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# Audience success for new Festival director

**The 2023 edition of the Bergen International Festival had more than 77.000 visits.**

The 71st Bergen International Festival closes Wednesday 7 June, and is the first under the artistic direction of [chief executive Lars Petter Hagen](#).

The preliminary audience count shows a combined number of 77.029 visits, an increase from last year with more than 3000 visits.

The audience number consists of 27.758 tickets issued, 45.563 registered visits to the large outdoor programme and other free events, as well as 3640 visitors to Bergen Kunsthall's Festival exhibition. In addition, there were more than 500.000 viewers of [Norway listens – A stage reading of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's](#) report on NRK.



'We are very happy to have reached so many, and proud of an increased audience turnout despite economic troubles and continued insecurities in post-pandemic years. People express that the Festival is important and means something for them. We have found a good balance between different types of events, with both world-class performances and a large, free outdoor programme which reached an audience in both sunshine and pouring rain, says Lars Petter Hagen.

The Bergen International Festival opened Wednesday 24 May with [What Is the City but the People?](#) in a large, outdoor portrait of the people of Bergen, performed in the presence of Their Majesties King Harald and Queen Sonja of Norway. [The opening performance Tosca in Grieghallen](#) drew two full houses and was called 'historic' by several reviewers.

'The span between *What Is the City but the People?* and *Tosca* shows the broad register of the Festival. It's nice that this is also being noticed internationally, with Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung writing that the Festival is 'one step closer to the future', says Hagen, who began his tenure as director in May of last year.

One year into his role as Festival director, the director is pleased with the audience turnout, the artistic success and positive reception in the international and national press.

'We have worked a lot with the Festival's strategy, and I'm happy that we can see the results already this year,' says Hagen.

Soprano Lise Davidsen was this year's Artist in residence and participated in seven performances.

'It has been a great privilege to work with Lise Davidsen in so many different formats, and lovely to experience how much the audience appreciates her artistry,' says Hagen.

In this year's programme, the festival director has also chosen to include more representatives of marginalised voices in art history.

'With Anne-Marie Ørbeck as Festival composer, we have presented music that almost never has been heard in the Festival's lifetime, and in the performing arts programme there are several examples of voices we seldom hear from. The arts is a place where we need to make more space, says Hagen.

*Photo above: Lise Davidsen and Edward Gardner, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra's chief conductor, during Verdi's Requiem. Photo: Synne Sofi Bårdsdatter Bønes*

**See also:**

- [Press photos from Bergen International Festival 2023](#)
- [Stream from the opening ceremony: What is the City but the People?](#)

**Facts/Bergen International Festival**

- The 71st Bergen International Festival takes place from 24 May to 7 June 2023.
- Presents hundreds of live artistic experiences in several dozen venues indoors and out every year and is considered a flagship amongst the Nordic music and theatre festivals.
- Festival Director Lars Petter Hagen started his tenure on 1 May 2022.

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