

## UBC Commission on Culture Cultural Prize

The Commission on Culture received excellent and very interesting applications from the following 10 UBC member cities: Cēsis, Falun, Gdańsk, Jõhvi, Malbork, Rakvere, Słupsk, Turku, Visby and Örebro. The theme of the UBC Cultural Prize 2011 was “Building Bridges for the Baltic Future”. The applications were dealing with the theme from very many points of view and the theme was approached from an amazing variety of different angles. That’s why the decision-making was this year harder than ever before.

The board of the Commission on Culture was lucky enough to have the newest UBC Bulletin on the table when the applications were evaluated. The solution to the difficult question how to choose the winner was actually written on the cover page of the magazine. There was a headline “Building on the Past Heading for the Future”. That’s how the bridges for the Baltic future should be constructed. Building on a solid knowledge of the past but having in mind a vision of the desired goal in the future.

This principle in their minds the board of the Commission on Culture found out that there was one candidate that was showing how to build the cultural activities very strongly on the past and in that way to have a great influence in cultural life and image of the city as well as strengthen the identity of the city. At the same time the board noticed that there was another candidate that was extremely strongly heading for the future as a voice of the present century.

The first one of them was the Mediaeval Week on Gotland. During the week the whole old town of Visby turns into a festival celebrating the medieval time, where the history turns real as visitors dress in authentic clothes and wear genuine equipment and accessories with the ruins, cobble stone streets and the town wall as a living background, lurid tournaments with horses and knights in armours, fire shows, theatre and feasts with medieval themes, concerts with medieval music, market place with tools, food and instruments, a large number of handicraft courses and a lot of lectures in history of this time, are spread all over the town and its surroundings during eight days every summer.

The other candidate was the Punk Song Festival – Anarchy in EU! that was held in Rakvere. In Estonia the song and dance festivals have helped the Estonians to preserve their own culture and identity under the foreign rule. The Punk Song Festival of Rakvere is trying to combine the traditional and the modern sides of Estonian culture: song festival and punk movement. Punk movement was one of the possibilities for young people to revolt and rebel against the governing rule and everything else that came with it. Punk movement played also a role in the struggle of independency.

The initiative to organize a Punk Song Festival was politically, culturally and musically a very risky attempt to realize. The choirs were asked to learn the world known punk classics in order to be able to participate the festival. The idea turned into a success story with 2000 choir singers including many choirs from abroad and 8000 spectators and sing-alongers. This could be a starting point for development of a modern type of song festival based on long traditions with modern repertoire and innovative musical arrangements.

Because the board of the Commission on Culture considered that both of the candidates fulfilled the criteria to be chosen to a winner of the UBC Cultural Prize 2011 but in a very different ways, the decision was to share the UBC Cultural Prize 2011 between the Mediaeval Week on Gotland and the Punk Song Festival in Rakvere.

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