

## National Arts Management Intensive

### Seminar III

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Zagreb

### Instructor Biographies

#### **Marek Vrabec**

**Founder and Artistic Director**

**Strings of Autumn international music festival**

**Dvorak Prague Festival**

**Prague, Czech Republic**

In 1996, when Marek Vrabec founded the Strings of Autumn festival, his vision was to provide a meeting point for the worlds of jazz, classical music, and world music. Almost twenty years later, Strings is a widely respected international festival: its bold and imaginative programming has won many admirers, not least among them the New York Times, who have described Strings as 'one of Prague's most innovative musical undertakings.'

Over the years, Marek has introduced the Czech audience to an impressive range of major international artists, many of them brought by him to Prague for their first-ever performances in the country – the likes of Bobby McFerrin, Brad Mehldau, Michael Nyman, and Jan Garbarek. In recent years, Strings has hosted bonafide legends such as Sonny Rollins and Wayne Shorter, as the festival continues to go from strength to strength.

In 2010, following a year spent at the Kennedy Center for the Performing arts in Washington DC, Marek organised the first ever fundraising gala for Strings of Autumn – the 'Spring Strings Gala.' In a country with no established tradition of individual giving to arts organisations, and one where the very concept of a fundraising gala was, at the time, little-known, this was an endeavour not without its risks. The fact that, five years later, the gala has become a major event in the social and cultural calendar (Yo-Yo Ma performed at the evening in 2014) is testament Marek's tenacity and clear-sighted vision.

In 2013, Marek was approached by the Czech Academy of Classical Music and asked to take over the running of their flagship festival, Dvorak Prague, tasked with taking the already-successful festival to the next level. Wanting to preserve both Dvorak Prague's profile as a 'pure' classical music festival and Strings of Autumn's more esoteric, 'crossover' appeal, Marek has been able to maintain the individual identities of both his festivals, ensuring that the one complements, rather than competes with, the other.

As a producer, Marek has to his credit a number of international co-productions, notably the opera Don Juan in Prague in 2005, which was performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. He was also the man behind the premiere performance and recording of Czech composer Jan Dismas Zelenka's oratorio *Sub Olea Pacis et Palma Virtutis*. The recording won the 2001 MIDEM Classical Award.

Marek also works as a regional agent for jazz artists such as Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Gregory Porter, organising their concerts in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, or enabling relationships with other local promoters, such as the Colours of Ostrava festival, the Czech Philharmonic, and Jazzfest Brno).