

# The 70<sup>th</sup> Bergen International Festival has opened

**Pianist Leif Ove Andsnes hosted the opening ceremony of the 70<sup>th</sup> Bergen International Festival, with H.M. Queen Sonja of Norway, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and around 3500 in the audience.**

After years of pandemic disruption to cultural life, the people of Bergen – and further afield – could finally start the Bergen International Festival with a large, free outdoor event in the Bergen city centre Wednesday 25 May.

The opening ceremony marks the beginning of 15 days with more than 100 different events at numerous venues in and around Bergen. At the opening ceremony, young performers and big stars joined forces, and pianist Leif Ove Andsnes was both the host and one of the soloists. The artistic programme focused on the current war in Europe, and several of the performed works were created in times of terror, crisis and war.



‘Here, the arts have always had an important voice. But art can also be ‘just’ beautiful and touching. Maybe today, more than ever, we need to be able to find rest in art and enjoy the moments’, said Andsnes.

The Bergen Philharmonic Youth Orchestra performed, together with artist-in-residence for this year’s festival, Kronos Quartet. Also taking to the stage were Edvard Grieg Youth Choir, cellist Amalie Stalheim and dancers from *På tå hev* and the Norwegian National Ballet.

Both Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Bergen’s Mayor Rune Bakervik spoke about the arts’ – and the Festival’s – ability to create a community across borders.

‘When the Bergen International Festival was founded a few years after the Second World War, the desire was to rebuild and create bridges between people and countries after the war. As we’re now celebrating our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our continent is yet again tainted by a horrible and devastating war. Events and actions that compromise all the values we appreciate’, said the Prime Minister in his speech.

The Mayor also touched upon the Festival’s importance for the people of Bergen’s identity and dreams.

'The Bergen International Festival gives us the opportunity to see through someone else's eyes, feel through other's tones, and feel like we're part of a large European community' said Bakervik.

The Bergen International Festival continues with the opening performance [Taylor Mac – A 24-decade history of popular music](#) with [Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra](#) at Grieghallen Wednesday 25 May at 18:45 and Thursday 26 May at 19:30.

- [Programme and video recording of the live stream of the Opening ceremony](#)
- [Press photos of the Opening ceremony](#). Photos by Thor Brødreskift.
- [Press photos from the Bergen International Festival 2022](#).

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**Facts/Bergen International Festival**

- The 70th Bergen International Festival is between 25 May–08 June 2022
- A hub for the Northern European arts scene
- Renowned for world premieres and new productions of music, opera, theatre and dance
- Unique venues, including Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg's own home and the 750-year-old royal hall Håkonshallen, constitute a rich historical framework around a vibrant festival which every year gives audiences hundreds of live, exploratory events on dozens of stages indoors and out
- The first Festival was held in 1953.
- The Festival Director Lars Petter Hagen started his tenure 1 May 2022.

