

## Innspill fra Bergen Nasjonale Opera ved Mary Miller

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### **What do we want Norwegian culture to be in 20 years?**

We want Norwegian cultural always to reflect, but also drive discussion and debate about the world we live in – history has to be respected, but new ideas, dynamic thinking and new technology have driven enormous change, and will always do so. The mix in our population is also changing: we need to constantly be looking outwards to see how the world is changing around Norway and welcoming what we can learn, while reflecting the change in our own society. At Bergen National Opera our commitment is to present opera which both respects great past traditions and promotes the new; our operas will always tell topical and relevant stories.

### **What opportunities and challenges are there?**

The opportunities and challenges are endless, but we need to ensure that culture leaders have the openness, knowledge, experience and willing to establish priorities, and to drive positive change. We also need to protect Norway's precious State commitment to funding culture, and to make sure that that while it is spread across the widest demographic, that there is a balance between equal opportunity and support for excellence. National companies throughout Norway must be respected and funded as flagships for high standards and talent development.

### **What are the special challenges in your region?**

The region is large, and local culture organisations can find it difficult and expensive to provide excellent and inspiring work in remote areas. Thus while the smaller areas and towns may have lots of local activity (this often depends on good leadership) their culture house presentations are often national touring entertainment shows, or films. The State's commitment to widespread culture should underpin and actively support and promote key professional organisations which will provide quality live 'art' acoustic performance to a wide area.

### **How should society respond to these challenges?**

Society must campaign strongly for secure and solid funding from the State for key institutions which can drive high standards and provide cultural leadership. For instance, the creative hub formed by Bergen National Opera, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Edvard Grieg Kor provides major opportunities for artists, creators, producers over a large regional demographic, creates inspirational audience experiences which are internationally as well as locally acclaimed. These organisations also consistently drive wide talent development and excellent participatory culture projects for and with children, with built-in strategies for the

long term. These regional partnerships with high quality professional organisations must remain supported at State level in order to sustain their development.

**What opportunities and special advantages does your region have?** The region and its landscape are in themselves inspiring, which is reflected in the number of artists in all media who live there. The area also attracts a large number of artists from overseas, keen to work here, and in some cases to bring their families to grow up in an environment healthy both in terms of resources and social balance. In Hordaland, thanks in part to current solid State funding for key institutions, there is good and productive dialogue between cultural bureaucrats and the artists themselves which sustains well thought through projects and wide collaboration.

**What is needed to maintain / develop a strong local cultural life in your region?** It is critical that flagship cultural organisations: Bergen Philharmonic, Bergen National Opera, Carte Blanche and Den National Scene retain their core funding from the State, and that their unique status is recognised as inspirators, employers and leaders. This funding should remain pinned to proportional funding from city and region. Also critical is excellent, well-trained, open-minded regional and national leadership which is prepared to take risks, and to experiment, while maintaining and supporting excellent existing work. It is also vital that local politicians and decision makers support the above funding premise, are well informed, are abreast of new developments, and understand the impact of culture and the arts on education, and how creativity amongst children and youth impacts their wider learning and social development. While Norway hugely encourages outdoor life and sport – with fine results – culture and creativity should aim to attain equal emphasis.

**What should be the role and responsibility of the state?** The State must reflect the critical role of culture by maintaining its responsibility for key institutions. By doing so, the State sends a clear message that Norway values, nurtures and funds culture country-wide as a priority. It is vital that funding and development should not be seen as capital-city centric. In particular, national companies rooted in cities outside Oslo should be accorded equal status and funded accordingly.

**What responsibilities and tasks should be for county councils?** The region must drive a dynamic environment for creativity, ensuring opportunities for all ages both as participants and leaders. The region should encourage and support cross-region and European partnerships which enhance dialogue and quality production. Funding decisions should be regularly reviewed and projects which are given support should be properly evaluated. Inspiring and educational activities for children to participate and create should be a priority. Norway and the region should constantly seek ways to provide opportunities for young artists to be inspired, to perform, to gain experience and to practise communication, mentored by experienced leaders.

**What responsibility and what tasks should lie to the municipalities?** The municipalities must support the State's core cultural funding to provide a rich, diverse and varied cultural programme across a range of city providers. The municipality must sustain appropriately funded partnerships with local professional organisations, and encouraging ongoing dialogue about the city's cultural dynamic: this should encourage a balance between support for the pursuit of ticket sales, and a cultural offer that encourages innovation and challenge. The work and development of the culture school should be closely followed, encouraging the seeking out opportunities for their children to participate in as wide an environment as possible. The municipalities should also maintain close links with their neighbouring partners, exchanging good practice and information. Municipalities should also extend this outreach where possible, to identify best practice in Europe, so as to seek out the most dynamic examples which might be relevant to their work in creating an eventful, creative environment for citizens.

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