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Shakespeare's Sonnets to open Bergen International Festival next year

As this year's Festival rounds up to record breaking sales and visitor numbers, the Bergen International Festival launches the spectacular opening performance of 2017.

The 2017 Bergen International Festival will open with *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, where world-renowned director Robert Wilson has taken twenty-five sonnets and created an epic piece of musical theatre. Together with the German theatre company Berliner Ensemble and Canadian composer Rufus Wainwright, he has created a performance cleverly mixing the genres to a captivating effect, contrasting darkness and light and making Shakespeare's poetic universe more modern and alive than ever.

"The Bergen International Festival is one of the great festivals of the world", Robert Wilson says.

Shakespeare's Sonnets were staged by the Berliner Ensemble in 2009, more than four hundred years after their publication. CEO and Artistic Director of the Bergen International Festival, Anders Beyer, has been working for years to get the production to Western Norway's city of Bergen.

"This is a performance where giants meet. When such creative forces collide, there will be sparks flying. This is a great example of a production fulfilling our ambition of merging different art forms and traditions to create interesting friction in our festival programme," he says.

On stage is a number of Shakespearean characters, from the leprechaun to the fool, from Cupid to the mysterious dark lady, and from the Queen of England to Shakespeare himself.

Robert Wilson has fundamentally renewed contemporary theatre and performance art since the mid-1960s. His works for the stage unconventionally integrate a wide variety of artistic media. His images are aesthetically striking and emotionally charged, and his productions have earned the acclaim of audiences and critics worldwide.

Rufus Wainwright's original compositions include a range of musical styles, turning the performance into a dreamlike journey beyond time:

"It sounds a little bit like cabaret, a little bit like opera, like Strauss and Schubert, classically German, taking a deep bow in front of Kurt Weill", Rufus Wainwright says.

Shakespeare's Sonnets is performed in Grieghallen 24 and 25 May 2017. Only the 25 May performance is currently on sale. [Download press photos here.](#)

Key figures of the 2016 Festival:

- The 2016 Bergen International Festival took place in Bergen between 25 May and 08 June.
- The festival presented more than 350 events at more than 40 venues.
- Around 125.000 visitors, an increase of 20 per cent from the previous record year of 2015.
- 37.000 tickets sold – 2.000 up from the 2015 record of 35.000.

For further information about this or next year's festival, please contact:

Communications Advisor Silje Vestvik: siljev@fib.no / +47 943 19 439
Communications Manager Kjersti Brown: kjerstib@fib.no / +47 917 52 677