the participating festivals is to be created, where discussions can continue. This is not a formal creation of a new network or alliance, but a way to continue what has been begun here and a first step towards exchanging ideas and creating collaborative projects. This means initially focusing on an intellectual and creative network – an unofficial Nordic festival alliance – which may then be developed and continued. There is already a strong section of Nordic festival associations within EFA, and the suggested collaboration between the participants might benefit from using this network, which is a good channel for networking and lobbying, as a platform. The festival survey undertaken by EFA may also prove a useful tool in discovering what possible collaborative partners there are for different festivals.

The second tangible beginning agreed upon was a document, a common statement, which shows that cooperation exists between the organisations present at the conference. This is a document of support for the participating festivals to use in their further work on a local level, addressed to politicians. The statement serves to highlight that a valid and important cooperation has been initiated, and that the organisations who have signed it represent a joint force. The hope is that it can be a tool in explaining the importance of arts and culture to those who do not see it as clearly as the participating organisations do, and that it can be a first step in exploring how mobilisation can be used to promote culture.

Additional concrete ideas brought forward were:

- Organising joint Nordic-Baltic conferences every year or every second year. This is already common practice for museums and theatres.
- Exchanging knowledge and experience through guest producers or curators. This brings new input to all parties involved and increases understanding of how our festival organisations work.
- Creating a structure for supporting travelling productions and giving ensembles the opportunity of performing the same programme several times. Festivals can receive information about prospective projects and ensembles and join in collaborative agreements. This is beneficial for the artists as well as financially efficient for the producers. A “Nordic Express” would create a platform for festivals to work together as well as a possibility of showcasing more ensembles and orchestras to the audience, thus creating new names in the music life. Funding is of course an obstacle that needs to be considered, which may prevent smaller festivals from being able to join.
- Creating a network that highlights what is going on in the Nordic-Baltic region, perhaps through a website.

Two aspects of collaborating and promoting the activities of the participating organisations emerged during the discussion in relation to the question of identity. The first aspect, which is an objective for many of the festivals, is to introduce the world to the audience at home, and to encourage exchange. This is reflected for instance in bringing artists and projects from the rest of Europe and the world to the Nordic festivals. The second aspect is showing the uniqueness of the place to a visiting audience. The ideas introduced suggest that there may be a balance to be found between providing possibilities for bringing international artists to perform in the Nordic festivals and finding and promoting what is creatively and artistically unique for this region. It was suggested that there is a possibility of using a collaborative

platform to market and promote the Nordic area in a wider sense as well, something that further encourages potential international visitors to decide to come, perhaps by focusing on something specific for the area, for instance the concept of “Sound and silence”.

The discussion on identity proved challenging and raised questions about what is meant by “the Nordic countries”, whether there is a Nordic-Baltic identity, what it looks like if there is one, and whether, if it exists, it is something the organisations want to communicate. Thoughts that emerged were that the idea of the “Nordic” area should involve the whole north (including for instance Alaska and Canada), that inhabitants and visitors look for and experience different things and that both aspects are important, that the identity of an area is in the eye of the beholder (as in the case of the “Nordic light”), and that ways of explaining what the terms “Nordic” and “Baltic” mean to the rest of the world may be needed. At the same time, many participants seemed to be agreed on that the objective of the collaboration is not to identify or create a common identity, but to find a common agenda that can, in the best possible way, help the participating organisations to highlight and develop their activities in this region.

Something all the organisations have in common is a considerable national variety in festivals, together with the need to be versatile. This is an asset, and perhaps leads to a word that provides a common artistic identity: diversity. It was also suggested that a common denominator could be the approach to creativity, which is something that is appreciated and encouraged throughout the Nordic region. Perhaps this idea of creativity is something to gather around. It is a concept that also holds an important place in society today.

Throughout the presentations as well as the discussions, a strong interest in pursuing possibilities of cooperation could be traced, and a hope of future meetings expressed.