**Theatre in Lithuania**

By Elzė Gudavičiūtė

Lithuania has 13 performance venues funded by the state: 8 drama theatres, 2 children theatres and 3 music theatres. Three of these theatres are given the status of national theatre. Over the past ten years, we saw a rise in the establishment of many independent initiatives, private theatres and public institutions providing space for performing arts.

In 2016, a new law governing Professional Performing Arts of Lithuanian Republic was introduced, which is a heavily edited version of the 2004 law for Theatres and Concert Halls. This law says that state theatres can acquire two different legal statuses: budget institution or public institution. Other theatres in Lithuania are owned and run privately, but also have the legal status of a public institution. The funding for theatres in regulated by the law of Professional Performing Arts.

Lithuanian ministry of culture is responsible for the shaping and implementing the politics of professional performing arts.

Our national theatres are run as budget institutions, established by the government, and this establishing function is implemented by an institution authorised by the government (ministry of culture). State theatres can be run as both, budget and public institutions.

Every three to five years, the artistic programmes of national theatres are approved by the ministry of culture, and theatres have to produce a yearly report. The work of national theatres is observed, analysed and evaluated by the ministry of culture.

The law states that the government funds are used to cover the expenses of artistic programmes of national theatres, including wages and acquiring assets. Each national theatre manages this budget independently. However, the ministry of culture, through approving the artistic programme of each theatre season, is indirectly involved in national theatre’s budget management.

The law also specifies the government funding principles and sources: funding is used to carry out artistic programmes approved by the establishment; further funding, to support relevant artistic programmes, can be acquired by other theatres and concert halls through the special call-outs by the ministry of culture and municipality councils. The main source of funding is the National programme of the ministry of culture.

State and municipal theatres are governed by the same funding principle as national theatres – the money is provided to fund the artistic programme of each theatre season. Regarding the exact amount of funding to support the state theatre as a budget institution, the ministry of culture is involved directly as the administrator of funds.

According to the law, state theatres, municipal theatres, public institutions and other theatres can get state or municipal funding to support relevant artistic programmes by taking part in the special call-outs by the ministry of culture and municipality councils.

Educational programmes at national and state theatres in Lithuania are funded by Lithuanian Council for Culture.

Lithuanian Council for Culture was established in 2013, after the reform of the funding system of cultural and artistic projects. This Council is a budget institution, financed by the Lithuanian government. The Council is owned by the government, the owner duties and obligations are fulfilled by the ministry of culture.

The Council funds cultural and artistic projects; gives scholarships to artists; monitors cultural and artistic projects; gives advice to the executors of cultural and artistic projects.

Since 2014, Lithuanian Council for Culture used 8 320 334 eu to fund 843 theatre projects.

Twice a year, Lithuanian Council for Culture organises funding call-outs for performing arts projects and their dissemination. Applications are evaluated by a comittee of experts and results are approved by the members of the Council. The Council is able to give 80 per cent of the funding asked for the project, the rest has to be secured through the project partnerships or other supporters. In 2018 the Council used 1 481 566 eu to fund 157 theatre projects.