Warsaw, 9th February 2024  
Press release

**Conclusion of the cultural and workshop project Interactions/Integrations *– How can art serve social integration?***

**Sinfonia Varsovia has completed its international, interdisciplinary cultural and workshop project Interactions/Integrations, conducted in cooperation with its Norwegian partner, the Norwegian Youth Chamber Music Festival (K&MFEST) in Stavanger. Its ambition was to make quality culture accessible to groups at risk of exclusion in accessing it, and to develop models of activities using art in social integration processes. For the last two years, the project has involved almost 300 people: managers of cultural institutions, academics and professional artists (instrumentalists, conductors, composers, painters, graphic designers). Its activities have so far reached nearly 9,000 people among the public and amateur artists during more than 70 events – concerts, seminars, discussions, workshops, exhibitions, composer residencies, local initiatives.**

**Ambitions of the project and its developers**

The project, launched in May 2022, consisted of two components. The first – *Interactions* – was aimed at improving the communication and organizational competencies of selected artists and organizers of cultural life in the field of social integration activities through seminars and workshops. The second – *Integrations* – put the acquired knowledge into practice at concerts and other initiatives, both in concert halls and local educational, cultural, and social welfare centers in Poland and Norway. These events were particularly aimed at people in risk of exclusion in accessing culture because of social and economic reasons.

The interdisciplinary and international nature of the project was intended to lead to an extensive exchange of competencies and experiences between artists and employees of cultural institutions. In addition to the musicians and staff of Sinfonia Varsovia and K&MFEST, participants included cartoonist Jeanine El Khawand, journalist and musicologist Mona Levin, painters Grzegorz Mart and Kjell Pahr-Iversen, composers Piotr Peszat and Żaneta Rydzewska, folk violinist Gunnar Stubseid and conductor Jean-Pierre Wallez.

**Activities**  
As part of Interactions/Integrations, experimental forms of artistic and workshop events were tested, often combining different fields of art. These included, for example, drawing, painting and cartoon workshops, in which music played or performed live inspired the creation of works by amateur artists, or, for instance, a concert juxtaposed with an art exhibition that inspired the creation of the composition presented during it. The purpose of such events was to reach new audiences and test the effectiveness of such activities in creating an engaged community built around a cultural institution.

Taking orchestral musicians beyond philharmonic spaces in so-called “small initiatives” to audiences often excluded from access to culture – to a refugee center, a school, a church, a social welfare home, a backyard or a folk dance – involved them in activities with different social overtones, at the same time requiring different communication and workshop competencies, which allowed the musicians to redefine their own role as artists beyond regular concert activity.

**Premieres**

Among others, the project premiered new orchestral works: *Music, action!* For painter, orchestra, live-electronics and live-video by the tandem of composer Piotr Peszat and painter Grzegorz Mart (26th October 2022, Stavanger Konserthus, Norway) and *Portals* *–* Double Concerto for violin, cello and string orchestra by Marcus Paus (24th September 2023, Teatr Wielki - Polish National Opera, Warsaw) during a concert available for live streaming, and inspired by the works of Kjell Pahr-Iversen presented at an exhibition also organized as part of the project at the Teatr Wielki - Polish National Opera.

**Methodological publication**

A team of methodologists – Marcin Poprawski, PhD, Agata Wittchen-Barełkowska, PhD, and Marta Szymańska – worked parallel to the above activities. On the basis of the collected interviews, observations and readings, they prepared the study *Socially Responsible Music Institution: Inspirations and Recommendations*. The monograph describes the project from the perspective of its participants: artists-musicians, audiences, social partners and managers of cultural institutions. An analysis of the motivations, conditions and potential of the participating musicians leads the authors to make recommendations for specific actions for symphony orchestras and music ensembles with ambitions to be socially responsible. The publication is available in print and online at the project website.

***Polar Strings***

February 2024 marked the release of the ***Polar Strings*** music album **–** **Sinfonia Varsovia’s strings**, conducted by **Rune Bergmann**, perform music by Polish and Norwegian composers. The album features **Edvard Grieg’s** Suite *From Holberg’s Time*, Op. 40, **Witold Lutosławski’s** String Overture, **Arne Nordheim’s** *Nachruf*, Variations on a Norwegian Folktune *I fjol gjætt'e gjeitinn* (*Last Year I was Tending the Goats*), Op. 31 by **Johan Svendsen**, and *Variations on a Theme by Girolamo Frescobaldi* by **Alexander Tansman**. The album’s repertoire highlights the links between the composers and cultures of the two countries. The project’s publications are complemented by an educational card game called *Polish-Norwegian* *InteGRAtions (InteGRAcje polsko-norweskie*; Polish “gra” stands for “game”) exploring the culture – with particular emphasis on music – and nature of Poland and Norway and their mutual connections.

The aforementioned project publications, as well as texts, photos and videos of the project’s events, are available on the website <https://interakcje-integracje.pl/en/> under the “library of experiences” tab. Interactions/Integrations 2022–2024 was implemented with funding from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 within the framework of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage’s “Culture” Programme.

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